CHAPTER IV

THE BINARY OPPOSITION OF CHILD VS ADULT SHOWN THROUGH ALICE'S EXPERIENCES IN LEWIS CARROLL'S *THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS*

This chapter analyzes how Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* represents the opposition between the child and the adult through Alice's encounters with three central adult figures: the Red Queen, the White Queen, and Humpty Dumpty. Each interaction demonstrates how the binary between child and adult, traditionally associated with authority and submission, rationality and naivety, is inverted within the text. Using Lévi-Strauss's concept of binary opposition, the analysis focuses on how Alice's epistemic agency, her ability to think, question, and interpret independently, subverts adult control and reveals the instability of adult logic.

4.1 Binary Oppositions and Epistemic Agency in Alice's Encounters

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, we see a lot of adults who meet Alice, a child in a strange, fun world. These meetings show us that children and adults are not the same. Not just in age, but in how they act, think, and view stuff. This gap is deep in the tale's plot, packed with rules that clash or make no sense. The adult characters Alice finds do not act like they know it all; some work hard to keep things right, while others go wild or act like children. So, it is hard to sort children from adult characters. By mixing adult ways with fun bits, and clear thoughts with wild ideas, Carroll makes us think hard on how we view adult characters in charge and who they are. We end up asking more about the set roles and spots we see in the real world.

4.1.1 The Red Queen: Order and Authority versus Autonomy and Logic

When we look at Alice's meets with the Red Queen, we see a clear clash in the tale. Carroll shows the Red Queen not just as a foe, but as a mark of the stiff and boss ways tied with adult life. The Red Queen's push for rules, order, and her non-stop rules show the goals and needs of adult life. Alice, on the other hand, faces this world with a mix of want for new, doubt, and a new feel of self, which show the traits of a child.

Lévi-Strauss (1963) claims that the sense in tales comes not from lone parts, but from the mix of contrasts, he calls this binary clashing. In *Through the Looking-Glass* the strain between Alice and the Red Queen is more than just a fight; it shows the deep clash between the child's play, the quest, the adult's rules and the power dynamics. This clash is not still, but moves, Alice's path is full of times when the lines between child and adult are not clear, asked, or for a while flipped. The tie between Alice and the Red Queen shows this clash, not just as a gap in age but also a fight in thoughts between free want for new and strict rules.

Carroll's tale, seen through Lévi-Strauss's view, turns into a deep look at the child/adult split, made more mixed by the odd and at times two-faced acts of its adult characters. As Alice goes through the tale's shifts, the text asks us to think on how sense is made through the non-stop talk of fronts, not through set or plain groups.

The Red Queen is introduced as a highly logical and disciplined figure who adheres to a system governed by abstract rules. She moves only according to chessboard logic, values speed over reflection, and prioritizes form over understanding. This worldview is encapsulated in her declaration:

> *"Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"* (Carroll, 1871, p. 30–31)

To the Red Queen, this statement is self-evident, yet to Alice, it is paradoxical and illogical. This moment clearly illustrates the binary between the child's perspective and the adult's rigid imposition of abstract, often contradictory, systems. While the Red Queen accepts this rule without question, Alice's confusion reflects a form of resistance to uncritical acceptance. The writer interprets this contrast as a structural binary, in which the child's logic, marked by a desire for coherence and experience-based understanding. The child's logic is set against the adult's authoritarian and detached principles.

This reading aligns with Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralist theory, which posits that oppositions are not inherently antagonistic but mutually constitutive; each pole of the binary derives its meaning through contrast with the other. In this context, Alice's reasoned questioning becomes intelligible and significant precisely because it exists in opposition to the Queen's unexamined authority. The writer's interpretation is thus in accordance with Lévi-Strauss's assertion that binary structures illuminate meaning not in isolation, but through the relationship between opposing concepts.

Further emphasizing this binary, the Red Queen continually directs Alice's behavior without providing clear reasons or explanations. For instance, when Alice finds herself unexpectedly at the coronation feast, the Red Queen gives her a barrage of contradictory commands:

> *"Curtsey while you're thinking what to say. It saves time."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 27)
>
> *"Speak when you're spoken to!"* (Carroll, 1871, p. 121)

These statements demonstrate the Queen's emphasis on protocol, efficiency, and submission, values that belong to a symbolic adult order. In contrast, Alice's responses, marked by polite confusion and sincere inquiry, embody the child's orientation toward clarity, logic, and dialogic interaction rather than performative compliance. The writer interprets this contrast as reflective of a structural binary between imposed authority and experiential reasoning. Alice does not rebel overtly; instead, her reactions reveal an inherent resistance rooted in the child's pursuit of meaning and consistency.

This interpretation is in line with Maria Nikolajeva's (2010) concept of "the repressive logic of the adult world," in which authority dictates meaning from above, often silencing or subordinating the child's perspective. In this framework, the Red Queen represents an adult figure who enforces structure without explanation, while Alice symbolizes a counter-force that challenges arbitrary command through reasoned questioning. The writer's reading thus affirms a Lévi-Straussian binary in which the child's voice gains significance precisely through its opposition to uncontextualized adult control.

Lévi-Strauss's structuralism holds that myths and stories often present binary oppositions such as nature/culture, raw/cooked, or sacred/profane. In Carroll's narrative, this structure manifests in the juxtaposition between free-thinking child and authoritarian adult. Alice's logic stands in direct contrast to the Red Queen's logic, which is fixed, prescriptive, and monologic. This binary is not resolved by the end of the text. Even as Alice is "crowned" queen, the ceremony descends into chaos and absurdity, undercutting the very authority it seeks to celebrate. The meaning of queendom itself is rendered unstable, suggesting that adult structures are performative rather than substantive.

This opposition is also dramatized spatially. The Red Queen's world is a chessboard, and every movement must follow strict rules. Alice is literally a pawn, confined by spatial and symbolic limitations. Yet she resists this confinement through questions, reflections, and moments of self-awareness. The Queen insists on forward motion and rapid progression, "Faster! Faster!", as if growing up were simply a matter of speed and direction. But Alice frequently pauses, turns aside, and engages the world around her, embodying a temporal rhythm aligned with experience rather than outcome. Peter Hunt (1994) notes that "children's literature often stages the act of growing up as a journey through systems of adult logic that the child must learn to navigate or to survive." In Alice's case, the navigation becomes a subtle form of resistance.

To clarify the binary elements structuring the relationship between Alice and the Red Queen, the following table summarizes the key oppositions at play:

Table 4.1: Alice (The Child) vs Red Queen (The Adult)

Aspect	Alice (The Child)	Red Queen (The Adult)	Narrative Function
Logic	Rational, sense-seeking	Arbitrary, authoritarian	Dogmatic enforcement vs logical exploration
Language	Questions, dialogic	Commands, non-dialogic	Closed authority vs open inquiry
Movement	Wandering, spontaneous	Rule-bound (chess logic)	Purposeful advancement vs exploratory delay
Time Perception	Present-focused, experiential	Accelerated, goal-oriented	Chronological adulthood vs experiential childhood
Authority	Questioned unless understood	Imposed without explanation	Structural dominance vs intuitive resistance
Emotional Control	Responsive, self-aware	Detached, ceremonial	Suppressed expression vs emotional openness

As seen above, Carroll does not merely use the Red Queen to represent a single authoritarian figure. Instead, she operates as a symbolic construct that gains meaning only through opposition to Alice's child identity. This relational structure is central to structuralist readings. The Queen's authority is not absolute; it exists only because it is resisted, questioned, and parodied by Alice's responses. This supports Lévi-Strauss's (1963) contention that myths do not resolve conflict but dramatize it continuously to produce cultural meaning.

To sum it up, the talk in the book between Alice and the Red Queen shows a clear split. It looks at the big gaps that mark children from adults. The Red Queen is all about hard rules, fast growth, and doing as told, things childrenren are often told to do by adults. In a swap, Alice asks lots of 'why's and tries on her own to find her way. This sets her as a sign of free thought. This fight is not just a big

idea but a key part of the story's pull. As Lévi-Strauss points out, our minds work by looking at pairs that do not mix. Carroll's tale uses this rule by setting the child/adult split, not as a clear right or wrong, but as a tool to check the wobbly hold of rule, words, and who we are in a world that makes no sense.

4.1.2 The White Queen: Emotional Instability versus Rational Self-Control

Alice's encounter with the White Queen puts a new twist on the children vs. adults theme. It is not the same as her talk with the Red Queen. The Red Queen is all about tough rules and set ways. The White Queen shows another type of adult thought. She is all about odd ideas, mix-ups in time, and wild mood swings. From a structuralist perspective, and particularly through the lens of Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory of binary opposition, the contrast between Alice and the White Queen serves to expose the gap between a child's grounded, experiential logic and the adult world's abstract, often absurd reasoning. In this sense, the narrative continues to explore meaning not through resolution, but through sustained tension between binary roles, where Alice's rational and emotionally composed child-identity stands in stark contrast to the White Queen's fragmented and illogical adulthood.

One of the most significant aspects of the White Queen's character is her strange relationship with time. She famously claims to live "backwards":

> *"It'zs a poor sort of memory that only works backwards," the Queen remarked.*
>
> *"What sort of things do you remember best?" Alice ventured to ask.*

> *"Oh, things that happened the week after next," the Queen replied in a careless tone.* (Carroll, 1871, pp. 63–64)

This conversation exemplifies the breakdown of temporal logic, something that Alice finds puzzling and unacceptable. For a child, time is perceived as linear and grounded in personal experience and memory. Alice is therefore shocked by the idea of remembering future events, a clear inversion of cause and effect. From her perspective, such a concept undermines rational understanding. Some scholars, such as Gillian Beer (1999), suggest that Carroll's manipulation of time reflects a whimsical subversion of epistemological order, designed more to entertain than to offer philosophical structure. In this reading, the absurdity of reversed time is embraced as part of the nonsensical charm of the Looking-Glass world, rather than as a meaningful binary opposition.

However, the writer argues that this temporal reversal is better understood through Claude Lévi-Strauss's concept of structural inversion, in which meaning is produced through contrast within a binary system. The Queen's understanding of time, abstract, circular, and symbolic, belongs to a conceptual order often aligned with adult logic and authority. In contrast, Alice's resistance and confusion highlight her grounding in experiential, linear temporality, reflecting the logic of childhood. The writer's interpretation aligns with scholars such as Maria Nikolajeva (2010), who asserts that children's narratives often stage conflicts between adult abstraction and child realism. Alice's attempt to reassert temporal rationality becomes a narrative expression of her position within a binary structure, one where the child's clarity stands in opposition to the adult's disorienting symbolism.

The White Queen's behavior throughout their conversation reveals further contradictions typical of the adult world as seen from a child's perspective. At one point, she pricks her finger on a brooch, and yet:

> *"The Queen had pricked her finger."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 65)
>
> *"That's the effect of living backwards,' the Queen said kindly: 'it always makes one a little giddy at first, '"* (Carroll, 1871, p. 63)

This inversion of causality illustrates how adult logic, as portrayed in the Looking-Glass world, subverts the child's intuitive framework for understanding reality. The writer interprets this narrative moment as emblematic of a deeper structural tension: the adult world operates through abstract systems that often contradict concrete, lived experience. The Queen's whimsical assertion that one can feel pain before an actual injury destabilizes Alice's understanding of cause and effect, a foundational logic for the child. This contradiction, rather than being accepted by Alice, provokes sustained confusion and critical questioning. Rather than passively submitting to the Queen's explanation, Alice persistently challenges its coherence, which the writer views as a form of narrative resistance. Her confusion is not merely a reaction to absurdity but a symbolic act that asserts the child's logic within a world governed by disorienting adult constructs. In this way, the child's epistemological position becomes a site of quiet defiance against adult authority.

She questions and recalibrates rather than blindly absorb the White Queen's version of logic. Moreover, the Queen's emotional state is another marker of structural contrast. She breaks into uncontrollable sobbing:

> *"She's in that state of mind," said the White Queen, "that she wants to deny something, only she doesn't know what to deny!"* (Carroll, 1871, p. 122)

This irrational emotional expression contrasts sharply with Alice's calm, rational demeanor. Traditionally, adult–child binaries assume adults to be emotionally regulated and children to be impulsive and unpredictable. However, some critics argue that such representations are often exaggerated. For example, Rose (1984) critiques children's literature for projecting adult anxieties onto child characters, suggesting that role reversals may serve more to express adult confusion than to empower child perspectives. From this view, Carroll's inversion might not signal the child's stability, but rather reflect the adult author's own ambivalence about authority and order.

In contrast, the writer interprets Carroll's portrayal of the White Queen as a deliberate structural reversal that challenges fixed adult-child hierarchies. While the Queen descends into tearful panic and illogical behavior, Alice maintains composure and applies reason. This inversion reconfigures expected power dynamics: the adult figure becomes unstable, while the child offers balance and clarity. The writer's interpretation aligns with Perry Nodelman's (2008) assertion that such inversions in children's literature disrupt dominant constructions of maturity, revealing that adult authority is often performative rather than inherent. By assigning reason to the child and emotional volatility to the adult, Carroll questions the naturalness of adult superiority and exposes its fragility within the binary framework.

If in her interaction with the Red Queen Alice encountered the authoritarian aspect of adulthood, in the White Queen she faces its fragility and absurdity. The binary opposition is not between good and evil or chaos and order, but between coherence and incoherence, between a grounded child's logic and an abstract adult dislocation. The Queen's disconnected speech, disorganized thought, and unpredictable behavior contrast with Alice's consistent desire to make sense of the world around her. While the White Queen seems to accept the nonsensical as natural, Alice insists on sense-making as a condition of reality.

In terms of Lévi-Strauss's structuralist framework, this binary operates not as a narrative problem to be solved, but as a formal condition for meaning. Alice's identity is articulated through the negation of the Queen's behavior. Each moment of contrast reinforces the structural binary of child versus adult. These oppositions are listed below in a comparative table that highlights their narrative significance:

Table 4.2: Alice (The Child) vs White Queen (The Adult)

Aspect	Alice (The Child)	White Queen (The Adult)	Narrative Function
Time	Sequential, experiential time	Non-linear, reverse logic	Abstract temporality vs Rational chronology
Cause and Effect	Cause precedes effect	Effect precedes cause	Symbolic inversion vs Logical structure
Emotion	Calm, composed responses	Irrational, performative crying	Emotional chaos vs Emotional clarity
Language	Direct, questioning	Disconnected, whimsical	Absurd reasoning vs Rational inquiry
Memory and Imagination	Present-based, active questioning	Future memory, passive acceptance	Imposed abstract reality vs Grounded awareness

Role Behavior	Active, driven by sense-making	Passive, unclear motivations	Symbolic instability vs Identity formation

This table reinforces how Carroll uses structural opposition to illustrate the difficulties children face when navigating adult discourse. The White Queen's internal world is governed by systems that make no sense to Alice. Yet the Queen, like many adults, expects the child to adapt to these systems without question. This tension is one of the central critiques embedded in Carroll's narrative. As Lévi-Strauss argues, meaning arises not in equilibrium but in contradiction. The child/adult opposition, dramatized through Alice and the White Queen, lays bare the dysfunctions of adult knowledge systems and the resilience of the child's logical resistance.

Furthermore, the Queen's insistence that Alice believe in impossible things,

"Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." (Carroll, 1871, p. 67)

, symbolizes the adult world's frequent detachment from experiential reality. The writer interprets this moment as a reversal of expected epistemological roles. For Alice, belief is tied to truth, evidence, and logical consistency. Her skepticism reflects a child's grounded relationship with what can be seen and understood. In contrast, the Queen treats belief as performative, untethered from verification or coherence. This inversion contributes to the text's central structural irony: the adult figure, typically associated with reason and authority, embraces fantasy and impossibility, while the child maintains a commitment to rationality. Within the binary framework, this reversal destabilizes conventional associations of maturity

with wisdom, instead positioning the child as the more epistemologically stable figure.

Ultimately, Carroll destabilizes the assumed superiority of adulthood by presenting the White Queen as structurally incoherent and emotionally disorganized. In contrast, Alice embodies the integrity of thought, emotional clarity, and curiosity. The binary opposition here is not merely generational, it is philosophical. Alice does not learn from the White Queen in a didactic sense; rather, she learns that not all adult behavior deserves to be emulated. In doing so, she carves out a child-identity that is resilient, reflective, and resistant to adult absurdity.

As with her experience with the Red Queen, Alice's interaction with the White Queen reinforces the binary opposition that underlies the entire narrative. Lévi-Strauss reminds us that mythic structures do not resolve contradictions; they display them. In Carroll's world, the child/adult binary is not a journey toward synthesis but a framework through which meaning is produced. Alice's resistance is not a flaw, but a structural function, necessary to reveal the absurdities, contradictions, and instabilities of the world she is expected to enter. In this way, Carroll uses the White Queen not to elevate adulthood, but to question its coherence.

4.1.3 Humpty Dumpty: Arbitrary Language versus Semantic Clarity

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice's conversation with Humpty Dumpty in Chapter 6 offers a rich textual site for examining the structural opposition between child and adult as theorized by Claude Lévi-Strauss. If the Red Queen

represents authoritarian control and the White Queen symbolizes incoherent emotional instability, Humpty Dumpty represents yet another adult archetype: the intellectual elitist who prioritizes abstract authority over mutual understanding. His interaction with Alice basically turns into a power struggle, he tries to dominate conversations, acting as if language belongs exclusively to adults, complete with a good dose of arrogance and dismissiveness. Meanwhile, Alice comes at things with a kind of childlike logic and just plain common sense, constantly pushing for genuine clarity. Their exchanges really highlight this sharp divide: on one side, the adult trying to dictate meaning, and on the other, the child insisting that real understanding should be something both people actually share.

Humpty Dumpty is introduced perched precariously on a narrow wall, both physically and metaphorically. He speaks in riddles and engages in semantic manipulation, redefining words at will:

> *"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less." "The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."*
>
> *"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master, that's all."*
>
> (Carroll, 1871, p. 82)

This exchange lies at the heart of the binary opposition between Alice and Humpty Dumpty. Humpty Dumpty treats language as a tool of dominance, using it as a means of control and symbolic authority. He rejects the principle of shared meaning by insisting that words mean only what he chooses them to mean. In

contrast, Alice defends the idea that language relies on mutual understanding and consistency. The writer interprets this gap shows a big fight between the adult's and children's views on words. It is more than a small fight: it is a deep clash. Adult characters (like Humpty Dumpty) use words as a way to rule and control, while children, like Alice, see words as a way to really talk and get each other. Alice feels that words must come from shared nods, not just from top-down force.

In a way that sees deep forms, like Claude Lévi-Strauss did, this scene shows strong set-in ways of thought. Lévi-Strauss said myths and tales are made of facing pairs, which show what characters think. Here, words are a field for deep-set views. Humpty Dumpty shows the adult lean toward vague big ideas and order, saying he owns the right to shape what words mean. By doing so, he cuts words off from their real role. This shows a big trend: adult ways often set strict lines and push back when asked, mainly by young minds. Maria Nikolajeva (2002) said adult roles in childs' books often show how made-up social ways are, more so when these ways do not fit young thought. So, the talk between Alice and Humpty Dumpty is not just fun but a sharp dig at adult power and random rule by words. In this view, Humpty Dumpty's acts show adult love for showy power, and Alice shows the young push for clear talk, chats, and shared sense.

All through the talk, Alice keeps up her view. She's not rude but stays fair and firm. She does not get why one would make up random mean words or the worth of just-for-show tags. When Humpty Dumpty boasts of his name and offers her a definition of the word "impenetrability," she questions the usefulness of such verbal games:

"Impenetrability! That's what I say!"

"Would you tell me, please," said Alice, "what that means?"

"Now you talk like a reasonable child," said Humpty Dumpty, looking very much pleased. "I meant by 'impenetrability' that we've had enough of that subject..." (Carroll, 1871, p. 82)

Even in this brief interaction, Humpty Dumpty manipulates the word not to promote understanding but to terminate dialogue. He praises Alice when she complies, yet the praise is superficial and functions primarily to reassert his position as the linguistic authority. Alice's persistence in questioning, on the other hand, reveals a child's natural inclination toward sense-making, mutual dialogue, and interpretive clarity. Some critics, however, argue that characters like Humpty Dumpty are intended less as representatives of adult ideology and more as expressions of Carroll's own linguistic playfulness. For instance, Cohen (1995) suggests that Carroll's characters often parody scholarly debates about semantics rather than encode a child–adult opposition. From this perspective, Humpty Dumpty may be read as a caricature of Victorian philology, and Alice's responses serve to highlight the comic absurdity of language debates rather than assert moral or epistemological superiority.

Through a structuralist lens, the writer doesn't simply interpret Humpty Dumpty as comic relief; instead, he stands in as the narrative's embodiment of adult authority that tries to mask insecurity by asserting intellectual dominance. His literal position on the wall visually underscores this idea, a spot that's obviously unstable, mirroring the shakiness of his supposed authority. Even though Humpty insists he's the "master" of meaning, the story undercuts this by

making him seem both absurd and puffed up with self-importance. His much-anticipated fall, hinted at throughout the exchange, goes beyond slapstick; it signals the collapse of frameworks that put control above genuine understanding. So, from a structuralist perspective, this moment highlights the failure of adult-imposed order in a way that's both symbolic and pretty hard to miss. In contrast, Alice exits the exchange with her reason intact, having refused to abandon clarity in favor of power. The writer reads this outcome as a reaffirmation of the child's epistemic resilience within the binary opposition between child and adult.

The oppositional nature of their encounter can be understood through the following structural table, which highlights the key binary contrasts between Alice and Humpty Dumpty:

Table 4.3: Alice (The Child) vs Humpty Dumpty (The Adult)

Aspect	Alice (The Child)	Humpty Dumpty (The Adult)	Narrative Function
Language Use	Rational, inquisitive, cooperative	Arbitrary, self-serving, manipulative	Language as control vs Language as communication
Authority	Based on reason and understanding	Based on titles and definitions	Positional dominance vs Dialogic equality
Meaning	Defined by shared context	Defined by speaker's will	Power over meaning vs Shared meaning
Emotional Tone	Curious, persistent	Condescending, dismissive	Adult superiority vs Child reasoning
Physical Symbolism	Grounded, mobile	Elevated, unstable position (on a wall)	Fragile authority vs Adaptive learning
Narrative Resolution	Moves forward, unaffected	Falls, symbolic collapse	Collapse of rigid system vs Continuation of flexible thinking

This structure affirms the binary logic at the core of the narrative. Alice's role is not to conquer or defeat the adult figure, but to serve as its structural opposite. In doing so, she reveals the limitations of adult authority when it is unmoored from mutual understanding. Lévi-Strauss emphasizes that myths use these oppositions not to promote one side over another, but to generate meaning through their contrast. In this way, Alice and Humpty Dumpty co-construct a narrative system in which the absurdity of one position clarifies the validity of the other.

Moreover, Humpty Dumpty's obsession with names, labels, and definitions highlights the adult desire to fix meaning to contain the fluidity of language within rigid structures. Alice, however, questions the necessity and purpose of these fixed labels. She shows that meaning arises not from authority, but from relational use. Lévi-Strauss's observation that a structure is not composed of isolated elements, but of relations between them (1963) finds a clear reflection in the exchange between Alice and Humpty Dumpty. Alice holds up the link logic of words. She thinks that sense is made by ties and shared thoughts. Humpty Dumpty, on the other hand, claims that words mean what he says, cutting off words from their group base.

The meet of Alice and Humpty Dumpty digs deep into the child/grown gap. Carroll uses their talk to look at the grown push to set high, Vague rule, most times at the cost of true talk. Humpty Dumpty, sat with bold self-trust, shows a type of adult that in the end breaks from its own mix-ups. In a turn, Alice's stick to plain truth and clear talk marks her as a keep of sense that can stand tests. Carroll keeps up the pull and push of these clashing views, in sync with Lévi-Strauss's

claim that sense pops up from the play of two sides. Here, the child is not just less but acts as a sharp view, showing the fail and deep flaws of grown claims to rule. This shift not only keeps the two sides but also brings out the strong pull of kept clash in making sense.

4.2 Synthesis: Child Logic as Structural Inversion

Past looks at *Through the Looking-Glass* show how big character rule in many ways. Some use strict rules, like the Red Queen. Some use wild mood swings, like the White Queen. Others, like Humpty Dumpty, rule words. This part, though, looks at how Alice reacts to this power. She does not just sit back. Alice uses smart moves to show her own power, push back, and take back control of the story.

Even as a child in a strange world run by adult rules, Alice won't give in to the mess or fear these big character try to put on her. She fights back. She uses her brain, keeps her cool, talks smart, and moves on her own. Her ways are quiet, but they mess with the adults' sure hold on power, right in the text.

Seen with Claude Lévi-Strauss's idea of two sides, Alice stands up to each big character who tries to rule her. As the tale goes on, she shows traits we think are for adults (like clear thought, calm, and sharp talk). This shows the weak and made-up split of adult/child. Her trip is not just a walk on the chessboard but also a deep move through power plays, where each meet points out how she grows to face, turn, or flip big character's hopes. By looking deep at her talks with key character, this look will show how Alice makes her way in a world set by rules she didn't make and doesn't fully take. It is through these moves that her self and power are said in the text.

4.2.1 Questioning Absurd Logic as a Form of Intellectual Resistance

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice meets adults who talk in riddles, set odd rules, and give odd answers. She does not just go along. She asks why, and doubts the odd words and acts she sees. Her way of non-stop asking is her key way to fight back. This method of persistent inquiry serves as her main tactic of resistance, enabling her to preserve her own sense of logic, personal identity, and autonomy within a world dominated by adults who assert unquestionable authority. Although Alice holds no structural power in the Looking-Glass world, her reasoning and insistence on coherence challenge the symbolic dominance of adult characters.

Alice's interaction with the Red Queen provides a foundational example. When the Queen explains that running as fast as possible is required just to remain in the same place, she says:

> *"Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place." "If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!"* (Carroll, 1871, pp. 30–31).

Instead of accepting this logic as valid, Alice internally compares it to the principles of motion in the real world. Her response, though expressed politely, implies disbelief and cognitive dissonance. This moment reflects the narrative clash between symbolic adult rules and the child's experiential understanding. Catherine Robson (2001) notes that Alice's rational mindset consistently challenges the surreal constructs of adult figures, not through emotional outbursts,

but by logically engaging with their contradictions. Her approach underscores a form of intellectual resistance that privileges coherence over compliance.

The writer interprets this scene through the lens of Claude Lévi-Strauss's structuralist theory of binary opposition. The adult characters function as representatives of abstract, symbolic systems, while Alice embodies empirical logic and inquiry. It is within this oppositional structure that the text produces meaning and exposes underlying power dynamics. Alice won't take in weird facts. It is a key move vs power. Alice does not passively absorb the adult characters' worldview; she engages with it critically, revealing its flaws and inconsistencies. This functions not just as a narrative device, but as a sharp critique of how adult systems often disregard the intellectual capacity of children.

This point stands out clear when Alice talks to Humpty Dumpty. When he says he can pick what words mean when he wants, Alice does not just nod. She digs in, calls him out, and points out how odd his view is. Alice replies:

> *"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."*
>
> *"The question is," said Humpty Dumpty, "which is to be master, that's all."*(Carroll, 1871, p. 82)

Some critics have suggested that Humpty Dumpty's semantic manipulation should not be read as authoritarian, but rather as a playful subversion of linguistic norms. For one, Jackie Wullschlager (1995) says that Carroll's use of words aims not at power but at free play with their sense. From this view, Humpty Dumpty

seems more like a joke than a boss. Alice has fun talks with him, not hard fights with rule.

Yet, this read by the critic tilts to a harder look. It hints the scene shows a big gap in talk power. Alice highlights a deeper philosophical issue, language only works when its meaning is mutually understood, not dictated by one party alone. Imposing meaning unilaterally simply undermines communication itself. While Humpty Dumpty asserts semantic authority, Alice questions its validity by drawing attention to the communicative failure that such manipulation invites. Her line of reasoning invokes the practical limits of language, grounded in mutual understanding.

This reading is consistent with Perry Nodelman's (2008) claim that child protagonists in literature frequently exhibit an intuitive grasp of meaning and fairness, which enables them to challenge adult claims that lack internal coherence. Alice's insistence on questioning definitions becomes an act of discursive agency. She refuses to be a passive recipient of meaning and instead demands logical consistency. The writer reads this moment as one in which the child character reclaims authority through rational critique, destabilizing adult dominance over language.

Her resistance continues in her interaction with the White Queen, who instructs Alice to believe impossible things. The Queen explains that believing the impossible simply requires practice, but Alice holds firm:

> *"There's no use trying," said Alice: "one can't believe impossible things."*
> (Carroll, 1871, p. 67)

Some scholars argue that the resistance expressed by child characters in fantasy narratives such as *Through the Looking-Glass* is more symbolic than substantial. For instance, Rose (1984) contends that children's literature often constructs an illusion of agency, while still maintaining adult ideological control through the author's voice. From this perspective, Alice's logical questioning may appear subversive but ultimately occurs within a framework that restricts genuine autonomy.

This reading casts doubt on the degree to which Alice's resistance can be seen as transformative. In contrast, the writer interprets Alice's behavior as a form of consistent narrative resistance grounded in reason. Her refusal to accept belief as a matter of obedience or custom, as the Queen implies, demonstrates the integrity of her cognitive boundaries. Alice treats belief as a conclusion derived from rational evaluation rather than emotional submission. This position aligns with Zohar Shavit's (1986) observation that in children's literature, adult characters often rely on emotional or authoritarian control, while the child's perspective prioritizes fairness, rationality, and internal consistency. Alice's fight in Wonderland is not loud or wild, but it is firm and quite bold if you see it closely.

She does not yell or fight the adults; her might is in her use of clear thought, as if she's checking the whole Wonderland trip. Her way sets her apart, not just as a child with adults, but as one who asks the rules that shape her world.

What stands out is Alice's way. It does not come from wanting to rule. She has no need to beat the adults just to win, there's no pride in her doubts. She aims to keep her free thought, always checking each thing and case she meets. Here,

Maria Nikolajeva's (2010) view fits well: soft, lasting doubts can shake adult rule more than loud fights can. Alice shows the weak spots in the adults' logic by not taking their mix-ups as real.

Also, the calm Alice keeps is a way to fight back. She stays cool and does not go wild; she shows a sort of smart calm, as if she trusts that logic is with her. This fits with Jacques Rancière's (1991) thought on the "fair share of smarts." Alice does not see herself as less smart than the adults, if not, her doubt dares the adult view of age and rule. Her not buying the wild claims is not just a small thing; it is a firm stand that rule must link to sense if it is to be obeyed. Alice's part, then, goes way past just a child fighting the adult world. She acts as a judge of logic, testing the real strength of Wonderland's signs. Seen with the view of a theory (Lévi-Strauss on clear cuts, for one) the push and pull between child logic and adult wild ideas is key in making sense. It is not about one side winning; it is the never-ending talk between them that shows the ideas that hold Wonderland up.

Plus, Alice's doubts do two jobs: they guard and build. On one side, they save her from the not-steady logic of Wonderland. On the other, her asks make new views and show the breaks and weak spots in the world around her. Each chat with ones like the Red Queen or Humpty Dumpty is not just a time of mix-up or upset. It is a planned, almost wise act of thought that dares the worth of wild ideas and brings back the right of the child (and, by that, the reader) to ask for sense from their world.

In short, Alice's fight is an mind shield, a firm call for clear thought that shows the weak base of adult rule in Wonderland. Her plan is subtle but strong,

using asks not fights to check the edge of the world she lives in. In her talks, Alice not just keeps her own free will but also shows a way of acting that is both sharp and new. The tale thus asks us to rethink the play of power between child and adult, sense and wild ideas, and the adult need of us all to make sense of a world that seems set to dodge our tries to get it.

4.2.2 Maintaining Emotional Composure in the Face of Irrational Authority

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Lewis Carroll puts Alice in a world full of odd logic and strange rules. Here, adults try to show power by making things hard, mocking, and scaring her. Yet, Alice does not give in; she keeps her cool. She stays calm, and at times, questions what she sees. This acts as a quiet but strong fight against the wild things around her. By keeping her cool, Alice does not fall into the weird power plays the adults use.

Her strong calm shows she is wise and steady in the tale, like the think-piece on children vs. adults by Claude Lévi-Strauss. On her trip in the Looking-Glass land, Alice meets hard times that test both her mind and her cool. This shows how tough she is on the inside. The adults she meets (the Red Queen, the White Queen, and Humpty Dumpty) often act wild or bossy. Yet Alice does not act wild or mean back. Even when they are rude or confuse her, she stays calm.

A clear example occurs during her encounter with the Red Queen, who berates Alice in a rapid and unrelenting manner, offering criticism rather than guidance. After a confusing exchange, the Queen says:

"Speak when you're spoken to!"

> *"But if everybody obeyed that rule," said Alice, "and if you only spoke when you were spoken to, and the other person always waited for you to begin, you see nobody would ever say anything."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 121)

In this moment, Alice responds to the Queen's aggression with logic rather than defensiveness. Her tone remains measured and composed, and she avoids escalating the confrontation. The writer interprets this interaction as a symbolic conflict between two opposing forces: the irrational, authoritarian adult figure and the rational, emotionally grounded child. While the Red Queen exemplifies the adult tendency to impose authority without reflection, Alice challenges this by calmly questioning the logic behind the command, all while maintaining her emotional control.

This subtle mode of resistance reflects a larger structural pattern within the narrative. The writer's interpretation aligns with Maria Nikolajeva's (2010) observation that in many works of children's literature, child characters resist adult control not only through the content of their responses but also through the manner in which they express them. Alice's emotional steadiness functions as a counterbalance to the volatility of the adult world. In this sense, it is not merely what Alice questions that undermines the Queen's authority, but how she questions it. Her tone becomes a strategic form of resistance that exposes the instability of adult dominance.

Alice's emotional composure is again tested in her interaction with the White Queen, who bursts into tears for no apparent reason and makes dramatic

declarations. When Alice expresses doubt about the Queen's reasoning, the Queen responds theatrically:

> *"I'm just one hundred and one, five months and a day."*
>
> *"I can't believe that!" said Alice.*
>
> *"Can't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone. "Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 67)

Despite the Queen's condescending tone, Alice remains calm and unconvinced. She does not mock the Queen nor does she react with distress. Instead, she quietly asserts her cognitive and emotional boundaries, indicating that belief cannot be compelled and that certain claims lie beyond the limits of reason. The writer interprets Alice's reaction as a subtle but significant form of resistance. By choosing to maintain composure, she refuses to legitimize the irrationality imposed upon her. This emotional restraint is not passive but purposeful. The writer's interpretation aligns with Karin Lesnik-Oberstein's (1994) view that emotional balance in child characters often symbolizes moral and intellectual clarity. In this context, Alice's calm demeanor becomes a narrative strategy that positions her as a rational and autonomous subject. She does not need to confront the Queen loudly or dramatically; her quiet refusal to be drawn into emotional chaos is a powerful form of resistance. Through her measured response, Alice reinforces the binary opposition between the chaotic adult order and the reasoned child perspective.

This contrast is sharpened further in her dialogue with Humpty Dumpty. Although he is sarcastic and condescending, Alice listens politely and only

occasionally expresses mild frustration. When he insists that his arbitrary definitions of words are correct, Alice responds:

> *"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 82)

Alice does not raise her voice or attempt to dominate the exchange through emotional force. Instead, she maintains a calm tone and allows the illogic of the adult's reasoning to reveal itself. The writer interprets this composure as a strategic form of resistance that exposes the instability of adult authority. This reading is consistent with Perry Nodelman's (2008) observation that child characters who preserve their emotional integrity often serve to unmask the performative nature of adult power, which frequently relies on spectacle, contradiction, or confusion to assert control.

This calm mood gets more sense when seen with the thoughts of Claude Lévi-Strauss on two-sided fights. In Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, usual ranks are turned on their heads. Most times, adults are in charge (they have titles, words, and a kind of high rank). But the child, by the look of it, sits low, the very clear down to their up. Yet Carroll flips this set-up. The adults show wild moods and mixed ideas, near to crazy. Alice, by the look of it, stands out as calm and wise, her self-knowing marks her as a steady hand in chaos.

This flip is not just by chance; it is a true throw at the adult social splits. Not just keeping the child low, Carroll lifts Alice, making her a light of insight and clear feelings. Her way to stay calm acts as a key lock on her own power, even when characters like the Red Queen try to shake her core self. Where adults try to

shake her self-view, Alice thinks it through, stays clear of mix-ups or rage, and aims to grasp her place.

In summary, Alice's cool acts as a block to senseless adult rule. Her peace keeps her safe from tricks; it also shows how shaky those in charge are when stripped of clear thoughts. Seen this way, Alice's calm marks her strong, a sign that true power can come from cool trying and feeling sure of oneself, not just from adult ways of rule.

4.2.3 Using Politeness to Reclaim Power

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, the big character oft act odd, be it wild acts, sly words, or swift mood shifts. Yet, with all this, Alice stays calm. She does not fight or yell back. She keeps cool, talks nice, asks smart things, and holds her own, even if the adults act wild. This calm way is how she holds off the adults while keeping true to who she is. In the thought of Lévi-Strauss's two-way split, being nice is how the child fights back. She meets rough acts with grace, and wild thoughts with clear ones.

When Alice meets the White Queen, for instance, the Queen begins to scream before pricking her finger. Alice observes this spectacle quietly and asks a practical, composed question:

> *"What is the matter?" she said, as soon as there was a chance of making herself heard.*
>
> *"Have you pricked your finger?"* (Carroll, 1871, p. 65)

Even though the Queen's behavior defies both logical and emotional expectations, Alice refrains from criticizing or mocking her. Instead, she responds with a polite and genuinely inquisitive question. The writer interprets this composure as a subtle but effective form of resistance. By not mirroring the emotional chaos of the adult, Alice retains her authority over the interaction. Her calmness repositions the power dynamic, as it demonstrates a deliberate refusal to be drawn into the Queen's irrational framework.

This restrained response gains further significance when considered within the broader function of child protagonists in literature. Naomi Hamer (2018) argues that polite or measured reactions from children in fictional narratives often serve to expose the instability of adult authority. Rather than confronting the adult figure through defiance, the child character challenges them through control and consistency. In this context, Alice's calm inquiry not only preserves her rational integrity but also subtly shifts the narrative balance of power away from the adult and toward the child.

A similar pattern appears during her interaction with Humpty Dumpty. He is patronizing, aggressively self-assured, and declares his dominance over language. Though Alice is clearly skeptical of his arguments, she does not raise her voice or ridicule him. Instead, she says:

"I'm afraid I do not quite understand," said Alice. (Carroll, 1871, p. 87)

This moment marks a crucial point in the narrative. Alice's words acknowledge confusion, yet her tone remains courteous and composed. She does not relinquish her reasoning, but she also avoids escalating the exchange into

confrontation. The writer interprets her politeness as a form of rhetorical disarming. Rather than challenging Humpty Dumpty through direct resistance, Alice allows his illogic to unravel itself. Her calm demeanor becomes the mechanism through which the imbalance of power is exposed.

This strategic composure aligns with Vanessa Joosen's (2011) study of power in children's literature, which argues that politeness can serve as a mode of narrative self-preservation. Through measured responses, child characters are able to navigate asymmetrical power structures without silencing themselves or risking narrative displacement. Alice exemplifies this form of subtle agency. By remaining composed, she refuses to submit to the adult figure's attempts at confusion and control, thereby retaining her voice in a world constructed to undermine it.

Another striking moment occurs during Alice's brief coronation sequence, when she becomes a queen herself. The Red and White Queens begin speaking over one another, offering nonsensical advice and riddles. Instead of attempting to dominate the conversation, Alice says:

> *"I do not want to be anybody's prisoner. I want to be a Queen."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 104)

Some critics argue that politeness in children's literature often reinforces rather than subverts adult authority. From this perspective, a child's calm and respectful tone may be interpreted as a form of social conditioning that sustains dominant power structures. Rose (1984), for instance, contends that narratives frequently offer the illusion of agency, while in fact reproducing ideologies that

position children as compliant and manageable subjects. In this reading, Alice's politeness could be seen not as resistance, but as internalized discipline that ultimately upholds adult frameworks.

The writer, however, interprets Alice's statement as assertive yet deliberate, functioning as a boundary-setting act that does not replicate the rhetorical chaos around her. She does not raise her voice or issue threats; she simply and clearly expresses her intentions. Alice's cool face is not a sign she gives way. It shows who she is and stands for pride. Using Judith Butler's idea (1997) on acts of speech that have an effect, one sees that Alice's talk is more than just talk; it turns into a way to act, as she moves through, and slightly shifts, the usual norms. Her way of calm talking is not just good ways but a planned act to hold onto her self sense in times of big change.

When seen through Lévi-Strauss's way of clear cut divides, this case is more clear. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, adults often show mood swings and miss the grip on their words, while Alice, the child, shows calm and sense. This shift in theme fights the old top-down chain of adult over child, with Carroll with a plan making Alice a shape whose ways are a tool of might not just soft yes. Her fair ways show the weak spots of adult lead and do not just fit in with it.

In conclusion, Alice's good ways are a sharp plan not just a trace of no guts. By meeting adult mess with fair ways, she gets control on her own terms. Her nice stance makes room for sense to live, lightly shaking lead based only on high spot in society. Alice's kind fight then shows as a still but big kind of push back, firm in self-hold not open fight.

4.2.4 Identity Assertion Through Rational Self-Positioning

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Lewis Carroll makes a land where Alice's self keeps on changing. It is shook by the odd and hard rules set by grown characters. As she moves the weird chess-like land, Alice is again and again told who she is. The characters here aim to mix her up or twist her mind with odd talks. Yet, Alice does not give in to this mess. She uses clear talk and smart thought. By sharp watch and strong thought, she holds onto her real self, with logic as her guard. By doing this, she fights off the grown characters and their wild ways. She leans on clear thought to keep who she is in the mess. Using Claude Lévi-Strauss's idea of two-way splits, her cool mind strikes against the wild, bossy talk of grown characters setting smart young ones one way, and wild adults the other way.

One of the clearest examples of this occurs during her encounter with Humpty Dumpty. Throughout their conversation, Humpty Dumpty insists that words mean exactly what he chooses them to mean, regardless of conventional language:

> *"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 82)

Alice, confused but not intimidated, replies:

> *"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 82)

This rational question represents Alice's subtle form of resistance. She does not confront Humpty Dumpty through defiance or emotional protest, but instead

reveals the inconsistency in his logic through calm, pointed inquiry. The writer interprets this response as a structural engagement with meaning itself. Alice resists by reasserting the rules of communication that the adult figure seeks to distort. Her reply fits with the view that we know words by their links to each other. Humpty Dumpty, with his wild use of words, acts as a boss who shifts their sense at will. In sharp form, Alice aims for clear sense and joint grasp. She stands on reason in a wild scene.

This sets a true clash: the child as a light of clear thought, and the adult as a mix of mess and blur. Using Lévi-Strauss's idea of two-way clashes (sense vs. none, child vs. adult, calm vs. wild) Alice's way keeps her with thought and stead. Even as her world falls apart, with time and who she is fading, she sticks to smart asks to show who she is. At last, the tale hints that Alice's firm push for shared sense is more than just tough; it is a calm fight vs. adults' random rule. By this, Alice backs the young brain's own rights, even in a world run by adults and mess.

Similarly, when Alice meets the White Queen and is told impossible things (such as believing six impossible things before breakfast), she does not accept the claim passively. Instead, she replies with disbelief and inquiry, even though she is polite. The White Queen tells her:

> *"Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 67)

Although Alice does not confront the Queen aggressively, her skeptical attitude signifies a refusal to submit to irrational adult logic. Rather than adapting herself to the illogical nature of the Looking-Glass world, she maintains her

position through reasoned inquiry. The writer interprets this as an embodiment of the binary opposition between the child as a symbol of coherence and the adult as a symbol of incoherence. Alice's calm resistance highlights the structural contrast between rationality and absurdity, a key dynamic in the novel's portrayal of generational power.

Maria Nikolajeva (2010) emphasizes that children in fantasy narratives often achieve subjectivity not through overt rebellion, but through ironic distance and epistemological development. This framework supports the writer's interpretation of Alice's strategy. She does not need to overturn the Queen's authority through confrontation. Instead, she asserts herself by asking questions, applying logic, and navigating the absurdities imposed by adult characters. Her method is deeply structural. Rather than standing outside the system, she operates within it, using its internal contradictions to preserve and affirm her identity.

Near the end of the novel, when Alice finally reaches the eighth square and is crowned Queen, the absurdity reaches its climax. The coronation is surrounded by chaotic rituals and contradictory speeches. However, Alice eventually rejects the nonsense:

> *"I can't stand this any longer!" she cried, as she jumped up and seized the tablecloth with both hands.* (Carroll, 1871, p. 137)

This moment should not be read as a loss of control, but rather as an instance of clarity and intentional decision-making. Alice's refusal to continue engaging in the nonsensical rituals around her signals a decisive return to rationality. The writer interprets this as the culmination of her identity assertion

within the symbolic system of the narrative. Her action is not dramatic, but it is structurally significant.

In terms of Claude Lévi-Strauss's binary opposition framework, this marks a critical turning point where the symbolic dominance of adult chaos is effectively disrupted by the child's reasoned agency. The incoherence of adult speech and performance, which has structured much of Alice's journey, is now countered by her firm and measured refusal to submit. This plan does more than just see children can think for self. It says that clear thought and good sense can be real aims, even with a messy world of signs. Alice won't just take the mad shift made by the odd adult world. She picks to use clear talk and smart thought to keep who she is. She fights the mix-up, not with give-in. She stays firm in her true self by her words, watch, and calm but firm no.

As seen in Claude Lévi-Strauss's two-part thought, Alice holds on to her need for a wise self-set. She shows a child as wise and whole, not like the cut-up thoughts of adults near her. Here, her love for thought acts as a way to show and hold her self in a place that seems set to shake it.

4.2.5 Resistance as a Child's Form of Power

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Lewis Carroll makes a world run by flipped rules. Big shots act wild and words turn shaky. In this odd place, Alice does not fight back loud. She stays true to clear thought, keeps calm, and holds onto her own way. She does not yell against the big shots. Alice sly moves past mad rules, steps back from wild spots, and keeps who she is in a mix-up. This act, looked at

with Claude Lévi-Strauss's idea of two sides, shows a tug of war. It is between the mess and push of adults and the child's need for clear thought, rule, and free will (Lévi-Strauss, 1963). Alice's smooth moves show the clash of adult lead and child free will. It points to the big fight deep in Carroll's tale.

A particularly illustrative example of Alice's resistance occurs during her encounter with the Red Queen, where her composed questioning and refusal to be swept up in the Queen's arbitrary demands exemplify her quiet but steadfast opposition. The Queen insists that to stay in place in the Looking-Glass world, one must run continuously, which inverts Alice's understanding of movement and progress. Rather than passively accepting this new rule, Alice offers a logical counterpoint grounded in her own reality:

> *"Well, in our country," said Alice, still panting a little, "you'd generally get to somewhere else, if you ran very fast for a long time, as we've been doing."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 30)

This response is both respectful and resistant. Alice does not directly defy the Red Queen, but she subtly exposes the contradiction in the Queen's command by applying real-world logic. The writer interprets this as a quiet yet powerful form of resistance. Rather than rejecting adult authority through confrontation, Alice undermines it by subjecting it to rational analysis. Her resistance does not require volume or defiance; it is enacted through the steady application of reason.

This strategy reflects a recurring pattern in Alice's interactions with adult figures throughout the narrative. The writer contends that by repeatedly choosing logic over submission, Alice constructs and asserts her own worldview. Within

the structural framework of binary opposition, Alice's use of reason becomes a symbolic act. It sets her apart from the incoherence often embodied by adult characters and affirms the child's role as a stabilizing force in a disordered world. Through this, she maintains her agency not by rejecting the system outright, but by operating within it to expose its contradictions.

Another significant example occurs during her conversation with Humpty Dumpty, who attempts to claim total control over language:

> *"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean, neither more nor less."*
>
> *"The question is," said Alice, "whether you can make words mean so many different things."* (Carroll, 1871, p. 82)

Here, Alice refuses to accept the arbitrariness of Humpty Dumpty's claim. Instead of passively absorbing his linguistic authority, she responds with a logical counter-question that challenges the validity of his assertion. The writer interprets this as an instance of intellectual resistance, in which Alice defends the principle that meaning should arise from shared understanding rather than unilateral control. Her stance foregrounds the structuralist tension between language as a relational system and its authoritarian distortion by adult figures.

Viewed through Claude Lévi-Strauss's theory of binary opposition, this exchange illustrates the contrast between structured meaning, produced through difference and opposition, and the adult's manipulation of language for dominance. Alice's insistence on coherence and mutual intelligibility represents a form of epistemic strength. Rather than becoming complicit in absurdity, she

affirms the necessity of rational meaning. In doing so, she positions herself as a rational subject capable of interrogating and exposing the contradictions embedded in adult discourse.

The clearest and most forceful act of resistance occurs at the Queen's chaotic banquet. Overwhelmed by meaningless rituals, constant interruptions, and absurd commands, Alice finally asserts herself physically and emotionally:

> *"I can't stand this any longer!" she cried, as she jumped up and seized the tablecloth with both hands.* (Carroll, 1871, p. 137)

This moment is not a childish outburst, but rather a decisive act of reclaiming agency. Alice's refusal to accept the incoherence of the adult world culminates in a physical gesture that symbolically overturns the authority figures surrounding her. The writer interprets this movement as a disruption of the illusion of order and control maintained by the Red and White Queens. It is not driven by emotion, but by clarity and choice.

In the thought of Claude Lévi-Strauss, this act shows a key shift in roles. The sharp child, once seen as less, now stands out as clear and free. The big character's show of power is seen as weak and not lasting. Alice's power in Wonderland is not just open push-back. She oft stands up in soft but key ways. She does not just go with the odd ways of those near her. She makes her own way. Look at her meet with Tweedledum and Tweedledee, for case: as they fight over a toy, Alice picks not to step in or mix in. Carroll shows, with a sly wit, her choice to step back and go on.

This part of the book is more than a small bit, it shows a soft, young type of push-back. Instead of facing or fixing the twins' wild ways, Alice picks to leave, seeing the mess of their fight. Maria Nikolajeva (2010) notes that, in such books, children oft stand out by not folding to tough rules but by choosing to step back. Alice's choice to not join in the twins' acts shows her free will and her skill to set who she is by her own rules, in and out of the odd ways of Wonderland.

On her trip, Alice keeps face to face with big rules and big character who try to box her in, cut her free will, and mess with her grip on truth. Yet, she does not just give in. Alice keeps a cool head. She oft tests the ways of those near her and shows she is her own by picking when to back off. In the view of Lévi-Strauss's ideas, Alice shows clear thought and can shift, traits that truly differ from the mix-up, stick-in-the-mud ways, and wild bits of the adult world in the book.

Alice's soft push-back in *Through the Looking-Glass* is seen as a young kind of strength. She does not try to tear down power by face-offs or might. She shows the breaks in top-down rules, asks about their core, and in the end, backs off from their not-backed rules. This put her as a mark of clear thought in a two-sided fight with wild big character, in line with Lévi-Strauss's view that sense comes from such fights. By not trying to rule and by leaning on clear thought and smart stepping back, Alice shows how the push of children can be a strong mind and right weight to adult rule.