



# CENTRAL ASIAN JOURNAL OF LITERATURE, PHILOSOPHY AND CULTURE

eISSN: 2660-6828 | Volume: 03 Issue: 12 Dec 2022  
<https://cajipc.centralasianstudies.org>

## Is Nonsense Absurd?

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*Received 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct 2022, Accepted 24<sup>th</sup> Nov 2022, Online 30<sup>th</sup> Dec 2022*

### ANNOTATION

The article analyzes the method of “nonsense” characteristic of English literature, its differences and similarities with absurdity.

**KEYWORDS:** nonsense, method, absurd, Victorian era, folklore.

Literary critics usually commenting on the Victorian era in English literature, emphasize that the industrialization process prevailing throughout the country is reflected in the material and spiritual world of people in the works of the artists of this period. Undoubtedly, in this period writers such as W. Thackeray, Ch. Dickens, E. Gaskell, Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot moved away from romanticism and created in critical-realism and they tried to hide the spiritual tragedy of a person oppressed by domestic life behind the bitter laughter of satire, contradictions and spiritual transformations.

However, in the Victorian era, there were also such writers whose works were connected with the folklore of the nation and they played main role in this field. For instance, mathematician, logician and the author of two world-famous fairy tales – “Alice in Wonderland” and “Alice Through the Looking Glass” Lewis Carroll was one of the famous writer in that period. And it means that in England with sharp, bitter laughter of critical realism flourished other methods of literature, such as nonsense, which embodies the genre, image and playful tone characteristic of folklore.

In the fairy tales, the journey of a little girl named Alice to two strange worlds (in a dream), what she saw and experienced there is reflected, and the they end with the girl waking up from sleep. For the first time, it seems as if the writer tells a wonderful story to children with the help of folklore genre, characters, plot line, song-poem, etc., and the reader can enjoy finding writer’s wonderful word games in the text. However, such an approach to the rare works of a mathematician, logician and storyteller is extremely superficial, and it proves that his work is still being researched, and that his literary work was carried out in the context of the “nonsense” literary method. Because understanding the literary phenomenon of nonsense can be the “key” to understanding the idea of Carroll’s works.

If we study the analyzes of the literary method of nonsense, which is considered to be the literary property of England (they mainly belong to Russian researchers familiar to us), one controversial issue is clearly visible in them. This issue is also important because its analysis makes it easier to understand the literary phenomenon of nonsense and Carroll's philosophy of fairy tales.

The issue is that in a number of studies, the terms "absurd", "classical absurd", "linguistic absurd" are used as synonyms and equivalents to the literary phenomenon "nonsense". It seems that there is nothing wrong with it, but the absurdism as a philosophical perspective and nonsense is an absolutely separate phenomena, which is also reflected in the fact that they correspond to different periods in terms of their emergence and development. In addition, there are legitimate questions about the interdependence, similarities and differences of both literary phenomena, the analysis of which reveals the essence of nonsense as a literary movement.

First of all, it should be noted that the literary phenomenon of "nonsense" is a method studied only in the context of English literature. Although Edward Lear (1812–1888) is considered the founder of the nonsense tradition, in his study "The Origins of English Nonsense" Noel Malcolm tried to prove that nonsense is a universal category beyond the boundaries of time and that examples of it can be found in different cultures, and exaggerated satirical methods typical of the method (fustian, bombast, canting), parody, macaronic poems (macaronics), impossibilia (changing the natural order of things and events), gibberish, dream, delirium, folklore and carnival elements are also found in works in German, French and Spanish, "It is inappropriate to say that exactly one of these genres, methods caused the emergence of nonsense poetry, but all of them make up a large part of the tools used by literary nonsense,"<sup>1</sup> he says. Theorist scientist Malcolm's views cannot be denied, because the roots of "nonsense" go directly to folklore. The use of folklore is one of the main requirements of a nonsense work, regardless of whether it is in prose or lyric. Carroll follows this without deviating in both tales.

Both of the writer's works are in the genre of fairy tales and author used different folkloric characters such as the Cheshire Cat, the March Hare, Humpty-Dumpty, the Unicorn, proverbs ("Grinning just like the Cheshire Cat" "Cats can look at kings" the author skillfully used the parodies of folk poems etc.) in his works. But Carroll doesn't just copy them, he uses them extensively, often with completely unexpected results. He also applies crazy-inversion not only to things and people, but also to concepts and structures.

The balance between meaning and meaninglessness is the most striking aspect of nonsense literature. In such a work, the first thing the reader notices is a series of methods that the deliberately created language distortions which give to new meanings. When Carroll's fairy tales are analyzed in depth, we understand that they deal with the issues of era, existence of the form and content of words. Nonsense is a world completely unlike real life, against all rules and boundaries in society. In this world they don't know what social distinction is, they don't think about money and profit, they don't try to be free from sin, they don't go to church, they don't practice hypocrisy, they don't fear from death. And they do not care about food, drink, height, movement and sleep, which are necessary for living. Death, illness, and injury are thought of quite differently than in the real world. Nonsense is neither a moral nor a religious genre, on the contrary, many things in it are aimed at showing the opposite of the religious-moral and social customs of the nineteenth century. The existing reality, relations in society, illogicality, considering human life to be meaningless are hidden behind the smile of crazy characters in nonsense, and this reminds us of the meaning of the supporters

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<sup>1</sup> Noel M. The Origins of English Nonsense. London, 1998.

of the absurd that a person does not even understand why he lives. This point of view is the basis for joining the conclusion that nonsense is a relative phenomenon to absurdity<sup>2</sup>. Among the converging aspects of nonsense and absurd, it can be said that they are created on the basis of their own laws, and in the process of creating their realities, which are often contrary to reality, they do not destroy existing meanings and do not strive for illogic, but transform them. According to the absurd researcher O. D. Burenika, the absurd creates a parallel reality. Based on this, Burenika divides the absurd into two phases: destructive (destructive) and creative (creative). He said that artists who destroy something through the absurd always create or open something new. In his play, S. Beckett created a world that can only be understandable with the help of his own logic. Carroll's Alice also falls into such peculiar worlds.

It is known that absurdist writers try to deny the error underlying their ideas, in which their contemporaries see "nothing inconsistent with common sense." For example, Kafka created the lives of his characters on the basis of bureaucratic rules, which are not human, but desired by diplomats, lawyers and other office workers. As a result, an absurd world is decided, in which a thinking person cannot live. Nonsense, on the other hand, does not try to make or correct the world. It does not distort ideas and information, does not illuminate the negative aspects of human life. K. Farrell, in his doctoral dissertation "Synaptic Estimates: Lewis Carroll, Linguistic Nonsense, and Cyberpunk" (1998), says that "nonsense as a literary device is a play between reader and writer, character and reader, and character and writer."<sup>3</sup> The next difference between the two concepts is manifested in the fact that nonsense is only a literary phenomenon, and absurd is a philosophical, moral, psychoanalytical phenomenon. Absurd is an abstract concept, which comes at the level of a more philosophical category, which requires the study of the literature of the absurd through philosophical ideas, including the idea of existentialism. Absurdity is much more closely tied to reality than nonsense, but in fact neither concept can exist without reality. In this case, it is appropriate to quote Peter Heath, who wrote a review of Carroll's works: "The difference between nonsense and absurd is that the first of them concerns the generally accepted logic, rules of language, norms of behavior and causal relations, and the second is excessively devoted to these". Just like a writer of nonsense, instead of evading the terms with ease, the absurdist stubbornly adheres to them even when they lose their meaning, and ignores the resulting absurdity. Considering the distinction between absurdity and nonsense, it should not be forgotten that nonsense is a literary metagenre that can be easily distinguished and formed (nonsense can be reflected in various genres: lyric, novel, poem, drama, etc.) .

While studying the studies of both literary phenomena, their differences are many, but the harmony of hope in the philosophies of both is surprising. This is especially evident in the direction of who was a supporter of A. Camus. In the eyes of Camus, with a thousand hardships, and knowing that it will roll again, the situation of Sisyphus is an absurd world, while Carroll says that the world is full of crazy characters, strange creatures, illogical decisions, instability is nonsense. However, the hope that Camus saw in the eternal punishment of the rebellious, cunning, clever Sisyphus, we see in the awakening of Alice from the dream, a girl who is stubborn, who constantly asks questions, who is not afraid to be different from others, who can't keep quiet when she sees her disobedience. It is hope (which is in action) that brings the wind of happiness to a senseless, absurd

<sup>2</sup> Чарская-Бойко В.Ю. К вопросу о концепции абсурда и нонсенса в Европейской традиции//Известия Российского государственного педагогического университета им. А.И.Герцена. 2009. Стр 215.

<sup>3</sup> Farrell J. K. Synaptic Boojums: Lewis Carroll, Linguistic nonsense, and cyberpunk: дис. на соис. учен. степени д-ра философ. наук. 1998

life, but for this, the hero must rebel against the nonsenseness around him like Alice, constantly search for the stone by asking questions to himself and others, and believe that his fate is in his hands like Sisyphus.

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