

Through the Looking Glass

Entering into the world of Looking Glass, Alice finds a poem which must be read in an inverted manner, as one finds a sense of 'mirror- image' in it. On the face of it, the language of the looking glass world appears nonsensical. On deeper interrogation, however, one finds a deeply logical structure behind it. According to Jacqueline Flescher: "The backbone of nonsense must be a consciously regulated pattern. It can be the rhythmic structure of verse, the order of a legal procedure, or the rules of the chess game." (128) Interestingly all these variations can be found in *Through the Looking Glass*. The Queen's, "Sentence first, verdict afterwards." implies a knowledge of the normal sequence of events. Running backwards is a reversal of conventional order, legalized by the mirror; and the chess game provides a structural setting for inconsequential behavior.

All these mind-boggling reversals confuse Alice, yet this confusion is really a product of her own commitment to the ordinary world, as she has been trained as a Victorian child. Nonsense, in the writings of Lewis Carroll, does not mean gibberish; it is not chaos, but the opposite of chaos. Rather than keeping a track of events that happened in the past, the looking glass world operates on the basis of spoken words which, when uttered, give rise to actions. Tweedledum and Tweedledee begin to quarrel immediately after Alice recites the rhyme about the broken rattle and just when she describes the classic rhyme related to Humpty Dumpty does he actually fall here in the fantasy world. The apparent disorder concealing deep logic is an effective satiric weapon used by Lewis Carroll.

This inclination towards a hidden order in the apparent chaos is a master craftsman's strategy that can be seen in the very beginning of *Through the Looking Glass* when Alice steps across the looking glass in her house to find herself in an alternative reality and her first encounter is with the figurines of a chess game. The chess game and the train journey serve as metaphors for the trajectory of Alice's life, over which she has little control. The rigidly constructed rules of a chess game guide Alice to a preordained conclusion that will eventually make her a queen and lead her towards her inevitable maturation and acquiring of womanhood. Just as Alice herself had been an angry governess for her kitten counting all her mistakes and fixing a judgement day, the Red Queen in the looking glass world presents a caricature of the quintessential Victorian governess, obsessive about manners, belching out behavioral advice to her supposed charges.

Towards the end of the book, even though things continue to have names, it is the reality of the things rather than the names that are questioned. What she only contemplates in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, "...for it might end, you know, in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what it should be like then?" threatens her with the possibility of actually coming true in *Through the Looking Glass*. "Why, you're only a sort of thing in his (Red King's) dream," says Tweedledee, "If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out band!... just like a candle!"

In the end, it's only when Alice becomes Queen, the fulfillment of her ardent wish, and when she "can't stand this any longer!" that she tries to get away from the so called chaotic, nonsense world. Ironically, she does it by putting it into a further state of disorder and chaos. In the end we, as readers, are left with graver philosophical issues of "Which dreamed it?" to grapple with which makes us wonder about the

subject of the story herself / himself. Thus the social, linguistic and aesthetic order of the Looking Glass world creates a realm of its own, and reverses that very order in order to let Alice find herself.