LOOKING AT ALICE'S DISPLACED IDENTITY IN LEWIS CARROLL'S *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND* AND *THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS* THROUGH A POSTMODERNIST LENS

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Abstract*: This paper aims to analyse Alice's displaced identity in Lewis Carroll's* Alice's Adventures in Wonderland *and* Through the Looking-Glass *via a postmodern lens. To be able to argue whether Lewis Carroll's portrayal of Alice and her journeys makes her identity postmodern we need to establish whether and, if so, to what extent it resonates with what postmodernism describes as identity. Language also becomes instrumental in construing aspects of the protagonist's identity, including the way in which the narrator equipped Alice with a certain kind of thinking. Lewis Carroll manipulates both her appearance and musings in a playful and paradoxical manner. He makes his character grow or decrease – so that she may fit the places she travels to or enters – not once, but several times, yet the repetitive process seems to become random. Therefore, Carroll creates an artistic image comparable to the computer-assisted ones. On the virtual page's canvas, he pastes an alternation of Alice's sizes: one is her usual/normal size, one is small and one big, and he keeps switching between them according to the situation or places Alice is in. Lost in a strange world, Alice tries to find herself, to create a connection with the world that she used to know but from where she has escaped. Even though she fights to find herself (her true self) again, nothing seems to have any sense in this absurd world of wonders.*

Keywords: *identity; displacement; postmodernism; journey; language; escape*

I start from the premise that, as Bauman, Eco, Zimmerman and other theorists contend, postmodernism is a "state of mind" (Bauman vii)[1] rather than exclusively a cultural period when a particular type of creation prevails. Postmodernism is a cultural movement which has manifested in architecture, literature and art, and some theoreticians argue that the life itself of the individual can be described as postmodern. I couldn't agree more with this proposition, especially as one of the characteristics of postmodernism is the fragmentation of the self. For one thing, the human being is not just a biological entity, but also everything that can be associated with that particular human being: what s/he says, what s/he thinks and what s/he does; moreover, in contemporary society, in the era of consumerism, the human being is also what s/he buys, in terms of clothes, accessories and appliances but also services and especially knowledge. Let us not forget about social media, which has become a kind of parallel universe so that the human being has created him-/herself several egos. Thus, is there any trace of a stable and centred self? More or less, postmodernism may be regarded as a contradiction in terms, an unlimited series of indeterminacies, ambiguity, discontinuity, revolt, deformation, disintegration, deconstruction, decentring, displacement, difference, discontinuity, revolt, disjunction and decomposition, and in more technical terms as evincing the rhetoric of irony, rupture and silence.

As the name itself suggests, postmodernism is regarded as a reaction to modernism. One represents what the other is not, an opposition in terms, one between reality and fiction, real and unreal. But, as the postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard has argued, we do not need to wait for

[1] Bauman (vii) immediately qualifies his statement thus: "More precisely – a state of those minds who have the habit (or is it a compulsion?) to reflect upon themselves, to search their own contents and report what they found: the state of mind of philosophers, social thinkers, artists – all those people on whom we rely when we are in a pensive mood or just pause for a moment to find out whence we are moving or being moved."

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these devices to be possible: virtual reality is already here and we all live in it almost every moment of our lives (Baudrillard, qtd. in Nicol 4). According to Linda Hutcheon in her *Poetics of Postmodernism*, "postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges – be it in architecture, literature, painting, sculpture, film, video, dance, TV, music, philosophy, aesthetic theory, psychoanalysis, linguistics, or historiography" (Hutcheon 3). Eco argues that "postmodernism is not a style which is typical of a specific moment in cultural history, but an attitude which underlies cultural production in any period: we could say that every period has its own postmodernism" (Eco, qtd. in Nicol 14). He states that the postmodern arises when the "modern" in a particular era recognizes that it cannot go any further. In fact, it is relatively difficult to establish, with precision, when and how this movement appeared because there are many writers, artists and works of art that have been avant-la-lettre and are considered by critics like Diane Elam or Zygmunt Bauman to belong to postmodernism even if they belong temporarily in a different cultural age. Simon Malpas contends, therefore, that if postmodernism is not a period but a style, texts and work of arts from earlier times might be considered postmodern if they engage with devices associated with postmodernism.

To be able to argue whether Lewis Carroll's portrayal of Alice makes her identity postmodern we need to establish whether, and if so, to what extent, it resonates with what postmodernism describes as identity, past and present, we should add. Traditionally, identity is partly described in terms of one's personality and physique, including gender, race and ethnicity, and partly in those of one's social profile, from social, religious and educational background to occupational matters to manners. Personality, in this view, is relatively easy to infer from one's words, actions and more generally social interactions, and it is commonly expected to be relatively constant, or rather stable, hence "predictable." As we shall see, Alice's personality becomes a matter of dramatic adjustment to startlingly radical, often shocking circumstances insofar as they blatantly challenge her horizon of social and cultural expectations. One's physique, on the other hand, is expected to change over time, more dramatically in the early years yet slowing down as we "grow up." On the contrary, Alice experiences a sudden, even jolting, process of growing up, which, although suggestive of the onset of puberty, is nevertheless reversible due to its artificially induced causes – ironically, somewhat reminiscent of the scope of cosmetic surgery nowadays yet benefitting from the advantages of IT input. If identity is traditionally conceived of as unitary and stable over time, which, as its underpinning assumption goes, is what makes us recognisable, what happens in the Alice texts hardly reinforces this view.

Postmodern theorists and artists, on the other hand, are critical of the post-Enlightenment belief in a unitary self and homogeneously stable identity over time and have proceeded to dismantle it. On the contrary, in postmodern reappraisals of identity, extreme self-awareness in identity matters combines with an understanding, even celebration, of fragmentariness as a notion better suited to describe human personality in all its dynamic complexity than the static view encapsulated in the "unified-self" perspective of Enlightenment-driven modernity. It is also true that no age has ever produced only one monolithic view on identity, but each has had at times competing views.

To return to Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is divided into twelve chapters, and Alice herself appears to become split too as if the narrative organised her very textual identity into chapters, or rather encounters. On closer inspection, it can be observed that Alice is defined by various characteristics, many age-related but some socially motivated. Apart from the fact that the reader encounters a different Alice in each chapter, each chapter in its turn presents a series of elements and clues which help Alice in her gradual transformation from her philosophical pondering to the objects and characters with which she interacts. Hugh Haughton argues:

> In the opening chapter of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* we are told Alice is "fond of pretending to be two people," but early in her shape-changing adventures she fears "there's

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> hardly enough of me left to make one respectable person." Wondering if she'd been changed in the night, she asks, "Who in the world am I?" In a book humming with puzzles, this is probably the greatest puzzle of all for Alice. (Haughton 193)

Haughton's statement points to Alice's instability of self, which starts with her own appearance. Alice enjoys pretending to be two people, as when she was playing croquet against herself, but for the time being she considers it is of no use "to pretend to be two people!" since "there's hardly enough of me left to make one respectable person" (Carroll 43). Alice feels lost; throughout the story all she does is seek to find herself again, to collect the pieces of the puzzle scattered along the twelve chapters.

Yet, as Haughton points out, Alice's very worries about her identity reveal her to be "very much a child of her time and class" (194):

> In this she is like Alice Liddell, the daughter of the Dean of Christ Church, born into the heart of the English establishment, a well-educated upper-middle-class Oxonian girl, versed in good manners, good verse, and the rules of chess, cards and croquet. […] [T]he royal scenario that pervades both stories reflects on her own social status, as well as on the romance conventions of fairy tales and the games of cards and chess she is caught up in. (Haughton 194)

In the beginning, after falling down the rabbit hole, she is obviously feeling lost, decentred and split, since she has "landed" in a strange world where nobody can provide her with answers but only prod her along with questions. The first chapter of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* marks the moment when Alice is abruptly displaced from her-self: "the rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down a very deep well" (Carroll 38). Unexpectedly, her falling down offers Alice the perfect environment to start her long series of musings. The tunnel, as Carroll calls it, is "tapestried" with different kinds of cupboards and bookshelves, maps and pictures, symbolically suggestive of the fragmentation and degradation of the stable bourgeois world Alice is familiar with. All the objects, though, point to a scholarly environment, and even if Alice's sense of self is degrading, her knowledge "orientation" is very sharp and homogeneous. As she starts recalling various aspects of geography, she feels dismayed to realize that she is waxing rather uncertain of the things she remembers: she says she would fall down and arrive at the Antipathies, when what she really means is the Antipodes. The moment she is faced with the bottle which is going to make her smaller, Alice thinks thoroughly and carefully before she drinks its contents, referring to the "little histories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and many other unpleasant things, all because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them" (Carroll 42). At this point, Alice's upbringing more than her educational background proper provides the little orientation Alice can rely on in her new environment.

Apart from the fragmented knowledge about herself and what surrounds her, Alice faces the manipulation of her body. The first chapter marks the beginning of a series of bodily transformations which point to a radical malleability of her physical being. Carroll virtually anticipates the arbitrariness, not just the opportunities, allowed by late twentieth-century technology. He puts Alice through a series of processes which would be used with a computer such as the "undo" / "redo" options, and thus creates a mechanical repeatability looking forward to the possibilities of nowadays technology. When the magic elixir in a bottle which has a printed paper label, "DRINK ME," around its neck makes her grow up suddenly, a stunned Alice imagines herself to be a telescope, but after she eats the magic cake to reverse the process and get smaller, she compares herself to a candle.

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Thus, the second chapter of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* introduces the reader to Alice's second bodily manipulation (the first one occurred when she drank the liquid in the bottle). Here is her description of the process: "now I'm opening out like the largest telescope that ever was! Goodbye feet! […] Oh, my poor little feet, I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now, dears? I'm sure I shan't be able!" (Carroll 44). Alice goes on to imagine a situation in which, apparently, her feet constitute a different part of her body, alienated from herself, but finally, she comes to her senses and realizes that she is talking nonsense. Such self-awareness is again clearly signalled: "Oh dear, what nonsense I'm talking!" (Carroll 45). On the contrary, after eating the cake and observing its sudden effect, Alice fears that she might conceivably end up "'going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?' and she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle is like after it is blown out, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing" (Carroll 42). Such instances of instantaneous growing up and the reverse process may be a fairy-tale echo, especially given their reliance on magic substances. Nonetheless, use of these particular substances, but especially the telescope analogy, may show an Alice steeped in her Victorian world's customs and implements (the latter aimed at either study or entertainment), if eager to escape from an unpromising – because unfamiliar looking and thus socially unclassifiable – hall into a garden promising the freedom of movement and possibly genteel encounters.

At the core of the second chapter of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* stands one of the most important and valuable of all Alice's soliloquies:

> Dear, dear! How queer everything is today! And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: was I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different. But if I am not the same, the next question is, "Who in the world am I?" Ah, that's the great puzzle. (Carroll 46)

After so much – and such reversible – growing up, a self-manipulation of sorts, Alice cannot remember who she is; she feels disoriented and confused. Her musings wax almost philosophical: "if I am not the same, the next question is, 'Who in the world am I?' Ah, that's the great puzzle" (Carroll 46). I find the mentioning of the word "puzzle" very important, in fact of metatextual import, because the whole story is partly generated around this particular concept, which moreover is used symbolically in the text. The puzzle denotes the fragmentation, or chaos, which will ultimately resolve into pattern. What this resolution connotes is the manipulative and artificial nature of establishing order and intelligibility. With the latter there comes the quasi-postmodern realisation, for Alice in her own age's terms, for the twenty-first-century readers in postmodern terms, that the coherence – at once cohesion/stability and intelligibility – of Alice's identity comes only at the price of accepting the rules of a socially engineered game, a game that exceeds her power to resist engaging in it.

The riddle of her ever-shifting identity makes Alice articulate her newly found puzzling condition in terms of a conglomeration of pieces which have to be put together to produce a whole, just as Alice's identity is scattered throughout the twelve chapters and the reader comes to put the bits and pieces back together only gradually. Yet, such reading process connotes game playing as a means of constructing the events into a coherent series. Being so confused by both her bodily instability and cognitive incapacity, Alice believes that she has been replaced – as if by fairy-tale arbitrary magic – with one of the children she knows:

> "I'm sure I'm not Ada," she said, "for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all; and I'm sure I can't be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh! She knows such a very little! Besides, she's she, and I'm I, and – oh dear, how puzzling it all is! I'll try if I know all the things I used to know. (Carroll 47)

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In this respect, Hugh Haughton argues that the fictional Alice measures herself by her superior knowledge and social status (Haughton 194): it is what not only children, and Victorian ones in particular, do, although it is Western indeed. Randomness in her game of self-identification is brought to attention as Alice thinks over the possibilities of which girl she may have been replaced with. She comes to the conclusion that she must be Mabel after all. Later, however, not fancying the thought much, Alice creates an absurd game where she imagines that she would accept the elders' invitation to return from the rabbit hole only if she liked to be the person whom she would be identified as:

> No, I've made up my mind about it; if I'm Mabel, I'll stay down here! It'll be no use their putting their heads down and saying "Come up dear!" I shall only look up and say "Who am I then? Tell me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I'll come up; if not, I'll stay down here till I'm somebody else." (Carroll 48)

Actually, it appears that Alice is fond of pretending to be more than two people in a game she devises herself, as chapter four suggests. Chapter four continues the series of identity confusions, when Alice takes on another "role": that of Marry Ann, the White Rabbit's housemaid. Even if previously Alice seemed to have forgotten who she is, when she notices that she has been mistaken for the White Rabbit's housemaid she utters, "How surprised he'll be when he finds out who I am!" (Carroll 59), implicating that for a moment she definitely knows who she is. This is later reinforced in the chapter when Alice talks to herself: "And she began fancying the sort of thing that would happen: 'Miss Alice! Come here directly, and get ready for your walk!' 'Coming in a minute, nurse! But I've got to watch this mouse-hole till Dinah comes back, and see that the mouse doesn't get out'" (Carroll 60).

Alice has learned the rules of the game, she has figured out what makes her large or small and she can now play with her own size however often she wants. The degree of self-awareness increases again when she finds herself large again and stuck in the White Rabbit's carceral house. Alice's soliloquy has a metatextual edge: "'when I used to read fairy-tales I fancied that kind of thing never happened and now I am in the middle of one! There ought to be a book written about me, that there ought! And when I grow up, I'll write one – but I'm grown up now,' she added in a sorrowful tone; 'at least there's no room to grow up any more here'" (Carroll 61). Not only is the girl conversant with fairy-tales, whose lineaments Alice recognises from her own experiences in Wonderland, used in the Victorian age to help to socialise children into their adult roles, but she fancies her adventures as worth recording in a book, thus providing the text a *mise en abyme* opportunity familiar to readers from countless literary works, *Hamlet* included, yet also anticipating, if in fictional and writerly terms, the fractal geometry of infinite replication.

Chapter five features one of the long series of questions relating to Alice's unstable identity. This time Alice encounters a wise caterpillar that asks her who she is. The polite question sounds to Alice as a terrible, and terribly difficult, query, which only increases her twinges of conscience, or rather self-consciousness: "'Who are you?' said the Caterpillar. 'This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation,' Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I – I hardly know, sir, just at present – at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then'" (Carroll 69). Alice ruefully admits that she "has changed several times since morning": her self-conscious reply points to a repeatability and multiplication of the self and therefore a destabilization of her identity. The thorough cross-examination goes further. The Caterpillar asks Alice to "explain herself," a challenging request that metaphorically "turns" Alice herself into a word or a phenomenon which needs to be explained:

> "What do you mean by that?" said the Caterpillar sternly, "Explain yourself!"
> "I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself, you see."

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> "I don't see," said the Caterpillar.
> "I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly," Alice replied very politely, "for I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing." (Carroll 70)

The girl does not have a sense of who she is any longer, so she cannot lay claims to a clear identity by explaining herself, as the Caterpillar requests her to. All the same, she is aware of the changes, concerning not just her body size, she has been going through:

> "So, you think you're changed, do you?"
> "I'm afraid I am, sir," said Alice; "I can't remember things as I used – and I don't keep the same size for ten minutes together!" (Carroll 71)

Dramatic changes notwithstanding, Alice's answer does have all the trappings of polite gentility which defines socially the Alice that early during the day fell down the rabbit hole.

Furthermore, when the Caterpillar asks her what size she wants to be, Alice admits that she is "not particular as to size," only that "one doesn't like changing so often" (Carroll 74). This kind of conversation anticipates a topic specific to many twenty-first-century Western women who want to change their appearance and resort to various, often radical, ways to achieve the desired results. At the end of her conversation with the Caterpillar, Alice grows back to her desired size:

> It was so long since she had been anything near the right size, that it felt quite strange at first; but she got used to it in a few minutes, and began talking to herself, as usual. "Come, there's half my plan done now! How puzzling all these changes are! I'm never sure what I'm going to be from one minute to another! However, I've got back to my right size; the next thing is to get into that beautiful garden – how is that to be done, I wonder?"… As she said this, she came suddenly upon an open place, with a little house in it about four feet high. "Whoever lives there," thought Alice, "it'll never do to come upon them this size: why, I should frighten them out of their wits!" So she began nibbling at the right hand bit again, and did not venture to go near the house till she had brought herself down to nine inches high. (Carroll 78)

The scene has a foreboding dimension, one could argue in retrospect, since Alice is taught by the sage – conceivably male – Caterpillar what to eat – pieces from the mushroom – to adjust her body. Many women nowadays are advised by often male experts what dietary regimen to engage in so as to alter, often diminish, their body size in order to become their "true," namely socially acceptable, self: under patriarchy, women are first and foremost good looks.

Finally, the twelfth chapter brings the reader little by little back to Alice's reality. The king, after reading the letter, exclaims: "It's a pun!" In a manner of speaking, the leading figure of the creatures in Wonderland acknowledges the fact that everything is a pun. The last chapter offers an overall image of "the society of Wonderland" whose layers blend. The animals, the Duchess, her cook, the soldiers and the Queen and King are all gathered into one "picture" – a pun, namely a play on words, hence *play* or *game*.

The story ends the same way it began: Alice wakes up next to her sister and recounts her "curious dream." Fantasy and reality reunite once again. The author lets the reader know that Alice's sister herself relives Alice's adventures and fantasizes how Alice will tell this story to her own children. Thus, the story will be repeated over and over again; it is never-ending like the mad tea-party or like meaning itself. It will be reproduced time and time again creating a pattern. Alice's fluid identity is suggested once again through the possibility to be relived as many times as one wants. Creating Wonderland, Lewis Carroll took advantage of the fruits of his imagination and

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created a story whose language produces images ahead of his time by employing mechanisms to create one of the first postmodern narratives. Apart from giving life to a series of characters that will forever be alive, Carroll conceives a place which will always "be open" for visitors across centuries. Lewis Carroll does not only blur the boundaries between codes, generic and linguistic between worlds, real and fictional but he blurs the boundaries between "centuries" with their epistemic concerns.

Through the Looking Glass, unlike *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, is focused more on the unfolding of events and evolution of the story around Alice. Since Alice has already passed through a series of adventures in Wonderland, now she has supposedly become more confident and stopped questioning her identity as frequently as she used to. However, interestingly enough, as soon as she has passed through the Looking-Glass, Alice's character becomes literally both invisible and floating:

> Alice watched the White King as he slowly struggled up from bar to bar, till at last she said, "Why, you'll be hours and hours getting to the table, at that rate. I'd far better help you, hadn't I?" But the King took no notice of the question: it was quite clear that he could neither hear her nor see her. […]
> She was out of the room in a moment, and ran down stairs – or, at least, it wasn't exactly running, but a new invention of hers for getting down stairs quickly and easily, as Alice said to herself. She just kept the tips of her fingers on the hand-rail, and floated gently down without even touching the stairs with her feet; then she floated on through the hall, and would have gone straight out at the door in the same way, if she hadn't caught hold of the door-post. She was getting a little giddy with so much floating in the air, and was rather glad to find herself walking again in the natural way. (Carroll 164-65)

Alice has become a *ghostly* presence, almost like a modern hologram as described by Baudrillard. She is not herself anymore, even though, theoretically, since *she* passed through the glass, it should be still her. If it were her, she should have been able to keep the characteristics she had in the "real world," but in fact she takes Looking-Glass features: "soft like a gauze"; "a sort of mist."

> "Let's pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! It'll be easy enough to get through –" She was up on the chimney-piece while she said this, though she hardly knew how she had got there. And certainly the glass was beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist. (Carroll 160)

The Looking-Glass has become a bridge and a kind of filter which splits Alice's state of being which engenders a condition that foreshadows what Baudrillard calls the clone.

In *Simulacra and Simulation*, Baudrillard comments upon two notions: "the clone" and the "hologram." He contends that "of all the prostheses that mark the history of the body, the double is the oldest"; he qualifies the double as "an imaginary figure, which, just like the soul, the shadow, the mirror image, haunts the subject" (Baudrillard 66). The author insists more on the spiritual condition of the clone than on the physical one which can be noticed in the Carrollian universe too. On the other hand, Baudrillard argues that the notion of hologram is in close connection with cloning, for it implies virtual reality much more than physicality:

> After the fantasy of seeing oneself (the mirror, the photograph) comes that of being able to circle around oneself, finally and especially of traversing oneself of passing through one's own spectral body – and any holographed object is initially the luminous ectoplasm of your own body. (Baudrillard 72)

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Baudrillard explains that the hologram gives the feeling of passing to the other side of one's body to the side of the double, "a luminous clone or dead twin that is never born in our place and watches us by anticipation" (73).

Carroll not only puts his character through a "holographic" experience, but creates a whole universe around this idea. As Alice gets further from the mirror and leaves the house to look for the Red Queen, she becomes visible again and turns into one of the characters from the Looking-Glass. When she finally meets the Queen and asks for direction, Alice figures out that the "curious country" looks like a chessboard:

> "I declare it's marked out just like a large chessboard!" Alice said at last. "There ought to be some men moving about somewhere – and so there are!" She added in a tone of delight, and her heart began to beat quick with excitement as she went on. "It's a great huge game of chess that's being played – all over the world – if this *is* the world at all, you know. Oh, what fun it is! How I *wish* I was one of them! I wouldn't mind being a Pawn, if only I might join – though of course I should *like* to be a Queen, best."
> She glanced rather shyly at the real Queen as she said this, but her companion only smiled pleasantly, and said, "That's easily managed. You can be the White Queen's Pawn, if you like, as Lily's too young to play; and you're in the Second Square to begin with: when you get to the Eighth Square you'll be a Queen." (Carroll 177; original emphasis)

Unlike the existential musings she had in Wonderland, in the country of the Looking-Glass, she sets some clear aims, she would like to become a Queen, but she does not mind being a Pawn either. Now, Alice has reached the point where she knows what she wants, is more autonomous and can shift her identity as she pleases. But in order to be able to become a Queen she must play the Game of Chess.

In the third chapter, Alice has to go through a wood which makes one forget who one is, in a particular sequence reminiscent of Wonderland:

> She stood silent for a minute, thinking: then she suddenly began again. "Then it really has happened, after all! And how, who am I? I will remember, if I can! I'm determined to do it!" But being determined didn't help much, and all she could say, after a great deal of puzzling, was, "L, I know it begins with L!" (Carroll 189)

Obviously, Alice's name does not begin with an "L"; rather, the letter "L" points metatextually to Alice Liddell's last name. Although forewarned by the Queen and thus herself aware of the would-be moment, as soon as she enters the forest Alice does forget her name. Notwithstanding rules to follow, arbitrariness and the game of chance still prevail. The forest, therefore, seems to act as a simulacrum of Wonderland. Furthermore, this is not the only instance where the "old" Alice of Wonderland resurfaces to question her identity and her verisimilitude. In the fourth chapter, on meeting Tweedledee and Tweedledum, Alice takes part in their nonsensical conversation, which will go as far as to refashion her identity radically as not real ("You know very well you are not real") and activate her now subdued self-awareness:

> "I am real!" said Alice and began to cry.
> "You won't make yourself a bit realer by crying," Tweedledee remarked: "there's nothing to cry about."
> "If I wasn't real," Alice said – half-laughing through her tears, it all seemed so Ridiculous – "I shouldn't be able to cry."

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> "I hope you don't suppose those are real tears?" Tweedledum interrupted in a tone of great contempt.
> "I know they're talking nonsense," Alice thought to herself: "and it's foolish to cry about it." So she brushed away her tears, and went on as cheerfully as she could. (Carroll 201)

Eventually, Alice comes to her senses to realize that they were talking nonsense, and tells herself that it is foolish to cry about it, a very similar attitude to what she was frequently doing in Wonderland.

Later, in chapter six, Alice encounters a famous character from a nursery rhyme, Humpty Dumpty, with whom she starts talking about their names. Their conversation, as well as Humpty Dumpty's posture, recalls Alice's encounter with the Caterpillar in Wonderland. "[S]itting with his legs crossed, like a Turk, on the top of a high wall" (Carroll 218), Humpty Dumpty looks just as oriental as the Caterpillar standing on the mushroom smoking from a hookah. Their conversation is hardly oriental, though, in either book, even though Humpty Dumpty, unlike the Caterpillar, is impolite enough to strike readers as a non-Western character:

> "Don't stand there chattering to yourself like that," Humpty Dumpty said, looking at her for the first time, "but tell me your name and your business."
> "My name is Alice, but –"
> "It's a stupid name enough!" Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently. "What does it mean?"
> "must a name mean something?" Alice asked doubtfully.
> "Of course it must," Humpty Dumpty said with a sort laugh: "my name means the shape I am – and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost." (Carroll 219)

Humpty Dumpty tackles the problem of the semiotic relationship between signifier and signified, one whose coordinates, if not actual terms, has inflected much Western philosophical thought. In his view, a name must describe something as it is, while "Alice" is just an abstraction for him. Actually, Humpty Dumpty fails to make the difference between common and proper nouns. In this playful exchange, Alice is probably expected to say "human" rather than "Alice." Hence, the two characters' "realities" are different. On the other hand, since "humans" do not "exist" in the Looking-Glass land, however she may choose to introduce herself, Alice cannot be understood by the creatures living there. Furthermore, towards the end of their conversation, Humpty Dumpty complains about the fact that all the people look the same and he would therefore not know her if they met again: "Your face is that same as everybody has – the two eyes, so – nose in the middle, mouth under. It's always the same. Now if you had the two eyes on the same side of the nose, for instance – or the mouth at the top – that would be some help" (Carroll 229). On closer inspection, Humpty Dumpty's complaint is pertinent: just as people perceive all eggs to be similar, the same way he perceives people undifferentiated from one another. For the egg-shaped character, what is different from himself is ipso facto indistinguishable – an amorphous mass of clones.

The further Alice gets into the country of the Looking-Glass, ironically, the more she appears to be a "curious creature" for its inhabitants, who seem to have never seen a child before. On meeting the Unicorn and the Lion, Alice is called a "monster":

> "What – is – this?" he said at last.
> "This is a child!" Haigha replied eagerly, coming in front of Alice to introduce her, and spreading out both his hands towards her in an Anglo-Saxon attitude. "We only found it to-day. It's as large as life, and twice as natural!"
> "I always thought they were fabulous monsters!" said the Unicorn. "Is it alive?"

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> "It can talk," said Haigha, solemnly.
> The Unicorn looked dreamily at Alice, and said "Talk, child." (Carroll 237)

Subsequently, Alice tells the Unicorn that she thought that "'Unicorns were fabulous monsters, too! I never saw one alive before!' 'Well, now that we have seen each other,' said the Unicorn, 'if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?'" (Carroll 237). The two characters start negotiating their status, thus creating a humorous situation: both Alice and the Unicorn are fictitious and/or fantastic creatures, if belonging to two different historical ages and actualized differently in an authored text and in the collective imagination, respectively. To complete the comical character of the scene, the Lion comes along and asks if Alice is an "animal, a vegetal or mineral" (Carroll 237). After as much identity refashioning, with or without her consent or direct agency, it should come as no surprise that when the two Knights fight and she is told she is one of their prisoners, Alice utters irritated: "I don't want to be anybody's prisoner. I want to be a Queen!" Eventually she gets her title, she does become a Queen. However, upon meeting the Red Queen and the White Queen, her identity is under scrutiny again, this time by the two royals:

> "That's just what I complain of! You should have meant! What do you suppose is the use of child without any 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." (Carroll 258)

Scaled down back to her human and child proportions, for Alice cannot truly be a queen even in a chess game, let alone in the social world outside the Looking-Glass, Alice should prove herself beyond a joke – and beyond language or chess games. Her identity makes meaning only as a function of where Alice is, rather than simply of what she says about herself.

As we have seen, Alice's identity is always under question, even if in the Looking-Glass she has become more confident about who she is and does not ask herself existential questions, nor does she find herself being scared of forgetting whereto she left in the morning. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, all the other creatures start asking Alice things about herself and deconstruct her meaning. In this story she undergoes an experience of initiation or of becoming, on the social road from pawn to Queen. But first she must forget her name again in the forest, meet fantastic creatures, be a monster, a vegetable, a mineral and joke to be entitled to become a Queen, according to the game rules of the Looking-Glass land.

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