



METAMORPHOSIS OF ALICE IN LEWIS CARROLL'S ALICE'S ADVENTURE IN WONDERLAND

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Metamorphosis is a transformation of something from one stage to another stage in appearances or in personality or in condition. This concept of metamorphosis was commonly used in literature to show the complete changes in character. It is believed that, 'Life is a never-ending metamorphosis'. Sometimes a change is followed by positive results, but on the darker side a metamorphosis can lead to sufferings. In Literature, Adventure stories almost always move quickly, and the pace of the plot is at least as important as characterization, setting and other elements of creative work.

Lewis Carroll's (1832-1898) Protagonist, Alice was actually the young daughter of Henry Liddell (the Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University), to whom he narrated the story first when she became bored on the trip to the village of Godstow. Since she loved it, she asked Carroll to write it down for her. The earliest version of the manuscript was not found, to add the finishing touches he had to research the nature of the animals which presented in the novel. He added his own illustrations but approached John Tenniel, a political cartoonist to illustrate the book for publications. On 26 November 1864, he gave the handwritten manuscript to Alice, mentioning, 'a Christmas Gift to a Dear Child in Memory of a summer's day'. Before Alice received her copy, Carroll was already preparing it for publication and expanding the 15,500 words to 27,500 words most notably adding the episodes about "The Cheshire Cat" and "The Mad Tea-Party". No wonder the novel Alice's Adventure in Wonderland remained a popular classic for children and adults.

The novel, Alice's Adventure in Wonderland belongs to the Genre of Fantasy because it has a Tough Journey, Talking animals, Magic and Queen of Hearts. The French historian Philippe Aries's famous statement was, "in medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist" (Web Cydebot), but the last nineteenth and early eighteenth centuries are known as the Golden Age of children's literature.

While chasing a White Rabbit, Alice unconsciously fell into the Rabbit's hole. When Alice jumped into the hole, she was very curious though she never knew where it ends. The change in her own size when she tried to enter into the Wonderland is symbolized to the changes that teenagers suffer from during puberty. "Puberty was the most horrifying time of a girl's life" (Web Nielsen). A child transforms to an adult not only biologically but also psychologically.

The definition of childhood changed over time. Adolescence is derived from the Latin word 'adolescere' signifying 'to grow into adulthood' and is a period of transitions: biological, psychological, social, and economic. Adolescence divided into three periods like early, middle and late adolescence. Alice was very much matured in her thinking from time to time. She also controlled herself not to over react in any situations. The caterpillar led Alice towards Maturation and Identity formation. Among all the absurdity, non-sensical situations, and transformations, the Wonderland as a journey land which had the elements of a nightmare. This happens when the adventurers return home, the dreamer awakens, or the magical beings depart. The whole thing is a dream, but the author won't reveal it till the end, he wanted his readers to feel the suspense till the end.

Alice gone through the turbulence of growing up order to find the answer to the question "Who in the world am I?" (AAIW 18). Except Alice, everyone whom she met was adult to her, such as White Rabbit, Caterpillar, the Duchess, the Mad hatter, the King and the Queen of Hearts. "In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity" (Web Erikson). Alice was a child but there are many situations that compelled her to face the adults, which paved the way for her transformations. The adult figures are very



dominant for her and they have some magical powers. Power and adulthood are closely connected. The relationship between adults and children are never equal in real life, and also in the underworld. The powerless child, Alice had to bear the dominance of adults in the Wonderland. The process of growing up involves the pursuit of knowledge. “You may feel powerless as a child, but the world will one day be yours and you’re responsible for it” (Web Fierstein). Though she was a curious girl she never encouraged by the adults to gain knowledge.

In the Chapter “Advice from the Caterpillar”, the caterpillar asked Alice “Who are you?” (AAIW 40) but she denied answering him, and moreover she didn’t want to be defeated by ‘the unpleasant’ caterpillar. By changing the conversation, the caterpillar advised Alice to hold her temper. Being an adult, the caterpillar demanded Alice to recite some rhymes. When she finished it the caterpillar said, “It is wrong from beginning to end” (AAIW 45). The Child usually gets disappointed or discouraged easily because they are very sensitive and emotional. She was again and again insulted by the adults but unfortunately, she couldn’t able to escape from the Wonderland, she compelled herself to be harmonious to other creatures in the dream world.

In the chapter “A Mad Tea Party”, Alice encounters three adult figures: The March Hare, The Hatter, and The Dormouse. At first March Hare said Alice “Please have some wine” (AAIW 60) in an encouraging tone. When she noticed the table, only tea was kept their which made her irritated. Then March insulted Alice for sitting on the table unlimitedly. “I didn’t know it was your table” (AAIW 60) said the innocent Alice. The rude comment by the Hatter also insulted her. After these things were happened, they started asking riddles as usual. On hearing that, Alice believed she could guess that, but immediately the March discouraged her.

When Dormouse told a story of three girls, living at the bottom of the treacle-well, which prompted Alice to say, “There’s no such thing!” (AAIW66) Alice shouted angrily but the Hatter, the March and the Dormouse asked to be quite an obedient. The curious Alice wanted to ask questions and she was also very eager to get answers for her queries, but she continually interrupted and disturbed by the adult figures from bringing out her ideas and thoughts.

Overall, the adults are quite cruel absurd and emotional too. Alice had the courage and boldness to fight against the absurd figures of Wonderland. The adults easily lose their temper to punish the inferior and the child no way to go but to surrender itself to them. Though Lewis’s Alice was a Victorian middle-class girl, she was very polite and grown up with good-manner, even when she saw some unusual creatures in the wonderland, she was humble and patient with them. One can notice that Alice’s power was changing her size from normal to unusual in a short period of time. In the First chapter when Alice was with her sister, she was in normal seven years old girl size, but when she entered the Wonderland one can notice her size was constantly changing. Wonderland gave special experience which is an adventurous experience for Alice was her physical growth. The changes in her body were also associated with the food and drink. In the first chapter, Alice drank a potion in a bottle without knowing what that was and shrunk. Again, she ate the cake and grown up into nine feet long.

Alice boldly showed injustice to the trial and the absurdity of the Adult world. By defeating the order of Adults, Alice deconstructed their authority and she got back her own rights as an independent, courageous, and self-confident child. She faced the circumstances very bravely and fought against them, she got rid of her fear and return to reality with a victory. The Underground wonderland was like a competition among the powerful adults, but Alice brought that unfair play to an end brilliantly. Thus, Alice’s changes in her size as well her thought are the results of her social interaction and behaviour with the inhabitants of the wonderland but where she lost her childhood innocence. Lewis Carroll recognizes a child’s value and defends the child’s rights for power as means to transmit ideology on them.



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