



TRABAJO FIN DE GRADO

**“A STUDY OF FEMALE MADNESS DURING THE VICTORIAN ERA: *ALICE’S
ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND*”**

Autora: BELÉN AMAYA PÉREZ

Tutor: JESÚS BOLAÑO QUINTERO

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ABSTRACT

In the context of the Victorian Era, madness acquired a complex and often negative perception. Female madness was highly significant as women were in many cases considered to be mad by nature. Such is the case that Victorian literature gave birth to a number of “mad women” who illustrated the application of madness to the female genre. The object of our study consists of an analysis of madness and female madness during the Victorian era in relation to *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, as madness constitutes one of its most important motives. Having a larger insight on the topic will provide us with a better comprehension of both the Victorian society and Carroll’s Wonderland, clarifying how relevant madness was and how it applied to them both. In order to achieve this, we will describe madness’ perception during Victorian times and we will also study some of Wonderland’s inhabitants focusing on Alice, seeking to illustrate this perception.

Key words:

Madness, female madness, Alice, Carroll, Victorian era, analysis

RESUMEN

En el contexto victoriano, la locura adoptó una percepción compleja y a menudo negativa. La locura femenina era muy significativa puesto que, en muchos casos, se consideraba que las mujeres estaban locas por su naturaleza. Tal era el caso que la literatura victoriana vio nacer a una serie de “mujeres locas” que ilustraron cómo se aplicaba la locura al género femenino. El objeto de nuestro estudio consiste en un análisis de la locura y la locura femenina durante la época victoriana en relación con *Alicia en el País de las Maravillas* de Lewis Carroll, ya que la locura constituye uno de sus motivos más importantes. Tener una visión más amplia del tema nos ofrecerá una mejor comprensión de la sociedad victoriana y del País de las Maravillas de Carroll, esclareciendo su relevancia y aplicación. Para ello, describiremos la percepción de la locura durante la época y estudiaremos algunos de los habitantes del País de las Maravillas centrándonos en Alicia, buscando ilustrar dicha percepción.

Palabras clave:

Locura, locura femenina, Alicia, Carroll, época victoriana, análisis

1. INTRODUCTION

The Victorian era is regarded as one of the most important periods in British history. Contradictions were noticeable and, in spite of the development that arose from the Industrial Revolution, the living conditions for the working class were appalling in the big cities. However, due to the vast technological and scientific developments that occurred during this time, the Victorian era promoted a large number of transformations in diverse fields, such as the economic, social and political spheres. This allowed for the establishment of a well-off society as well as a life style based on commodities. Nonetheless, the advancement did not equally apply to every social stratum, as the lower classes were poor and their life style miserable. Throughout this project, we will focus on a concrete aspect of Victorian society: madness and, more particularly, female madness. The concept of madness exploited during this epoch deserves to be assessed for its significance throughout the ages. In fact, Victorian literature gave birth to a considerable amount of “mad women”, associating madness with a diversity of negative traits and patterns we will later on discuss and, moreover, considering it to be a genetic condition.

In the context of female madness, one of the many works that might serve as a representative of the conception of madness during the Victorian era is *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*,¹ written by Lewis Carroll in 1865. As it is commonly known, the novel is constructed upon the idea of madness and every character incarnates their own definition of insanity. Female characters hold a great relevance for they constitute a representation of female madness, contributing to the previously mentioned tradition of “mad women”. Therefore, the new nuances and implications explored by Carroll were added to the already existent ones. The object of our study consist of a thorough analysis of madness and its application in *Alice*, maintaining our main focus on Alice as a female individual and, hence, a representative of female madness. We will further explore and investigate the idea of insanity taking the epoch and its visions into consideration, as we will offer a deep study on how madness applied to female individuals both throughout Victorian times and Carroll's *Alice* seeking to elucidate its main characteristics.

¹ Referred to as *Alice* from now on.

Alice will be used as our primary source, and several examples will be provided in order to endorse the suggested theories and investigations. Moreover, we will back our research utilizing studies made by different scholars trying to offer a wider perspective on the subject. To start with, we will contextualize the Victorian era and its conception of madness, underlining the concept of lunacy for its significance within the context of insanity during Victorian times. We will also discuss Carroll's importance and style, including an address to madness in *Alice*; how madness applies to general characters will be explored, highlighting the Mad Hatter's case as it has been largely studied and investigated by scholars throughout the ages.

Moving on to our second subpart, we will begin to develop our main object of study: female madness. In this sense, we will first give a description of how female insanity was perceived during Victorian times, explaining the relevance of hysteria as well as its symptoms and courses of treatment. Several "mad women" from Victorian literature will be assessed and further analyzed seeking to illustrate the Victorian perception of female madness, which will simultaneously elucidate the existence of a concrete pattern regarding madness and women. Once this idea is established, we will elaborate a thorough study of *Alice* trying to illustrate her relation with madness. In this context, the question of whether *Alice*'s acts and their implications are somewhat related with madness or not will also be addressed. The followed structure attempts to facilitate the comprehension and reading, providing both background information about the epoch and about *Alice* along with its author. Throughout this project, we will try to shed some light on the importance of madness during the Victorian era, as we will also essay to give enough evidence of Carroll's impact and the nuances he added to the contemporary vision of madness.

2. LEWIS CARROLL AND THE VICTORIAN ERA: HISTORICAL AND MEDICAL CONTEXT OF *ALICE*

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898), who was most commonly known by his pseudonym Lewis Carroll, was a versatile individual who excelled in mathematics, logic and photography. Despite having all of those qualities, most of his popularity and success came from his writing abilities; he composed what many would consider to be a classic of English literature: *Alice* (1865). In fact, “[it] has been analysed from a wide variety of viewpoints: as an exploration of the human mind, with the purpose of finding an esoteric meaning connected to mathematics and logic, in relation to psychological references, symbolism, or even as a surreal effect of the use of drugs” (Huici 1), which emphasizes the novel’s wealth as well as how it has aroused studies and research attention.

In this context, the question of Carroll’s source of inspiration can be assessed. Its roots are based on a number of elements, among which two can be highlighted. On the one hand, the “Victorian era is represented in the novel through satire [...] certain situations, elements and characters of Wonderland are connected to the reality of the Victorian era” (Huici 1); in other words, Victorian characteristics and beliefs are influential aspects as they are placed in the novel’s core. Hence, a brief analysis of the epoch would enrich and facilitate our understanding of the matter. Broadly, the Victorian era is associated with queen Victoria’s reign, that goes from 1837 to 1901, and it constitutes one of the most pivotal epochs of British history being the peak of the Industrial Revolution. The Encyclopaedia Britannica states that Victorian times are “characterized by a class-based society, a growing number of people able to vote, a growing state and economy, and Britain’s status as the most powerful empire in the world” (Steinbach). Victorian’s social classes and their differentiation have been widely explored, broaching the gap between upper and lower social ranks. Furthermore,

The concept of class is sometimes difficult to understand. In Victorian England it did not depend on the amount of money people had – although it did rest partly on the source of their inner income, as well as on birth and family connections. [...] Class was revealed in manners, speech, clothing, education, and values. The classes lived in separate areas and observed different social customs in everything from religion to courtship to the names and hours of their meals. In addition, Victorians believed that each

class had its own standards; and people were expected to conform to the rules for their class. (Mitchell 17)

On the other hand, the latter source of inspiration is the infant named Alice Liddell. “Alice Pleasance Liddell was peculiarly special to Charles Dodgson [Carroll] and, in time, to all of us” (Winchester 82), for she is indeed considered to be the child Alice’s persona is based on. Carroll’s relationship with the so-mentioned girl has been discussed and often described as a non-innocent bond due to suspicions regarding Carroll’s sexual desire towards children:

As a friend to hundreds of children, he filled his cupboards in Christ Church with enough toys and gadgets to stock a small toyshop; left alone in his rooms, he busied himself writing letters of complaint about the size of his hassock or how his potatoes were cooked. Socially he could be gregarious, warm and witty; he could also be shy, cold and prickly. To some he was a holy innocent; to others his behaviour justified James Joyce’s later characterization of him as ‘Lewd’s carol’. (Douglas-Fairhurst 15)

Regardless, Alice Liddell and Carroll’s relationship was close. It was on July 4th, 1862, when the story started to take shape: while Carroll, accompanied by his friend Robinson Duckworth, was ploughing through the Thames river with Alice and her two sisters, Lorina and Edith, he enlightened them with a tale about a girl in an underground land. Once they all returned home, Alice manifested how fervently she wished to have the story written, and, to please her, “Dodgson was able to write down the story more or less as told and added to it several extra adventures that had been told on other occasions” (Green), resulting on *Alice*.

The novel is classified as children’s literature; however, it can also be referred to as nonsense literature. According to professor Jean-Jacques Lecercle’s definition,

Nonsense texts, as is apparent in the emblematic figure of Humpty Dumpty, mimic the activities of literary critics and philosophers, only in an excessive and subversive way. In so doing they express intuitions that often escape more serious practitioners of the art. They also, of course, fail to produce the same result—a coherent interpretation of the text being read: excess always compensates for lack. The lack of results, of seriousness, can be seen as the necessary loss in order to gain new intuitions. In their nonsensicality or ‘madness’, nonsense texts are often more perceptive, or imaginative, or intuitive, than straightforward readings. (5-6)

Nonsense literature reaches its peak at the end of the 19th century. As already established by Lecercle, these texts are constructed based on a completely unique perspective: hiding behind the façade of humour, absurdity and riddles there is a reflection that seeks to denounce existential and social issues. In fact, “in spite of the type of story, we are able to infer some sense of meaning, hence all stories possess meaning” (Pérez Téllez 866; my translation).² Furthermore, meaningful and meaningless elements are included, providing the story with a certain paradox. Reliable descriptions, situations and characters are negated by exceptional components, blending what can and cannot be conceived nor comprehended. This finds its representation in Carroll’s novel, where a little girl runs after a speaking rabbit, falling down its hole and ending up in what seems to be an oneiric land where everything is possible:

We encounter blue caterpillars who smoke hookahs, babies who turn into pigs, cats whose grins remain after their heads have faded away, and a Mad Hatter who speaks to time. There is a White Queen who lives backward and remembers forward, and there are trials in which the sentence is handed down first with the evidence and verdict given out only afterward. And you’d better be on your best behaviour while there. As the Red Queen sees it, beheading is a punishment that fits *every* crime! (Irwin and Davis)

Once that has been established and our understanding of the novel’s genre has been enlarged, we can begin to analyse the idea of madness and how it is one of the crucial motives the novel is constructed upon; as the Cheshire Cat states, “we’re all mad here. I’m mad. You’re mad” (Carroll 67). In order to fully understand how madness influences the inhabitants of Wonderland, we must first give a brief but sufficient description of the conception of madness during the Victorian era; this is precisely one of the references Carroll utilizes:

By naming and including this playful idea of madness, Carroll entered a vibrant discourse during his era, when defining mental illness and disability was troublesome, and when people with mental illnesses were visible in both the public imagination and in the eyes of the state in ways they had rarely been before, due to the increase of asylums, diagnoses of mental illnesses and disabilities, and the attempt to legally categorize the main types of mental illness. (Deems 63)

2 Original quotation: “sin importar el tipo de relato podemos inferir algún tipo de sentido, por lo tanto la conclusión sería que todos los relatos poseen sentido”.

Madness and mental diseases were a complex issue throughout this epoch for they were at times misconceived. In fact, madness could be associated with lunacy. It was believed that some individuals were affected by the influxes of the moon, aggravating their loss of sanity and causing them a complete loss of control over themselves. In response to this notion of madness, asylums appeared as mental institutions, with the apparent objective of treating individuals suffering from any mental disease, alienating them from society. However,

anxiety about being sent to the ‘living tomb’ (a commonly used metaphor for the asylum) was perhaps felt most intensely by those who had something more than their liberty to lose. Malicious lunacy certification was overwhelmingly a problem for those who had money or property (even if it was just a small estate or income) and for people whose behaviour was deemed to embarrass or to threaten the social standing of another, or others. While individuals from all levels of society feared an accusation of insanity, the poor had better safeguards against this particular social menace. (Wise)

Therefore, madness and lunacy were not necessarily reliable diagnoses; in some occasions, they could respond to an agenda depending on the circumstances. Asylums were progressively conceived as places seeking to imprison human beings without taking their sanity into consideration. The courses of treatment inflicted on these mental patients were not proven to be effective, which leads to a never-ending confinement: as diseases were not cured, their reintegration was unreachable. In fact, “the Victorians were ambivalent in their reaction to the mentally disturbed. Whilst they sought to segregate the insane from the rest of the population, they were also terrified by the prospect of the wrongful confinement of sane people” (Beveridge and Renvoize 411).

By analyzing the behavior of Wonderland’s inhabitants, we can realize that madness is a central component as they are all characterized following a certain insanity criteria: “Wonderland madness defied many of the conceptions of madness that Victorian doctors formed; first because it could be applied to any and all characters and not only the characters labeled as mad, but also because it could be a positive and liberating, rather than a negative, force” (Deems 63). Madness is therefore represented in each and every character and it is manifested differently; divers motives and patterns are distinguished:

The different meanings of Alice and her journey around Wonderland have been questioned throughout the ages. Is it real or is it a dream? Is Alice and her world part of what we all have within or are they

simply an expression of the author's madness? However, there is a constant assumption among the different solutions of Alice's enigma. Various interpretations, such as Roth's, C. Jung's among others, argue that the characters, each and every one of them, are representations of several pathologies and mental illnesses. Alice and the rest of them, for instance the White Rabbit, the Caterpillar, the Queen of Hearts and the Mad Hatter, are clear examples of these pathologies. (Quesada Salazar et al. 40; my translation)³

In this sense, we are going to further analyze one of the most important characters, as it will enrich our approach and comprehension on the matter, proving how deeply madness is rooted and how varied it might be. By examining him, the topic of discussion will be better developed and contrasted. Even if our main focus will consist of a study of the main female character (which will be tackled throughout our next section), it is still relevant to enlarge this perspective as it will provide us with a greater insight of the conception of madness Carroll tried to transmit.

Several studies have explored and addressed the Mad Hatter's case for its historical significance and resemblance: "Mercurial poisoning became so common among the hatters in Victorian Britain that it is widely supposed that Lewis Carroll had the condition in mind when he invented the character of the Mad Hatter in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*" (Waldron 1961). However, this idea of mercurial poisoning has been frequently discussed causing a polarized debate, since some believe it explains the Mad Hatter's attitude while others consider otherwise. In fact, Waldron disagrees with mercurial poisoning being the reason behind the Mad Hatter's madness. He argues that these poisoning effects of on an individual's mental health/stability do not correspond with the Mad Hatter's personality:

The principal psychotic features of erethism were excessive timidity, diffidence, increasing shyness, loss of self confidence, anxiety, and a desire to remain unobserved and unobtrusive. The victim also had

³ Original quotation: "Los diferentes significados de Alicia y su viaje en el país de las maravillas han sido cuestionados a lo largo de la historia. ¿Es realidad o es sueño? ¿Es Alicia y su mundo parte de lo que todos tenemos dentro de nosotros o simplemente una expresión de locura de su autor? Sin embargo existe una constante a lo largo de las diferentes 'soluciones' para el enigma que es Alicia. Varias interpretaciones, por ejemplo de parte de Roth, C. Jung, entre otros, explican que los personajes, cada uno de ellos, son representaciones de miles de patologías y enfermedades mentales existentes en el ser humano. Alicia y el resto de los personajes tales como el Conejo Blanco, la Oruga, la Reina de Corazones y el Sombrero loco, son un ejemplo claro de estas patologías [...]"

a pathological fear of ridicule and often reacted with an explosive loss of temper when criticised. It could scarcely be said that the Mad Hatter suffered to any great extent from the desire to go unnoticed or that the dominant traits of his personality were shyness and timidity. He is portrayed rather as an eccentric extrovert with an obsession with time. (1961)

These qualities appear in Alice and the Mad Hatter's first encounter: "Your hair wants cutting,' said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech. 'You should learn not to make personal remarks,' Alice said with some severity; 'it's very rude'" (Carroll 72). Waldron defensively states that this assumption does not specifically correspond with timidity or desiring to go unnoticed. Instead, the Hatter possesses what can be considered an intrusive attitude as he directly alludes to Alice's physical appearance. Moreover, there is a concrete moment in which "the conversation dropped, and the party sat silent for a minute" (Carroll 73) and "the Hatter was the first to break the silence" (Carroll 73), proving Waldron's thesis.

Nevertheless, "there are authors who dispute over these approaches. The doctor T.M.L Price [...] argues that the constant trembles of *Alice's* Hatter, as well as his nervousness around the Queen of Hearts provide sufficient evidence for the Hatter's mercurial poisoning" (Quesada Salazar et al. 41; my translation).⁴ As well as in the previous case, proofs of this can also be found. The King and the Queen of Hearts' trial in order to identify who had stolen the tarts is another case in which the appearance of the Hatter is significant:

Here the Queen put on her spectacles, and began staring at the Hatter, who turned pale and fidgeted. 'Give your evidence,' said the King; 'and don't be nervous, or I'll have you executed on the spot.' This did not seem to encourage the witness at all: he kept shifting from one foot to other, looking uneasily at the Queen, and in his confusion he bit a large piece out of his teacup instead of the bread-and-butter. (Carroll 124)

We find a contrast between the fearlessness the Hatter portrayed during the tea party and these traits of unease and nervousness, appearing to be a different persona. The features that Waldron associates with mercurial poisoning are represented by the anxious facet of the Hatter. In addition, doctor Price assesses the loss of temper that Waldron references, stating

⁴ Original quotation: "[...] existen autores que disputan estos planteamientos. El doctor T.M.L Price [...] disputa que los constantes temblores del Sombrerero en Alicia, así como su nerviosismo frente a la Reina de Corazones, sirven como evidencia de que el Sombrerero sufría de envenenamiento por mercurio".

that it could be perceived during the tea party: “‘If you knew Time as well as I do,’ said the Hatter, ‘you wouldn’t talk about wasting *it*. It’s *him*.’ ‘I don’t know what you mean,’ said Alice. ‘Of course you don’t!’ the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously” (Carroll 75). As observed, the Hatter fluctuates between various characteristics or, even, diagnoses; he is mad or considered as such, as his mere name indicates. However, the stigma around insane individuals, perceived as violent and dangerous, starts losing its foundations: “At first, [the Hatter] provokes fear and uncertainty upon Alice [...] but she finally realizes that he is innocent and not that fearsome” (Solís García 76; my translation).⁵

It is crucial to take the many shapes insanity might adopt into consideration, emphasizing what has been stated before about madness’ variety and relevance. As an exemplification of this, other “mad individuals” can be mentioned to offer a much wider perspective: the Cheshire Cat, which “unlike most of the creatures, the Cheshire Cat is sufficiently detached from his environment to be able to comment, in a fast, facetious sort of way, on the characters who share Wonderland with him [...] He tells Alice that everybody in Wonderland is mad” (Graham 80); or the White Rabbit, reflecting the significant role time plays as his obsession with being on time demonstrate:

The loss of a comprehensible space-time frame of reference is also the first thing she [Alice] encounters, setting the stage for the pool of tears and stressful events to follow. We should remember too that all is set in motion by the “Type A” behavior [marked by urgency and impatience] of the White Rabbit. Thus, following the trail of the Rabbit may provide important clues about the relationship of time and stress – if we have the proper eye for irony. (427)

These questions of madness and nonsense that are prominent in *Alice* are represented as well in other texts written by Carroll, such as “The Hunting of the Snark (An Agony in 8 Fits)”. This nonsense poem was published in 1876, it is based in the same fictional setting as the “Jabberwocky” poem included in *Alice Through the Looking-Glass* (1871). Nevertheless, one of the most significant cases might be *Sylvie and Bruno*, for scholars have addressed the differences and similarities with *Alice*. The novel was written after *Alice* and it was published in two volumes: the first one in 1889 and the second one in 1893. It consists of two stories set

⁵ Original quotation: “En un primer momento causa miedo y desconocimiento en Alicia [...] pero finalmente ve que es un ser poco temible e inocente”.

in three different worlds: the Court of Outland, Elfland and “Commonplace life”; “the scenes shift and merge so often that the reader, adult or child, is bewildered” (Spink 222). Moreover, nonsense has its relevance as we are able to distinguish some nonsense poems throughout the book. In addition, it is important to emphasize the two strands found in the book: on the one hand, we find a much more fantastic ambiance, a fairy story, while on the other hand we are presented with an adult story for the convictions and topics it contains. The fairy story “culminates in a set-piece, much as each of the *Alice* stories does” (Spink 222). However, variations can be distinguished:

Is it any wonder, taking Dodgson’s remarkably haphazard approach – a sort of galloping serendipity – and his uneasy relationship with Furniss into account, that the books appear to lack unity or cohesion? Here is a fragmented and incomplete vision. The reader looks for a sustained allegory and a central symbolism in the *Alice* book and, though perhaps unable to identify them precisely, feels confident that they are there, giving the books an inner strength. The reader perceives no such unity, no pervasive inner meaning in the *Sylvie and Bruno* books. (Spink 224)

Therefore, Carroll seems to be depicted as a man who has lost his inner sense of self, a writer unable to reach the same level of success he once possessed, “a man losing contact: with his nonsense roots, with his child audience, with the need to delight rather than improve” (Spink 227). Despite its similarities with *Alice*, *Sylvie and Bruno* did not accomplish the recognition Wonderland did, for “he is Lewis Carroll without Alice, Lewis Carroll who has lost the key to Wonderland” (Spink 227).

3. FEMALE'S PATHOLOGIES IN *ALICE*

3.1. Female pathologies in Victorian times

In *Alice*, female characters are deep in terms of personality and psyche. It elucidates not only their significance throughout Carroll's story but also the conception of women and their mental health during the Victorian era:

It was generally thought that women were naturally predisposed to certain traits, qualities, and abilities which in turn dictated their proper role and sphere in life. Despite the fact that gender categories are always open to contestation, and that there were underlying tensions in nineteenth-century thinking about femininity, the idea of female power remained problematic for a Victorian ideology of womanhood which stressed a quite different ethic. (Owen 6)

Hence, women were perceived as passive powerless figures subdued by a patriarchal scheme. In fact, there was an "innate female passivity, a negative attribute constructed in opposition to so-called masculine will-power. Along with this went the concepts of female frailty, constructed in opposition to a standard of masculine strength and virility" (Owen 7). These characteristics originated the "Victorian perfect lady" (Owen 7), an incarnation of the qualities that were most appreciated among Victorian women: "a quiet, delicate, submissive creature, a self-sacrificing wife and natural mother" (Owen 7).

In general terms, women were considered to be mad by nature; in fact, "not only is a woman vulnerable to mental disorders, she is weak and easily influenced (by the 'supernatural' or by organic degeneration), and she is somehow 'guilty' (of sinning or not procreating)" (Tasca et al. 110). Several studies revealed that women were perceived as individuals with an inclination towards mental instability and nervous disorders, which essentially describes hysteria, "arguably the oldest and most important category of neurosis in recorded medical history. References to something that may be interpreted as hysteria can be found in Egyptian papyri of 1900 B.C. and in present-day psychiatric literature" (Micale 3), as one of the most recurring diagnosis.

The root of hysteria was theorized to be within the female uterus, as the Greek doctor Hippocrates established centuries ago:

Hippocrates (5th century BC) is the first to use the term *hysteria*. Indeed he also believes that the cause of this disease lies in the movement of the uterus (“hysteron”). The Greek physician provides a good description of hysteria, which is clearly distinguished from epilepsy. He emphasizes the difference between the compulsive movements of epilepsy, caused by a disorder of the brain, and those of hysteria due to the abnormal movements of the uterus in the body. Then, he resumes the idea of a restless and migratory uterus and identifies the cause of the indisposition as poisonous stagnant humors which, due to an inadequate sexual life, have never been expelled. (Tasca et al. 111)

As observed, women’s uterus was presumed to move and migrate provoking the emergence of hysteria. Moreover, it appears to exist a relation between hysteria and sexual practices, being the adequacy of women’s sexual life what determines the uterus condition. In this sense, humors might have a disposition to putrefaction and a proper procreation constitutes the only viable way to cleanse the body. The lack of it leads to a deterioration of the uterus for those decayed humors could not be expelled (Tasca et al. 111).

Furthermore, symptoms were varied, extending from swelling or strong headaches to insomnia, irritability or even a certain predisposition to cause problems. It could even end up provoking several disorders such as anxiety, suffocation, convulsions and paralysis. Hysteria does not necessarily respond to a precise definition, as it could be qualified as a relatively general type of diagnosis. In many cases, hysteria might have been associated with symptoms or complaints that were not located, resulting on a frail diagnosis. Various suggestions or courses of treatment were recommended in order to prevent both hysteria and what might come alongside it:

He [referring to Hippocrates] suggests that even widows and unmarried women should get married and live a satisfactory sexual life within the bounds of marriage. However, when the disease is recognized, affected women are advised not only to partake in sexual activity, but also to cure themselves with acrid or fragrant fumigation of the face and genitals, to push the uterus back to its natural place inside the body. (Tasca et al. 111)

Although Hippocrates’ hypothesis was cultivated many centuries prior in Ancient Greece, his words were still believed and thought to be legitimate during Victorian times. Simultaneously,

this might also prove how negligible the unfolding in terms of women's conception and female pathologies has been as it hadn't changed for decades:

During the Victorian Age [...] women carried a bottle of smelling salts [...] it was believed, that, as postulated by Hippocrates, the wandering womb disliked the pungent odor and would return to its place [...] it shows how Hippocrates' theories remained a point of reference for centuries. (Tasca et al. 114)

3.2. Female pathologies in Victorian literature

These conceptions and ideas about women's predisposition to madness can be visualized in Victorian Literature, which certifies the importance and legitimacy of hysteria and other female pathologies. Moreover, it will help us comprehend the motives Carroll might have followed in order to create some of his most famous female characters. However, the individuals belonged to a much more larger concept, the idea of "mad women". Indeed, female madness was a recurrent topic Victorian authors explored pursuing diverse aims. In general terms, it was fairly common to distinguish several female personas who were defined by a certain pattern of insanity or who were even condemned as "mad women" and treated as such, leaving no room to the possibility of a biased value judgment:

Feminist scholarship over the last several decades has focused on the intersection of gender and mental illness as playing a key role in the subjugation of women's discourses in the dominant political and social structures. Constructions of women as mad and of madness as having inherent feminine qualities have often been used by the discourse of the dominant ideology as a method of control through the representations of mad women (or women as mad) as threatening to the heteronormative, patriarchal, and capitalistic hegemony. Women are dangerous because of their madness, and dangerous women are mad in these literary and social constructions. (Swehla 3)

Focusing on Victorian times and female madness, Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* (1847) gives birth to Mrs. Rochester (or Bertha Mason), "the madwoman in the attic". Her madness is already palpable when she first appears, and her condition seems to deteriorate as the story progresses. In fact,

Her introduction is not encouraging: 'In the deep shade, at the further end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight, tell: it grovelled, seemingly on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange, wild animal: but it was covered with clothing: and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.' There is no sympathy in this account, only fear and revulsion. Clearly, madness is seen as a state of degradation and bestiality. This is reinforced by referring to Mrs Rochester as 'it' and later as a 'clothed hyena' standing on 'its hind feet'. At one stage she is compared to a 'Vampyre' and this occult allusion further emphasises the essential 'otherness' of madness. (Beveridge and Renvoize 411)

Mrs. Rochester might even be perceived as a phantasmagorical individual, especially at the beginning of the novel: "[She] spends her fictional existence hidden from view in the upper regions of Thornfield Hall and makes only occasional but grue some appearances in the story" (Beveridge and Renvoize 411). Therefore, she is not clearly seen, instead she is heard laughing or babbling, emphasizing her madness and a certain sense of danger. Her insanity is, in a way, thought to be inherited and considered to reside in her family for generations, as "in Rochester's account of Bertha's family the 'germs of insanity' are passed on by the Creole mother" (Thomas 1).

This might give rise to a quandary some studies have assessed: was Mrs. Rochester truly mad by heritage or her so-called madness was only the product of her isolation? "Bertha's madness is vaguely described by Rochester as a result of her Creole inheritance, a certain taint in the blood as it were, not unconnected with her sexuality" (Smyth 289). In relation to the idea of confinement, "it would appear that madness and confinement generally presented Brontë with a powerful analogy for patriarchy's reception of female rebellion; at once active and passive, dangerous and containable, meaningful and meaningless" (Beattie 495-496).

This idea of confinement is significant. The link between self isolation and madness is often addressed as a solid one. The American author Charlotte Perkins Gilman further explores it in her novel *The Yellow Wallpaper* (1892). In spite of her American origin, it is still relevant to mention her due to her meaningful contribution to the topic of madness and confinement, allowing us to fully comprehend the deep relation between both aspects. The female narrator of the novel is forced by her husband to remain locked in a room following a concrete course of treatment advised by him: the "rest cure". This "allowed the patient to do

nothing, secluded her from all human contact except the nurses and doctor attending her, and encouraged her to overeat until she experienced significant weight gains. In the course of Gilman's story, it becomes evident that this treatment is contributing to her breakdown” (Smyth 290). Hence, we realize that what Gilman might be suggesting is that captivity leads indeed to madness, being insanity not necessarily a question of inheritance but a matter of profound isolation. Following with this idea and establishing a comparison with Bertha’s case, we can consider the possibility that Bertha’s madness is not entirely inherited but also provoked by the conditions she is subdued to.

Other Victorian authors, such as Emily Bronte, have addressed madness differently. In this sense, in Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847), “the depiction of madness reflects the interweaving themes of the work. Thus madness is seen to partake of the supernatural; the diabolical; the mystic; the expression of passion; and, more prosaically, the physical symptoms of illness” (Beveridge and Renvoize 411). Madness seems to be associated with divers motives. Passion is connected to madness for its expression is seen as a proof of the woman’s instability, being emphasized when compared with her husband’s cold manners (Beveridge and Renvoize 412). As for the mystical element, “Catherine is described as ‘altered ... but when she was calm, there seemed unearthly beauty in the change ... (her eyes) appeared always to gaze beyond, and far beyond-you would have said out of this world’” (Beveridge and Renvoize 412). Regarding madness and diabolism, the connection between them both is directly established when Heathcliff inquires about the possibility of Catherine being possessed by some form of evil (Beveridge and Renvoize 412).

There are yet other examples of mad characters, taking the following into account:

Madness makes sporadic appearances throughout other Victorian novels. In Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White* (1860) wrongful confinement in an asylum forms a key element in the plot. The mentally afflicted Anne Catherick, the Woman in White, is sketchily drawn and madness is seen as a kind of childlike state. In Mrs Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) mental illness makes a brief appearance at the end of the novel to explain the transformation of the heroine from fighter to demure wife. Mad characters play minor roles in George Gissing's *The Nether World* (1889) and in Ainsworth's *Old St Paul's* (1841). (Beveridge and Renvoize 413)

Madness fluctuates between a wide range of nuances and each persona expresses it according to a different criteria. In this context, according to what Swehla argues, female madness can be related with danger and tragedy. There are several “mad women”, such as Ophelia or Bertha Rochester, that are marked by tragedy, which establishes a certain link between insanity and this so-mentioned tragedy. On the other side, Swehla also indicates how female madness differs from the male one in terms of laughter. Mad female personas are not portrayed aiming to provoke laughter upon the readers while mad male characters are often perceived as humorous. This differentiation corresponds to a mechanism seeking to subordinate women and dismiss their humour. (3-4)

Carroll, as a Victorian author, pursued his own goals by illustrating madness the way he did. In fact,

It should be noted that Carroll refers to the story in his letter as a “fairy-tale”, one of the forms of entertainment identified in Cross’ statement. Despite Carroll’s admission that the story does not contain fairies, the implication of the story’s ethereal elements remains, thus maintaining the element of madness as well. Scull concurs “Victorians developed an insatiable appetite for these tales of the same cast among the lunatic” (239). If the image of madness was becoming a significant part of a wide variety of literary and dramatic works in the nineteenth century, then its fundamental presence in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* would not be an entirely insupportable concept. (Arszulowicz 6)

We might call into question the scenario that evolves around insanity and female insanity in *Alice*. As it has been already indicated, madness can be varied and its traits are subjected to change for they pursue a concrete objective; Carroll’s work is not an exception. Continuing with this idea, throughout our next section, among others, we will assess how madness is illustrated by further analysing and studying the protagonist of the novel, Alice herself.

3.3. Alice’s madness and interpretations

Alice plays a relevant role for she is indeed the one who roams Wonderland while slowly encountering each individual and introducing them to the reader. In fact,

The characters who inhabit Alice's Adventures in Wonderland offer not simply a representation of madness, but a means of providing insight. The madness exhibited by and through the inhabitants of Wonderland provide insight into the character of Alice, and Alice's manifestations of madness provide insight into those she encounters in Wonderland. (Arszulowicz 5)

Hence, we observe Wonderland through Alice's own perspective, which would imply that madness is to a certain extent filtered through her vision. In this sense, her presence provides with a larger understanding of each and every character and vice-versa. She can be analysed from a wide range of perspectives and so can her madness.

One of the many theories that have lingered addresses how Alice's experience in Wonderland is not reliable, but a mere product of migraines: "Allergist Frederic Speer has found Alice's journey to be the product of the premonitory stage of migraine headache" (Petersen 427-428). Following with this idea, Alice seems to be presented as an untrustworthy narrator for what she perceives might not correspond with reality but with a concrete complaint. From the very beginning of the story, we question Alice's perspective, fluctuating between two possibilities: Alice sees what she narrates or she imagines it. Alice's first glimpse of the White Rabbit is illustrating: "There was nothing so *very* remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so *very* much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, 'Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!' (when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural)" (Carroll 2). How she witnesses a talkative White Rabbit as nothing extraordinary and how she does not seem to be shocked by the event, might indicate that she is not in her right mind.

This already suggests Alice's loss of sanity. Such is the repercussion of Alice's possible madness that she has originated a concrete medical pathology or syndrome named after her, known as "the Alice in Wonderland syndrome". It consists of a neurological condition that is mostly developed in children where one experiences "hallucinations or illusions of expansion, reduction, or distortion of body image" (Liu et al. 317). This is related with Alice's case: before she manages to enter Wonderland, she goes through an episode in which she is constantly changing her size by eating a cake or drinking a liquid. Simultaneously, this ingestion makes her larger or smaller with the only objective of being the

appropriate size in order to fit through the small door that leads towards the garden she wants to be in:

‘What a curious feeling!’ said Alice. ‘I must be shutting up like a telescope.’ And so it was indeed: she was not only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden. First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further: she felt a little nervous about this; ‘for it might end, you know,’ said Alice to herself, ‘in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?’ (Carroll 8)

Many consider that the perception of Alice being sometimes larger and others smaller reflects a distortion of her own reality caused by the syndrome we mentioned before:

Individuals with true AWS perceive their own body parts changing size. Lanska et al.⁵ referred to this as “type A” AWS. Micropsia (objects appear too small), macropsia (objects appear too large), metamorphopsia (objects appear too fat, thin, short, tall, and so on), teleopsia (objects appear further away than they are), and pelopsia (objects appear closer than they are)¹ are extrapersonal visual complaints similar to AWS. Lanska et al.⁵ referred to them as “type B.” Lanska et al.⁵ categorized “type C” complaints as altered perception of one’s body image and externally other people or objects as well. (Liu et al. 317-318)

However, the growing and shrinking process have other interpretations. In this sense, a psychoanalytical component has been defended: sex, even if not explicitly, might have its relevance; “Carroll’s works do not mention sex directly, instead it is present through word play and paradoxical situations” (Quesada Salazar et al. 42; my translation).⁶ As it is explained throughout this concrete study by Quesada Salazar et al., psychiatrist Lacan argues that this constant shifting between being larger and smaller has a place inside the psychoanalytical theory suggesting a sexual element. According to psychoanalysis, sex is interpreted as something placed outside the common or the expected. The way Alice changes her size is, hence, an event placed out of the ordinary. Therefore:

These word play, the fungus’ ingestion made by Alice, her changes in relation with size, space and time represent, according to Caldas (2004), clear examples of eccentricity and detour that, following the psychoanalytical theory, define sex. Sex, defined by Freud (Caldas, 2004) is somehow represented by

⁶ Original quotation: “La obra de Carroll no hace mención directa del sexo, este se encuentra presente mediante los juegos de lenguaje y las situaciones paradoja”.

the lack of significance and, therefore, it appears within Alice's persona. (Quesada Salazar et al. 43; my translation)⁷

Concurrently, the psychoanalytical component might be addressed from a different perspective related with madness and hysteria:

History, according to psychoanalysis, can be related with hysteria (and there is no room for mistake here). It could be, indeed, something similar to what Lewis Carroll conceived when speaking of how Alice forgets her own name, of the mocking songs she unwillingly sang, of her indefatigable inquire about herself, of those empty shelves she was so disappointed at [...] Something similar enough to what Alice was going through was what the patients express when saying: "I don't even know my name!" or "I don't understand how I could say what I said!" or "I still don't understand how I could do what I did!" (Capo)⁸

As observed, hysteria does have a place within the psychoanalytical theory, which might already indicate the possibility of Alice suffering from it. In order to provide a link with the idea of sex previously stated, "according to Freud, those traumatic experiences that are repressed turning into pathogenic possess a sexual nature" (Sopena; my translation).⁹ Therefore, as Alice follows all these patterns that go from her distortion of reality to her apparent loss of identity, several studies and researches would consider she is suffering from hysteria.

Alice's loss of identity is noticeable, for "Alice is trying to figure out who she is after her fall. [...] Alice is not at all sure who she is" (Petersen 428-429). In fact, right after

7 Original quotation: "Estos juegos del lenguaje, la ingesta de hongos por parte de Alicia, sus cambios en tamaño, espacio y tiempo representan, según Caldas (2004), ejemplos claros de esta excentricidad y desvío que define, desde el psicoanálisis, el sexo. Este sexo, definido por Freud (Caldas, 2004) se ve representado de cierta manera en la falta de un significante, y, por lo tanto, presentes en el personaje de Alicia".

8 Original quotation: "La historia en psicoanálisis es histerizable (y no hay error posible de imprenta en esto). Y podrá, en efecto, ser parecida a una historia como la que concibió Lewis Carroll al tratar del olvido del nombre propio que a Alicia afectaba, de las canciones burlescas que de ella brotaban muy a su pesar, de su infatigable indagar en sí misma, de los estantes vacíos ante los que se detenía decepcionada [...] Y algo parecido a lo que le pasaba a Alicia, expresan los pacientes, cuando dicen, por ejemplo: 'No sé ni cómo me llamo!' o '¡No entiendo cómo pude decir lo que dije!' o '¡No entiendo todavía cómo pude hacer lo que hice!'"

9 Original quotation: "Para Freud esas vivencias traumáticas que al ser reprimidas se vuelven patógenas, son de índole sexual".

she falls down the Rabbit hole, she is not able to recognize her own words, as she states “Oh dear, what nonsense I’m talking” (Carroll 12). She suffers what seems to be an automatic loss of her sense of self, leaving her wondering about who she is:

‘Dear, dear! How queer everything is to-day! 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’m not the same, the next question is, Who in the world am I? Ah, *that’s* the great puzzle!’ (Carroll 14)

The question of Alice’s identity is addressed in the conversation with the Caterpillar, in which Alice openly recognizes: “I – I hardly know [who I am], 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 45). This illustrates how Alice’s psyche has been affected by the number of times she has grown and shrunk, confusing her to the point that “she undergoes what modern psychologists would term an identity crisis” (Levin 598). It is also relevant to mention that some Wonderland’s inhabitants, as the White Rabbit, seem to not be aware of who she is either, as illustrated here: “Very soon the Rabbit noticed Alice [...] ‘Why, Mary Ann, what *are* you doing out here? Run home this moment, and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan! Quick, now!’” (Carroll 31). The Rabbit refers to Alice as “Mary Ann” and Alice responds to that name as if it was hers. Furthermore, emphasizing this idea, she considers the possibility of being several different individuals, assuming that she might not be Alice anymore:

‘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. [...] London is the capital of Paris, and Paris is the capital of Rome, and Rome – no, *that’s* all wrong, I’m certain! I must have been changed for Mabel!’ (Carroll 14-15)

In this sense, it is significant to address that being Mabel embarrassed her. She genuinely assumes that it is still possible to become someone else, as if it was ordinary to become someone one is not. Taking how Alice tends to leverage a “good opportunity for showing off her knowledge” (Carroll 3) into consideration, we might comprehend how catastrophic the realization of being Mable results. In fact, she states: “‘I must be Mabel after all, and I shall have to go and live in that poky little house, and have next to no toys to play

with, and oh! ever so many lessons to learn! No, I've made up my mind about it; if I'm Mabel, I'll stay down here!" (Carroll 15-16). It seems to be a motive of shame that will lead her to the sacrifice of staying where no one could see nor recognize her. She also declares: "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 16). This assumption proves that, to a certain extent, she starts contemplating that being someone different is plausible, that changing every single element that constitutes an individual, even their identity, is always achievable. She even reckons the existence of a certain duality within her, increasing the complexity of the matter:

She generally gave herself very good advice, (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes; and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people. 'But it's no use now,' thought poor Alice, 'to pretend to be two people! Why, there's hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!' (Carroll 9)

If we directly address the question of Alice's madness, whether she is sane or not, "the Cat is the only creature to make explicit the identification between Alice and the madness of Wonderland" (Auerbach 38). The creature establishes that Alice's presence in Wonderland could only signify she is as mad as the rest of them are: "'How do you know I'm mad?' said Alice. 'You must be,' said the Cat, 'or you wouldn't have come here'" (Carroll 67). In this sense, many studies defend that the creation of *Alice* and Alice's character are a mere reflection of Carroll's madness. This would imply that Alice is as mad as Carroll apparently is, agreeing with the Cheshire Cat's perspective of Alice's insanity. Some considered that Carroll himself suffered from the "Alice's in Wonderland syndrome", causing severe headaches and a distorted perspective of reality. By creating Alice and Wonderland, he was only illustrating his own distorted vision: "Neurologist Oliver Sacks has gone so far as to associate Alice's experiences with Carroll's 'Lilliputian' and 'Brobdignagian vision' experienced during the migraine prodrome or aura" (Peterson 428); this is, indeed, one of the reasons that explains why Alice was believed to be mentally unstable. However, this is not the only tie that unites both Alice and Carroll:

Some authors such as Goodacre (1984) mention that within Charles' personality [...] evidences of a Victorian woman can be found, meaning female traits of the epoch. Moreover, according to Snider (2006) and using Jung's concepts, there was a certain pattern of artists producing a visionary work (a work from the collective unconscious) for they possessed a certain psychological characteristics that enable them to create those kind of works. "Only an individual with Dodgson/Carroll's psyche would have been able to write *Alice's* books throughout Victorian times" (Snider, 2006, p. 6). In his article, Snider (2006) establishes that Alice could be considered a reflection of Carroll's soul. (Salazar et al. 44; my translation)¹⁰

This might contribute to Alice's identity quest even if "Alice's lesson about her own identity has never been stated explicitly" (Auerbach 41): being Carroll an individual that possesses traits that would be considered female and having fluctuating personality between both genders, we might conceive Alice's loss of herself as a mere reflection of this so-mentioned fluctuation. Moreover,

Jung [...] explains that a child is a symbol that unites the opposed; a mediator, one that brings sanity, one that creates a sense of wholeness. Alice is attributed with this sense of unity, of wholeness, that finds its representation in the opposed white and red flowers, the Red and White queens and the union between them [...] Alice is the one who tries to unite what Jung qualifies as the female principle, Eros, and the male one, Logos. The feminine is her natural nature while the masculine is perceived inside her constant logic and reasoning. (Salazar et al. 44; my translation)¹¹

Although Alice is assumed to be mad, she still seems to reject that idea; she does not want to be mad nor considered as such, probably in fear of society's judgement. When she

10 Original quotation: "Algunos autores como Goodacre (1984) mencionan que en la personalidad de Charles [...] se evidencian rasgos de mujer Victoriana, es decir, rasgos femeninos de la época. Además, según Snider (2006) y utilizando términos de Jung, se veía un patrón en artistas que producían un trabajo visionario (trabajo proveniente del inconsciente colectivo) y este es que presentaban un maquillaje psicológico que los hacía capaces de realizar esas obras de arte. 'Solamente una persona con la psique de Dodgson/Carroll escribiendo en la época victoriana pudo haber escrito los libros de Alicia' (Snider, 2006, p. 6). En su artículo, Snider (2006) establece que podría ser considerada Alicia como la imagen del ánima del mismo Carroll".

11 Original quotation: "Jung [...] explica que el niño es un símbolo que une los opuestos; un mediator, uno que trae sanidad, es decir, uno que hace uno solo (whole). A Alicia se le atribuye mucho este sentido de unidad, de holismo, representado en los opuestos de flores blancas y rojas, en la reina roja y la blanca y la unión entre estas [...] Alicia es quien intenta unir lo que Jung llama el principio femenino, Eros, con el masculino, Logos. Lo femenino es su naturaleza natural mientras lo masculino se percibe en su continua lógica, en su constante razonamiento".

encounters the Cheshire Cat, she recognizes the following: “But I don’t want to go among mad people” (Carroll 67). Later on, at the tea party, she seems to be uneasy, proving her own nuisance towards madness; she leaves the party saying “at any rate I’ll never go *there* again [...] It’s the stupidest tea-party I ever was at in all my life!” (Carroll 82). This might constitute a reflection of the condemnation of female madness by Victorian society and the pejorative meaning attributed to it. Arszulowicz assessed this idea and, according to what she stipulates:

He contends that Alice’s presence in Wonderland and her reaction and response to its sociological structure speaks to her psychological and allegorical makeup. He argues that “in rejecting... [Wonderland’s] disorder Alice is rejecting not only the terrifying underside of human consciousness but the liberating imagination as well...For flexibility, surprise, and disorder are at the root of comedy as well as terror, and Wonderland shows Alice not only rootless hostility but free and uncompetitive joy” (Kincaid 92). In rejecting all of the elements that construct Wonderland, according to Kincaid, Alice rejects some of the basic psychological elements that lie at the root of her own humanity. Alice works hard and is ultimately successful at rejecting Wonderland’s madness, but what she overlooks is her own fundamental madness that allows her to enter and proceed through Wonderland. (1-2)

Even if Alice seems to reject Wonderland’s madness, she simply adjusts to it, for “Alice soon gets used to the tone of desperate seriousness in which she is greeted by all the creatures she meets” (Levin 596): “Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way” (Carroll 10). Afterwards, when she meets the “queer-looking party” (Carroll 22) formed by the Mouse, the Dodo and other “curious creatures” (Carroll 21), even though they were entirely out of the ordinary and, in a way, mad, “after a few minutes it seemed quite natural to Alice to find herself talking familiarly with them, as if she had known them all her life” (Carroll 22). This proves what Arszulowicz states, Alice overlooks her own loss of sanity for it seems to be easy for her to adjust to such unstable atmosphere and creatures, conveying the possibility of Alice and Wonderland’s inhabitants sharing a concrete trait: madness.

Another aspect that could strengthen this idea is Alice’s evolution throughout her journey, as she first arrives being a complete foreigner or stranger and, when she leaves, she is part of Wonderland. Therefore, at first, she can be defined as a more passive figure, still trying to understand the world around her and obeying what was being commanded whether she

should or not. When she first meets the Mouse, for instance, as she tries to please it desperately apologizing when needed for she did not want to cause any harm: “oh, I beg your pardon!” cried Alice again, for this time the Mouse was bristling all over, and she felt certain it must be really offended. ‘We won’t talk about her [her cat] any more if you’d rather not.’” (Carroll 19); she responds to the White Rabbit’s commands without hesitation even when he names her “Mary Ann”; while she is at the tea party, she promises “[she] won’t interrupt again” (Carroll 79), almost as if she could not talk without permission.

However, as the story moves forward, she goes through a certain transition that leads to a more active attitude, in which she uses her voice and verbalizes her perspectives as she sees fit. Various examples of this can be found in the development of the Queen of Hearts’ trial: she is asked to leave accused of being too tall to remain for “all persons more than a mile high to leave the court” (Carroll 133), but she responds “well, I shan’t go, at any rate [...] besides, that’s not a regular rule: you invented it just now” (Carroll 133); when the Jury and the King were trying to blame the Knave with a proof that Alice considers to be illogical she claims “it proves nothing of the sort!” (Carroll 134) and “*I don’t believe there’s an atom of meaning in it*” (Carroll 136); Alice openly establishes that the trial makes no sense:

‘No, no!’ said the Queen. ‘Sentence first – verdict afterwards.’ ‘Stuff and nonsense!’ said Alice loudly. ‘The idea of having the sentence first!’ ‘Hold your tongue!’ said the Queen, turning purple. ‘I won’t!’ said Alice. ‘Off with her head!’ the Queen shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved. ‘Who cares for you?’ said Alice, (she had grown to her full size by this time.) ‘You’re nothing but a pack of cards!’ (Carroll 139)

According to Swehla:

The claim of Alice as a mad character must be defended. After all, the eccentric and colorful characters of Wonderland often seem closer to the madness of Delirium than Alice does; in fact, Alice can sometimes be dull and logical in comparison. However, if the definition of woman’s madness is a threat to the patriarchal order of society, and the society of Wonderland can be indeed seen as a cohesive, normative society (if only in relation to itself), then Alice does indeed fit this definition. She is consistently dismissed or perceived as a threat to the citizens of Wonderland because she does not conform to the accepted rules of Wonderland society. There is no indication that Wonderland does not follow a set of rules, rules which often parody what we could call “real world” rules. (6)

As observed, despite the variations of the background information applied to Alice's character, several scholars defend and support the claim of Alice's madness. However, insanity might adopt a softer appearance in comparison with other mad women from Victorian literature, as the ones we have previously pointed out. The fact that "poor Alice" is still a child contributes to this softer vision and provokes a certain tenderness among the readers, whether she is mad or not, as "Alice herself, prim and earnest in pinafore and pumps, confronting a world out of control by looking for the rules and murmuring her lessons, stands as one image of the Victorian middle-class child" (Auerbach 31). As such, she is "burning with curiosity" (Carroll 2); in fact, "the pun on 'curious' defines Alice's fluctuating personality" (Auerbach 33). As Peake indicates, "in *Alice* there is no horror. There is only a certain kind of madness, or nonsense – a very different thing. Madness can be lovely when it's the madness of the imagination and not the madness of pathology" (7). Furthermore:

The *Alice* books explore profound affinities with childhood experience and its hidden and abiding presence. The babble conversation of the infant lies beneath adult talk: infant communication is plosive, punctuated by nouns, each with a broad nimbus of meaning, and informed by cadences of inquiry, assertion, and denial. It is revived in puns, exclamations, sing-song, laughter, and cries current in adult speech. (Beer 2)

4. CONCLUSION

Madness has been proven to be a significant concept, being often referred to during the Victorian Era, both in literature and psychology. In fact, according to Swehla,

Madness traditionally has been defined in these terms. It has been defined as a disease, a deviance from normative society, and one that posits a potential danger to the structures of reason, thus defining it in relationship to those structures. Madness is equated to the loss of reason, an aberration and a threat to both individual and public safety. (1)

In the context of *Alice*, taking Alice's persona into consideration, we might observe that madness is not necessarily illustrated as a negative quality. In spite of the given vision of madness as pejorative throughout Victorian times, Wonderland's inhabitants (Alice included) offer an alternative representation resulting on a softer perception of madness and insanity. Furthermore, madness constitutes one of the novel's main motives as we have tried to demonstrate throughout this study; however, it is not without diverse nuances and applications that madness is exploited and developed for its manifestation might be mutable and varied. Carroll constructs *Alice* upon this notion of insanity, contributing to enlarge the literary group of "mad women" and adding his own subtleties.

Hence, with this project we have tried to largely research on the topic of madness, trying to provide with sufficient background information and, moreover, studying its application in *Alice*. By further analyzing female madness, we have essayed to highlight its relevance during Victorian times as well as its interpretations. Indeed, portraying women as mad or insane was recurrent and often thought to be a matter of genre and genetics. Our description of some of the "mad women" pertaining to Victorian literature aims to emphasize the topic's significance and recurrence during this time, clarifying the perception of female madness, how it applies to individuals and the variations we might find between them. Focusing on Alice's analysis, we have sought to enumerate her most important features putting a special emphasis on the madness she portrays.

This study has been profitable since it has enabled us to further explore the concept of madness and female madness during the Victorian times, as well as its illustration in *Alice* and its various connotations. In this sense, the collected traits and ideas might serve us as an incentive to continue studying and analyzing the so-mentioned topic. Moreover, by investigating female madness we have discovered its complexity, which enables us to carry out different researches focusing on related fields; for instance, we might essay to compare Alice's case with other literary "mad women" from the Victorian era, which would provide us with a much more comparative perspective. Such investigation might be focused on whether Alice's representation of madness is different and, in case it is, what kind of implications it conveys.

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