Bloom's Modern Critical

INTERPRETATIONS

Edited and with an Introduction by **HAROLD BLOOM**

Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations

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Lewis Carroll's *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND*

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Editor's Note

My Introduction meditates upon Lewis Carroll's enigmatic allegory, with its implicit principle that Wonderland is the realm in which time has been slain.

The English novelist J.B. Priestley finds in Humpty Dumpty "the air of a solemn literary man" or would-be literary critic, while Florence Becker Lennon interprets Wonderland as Carroll's refuge from academic and clerical inanities.

William Empson, one of the best modern critics, shrewdly analyzes Carroll's Alice as the "swain" of pastoral tradition, after which Elizabeth Sewell examines Nonsense as Carroll's literary mode, in which there is no emotion.

Carroll's Looking Glass world is judged by Alexander L. Taylor to be a new realm of morality, while Phyllis Greenacre delves into the mask of Carroll to uncover hidden aspects of Dodgson's personality.

Wonderland's remarkable poetry is characterized by Richard Kelly as parodistic sublimity, after which Donald Rackin quests for the dark linkage between love and death in both chronicles of Alice.

Carroll's genre evades every definition, though Nina Demurova gallantly brings together Shakespearean dialogue and folk literature in an illuminating way.

In an original venture, Karoline Leach suggests that Carroll (Dodgson) never proposed to Alice Liddell, but actually was deeply attracted to the girl's mother. In any case, I agree with Hugh Haughton's contention that that the identity of Carroll's Alice transcends any idea of order available in Dodgson's social world.

In this volume's final essay, Will Brooker emphasizes the elegiac aspect of Carroll's Alice, which certainly is a crucial element in the tonality of Carroll's art.

My Afterthought itself is a brief elegy for Carroll's popularity, which currently is fading among the children of the world, who pass from J.K. Rowling to Stephen King, in our Age of Information and the Screens: television, cinema, and computer.

HAROLD BLOOM

Introduction

I

> "And yet what a dear little puppy it was!" said Alice, as she leant against a buttercup to rest herself, and fanned herself with one of the leaves. "I should have liked teaching it tricks very much, if—if I'd only been the right size to do it! Oh dear! I'd nearly forgotten that I've got to grow up again!"

Whatever the process is of renewing one's experience of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking-Glass*, and *The Hunting of the Snark*, the sensation is neither that of rereading nor of reading as though for the first time. Lewis Carroll is Shakespearean to the degree that his writing has become a kind of Scripture for us. Take, quite at random, the sublimely outrageous chapter 6, "Pig and Pepper," of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Alice enters a large, smoky kitchen and discovers an atmosphere permeated with pepper, a sneezing duchess, and a howling and sneezing baby, as well as a cook stirring a cauldron of soup, and a large, grinning Cheshire Cat. Carroll's prevalent phantasmagoria heightens (if that is possible) as the cook commences to throw everything within her reach (fire-irons, saucepans, dishes) at the Duchess and her howling imp, while the Duchess cries out, "Chop off her head!" and sings a sort of lullaby to her baby, thoughtfully shaking it (violently) at the end of each line:

"Speak roughly to your little boy,
And beat him when he sneezes:
He only does it to annoy,
Because he knows it teases."

CHORUS
(in which the cook and the baby joined):—
"Wow! wow! wow!"

While the Duchess sang the second verse of the song, she kept tossing the baby violently up and down, and the poor little thing howled so, that Alice could hardly hear the words:—

"I speak severely to my boy,
And beat him when he sneezes:
For he can thoroughly enjoy
The pepper when he pleases!"

CHORUS
"Wow! wow! wow!"

"Here! You may nurse it a bit, if you like!" the Duchess said to Alice, flinging the baby at her as she spoke. "I must go and get ready to play croquet with the Queen," and she hurried out of the room. The cook threw a frying-pan after her as she went, but it just missed her.

Carroll stated the parodist's principle as choosing the best poems for model, but here the paradigm is a ghastly children's poem of the mid-nineteenth century:

Speak gently to the little child!
Its love be sure to gain;
Teach it in accents soft and mild;
It may not long remain.

That is ghastly enough to be its own parody, but Carroll wants it for his own dark purposes. The pepper is peculiarly analogous to a sexual stimulant, and the baby boy turns out to be a pig (presumably because little boys were not the objects of Carroll's affections). Alice, like Carroll, has no use for them:

> So she set the little creature down, and felt quite relieved to see it trot away quietly into the wood. "If it had grown up," she said to herself, "it would have made a dreadfully ugly child: but it makes rather a handsome pig, I think." And she began thinking over other children she knew, who might do very well as pigs, and was just saying to herself, "if one only knew the right way to change them—" when she was a little startled by seeing the Cheshire Cat sitting on a bough of a tree a few yards off.

The Cheshire Cat is an ironic enigma, typical of many such in Carroll's enigmatic or riddling allegory. He is thoroughly unpleasant, but so, generally, are many of the inhabitants of Wonderland. It is a truism of criticism to remark that the child Alice is considerably more mature than any of the inhabitants of Wonderland, but what the Cheshire Cat remarks is true also:

> The Cat only grinned when it saw Alice. It looked good-natured, she thought: still it had *very* long claws and a great many teeth, so she felt that it ought to be treated with respect.
>
> "Cheshire Puss," she began, rather timidly, as she did not at all know whether it would like the name: however, it only grinned a little wider. "Come, it's pleased so far," thought Alice, and she went on. "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"
>
> "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to," said the Cat.
>
> "I don't much care where—" said Alice.
>
> "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.
>
> "—so long as I get *somewhere*," Alice added as an explanation. "Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "if you only walk long enough."
>
> Alice felt that this could not be denied, so she tried another question. "What sort of people live about here?"
>
> "In *that* direction," the Cat said, waving its right paw round, "lives a Hatter: and in *that* direction," waving the other paw, "lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad."
>
> "But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.
>
> "Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat: "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."
>
> "How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.

> "You must be," said the Cat, "or you wouldn't have come here."
>
> Alice didn't think that proved it at all: however, she went on: "And how do you know that you're mad?"
>
> "To begin with," said the Cat, "a dog's not mad. You grant that?"
>
> "I suppose so," said Alice.
>
> "Well, then," the Cat went on, "you see a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now *I* growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad."
>
> "*I* call it purring, not growling," said Alice.

Is Alice mad, because she has come to Wonderland? When the Cheshire Cat reappears, it stages a famously slow vanishing, ending with its grin, which stays on for some time after the rest of it is gone. That ontological grin is the emblem of the Cheshire Cat's madness, and is the prelude to the Mad Tea Party of the next chapter, which in turn is emblematical of the *Alice* books, since they can be described, quite accurately, as a mad tea party, rather than a nonsensical tea party. Lionel Trilling spoke of "the world of nonsense, that curious invention of the English of the nineteenth century, of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear," and confessed that, critically, nonsense seemed to him inexplicable: "One of the mysteries of art, perhaps as impenetrable as why tragedy gives pleasure, is why nonsense commands so fascinated an attention, and why, when it succeeds, it makes more than sense."

A critic as distinguished as Trilling, William Empson, sought to solve the mystery by finding a defense against madness in Alice's characteristic stance:

> Much of the technique of the rudeness of the Mad Hatter has been learned from Hamlet. It is the ground-bass of this kinship with insanity, I think, that makes it so clear that the books are not trifling, and the cool courage with which Alice accepts madmen that gives them their strength.
>
> ("The Child as Swain," *Some Versions of Pastoral*)

It does not seem to me either that Carroll makes nonsense into "more than sense" or that Alice's undoubted courage is particularly cool. Unlike the sublime Edward Leaf, Carroll does not read to me as a nonsense writer. Riddle is not nonsense, and enigmatic allegory does not exalt courage as the major virtue. Carroll is a Victorian Romantic just as were his exact contemporaries, the Pre-Raphaelite poets, but his phantasmagoria, utterly unlike theirs, is a wholly successful defense against, or revision of, High

Romantic Quest. Christina Rossetti's *Goblin Market* has more in common with Edward Lear than Carroll does, and Swinburne is an even defter parodist than Carroll.

Carroll's parodies, sometimes brilliant though they are, do not transcend their echoes, do not reverse Carroll's own burden of literary belatedness. But the *Alice* books and *The Hunting of the Snark* do achieve convincing originality, while the Pre-Raphaelites sometimes are merely involuntary parodies of Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, and Browning. Romantic erotic quest, which ends in the Inferno of Shelley's *The Triumph of Life*, is displaced into the purgatorial sadomasochism of the Pre-Raphaelite poets. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Swinburne, and their critical follower, Pater, substitute or trope the body for time, and accept the violence of the will's revenge against time upon their own bodies.

Carroll evades both sadomasochism and the Romantic erotic quest by identifying himself with the seven-year-old Alice. Wonderland has only one reality principle, which is that time has been murdered. Nothing need be substituted for time, even though only madness can murder time. Alice is only as mad as she needs to be, which may be her actual legacy from Hamlet. She will not grow up, or sexually mature, so long as she can get back into Wonderland, and she can get back out of Wonderland whenever she needs to. The Pre-Raphaelites and Pater are immersed in the world of the reality principle, the world of Schopenhauer and Freud. Psychoanalytic interpretations of Carroll's works always fail, because they are necessarily easy and vulgar, and therefore disgusting. Alice does not deign to be told what she is evading, and Carroll's books are not exercises in sublimation. What is repressed in them is his discomfort with culture, including Wordsworth, the largest precursor of his vision.

II

> "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!"

This is the crisis of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, it asserts Alice's freedom from her own phantasmagoria, after which she returns to our order of reality. The parallel moment in *Through the Looking-Glass* is a weak repetition of this splendor:

> There was not a moment to be lost. Already several of the guests were lying down in the dishes, and the soup-ladle was walking up the table towards Alice's chair, and beckoning to her impatiently to get out of its way.
>
> "I can't stand this any longer!" she cried, as she jumped up and seized the tablecloth with both hands: one good pull, and plates, dishes, guests, and candles came crashing down together in a heap on the floor.

The movement from "You're nothing but a pack of cards!" to "I can't stand this any longer!" is a fair representation of the relative aesthetic decline the reader experiences as she goes from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to *Through the Looking-Glass*. Had the first book never existed, our regard for the second would be unique and immense, which is only another way of admiring how the first *Alice* narrative is able to avoid any human affect as mundane as bitterness. The White Rabbit is an extraordinary parody of Carroll's own sense of literary and even erotic belatedness, yet the quality he conveys is an exuberant vivacity. We are, all of us, now perpetually late for a very important date, but that apprehension of being late, late is for many among us an anxious expectation. For Carroll, in his first vision as Alice, everything is again early, which gives the book its pure and radiant atmosphere of a triumphant firstness.

Bitterness keeps breaking in as we read *Through the Looking-Glass*, which may explain how weirdly and perpetually contemporary this second and somewhat lesser work now seems. Its epitome is that grand poem, "The Walrus and the Carpenter":

> "'But wait a bit,' the Oysters cried,
> 'Before we have our chat;
> For some of us are out of breath,
> And all of us are fat!'
> 'No hurry!' said the Carpenter.
> They thanked him much for that.
>
> 'A loaf of bread,' the Walrus said,
> 'Is what we chiefly need:
> Pepper and vinegar besides
> Are very good indeed—
> Now, if you're ready, Oysters dear,
> We can begin to feed.'

'But not on us!' the Oysters cried,
  Turning a little blue.
'After such kindness, that would be
  A dismal thing to do!'
'The night is fine,' the Walrus said.
  'Do you admire the view?

'It was so kind of you to come!
  And you are very nice!'
The Carpenter said nothing but
  'Cut us another slice.
I wish you were not quite so deaf—
  I've had to ask you twice!'

'It seems a shame,' the Walrus said,
  'To play them such a trick.
After we've brought them out so far,
  And made them trot so quick!'
The Carpenter said nothing but
  'The butter's spread too thick!'

'I weep for you,' the Walrus said:
  'I deeply sympathize.'
With sobs and tears he sorted out
  Those of the largest size,
Holding his pocket-handkerchief
  Before his streaming eyes.

'O Oysters,' said the Carpenter,
  'You've had a pleasant run!
Shall we be trotting home again?'
  But answer came there none
And this was scarcely odd, because
  They'd eaten every one."

In an additional stanza, written for a theatrical presentation of the *Alice* narratives, but fortunately not part of our received text, Carroll accuses the Walrus and the Carpenter of "craft and cruelty," a judgment in which Alice joins him when she remarks that "They were *both* very unpleasant characters—." But so are the Sheep, and that pompous egg-head Humpty

Dumpty, though we do not receive them as quite the weird representations that actually they indeed constitute. Carroll's art renders each of them as totally idiosyncratic, it being Carroll's largest enigma that only Alice, in either book, lacks personality or pathos. In "The Walrus and the Carpenter," those two voracious deceivers are neatly distinguished from one another. They are both weepers, high Victorian sentimentalists, living in a contra-natural midnight world where the sun outshines the sulky moon, presumably an indication that this world oddly is natural—all-too-natural—which is to say: hungry.

The Walrus and the Carpenter weep to increase their appetites, as it were, but the Walrus, being the orator of the two, is finally so moved by his own eloquence that he weeps on, even when he is happily satiated. Though he is more cunning than the Carpenter, he is also less sadistic; we wince a bit at the Carpenter's "Shall we be trotting home again?" but we ought to wince more when the Walrus sobbingly says: "I weep for you. I deeply sympathize."

Humpty Dumpty may well be Carroll's most famous enigma, and his most Shakespearean. He is also a prophecy of many of our contemporary literary theorists: "I can explain all the poems that ever were invented—and a good many that haven't been invented just yet." "You're so exactly like other people," Humpty Dumpty rather nastily says to Alice, but he receives his comeuppance just as she pronounces her accurate normative judgment that he is truly "unsatisfactory."

The White Knight, at once the most satisfactory and charmingly pleasant of Carroll's enigmas, is the figure in *Through the Looking-Glass* who returns us vividly to the gentler spirit of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. There is a critical tradition that the White Knight is a self-portrait of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, the other self of Lewis Carroll in the world of the reality principle. There may be something to this, but more palpably the White Knight is a version of the kindly, heroic, and benignly mad Don Quixote. The White Knight's madness is like Alice's own malady, if the Cheshire Cat was right about Alice. It is the madness of play, Carroll's sweet madness, a defense against darker madness.

Carroll's best poem is "The White Knight's Ballad," which is a superb and loving parody of Wordsworth's great crisis-poem "Resolution and Independence." Wordsworth's near-solipsism, his inability to listen to what the old Leech-gatherer is saying in answer to the poet's anguished question ("How is it that you live, and what is it you do?") was mocked rather mercilessly in Carroll's original version of his poem, published in 1856, fifteen years before *Through the Looking-Glass*. In the 1856 poem, "Upon the Lonely Moor," the poet is outrageously rough and even brutal to the aged

man, who is not just unheard but is kicked, punched, boxed on the ear, and has his hair tweaked. All this happily is softened in the beautiful revision that is the song sung by the White Knight:

> "It's long," said the Knight, "but it's very, *very* beautiful. Everybody that hears me sing it—either it brings the *tears* into their eyes, or else—"
>
> "Or else what?" said Alice, for the Knight had made a sudden pause.
>
> "Or else it doesn't, you know. The name of the song is called '*Haddocks' Eyes*.'"
>
> "Oh, that's the name of the song, is it?" Alice said, trying to feel interested.
>
> "No, you don't understand," the Knight said, looking a little vexed. "That's what the name is *called*. The name really is '*The Aged Aged Man*.'"
>
> "Then I ought to have said 'That's what the *song* is called'?" Alice corrected herself.
>
> "No, you oughtn't: that's quite another thing! The song is called '*Ways And Means*': but that's only what it's *called*, you know!"
>
> "Well, what *is* the song, then?" said Alice, who was by this time completely bewildered.
>
> "I was coming to that," the Knight said. "The song really is '*A-sitting On A Gate*': and the tune's my own invention."
>
> So saying, he stopped his horse and let the reins fall on its neck: then, slowly beating time with one hand, and with a faint smile lighting up his gentle foolish face, as if he enjoyed the music of his song, he began.
>
> Of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly. Years afterwards she could bring the whole scene back again, as if it had been only yesterday—the mild blue eyes and kindly smile of the Knight—the setting sun gleaming through his hair, and shining on his armour in a blaze of light that quite dazzled her—the horse quietly moving about, with the reins hanging loose on his neck, cropping the grass at her feet—and the black shadows of the forest behind—all this she took in like a picture, as, with one hand shading her eyes, she leant against a tree, watching the strange pair, and listening, in a half-dream, to the melancholy music of the song.

"But the tune *isn't* his own invention," she said to herself: "it's '*I give thee all, I can no more.*'" She stood and listened very attentively, but no tears came into her eyes.

"I'll tell thee everything I can:
There's little to relate.
I saw an aged aged man,
A-sitting on a gate.
'Who are you, aged man?' I said.
'And how is it you live?'
And his answer trickled through my head,
Like water through a sieve.

He said 'I look for butterflies
That sleep among the wheat:
I make them into mutton-pies,
And sell them in the street.
I sell them unto men,' he said,
'Who sail on stormy seas;
And that's the way I get my bread—
A trifle, if you please.'

But I was thinking of a plan
To dye one's whiskers green,
And always use so large a fan
That they could not be seen.
So, having no reply to give
To what the old man said,
I cried 'Come, tell me how you live!'
And thumped him on the head.

His accents mild took up the tale:
He said 'I go my ways,
And when I find a mountain-rill,
I set it in a blaze;
And thence they make a stuff they call
Rowland's Macassar-Oil—
Yet twopence-halfpenny is all
They give me for my toil.'

But I was thinking of a way
    To feed oneself on batter,
And so go on from day to day
    Getting a little fatter.
I shook him well from side to side,
    Until his face was blue:
'Come, tell me how you live,' I cried,
    'And what it is you do!'

He said 'I hunt for haddocks' eyes
    Among the heather bright,
And work them into waistcoat-buttons
    In the silent night.
And these I do not sell for gold
    Or coin of silvery shine,
But for a copper halfpenny,
    And that will purchase nine.'"

Thumped and shaken blue, but otherwise undamaged, the aged hunter for haddocks' eyes is a belated but less fearful representative of the reality principle than Wordsworth's Leech-gatherer. As much as the Leech-gatherer, the White Knight's decrepit survivor is "like a man from some far region sent, / To give me human strength, by apt admonishment." The alternative for Carroll, as for Wordsworth, would be despondency and madness, the waning of the poet's youthful joy into a death-in-life. But Carroll, fiercely defending against his own Wordsworthianism, triumphantly makes it new in a final vision of the aged man that is anything but Wordsworthian, because it is pure Wonderland:

"And now, if e'er by chance I put
    My fingers into glue,
Or madly squeeze a right-hand foot
    Into a left-hand shoe,
Or if I drop upon my toe
    A very heavy weight,
I weep, for it reminds me so
Of that old man I used to know—
Whose look was mild, whose speech
    was slow,

Whose hair was whiter than the snow,
Whose face was very like a crow,
With eyes, like cinders, all aglow,
Who seemed distracted with his woe,
Who rocked his body to and fro,
And muttered mumblingly and low,
As if his mouth were full of dough,
Who snorted like a buffalo—
That summer evening long ago,
A-sitting on a gate."

J.B. PRIESTLEY

A Note on Humpty Dumpty

Alice in Wonderland and *Through the Looking-Glass* are, I understand, to be published for the first time in German. When I first learned this important fact, it surprised me for a moment, for I had thought that both these classics had by this time passed into all civilized tongues; but after some little reflection, I soon realized that if they had been popular in Germany, we should have known about it. It is not difficult to imagine what will happen when the *Alice* books are well known there, for we know what happened to Shakespeare. A cloud of commentators will gather, and a thousand solemn Teutons will sit down to write huge volumes of comment and criticism; they will contrast and compare the characters (there will even be a short chapter on Bill the Lizard), and will offer numerous conflicting interpretations of the jokes. After that, Freud and Jung and their followers will inevitably arrive upon the scene, and they will give us appalling volumes on *Sexualtheorie of Alice in Wonderland*, on the *Assoziationsfähigkeit und Assoziationsstudien* of Jabberwocky, on the inner meaning of the conflict between Tweedledum and Tweedledee from the *psychoanalytische und psychopathologische* points of view. We shall understand, for the first time, the peculiarly revolting symbolism of the Mad Hatter's Tea-Party, and my old friend, the Mad Hatter himself, will be shown to be a mere bundle of neuroses. And as for Alice—but no, Alice shall be spared; I, for one, am not going to be the first to disillusion the

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wistful shade of Lewis Carroll; may he remain in ignorance a little longer as to what there really was in Alice's mind, the Wonderland (save the mark!) in Alice.

How will Humpty Dumpty fare among the German critics and commentators? I shall be interested to learn, for there has always seemed to me about Humpty Dumpty the air of a solemn literary man, and I was driven to thinking about him only a few days ago, when I had been reading the work of a rather pontifical and humorless young critic whose name I would not divulge for the world. There is quite a little school of youngish critics in this country and America whose work, at once pretentious and barren, has always seemed to me to have a certain "note" in it that was vaguely familiar; but it was not until the other day that I realized where it was I had caught that manner, heard those accents, before. It was in *Through the Looking-Glass*. Humpty Dumpty has not had justice done to him; he is a prophetic figure, and Lewis Carroll, in drawing him, was satirizing a race of critics that did not then exist. Now that they do exist and put their insufferable writings before us at every turn, it is high time we learned to appreciate Carroll's character sketch for what it is—a master stroke of satire in anticipation. I do not say for one moment that such an explanation will exhaust the significance of Humpty Dumpty, for I should not be surprised if there are not other, deeper and more esoteric, interpretations of this character waiting to be discovered by members of the Theosophical Society and others; but it is Humpty Dumpty as a literary character that interests me, and so I shall confine myself to this one aspect. Let us approach the text while it is still unencumbered with German professors.

Alice, you will remember, discovers Humpty Dumpty (who has just been an egg in a shop) sitting on the top of a high and extremely narrow wall, and she takes him for a stuffed figure. This is, you will observe, our introduction to him: notice the *high* wall, so narrow that Alice "wondered how he could keep his *balance*" (the italics are mine) and the *stuffed figure*. Remember these things, and think of that darling of the tiny coteries, Mr. Blank, that owlish young critic: I say no more. It is characteristic of all such critics that they very quickly show a contempt for their audience; they are all for the select few, who can appreciate Flaubert and Stendhal and Chekhov and no one else. Humpty Dumpty strikes this note very early: "Some people," he remarks, at the very beginning of the talk, "have no more sense than a baby!" Immediately afterwards, he asks Alice what her name *means* and is annoyed because she does not know, a significant procedure that needs no comment from me. Then Alice, who represents the normal person, asks a question of the utmost importance—

> *"Don't you think you'd be safer down on the ground?" Alice went on, not with any idea of making another riddle, but simply in her good-natured anxiety for the queer creature. "That wall is so very narrow!"*

Indeed, the whole passage is significant. Notice that Humpty Dumpty thinks that every simple question is a riddle, something for him to solve triumphantly, and he cannot understand that Alice, standing firmly on the ground, may be wiser than he and may be really giving advice and not seeking the answers to trifling conundrums. He, of course, prefers to be in the air, and the very *narrowness* of his wall appeals to him. Again, on the very same page, we discover him breaking into a sudden passion because Alice interrupts with "To send all his horses and all his men." What he thought a grand secret is in reality a mere commonplace, known to Alice and everybody else, and only his blind conceit has prevented him from discovering this fact before: there is no necessity to labor the point or to indicate the analogy. Very typical too is the pedantry he displays, shortly afterwards, in the discussion about Alice's age—

> *"I thought you meant 'How old are you?'" Alice exclaimed. "If I'd meant that, I'd have said it," said Humpty Dumpty.*

And the next moment, he shows his hand again by remarking: "Now if you'd asked *my* advice, I'd have said, 'Leave off at seven'—but it's too late now." Here is that characteristic reluctance to come to terms with reality, that love of fixed standards, rigidity, arrested development, that hatred of change and evolution, which always mark this type of mind.

It would not be difficult to follow the conversation step by step and find something typical of the fourth-rate critic in every remark that Humpty Dumpty makes; but we must pass on to the latter part of the chapter, in which the conversation turns upon literary themes. Here the clues to Carroll's real intention in writing the chapter are plain for everyone to see. After the talk about un-birthday presents, Humpty Dumpty, it will be remembered, exclaims: "There's glory for you!" Alice, of course, does not understand what he means by "glory," and says so, upon which he smiles contemptuously and cries: "Of course you don't—till I tell you." At every step now the satire becomes more and more direct, until, we reach the very climax in Humpty Dumpty's cry of "Impenetrability! That's what I say!" Who does not know those superior beings who, when they write what they allege to be literary criticism, talk of "planes" and "dimensions," of "static" and "dynamic," of "objective correlative," and jargon only knows what else!

And here is Humpty Dumpty, swaying on his high and narrow wall and crying, in a kind of ecstasy, "Impenetrability!"—Humpty Dumpty, the very type and symbol of all such jargoneers. Alice, as usual, speaks for the sane mass of mankind when she remarks so thoughtfully, "That's a great deal to make one word mean." Of course it is a great deal, but then Humpty Dumpty and his kind pester us with their uncouth and inappropriate terms so that they may be spared the labor of thought and yet may convey the impression of great profundity. There is a certain periodical written for the benefit of superior persons in America, a periodical in which every article bristles with terrifying names and pretentious technical terms that really mean little or nothing, and if I had my way there would be scored across every page of that periodical, in the largest and blackest of letters, the blessed word "Impenetrability." But hardly less significant is Humpty Dumpty's reply to Alice's request that he should explain to her the meaning of the poem "Jabberwocky." For once he is eager, alert, on his mettle: "Let's hear it," he cries. "I can explain all the poems that ever were invented—and a good many that haven't been invented just yet." Of course he can, and so can all his tribe; they are forever explaining poems, forever mauling and manhandling their betters, the poets. But what, it may be asked, is meant by that reference to a good many poems "that haven't been invented yet"? For my part, I hold that it refers to the sketchy verses written by his friends, members of his little coterie, for such verses can hardly be said to have been invented, and it is only when they are explained by the friendly critic that they really come into existence as inventions at all. Finally, it is inevitable that we should discover that Humpty Dumpty, too, writes verse. This fact alone proves conclusively that Lewis Carroll, having had a sudden and disturbing vision of what was to come, meant this Humpty Dumpty episode to be a satire. True, the verses themselves are better, at least technically, than those we are treated to by the young critics who are aimed at, but it is extremely likely that our author, even in parody, felt that he ought not to fall below a certain standard. But the poem, if it can be called a poem, that Humpty Dumpty recites has certain characteristics that are by this time only too familiar to readers of verse: it has that abrupt manner, that sense of incompleteness, that suggestion of vague symbolism, which we know only too well. Such verses as—

> *The little fishes' answer was*
> *"We cannot do it, Sir, because—"*

and

> *And when I found the door was shut,*
> *I tried to turn the handle, but—*

leave us in doubt as to who are the posthumous victims of this satirical genius. And we have only to think of what we have suffered from such persons, and in particular (not to mince matters) Mr. Blank and Mr. Dash, to agree that once again Alice is made to speak for all of us when she exclaims, as she walks away from the absurd figure perched on the high and narrow wall, "Of all the unsatisfactory people I *ever* met...." There is clearly no more to be said; the episode is at an end; Humpty Dumpty and all his later followers are annihilated.

FLORENCE BECKER LENNON

Escape into the Garden

Poor Alice! It was as much as she could do, lying on one side, to look through into the garden with one eye; but to get through was more hopeless than ever: she sat down and began to cry again.

When Charles Dodgson became sub-librarian of Christ Church in 1855, he was privileged to use the little room off the upper library, overlooking the deanery garden. On the smooth grass, under the majestic old trees, first Lorina and Alice, then baby Edith, and gradually more and more children, chuckled and tumbled and learned not to make too much noise. The lonely young man upstairs, looking out of the window, must have remembered his childhood days in the garden at Croft, with many little sisters and brothers—especially sisters; and gradually the light of the Never-Never land illuminated the Oxford garden and the Dean's daughters. And the more Mr. Dodgson was captured by Dr. Pusey, the more ravishing the garden and the little girls must have looked.

A few months after his installation in the library, Dodgson took his new camera to the Deanery, and a new phase of his life began. The entry for April 25, 1856, reads: "Went over with Southey in the afternoon to the Deanery, to try and take a photograph of the Cathedral: both attempts proved failures. The three little girls were in the garden most of the time, and we became,

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excellent friends: we tried to group them in the foreground of the picture, but they were not patient sitters. I mark this day with a white stone."

That was Dodgson's symbol for a memorable day. Green thinks this was his first meeting with Alice, then about four years old, though he had made friends with her older brother Harry and sister Lorina.

On June 3 he says, "Spent the morning at the Deanery, photographing the children." Green says this was the first record of his photographing children, and quotes Gernsheim's claim that he was "the best photographer of children in the nineteenth century."

When the three eldest girls were ten, eight, and six years old respectively, the story sessions started. Lorina Charlotte had brown hair and clean-cut features; Alice's hair was cut across her forehead in a fringe—"bangs," we say in America—that emphasized her wistful eyes and dainty three-cornered face; Edith had fluffy bright auburn hair. They commonly wore white cotton frocks, white open-work stockings, and black strap slippers, all alike. The girls would cross Tom Quad with Miss Prickett, the less-than-omniscient governess whose boners are represented in *Alice in Wonderland*. In Mr. Dodgson's rooms, they would pull him down on his large sofa and beg for stories. Seizing the nearest piece of paper, he would start, illustrating as he went along. If one of the girls asked a good question, the story, not perhaps a new one at first, would branch off into some new direction.[1]

Unlike the later child-friends, the Liddell sisters never took tea at his lodgings. In fact, tea for children was still an innovation and a special treat, but on the river trips they took along a big basket with cakes and a teakettle to boil beside a haymow. Four or five times in each summer he took the three on a picnic for either a whole or a half day. Miss Prickett was left behind, but chaperonage was supplied by Canon Robinson Duckworth or one of the brothers Dodgson (for Skeffington and Wilfred had matriculated in 1855), and, on one occasion, by two Dodgson sisters. This was the least successful picnic, for the young ladies, still in their twenties, seemed old and gloomy to the children. (To Ethel Arnold, as a child, they seemed "austere and evangelical.") Songs and stories were omitted; the visitors were plump, and lowered the boat alarmingly. Finally it rained; the boat was abandoned and the return trip made by carriage, with time out in a farm house to dry the bedraggled hoop skirts.[2]

The path to the Isis from Tom Quad passed the smelly Trill Mill stream. Dean Liddell had a new and more appetizing path dug; meanwhile, stepping gingerly, the girls in their big shade hats clung to the hands of the two young men who were simultaneously juggling the luncheon basket. Arrived at the river, young Mr. Dodgson would select the safest, roomiest,

and most comfortable boat, stock it with cushions, and bestow his guests and the luncheon baskets with accurate balance. He rowed stroke and Mr. Duckworth rowed bow; an extra pair of oars was added for the girls' rowing lessons. One of them might hold the tiller rope, and if the boat wove a crooked course, it was all in the name of education.

Dodgson celebrated by doffing his new clericals, and appearing in white flannel trousers and a hard straw hat, with black shoes, of course, since tennis shoes had not been invented. These were the most festive times of his life—he was only thirty on July 4, 1862, when all the rays converge. His life was before him and his powers were at their height. Drifting on the slow Isis that becomes the Thames, in his pleasant, slow voice with its "curious stutter," he wove a dream story for three lovely young ladies and a don. Duckworth asked if it was purely extemporaneous, and he truthfully answered. "Yes."[3] Germination acts that way—one moment there is a brown bud; next moment it is cracked, and a green shoot pushes out. The preparation has been going on in the dark.

They rowed up to Godstow, had tea beside a haymow, and rowed back again, returning by about eight-thirty. Stories had been told and songs had been sung, and at the Deanery door ten-year-old Alice said, "Oh, Mr. Dodgson, I wish you would write out Alice's adventures for me." If she had not sensed something special in that story, perhaps he might not have thought to write it down. Years later he attributed his beginning as a writer to her "infant patronage." How and when he wrote out the story has been told variously by Duckworth and by Alice, in her old age, to her son. But now that we have Dodgson's diaries there is no need to speculate. On the day when he finished the drawings for the manuscript, September 13, 1864, he wrote the data in the diary under July 4, 1862. On a blank page in Volume 9 of the *Diaries* he wrote the following:

> "It was first told July 4 (F.) 1862.
> Headings written out (on my way to London) July 5, 1862.
> M. S. copy begun Nov. 13 (Th.) 1862.
> Text (of *Alice's Adventures Underground*) finished before Feb. 10, 1863.
> Pictures in M. S. finished Sept. 13 (Tu.), 1864. M. S. finally sent to Alice, Nov. 26, 1864."

On July 5 he met the Liddells at the station. They were all on their way to London by the same train. It seems likely he did not sit with them, because he noted writing out the "heads" of the story on the train. It was nearly two and a half years before Alice received the weirdly illustrated little

green book, with the story beautifully written out in Dodgson's best library script.

The Liddell children read and reread it, and kept it on the deanery table for their guests to enjoy. When Mrs. MacDonald read it aloud to her children, Greville, then aged six, said, "There ought to be sixty thousand volumes of it."[4] And Henry Kingsley wrote the author that it should be published.

Dodgson hesitated to risk a loss on the hunch of a child and the praise of one fellow-writer. Duckworth suggested that the book would surely succeed if Tenniel would illustrate it. Eventually the actor Tom Taylor introduced the two men, and on April 5, 1864, arrangements were completed with Macmillan and with Tenniel.

The arrangements with Macmillan are the first of Dodgson's peculiar special methods of doing business. His books, says Charles Morgan, "were, by his own wish, published 'on commission'—that is to say at his own and not the publisher's risk.... What Lewis Carroll understood ... is that in persuading a great house to publish for him on commission he was rarely fortunate.[5]

Tenniel, who had started as a child prodigy, nearly ended as one. When a boy, fencing with his father, he lost the sight of one eye. But the remaining eye saw more than most. At sixteen he exhibited—and sold—an oil painting; not caring for art school, he studied by himself and at he British Museum, with the help of the trustees and free access to all collections. He spent a good deal of time on the Elgin marbles, also known as the Parthenon frieze and pediments, and on the collections of armor and costume. He also liked to visit the Zoological Gardens, but without a sketch book. His memory was phenomenal, and the only model he used was an occasional photograph—with one exception, to be noted later.

His first book illustrations were for a volume of Aesop, published in 1848. When the second cartoonist of *Punch* resigned over a religious difference, Mark Lemon remembered the illustrator of Aesop and engaged him. At first the new man had little chance to show what he could do, apart from title page, decorated initial, and so on, for the first cartoonist was John Leech. Tenniel's earliest cartoons appeared in 1851, without especial success, but by the following year they had improved. He made his name with the drawing for the death of Wellington and the creation of the British Lion. By 1862 he was doing at least one cartoon a week, and, when Leech died in 1864, Tenniel became cartoonist for *Punch*, where he remained for fifty years, retiring at eighty, and living to within three days of his ninety-fourth birthday.

Tenniel was a mild and gentle man who knew his own mind. In illustrating, he put himself in the author's place and used all his imagination and artistry to recreate the latter's ideas. He was, like Dodgson himself, incorruptible and original. These two incompatibles in double harness won the race—and cut the traces. "With *Through the Looking-Glass*," said Tenniel tactfully, "the faculty of making book-illustrations departed from me."

By 1864 he was in a position to ask £148 for illustrating Alice. Dodgson paid this himself, as well as the Dalziel brothers' engraving bill, which for both books came to £203/16. Further, he paid for the plates of the 1865 edition, the rare true first edition, which he called in because the reproduction of the plates left Tenniel dissatisfied. Before photoengraving, the artist drew directly on the wood block—then responsibility passed to the engravers. Fortunately, the Dalziels were at the top of their profession, though Dante Gabriel Rossetti blessed them with: "These engravers! What ministers of wrath! Your drawing comes to them, like Agag, delicately, and is hewn in pieces before the Lord Harry.... As yet, I fare best with W. J. Linton. He keeps stomach-aches for you, but Dalziel deals in fevers and agues."[6] Tenniel, however, worked well with the Dalziels, and also with Joseph Swain, who handled Dodgson's later illustrators' work. The subtleties that this method of engraving could produce required full understanding between engraver and illustrator, and plenty of time and patience—perhaps Rossetti's short suit. Dodgson was never too busy for a conference, never hurried his coworkers, and expected—perfection.

He would have liked illustrating the books himself, till he found that a special technique was required. He is said never to have been satisfied with Tenniel, though everybody else was. Dodgson and Tenniel, like Gilbert and Sullivan, complemented each other artistically, but not without friction. Perhaps Dodgson was a little jealous, and his exacting methods may have gotten on Tenniel's nerves. He proposed a model—Tenniel said he no more needed one than Dodgson needed the multiplication table!

Dodgson's own drawings always expressed two principal aspects of his nature—the humorously horrible and the sweet. The latter gradually encroached on the former, but without quite replacing it. Tenniel's work, of course, was infinitely more vigorous, without much of either the sweet or the horrible, so that Carroll told Harry Furniss he had not liked any of Tenniel's drawings except Humpty Dumpty! But by that time Tenniel was telling Furniss, "Dodgson is impossible! You will never put up with that conceited old Don for more than a week!"[7] How far Harry Furniss' own jealousy colored—or invented—this gossip no one knows. He too drew for *Punch*, but he had to sit in the gallery of Parliament, catching expressions red hot, while

Tenniel, working at home, immortalized his subjects often without having seen more than a photograph.

Mr. Madan asks, "Where did Quentyn Matsys, or Leonardo, see the Ugly Duchess who lived 150 years before their time?"[8] And where did Tenniel see their portraits of poor Margarethe Maultasch? The drawing, attributed—rather doubtfully—to Leonardo, is in the Windsor Castle Library, where Tenniel may have seen it. Once would be enough for that elephantine memory. But it is more likely that he saw the Matsys portrait, for he uses the detail of costume in that painting, which in 1856 belonged to Alfred Seymour.[8]

Mr. Madan himself solved the question of Tenniel's Alice. Dodgson's drawings of her are sweet and gentle, but not otherwise good likenesses of Alice Liddell. Tenniel's Alice, however, is distinctly someone else, and that someone else was Miss Mary Hilton Badcock, later Mrs. Probert. For once in his life, Tenniel was persuaded to use a model.[9]

First he and Dodgson held numerous conferences to determine whether Alice should have a fringe, or "bangs," like Alice Liddell. Since Dodgson deleted the lovely photograph of Alice from the facsimile of the manuscript published in 1886, it was doubtless his idea to have the illustrations in no way resemble her. When he saw a photograph of Mary at a Mr. Gray's, of Sharon, everything was solved. He had only to obtain Canon Badcock's permission for his daughter to sit, and Tenniel's consent to break the habits of a lifetime. Nevertheless Dodgson prevailed, and the artist made several trips to Ripon to sketch the Canon's daughter, who had bright gold hair and was quite a different type from the dark, dreamy Alice Liddell. Dodgson profited by his new friendship to photograph, not only Mary, but also Lucy, Clara, and Emily, her sisters.

Tenniel got a bit of his own back when he was illustrating *Through the Looking-Glass*. There were thirteen chapters, of which Dodgson decided to delete one. The artist suggested sacrificing the one that required him to draw a wasp in a wig. He wrote: "Don't think me brutal, but the wasp chapter doesn't interest me in the least."[5] Whatever Dodgson thought of the brutality, he took the advice.

Canon Duckworth was rewarded for his share in the book. Whenever a batch of Tenniel's engravings arrived, the Canon was invited to dinner, and spent an exciting evening with Dodgson over the pictures, in spite of Harry Furniss' rather spiteful gossip about author and artist.

For the *Alice* books this collaboration was ideal. In their first form, the books are as finished as the Parthenon was before the Turks thought of storing gunpowder in it. The futile attempts to make new illustrations to the *Alice* books resemble the further finishing of the Parthenon when the

gunpowder exploded. An explosion that harmed neither Dodgson nor Tenniel, however, is Marguerite Mespoulet's book, *Creators of Wonderland*. With text and illustration she shows that Tenniel, at least, and Dodgson very probably, was influenced by the work of J. J. Grandville. In the picture of the two footmen in *Wonderland* Tenniel definitely used a frog footman of Grandville's. The Paris *Charivari*, founded in 1832, that used Grandville's pictures, circulated quite freely in England. *Punch*, of course, is the London *Charivari*, and Thackeray, one of its founders, shuttled back and forth between Paris and London, and knew Grandville's work well, as indeed many art lovers in England did.

Miss Mespoulet nowhere claims that Dodgson was necessarily influenced by Grandville, though it seems quite likely he had absorbed Grandville's work, as he had certainly absorbed Lear's *Nonsense Book*, which appeared when he was fourteen. She prefers to call Tenniel the link between the two. Grandville's *autre monde* has much in common with *Wonderland*, but whatever Dodgson took, and wherever he found it, he made it his own.

Angus Davidson finds no mention of Lewis Carroll in Lear's diaries or letters,[10] and Mr. Madan found "*no trace* of Lear"[8] in Dodgson's library at Oxford, yet the two moved in some of the same circles and could hardly have avoided meeting. But, as John Livingston Lowes says in *The Road to Xanadu*: "origins prove *nothing*.... William James bluntly declared ... All they do is to afford a welcome answer to the question: *What has creative Genius framed from its inert stuff*?"[11]

This holds for Tenniel too, who simply lifted his Frog Footman and Fish Footman from Grandville. And yet—simply? He split up Grandville's Frog Footman into two persons, giving the Fish costume to the Frog. And besides, as Alice said, "She was she, and I was I, and oh dear—" Tenniel too made his own whatever he touched. His personal style, unmodified by Grandville, would have been too harsh and uncompromising for the dream books. His taste told him what to use, as in the case of the Ugly Duchess, whom he handled much more mercifully than her original Creator did.

Strained relations or no, Dodgson was not one to forget a collaborator. In 1886 he gave Tenniel an autographed copy of *The Hunting of the Snark*, and in the same year Canon Duckworth received a copy of the facsimile of *Alice Underground*, inscribed: "The Duck from the Dodo, June, 1886."

Canon Duckworth, to be sure, was the Duck in the Caucus-race, and Dodgson was the Dodo. It is hard to see any reason other than a linguistic one for the Dodgson–Dodo constellation. Since 1507, when Portuguese navigators discovered the island later called Mauritius, the dodo (from *doúdo*, Portuguese for *simpleton*) was known to Europeans by hearsay. Dutch sailors

called them *Walckvogel*, or *Walgvögel*—disgusting birds—because, after knocking the poor simpletons down with clubs, they found the meat almost inedible. Conservationists don't know whether the sailors then stopped knocking them dead....

Between 1610 and 1620 several live specimens were brought to Europe, where they lived a short time. One of the last skeletons to be set up was in the Ashmolean Museum in the seventeenth century. About eighty years later nothing remained but the skull and right foot, which were still there recently. There was also a large painting of the bird, which Dodgson and Tenniel may have seen. The last records of a living dodo date from 1681, so the expression "dead as a dodo" was no doubt current in the last century. The name, *Didus ineptus*, connotes stupidity. Today—though not in 1862—Dodo and Dodgson are juxtaposed in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Why, except for phonetic reasons, should Dodgson have associated himself with this unfortunate bird, lacking wits enough to hide its single egg or to run from its enemies? Can we reconstruct our Dodo from a single boner?

Dodgson's recent biographers, starting with Green, who claims to have been a stammerer himself, feel that "Dodo" may also have referred to Dodgson's way of saying his own name: "Do-Do-Dodgson." It may indeed, though the only documentation we have so far (in a letter from Mrs. Skene) refers to his stammering on the "P" sound.

As to Canon Duckworth—in the manuscript the Duck has a speech later transferred to the Eaglet (Edith). After the Dodo has said:

"In that case, I move that the meeting adjourn, for the immediate adoption of more energetic remedies—" in the manuscript it is the Duck and not the Eaglet who answers: "'Speak English! I don't know the meaning of all those long words, and what's more, I don't believe you do either!' And the Duck quacked a comfortable laugh to itself. Some of the other animals tittered audibly."

Dodgson made a practice of weaving members of the party and topical events into his story. Dinah, for instance, was a real cat. The Liddell children had two tabby kittens, which they named "Villikens and his Dinah," after a popular song.[1] Villikens was short-lived, but Dinah lived to be chased out of Christ Church library many times, and to be consoled and bathed and loved by Alice, though technically she belonged to Lorina.

Topical allusions appear in the Dormouse's story too. The three sisters in that tale were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie—L. C. for Lorina Charlotte; Lacie, an anagram for Alice; and Tillie, for Matilda—the sisters' pet name for Edith.[1] Elsewhere the play on names produces variants—Lory for Lorina, and Eaglet for Edith. The first version, reminiscent of the day when the

Misses Dodgson were caught in the rain, takes the party into a little cottage to dry their clothing. Some of the stories told on earlier river excursions extended *Alice's Adventures Underground* into *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, but the manuscript corresponded to the story told on July fourth.

There is no Caucus-race in the manuscript, but there is a picture by Grandville, showing the animals seated in a circle, much like Tenniel's. In the manuscript, this takes the place of the caucus:

"'I only meant to say,' said the Duck in a rather offended tone, 'that I knew of a house near here, where we could get the young lady and the rest of the party dried, and then we could listen comfortably to the story which I think you were good enough to promise to tell us,' bowing gravely to the mouse.

"The mouse made no objection to this, and the whole party moved along the river bank (for the pool had by this time begun to flow out of the hall, and the edge of it was fringed with rushes and forget-me-nots) in a slow procession, the Dodo leading the way. After a time the Dodo became impatient, and, leaving the Duck to bring up the rest of the party, moved on at a quicker pace with Alice, the Lory, and the Eaglet, and soon brought them to a little cottage, and there they sat snugly by the fire, wrapped up in blankets, until the rest of the party had arrived, and they were all dry again."

Then after the mouse's tale, and its departure in a huff, "she sat for a while sorrowful and silent, but it was not long before she recovered her spirits, and began talking to herself, as usual: 'I do wish some of them had stayed a little longer, I was getting to be such friends with them—really the Lory and I were almost like sisters! And so was that dear little Eaglet! And then the Duck and the Dodo! How nicely the Duck sang to us as we came along through the water: and if the Dodo hadn't known the way to that nice little cottage, I don't know when we should have got dry again—' and there is no knowing how long she might have prattled on in this way, if she had not suddenly caught the sound of pattering feet." Well enough for a manuscript destined for an intimate circle, but he had enough of a public mind to realize that these paragraphs did not belong in a printed book.

His public mind and his private one were now on their way to taking up separate residence. For he decided to sign *Alice* by the pseudonym he had been trying out in *The Train*, Edmund Yates's paper. Collingwood tells how Dodgson submitted several names for the five poems and one story that appeared in *The Train* in 1856–7, but he gives the wrong name and date for the first poem, which was actually "Solitude," in March, 1856. Yates rejected "Dares," from Daresbury, and two anagrams, "Edgar Cuthwellis" and "Edgar U. C. Westhall," as well as "Louis Carroll," in favor of the now famous version. Dodgson evolved it by the simple process of latinizing,

reversing, and reanglicizing his given names: Carolus Ludovicus, Ludovicus Carolus, Lewis Carroll.[5]

A pseudonym, once started for whatever reason, may activate a split, but of course in this case the split had already begun. There is, however, a tendency to assign certain moods or behavior to the pseudonym, which gradually acquires autonomy as a snowball acquires snow.

From *Wonderland* to *Looking-Glass* the man, and therefore his work, changed in other ways. The refinement, sharpening, and concentration of the next seven years produce a different emotional tone: the creatures in *Through the Looking-Glass* are less sad, and more pedantic and querulous; for instance, compare the weeping Mock Turtle with the belligerent, snivelling, contrary twins, the Tweedles. His weeping self was less sad and more complaining by that time. In a sense Carroll distinctly slid downhill from *Wonderland*. *Through the Looking-Glass* is more mature, and *Sylvie and Bruno* more elfin—too elfin—as well as more bothered with ethical and other problems arising from the anomaly of a benevolent deity who is also omnipotent.... Carroll's power of pure play was duller at sixty than at thirty, and his power of thought was scarcely sharpened.

In *Wonderland* he transports the dream characters to a dream country, where the traveler is sane and the natives mad—like an Englishman abroad. In *A Tangled Tale*, however, Mad Mathesis runs wild in the heart of London, making the citizens stare. It is almost trite to say that Carroll remained a child to whom the world looked even madder than it does to most of us. He was too polite, or too cautious, to say so, and perfected a technique for getting around freely without any worse tag than "eccentric," but one of his logical dilemmas was "They are sane. I am not like them. I am insane." Or vice versa. Do cats eat bats? Or do bats eat cats?

The appearing and disappearing Cheshire Cat is a sort of guardian imp and liaison officer between the two worlds; an undercurrent of *Wonderland* is Alice's longing for Dinah, so perhaps the cat with the disappearing head (the Cheshire Cat, from Charles's birthplace) is Dinah's dream-self, who, by the laws of dreamland, instead of frightening the creatures away, only keeps them pleasantly on edge. It is significant that the Cheshire Cat remarks, "We're all mad here." Dinah is the one link to the daily world, the one person (?) Alice misses; she says, "They will put their heads down and say 'Come up again, dear!'"—is the Cheshire Cat Dinah's head recalling her to the world across the border?

Dinah is not the only double exposure. There are: the Rabbit and the March Hare; the furious little Mouse in the pool and the Dormouse; and finally, the Queen of Hearts and the Duchess, who in the manuscript were one person—Queen of Hearts and Marchioness (not Duchess) of Mock

Turtle. The whole Mad Tea Party sounds like four aspects of Mr. Dodgson sitting about a table, calling one another names, like those arrangements of mirrors in "amusement" parks where you can photograph yourself from several angles at once. Or perhaps Alice stood for Mr. Dodgson, who was so easily offended, and who walked out of Common Room at the drop of a bad word: The peculiar creatures who spoke something that was "certainly English," yet made no sense, may have been the other members of Common Room. Speculation about the Hatter makes him an Oxford character—Mr. Collingwood thinks a classmate of his uncle's; Mr. Madan suggests Theophilus Carter, a furniture dealer of the High Street.

"It is really dreadful the way the creatures order one about here." Is that Oxford, the British Empire, or the whole world? In his childhood home "'twas Love that made the world go round." The King and Queen of hearts had ten children, which might mean the ten numbered cards in a suit, or the ten Dodgson children besides Charles—making him the Knave! "She's all my fancy painted him" was his first form of the White Rabbit's testimony against the Knave. To the Duchess' remark about Love making the world go round, Alice replied, "Somebody said that it's done by everybody minding their own business!" At sixty-one Alice's creator sank into the morass, gurgling

For I think it is Love,
For I feel it is Love,
For I'm sure it is nothing but Love!

"'Once,' said the Mock Turtle at last, with a deep sigh, 'I was a real Turtle.'" "Once," said Charles Dodgson, "I was a real boy." Until he was five, perhaps—for Bruno, his only endurable boy character, is five years old. Alice, in *Wonderland*, is seven; in *Through the Looking-Glass*, "seven and a half exactually." The face of the Mock Turtle, both in Carroll's drawings and in Tenniel's, has the sad, yearning expression of Charles himself in all his pictures, yearning, perhaps, for his crucified manhood and liberty of thought.... No wonder, after another seven years of a don's life, the Mock Turtle's sadness became the valetudinarianism of the Tweedle brothers. Brother against brother. Instead of the mildly antagonistic Gryphon versus the lachrymose Mock Turtle, we have the furious identical twins. As if, after parting one's hair on the side, one had decided to part it in the middle and get two even but less symmetrical divisions, the not-so-heavenly twins.

The mathematical mind of the author gave pungency to his dream-books, though as a mathematician *per se* he never rose above mediocrity. He enjoyed logical exercises, and pure thinking, and he especially enjoyed mystifying people by keeping his Alice-self sacred and secret—a

ventriloquist's dummy in a cupboard. It may be this desire to protect his excursions into a four-dimensional world, rather than his so-called "modesty," that explains his dislike of being known at Oxford or in unselected adult society as the author of the *Alice* books. He even hated to sit for his photograph, much as he liked to photograph others, and while, unsolicited, he autographed his books for all his friends, he dreaded autograph hunters to the point of tricking them with a typewriter, or having a friend forge his name to letters.[5] Caricatures went only one way, too. Once, when she was small, Isa Bowman drew a caricature of him. He went flaming red, snatched it away, and burned it. Then when she apologized, he embraced and forgave her.[12] It is doubtful that he could have seen Harry Furniss' caricatures of him and forgiven them. However he looked to others, he was the White Rabbit to himself, though he would have preferred to be the worse-tempered but more dignified March Hare.

Taylor found some ingenious mathematical cryptograms in *Alice*. Of the procedure where she starts counting, "Four times five is twelve," and so forth, concluding, "I'll never get to twenty at that rate," he says it could bring her only to 19, never to twenty, because it is based on scales of notation.[13]

He also asks why the Mad Hatter's watch is two days wrong. "What time is it at the center of the earth, at no longitude? By the sun it is all times or no time. It tells the day of the month. Hatter's watch goes by the moon." It is the fourth, two days wrong—there are two days between the lunar and the calendar month. And the fourth is Alice's birthday.

Another gem comes from Robert Graves's article in the *Atlantic Monthly* for August, 1957, "*Mushrooms, Food of the Gods*": "... the scarlet-capped fly amanite, which ... mycophobes regard as the most poisonous of all, though no one is ever recorded to have died from eating it! Oddly enough, its earliest appearance in English Literature is a charming one: Lewis Carroll's account of how Alice ate the mushroom on which the Caterpillar sat smoking his hookah, and could thus become shorter or taller at will. ('Curioser and curioser,' said Alice.) This hallucination, produced by the fly amanite, was described in a text-book, M. C. Cooke's Plain and Easy Account of British Fungi, published on October 4, 1862, just before Alice in Wonderland was put on paper."

There is little material on the Pig-and-Pepper episode. The famous lullaby is a triple satire on parental feelings, on Carroll's ideas about boy-nature, and on a bad poem, "Speak softly to a little child." The cook's silence is sinister. She speaks three words. The King says, "Give your evidence." She answers, "Shan't." He asks, "What are tarts made of?"; she says, "Pepper, mostly," and vanishes. She is a grotesque yet sibylline figure, naming the condiment Charles felt himself lacking in.

Lastly, Alice tries to carry the baby who becomes a pig. This is how a bachelor holds a baby, finally tying it into a knot and holding one leg and one ear, gazing at it in dismay until it becomes a pig and "trots off quietly into the wood." But what about Uggug, in *Sylvie and Bruno*—the horrid boy produced by straining off all the pleasant qualities of boy-nature for Bruno? Uggug turns into a porcupine, or prickly pig, because he is "loveless, loveless." Is the pig that runs away the boy-self that left a purified Alice? She feels relieved, because "it would have made a dreadfully ugly child [to one who did not like little boys]: but it makes rather a handsome pig, I think."

The card game is as basic to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as chess is to *Looking-Glass*. An interesting attempt to explain the card game is made by Muriel Bruce Hasbrouck in her *Pursuit of Destiny*. She claims the Tarot cards are a device of learned Muslims to keep the ancient learning alive against the Christian relegation of the arts and sciences to the devil. She finds a rationalized astrology, based not on "influences" of planetary conjunctions, but on early knowledge of regular fluctuations in solar energy and the earth's field.

"Call the celestial sphere *the field* ... maybe the four-dimensional space–time continuum. The formula is based on a mathematical relationship between the four major divisions of the ancient universe ... called elements, and a series of 36 ten-degree cycles of the year...." She quotes Pythagoras and Dr. Jung as dividing humanity into four types—the four basic blood types—and so forth, leading up to Alice's cry, "You're nothing but a pack of cards!"

No matter how many editions of this book may be called for, it is safe to guess that each one will have to list new interpretations of the *Alice* books, which is as it should be. It is the first dream book, made up of simple everyday materials freshly seen, and a classic plot.

Many persons who have read *Wonderland* at least once a year since they could read, fail to notice the plot. The story revolves about the golden key to the enchanted garden and Alice's endless frustrations and wanderings in bypaths until she enters at last, to find the flowers really beautiful, though some of them need painting but—the place is populated by disagreeable persons attempting to play croquet under trying circumstances. Then comes a Last Judgment with the entire cast—and an anti-climax.

The garden is an equally rich symbol if we call it adult life viewed by a child, or vice versa. The protean Alice with her formulas for growing and shrinking and cutting back and forth across the borders of childhood and maturity, yet remaining always a wise child, is of course Dodgson himself—or herself. It is hard, studying some of his portraits and reading some of his works, to realize that he was a man indeed. It is still harder to find any evidence that he himself realized it. He seems increasingly like a maiden aunt

with the heart of a girl, even with all the satires on his fellow dons and the refined cruelties of his verse. All these traits are present in a maiden aunt, of the type that in the United States writes faintly sardonic articles for the highbrow magazines and finds an outlet for affectionate impulses in her nieces and nephews.

Dodgson was a lonely soul—no matter how much love and admiration he evoked, his reticences and rigidities and shyness kept him from reaching out to adults. For the really free interchange of gaiety and comradeship he was limited to children—and to girl children at that. Later he could not mention that afternoon on the river without an access of lyricism:

"I distinctly remember ... how in a desperate attempt to strike out some new line of fairy-lore, I had sent my heroine straight down a rabbit hole, to begin with, without the least idea what was to happen afterwards.

"Stand forth, then, Alice, the child of my dreams.... What wert thou, dream-Alice, in thy foster-father's eyes? How shall he picture thee? Loving, first, loving and gentle: loving as a dog (forgive the prosaic simile, but I know no earthly love so pure and perfect), and gentle as a fawn: then courteous—courteous to *all*, high or low, grand or grotesque, King or Caterpillar, even as though she were herself a King's daughter, and her clothing of wrought gold; then trustful, ready to accept the wildest possibilities with all that utter trust that only dreamers know; and, lastly, curious—wildly curious, and with the eager enjoyment of Life that comes only in the happy hours of childhood, when all is new and fair, and when sin and sorrow are but names—empty words signifying nothing!

"And the White Rabbit, what of *him*? ... For *her* 'youth,' 'audacity,' 'vigour,' 'swift directness of purpose,' read 'elderly,' 'timid,' 'feeble,' and 'nervously shilly-shallying,' and you will get *something* of what I meant him to be....

"Let me cull from the two books a Royal Trio—the Queen of Hearts, the Red Queen, and the White Queen.... Each had to preserve, through all her eccentricities, a certain queenly dignity.... I pictured to myself the Queen of Hearts as a sort of embodiment of ungovernable passion, a blind and aimless Fury. The Red Queen I pictured as a Fury, but of another type; *her* passion must be cold and calm; she must be formal and strict, yet not unkindly; pedantic to the tenth degree, the concentrated essence of all governesses! Lastly, the White Queen seemed, to my dreaming fancy, gentle, stupid, fat, and pale; helpless as an infant ... just suggesting imbecility but never quite passing into it.... There is a character strangely like her in Wilkie Collins' novel, *No Name*: by two converging paths we have somehow reached the same ideal, and Mrs. Wragge and the White Queen might have been twin sisters."[3]

Such a richly variegated personality need not go outside himself for portraits. If Alice is his seeking self, his best-beloved ego to which he assigns all the desirable traits, then the White Rabbit is his timid, donnish self, struck inarticulate for half-an-hour when a brother don catches him walking with a little girl; the man with the little black bag, the gloves (my paws and whiskers, the gloves!), the pocketbook with the many compartments—the man with the peculiar gait, the stammer, the inability to carve a joint, who softly and suddenly vanished away if anyone mentioned his books.

The penultimate paragraphs of *Alice's Adventures Underground* follow:

"But her sister sat there some while longer, watching the setting sun, and thinking of little Alice and her adventures, till she too began dreaming after a fashion, and this was her dream.

"She saw an ancient city, and a quiet river widening near it along the plain, and up the stream went slowly gliding a boat with a merry party of children on board—she could hear the voices and laughter like music over the water—and among them was another little Alice, who sat listening with bright eager eyes, to a tale that was being told, and she listened for the words of the tale, and lo, it was the dream of her own little sister. So the boat wound slowly along, beneath the bright summer-day, with its merry crew and its voices of music and laughter, till it passed round one of the many turnings of the stream, and she saw it no more."

To so accomplished an acrobat, a dream within a dream is a small matter. It is indeed the blend of logical with dream material that gives Carroll's works their distinct and inimitable flavor. The fall down the Rabbit hole, for instance, is a birth dream indeed—and what a symbol—the Rabbit for fertility! The motif is always cropping out; when Alice is in the long hall, later the Hall of Tears, she finds the key to the little door, that "led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and looked along the passage ... but she could not even get her head through the doorway." Later she slips into the pool of tears and swims about easily. Then, in the Rabbit's house, she starts to grow uncomfortably large and threatens to burst the house. When Bill the Lizard comes down the chimney after her, she makes a final effort and succeeds in retracting one leg far enough to kick him back up.

Birth dreams are universal, but since we are born without language, they use visual and muscular imagery; whatever reminds us of birth retains a mysterious fascination, unaccountable till this great discovery of Dr. Rank's. *Wonderland* contains all the elements—the comfortable swimming about in the water, the doubt of being able to get her head through the narrow passage, the constriction of the small room, increasing threateningly as she grows; the attempt to kick out in a narrow space. To name and classify a dream element

is merely to recognize the unconscious. But these birth images must have had a meaning to their inventor; a spiritual rebirth, perhaps—for Dodgson was just over the hill from one of his major crises. He had looked down into the Deanery garden from the library window for years, he was thirty years old, and he had taken holy orders six months before. And perhaps that was it.

Acceptance of ordination after so many doubts and such a long postponement—he had been eligible for six years—must have required a new synthesis. The scene in the Hall of Tears, where Alice gives herself good advice, the one where "Once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people," and other hints, suggest Dodgson may have had fleeting doubts of his own identity, no doubt intensified since his ordination. For it was not Alice Liddell who pretended to be two people, or who needed rebirth.

As Lowes says again: "Great art is more often than not the product of tendencies which are art's undoing when uncontrolled ... there enter into imaginative creation three factors which reciprocally interplay: the Well, and the Vision, and the Will ... the long, slow storing of the Well ... the flash of amazing vision through a fortuitous suggestion ... the exciting task of translating the vision into reality."[11] All these factors were present, and he resigned himself—on the surface—to being the Reverend Charles Dodgson; but, as the outer bonds gripped tighter, the inner self soared more and more. For such a nature, actually, stone walls do not a prison make, since the space inside a spirit of genius is infinite.

The *Alice* books are frankly dream stories; both have an elaborate and rather orgiastic nightmarish awakening, though only in the first one does the dreamer direct the dream. Both use the materials of the universal dream or folk tale; their prime value lies in this articulation of the inarticulate impressions of childhood and in their multiple use on several planes simultaneously, which make them interesting to all ages and cultural levels.

Here may be, for instance, a memory of school, of Oxford, of the ordination. It takes place in the Rabbit's house, after Alice has grown too large for comfort: "'It was much pleasanter at home,' thought poor Alice, 'when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits. I almost wish I hadn't come down that rabbit-hole—and yet—and yet—it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life!'" There is the humorous resignation of a young man who finds himself, against his wishes, growing up and forced to take on the attributes of Father William. That poem is not the expression of secure manhood, and Carroll's own illustrations show the youth's surprise, intensified almost to agony, at his

father's smug competence. In one picture the youth is distinctly what Gilbert took the liberty of calling a *je ne sais quoi* young man.

The next challenge Alice meets is even more serious. "'Who are *you*?' said the Caterpillar." When Alice courteously tries to answer him, he makes himself more disagreeable.

"'I—I hardly know, 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.'

"'What do you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar, sternly. 'Explain yourself!'

"'I can't explain *myself*, I'm afraid, Sir,' said Alice, 'because I'm not myself, you see.'

"'I don't see,' said the Caterpillar.

"'I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly,' Alice replied very politely, 'for I can't understand it myself, to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.'

"'It isn't,' said the Caterpillar."

Another distressing scene, when Alice's neck has grown so long it winds over the tree-tops, and a Pigeon challenges her:

"'But I'm not a serpent, I tell you!' said Alice. 'I'm a—I'm a—'

"'Well! *What* are you?' said the Pigeon. 'I can see you're trying to invent something.'

"'I—I'm a little girl,' said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through, that day.

"'A likely story indeed!' said the Pigeon, in a tone of the deepest contempt. 'I've seen a good many little girls in my time, but never *one* with such a neck as that! No, no! You're a serpent; and there's no use denying it.'"

Some biographers thought Dodgson lived a calm and placid life under the spreading oaks of Oxford. But is the following, for instance, pure fun?

"'In *that* direction,' the Cat said, waving its right paw round, 'lives a Hatter: and in *that* direction,' waving the other paw, 'lives a March Hare. Visit either you like: they're both mad.'

"'But I don't want to go among mad people,' Alice remarked.

"'Oh, you can't help that,' said the Cat: 'we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.'

"'How do you know I'm mad?' said Alice.

"'You must be,' said the Cat, 'or you wouldn't have come here.'"

This gives some idea of what Charles felt about the world around him and his part in it. But in some way the very sacrifice it cost him to take orders seems to have fired him to the highest point of his career. *Alice in Wonderland* is the choice flower of his genius. *Through the Looking-Glass* is witty,

inventive, quaint, what you will; but the shadow of the Red Queen of Logic and the mysterious threat of the Red King hang over it; the dreamer who may own not only the dream but even the characters in it, keeps it from being an unclouded childish story. The little girl who said she liked both stories, but thought *Through the Looking-Glass* was "stupider" than *Wonderland*, conveys the same idea. Nothing in *Wonderland* parallels the complete severance of the Reds and Whites in *Through the Looking-Glass*. In *Sylvie and Bruno*, author and story have begun to disintegrate. The archness and sweetness of parts, the utter cruelty and loathsomeness of others, predict literal decomposition into his elements.

Wonderland has none of that. In it Carroll wields a nimble shuttle, weaving disparate threads into a unified and perfect textile, of the pattern of the search for the golden fleece, or the golden apples, or the fountain of youth, or the pot of gold at the rainbow's end; the search for the universal treasure, that mankind recognizes with a joyful stirring. It is the plot of our life here on earth, and any honest story that conforms to it, adds to it, finds new forms and characters for it, even for the thousandth telling, will move us. It is not even a special result of civilization that finding the treasure does not bring happiness—what of the fisherman whose wife would be pope, or the one whose wife won three wishes and had to use the third to get the sausage off her husband's nose? The wish can be fulfilled only in a dream, and the happy ending is—to awaken and find one is still oneself, and can trace some of the dream elements, as Alice did, to familiar sights and sounds. As Carroll's fellow-mathematician and Yankee contemporary, Willard Gibbs, remarked, "The whole is simpler than its parts."[14]

Here sits Mr. Dodgson, then, in the tightest kind of box—Christ Church Don by his own exertions, Student by the grace of Dr. Pusey, Deacon of the Church of England by the hand of Bishop Wilberforce; with his thoughts and actions prescribed by medieval tradition, by the prejudices of Prince Albert, by the Dean of Christ Church, by his father the Archdeacon and his old schoolmaster the Archbishop of Canterbury, by the whole hierarchy through Oliver Cromwell clear up to God, not to mention the Reverend Charles Dodgson himself, one of the strictest of the lot. Tighter and tighter, oh Lord! The only escape is down the rabbit hole and into the beautiful garden.

And like Carl Sandburg's *Gimme the Ax*, "when he gets to the moon he will find everything the same as it always was."

Notes

1. *The Cornhill Magazine*, July, 1932, "Alice's Recollections of Carrollian Days," by Captain Caryl Hargreaves.

2. *The New York Times*, May 1, 1932, "Lewis Carroll As Recalled by Alice," by Captain Caryl Hargreaves.

3. *The Lewis Carroll Picture Book*; by Stuart Dodgson Collingwood.

4. *George Macdonald and His Wife*, by Greville Macdonald.

5. *The House of Macmillan, 1843–1943*, by Charles Morgan.

6. *The Rossettis*, by Elisabeth Luther Cary.

7. *Pearson's Magazine*, Dec., 1930, "Lewis Carroll Letters to his Illustrator," by Dorothy Furniss.

8. Private letter from Mr. Falconer Madan.

9. *Burlington Magazine*, April, 1921, "A Portrait of the Ugliest Princess in History," by W. A. Baillie-Grohman.

10. *Edward Lear*, by Angus Davidson.

11. *The Road to Xanadu*, by John Livingston Lowes.

12. *The Story of Lewis Carroll*, by Isa Bowman.

13. *The White Knight—A Study of C. L. Dodgson*, by Alexander L. Taylor.

14. *Willard Gibbs*, by Muriel Rukeyser.

WILLIAM EMPSON

Alice in Wonderland: *The Child as Swain*

It must seem a curious thing that there has been so little serious criticism of the *Alices*, and that so many critics, with so militant and eager an air of good taste, have explained that they would not think of attempting it. Even Mr. de la Mare's book, which made many good points, is queerly evasive in tone. There seems to be a feeling that real criticism would involve psychoanalysis, and that the results would be so improper as to destroy the atmosphere of the books altogether. Dodgson was too conscious a writer to be caught out so easily. For instance, it is an obvious bit of interpretation to say that the Queen of Hearts is a symbol of "uncontrolled animal passion" seen through the clear but blank eyes of sexlessness; obvious, and the sort of thing critics are now so sure would be in bad taste; Dodgson said it himself, to the actress who took the part when the thing was acted. The books are so frankly about growing up that there is no great discovery in translating them into Freudian terms; it seems only the proper exegesis of a classic even where it would be a shock to the author. On the whole, the results of the analysis, when put into drawing-room language, are his conscious opinions; and if there was no other satisfactory outlet for his feelings but the special one fixed in his books, the same is true in a degree of any original artist. I shall use psychoanalysis where it seems relevant, and feel I had better begin by saying what use it is supposed to be. Its business here is not to discover a neurosis

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From *Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dreamchild as Seen Through the Critics' Looking-Glasses*, Robert Phillips, ed. © 1971 by The Vanguard Press. Originally published in *Some Versions of Pastoral*.

peculiar to Dodgson. The essential idea behind the books is a shift onto the child, which Dodgson did not invent, of the obscure tradition of pastoral. The formula is now "*child*-become-judge," and if Dodgson identifies himself with the child, so does the writer of the primary sort of pastoral with his magnified version of the swain. (Dodgson took an excellent photograph, much admired by Tennyson, of Alice Liddell as a ragged beggar girl, which seems a sort of example of the connection.) I should say indeed that this version was more open to neurosis than the older ones; it is less hopeful and more a return into oneself. The analysis should show how this works in general. But there are other things to be said about such a version of pastoral; its use of the device prior to irony lets it make covert judgments about any matter the author was interested in.

There is a tantalizing one about Darwinism. The first Neanderthal skull was found in 1856. *The Origin of Species* (1859) came out six years before *Wonderland*, three before its conception, and was very much in the air, a pervading bad smell. It is hard to say how far Dodgson, under cover of nonsense, was using ideas of which his set disapproved; he wrote some hysterical passages against vivisection and has a curious remark to the effect that chemistry professors had better not have laboratories, but was open to new ideas and doubted the eternity of hell. The 1860 meeting of the British Association, at which Huxley started his career as publicist and gave that resounding snub to Bishop Wilberforce, was held at Oxford, where Dodgson was already in residence. He had met Tennyson in '56, and we hear of Tennyson lecturing him later on the likeness of monkeys' and men's skulls.

The only passage that I feel sure involves evolution comes at the beginning of *Wonderland* (the most spontaneous and "subconscious" part of the books), when Alice gets out of the bath of tears that has magically released her from the underground chamber; it is made clear (for instance about watering-places) that the salt water is the sea from which life arose; as a bodily product it is also the amniotic fluid (there are other forces at work here); ontogeny then repeats phylogeny, and a whole Noah's Ark gets out of the sea with her. In Dodgson's own illustration as well as Tenniel's there is the disturbing head of a monkey and in the text there is an extinct bird. Our minds having thus been forced back onto the history of species, there is a reading of history from the period when the Mouse "came over" with the Conqueror; questions of race turn into the questions of breeding in which Dodgson was more frankly interested, and there are obscure snubs for people who boast about their ancestors. We then have the Caucus-Race (the word had associations for Dodgson with local politics; he says somewhere, "I never go to a Caucus without reluctance"), in which

you begin running when you like and leave off when you like, and all win. The subtlety of this is that it supports Natural Selection (in the offensive way the nineteenth century did) to show the absurdity of democracy, and supports democracy (or at any rate liberty) to show the absurdity of Natural Selection. The race is not to the swift, because idealism will not let it be to the swift, and because life, as we are told in the final poem, is at random and a dream. But there is no weakening of human values in this generosity; all the animals win, and Alice, because she is Man, has therefore to give them comfits, but though they demand this they do not fail to recognize that she is superior. They give her her own elegant thimble, the symbol of her labor, because she too has won, and because the highest among you shall be the servant of all. This is a solid piece of symbolism; the politically minded scientists preaching progress through "selection" and *laissez-faire* are confronted with the full anarchy of Christ. And the pretense of infantilism allows it a certain grim honesty; Alice is a little ridiculous and discomfited, under cover of charm, and would prefer a more aristocratic system.

In the *Looking-Glass* too there are ideas about progress at an early stage of the journey of growing up. Alice goes quickly through the First Square by railway, in a carriage full of animals in a state of excitement about the progress of business and machinery; the only man is Disraeli, dressed in newspapers—the new man who gets on by self-advertisement, the newspaper-fed man who believes in progress, possibly even the rational dress of the future.

> ... *to her great surprise they all* thought *in chorus (I hope you understand what* thinking in chorus *means—for I must confess that I don't)*, "*Better say nothing at all. Language is worth a thousand pounds a word!*"
>
> "*I shall dream about a thousand pounds tonight, I know I shall,*" *thought Alice.*
>
> *All this time the Guard was looking at her, first through a telescope, then through a microscope, and then through an opera-glass. At last he said, "You're traveling the wrong way," and shut up the window and went away.*

This seems to be a prophecy; Huxley in the Romanes lecture of 1893, and less clearly beforehand, said that the human sense of right must judge and often be opposed to the progress imposed by Nature, but at this time he was still looking through the glasses.

> *But the gentleman dressed in white paper leaned forwards and whispered in her ear, "Never mind what they all say, my dear, but take a return-ticket every time the train stops."*

In 1861 "many Tory members considered that the prime minister was a better representative of conservative opinions than the leader of the opposition." This seems to be the double outlook of Disraeli's conservatism, too subtle to inspire action. I think he turns up again as the Unicorn when the Lion and the Unicorn are fighting for the Crown; they make a great dust and nuisance, treat the commonsense Alice as entirely mythical, and are very frightening to the poor King to whom the Crown really belongs.

> *"Indeed I shan't," Alice said rather impatiently. "I don't belong to this railway journey at all—I was in a wood just now—and I wish I could get back there!"*

When she gets back to the wood it is different; it is Nature in the raw, with no names, and she is afraid of it. She still thinks the animals are right to stay there; even when they know their names "they wouldn't answer at all, if they were wise." (They might do well to write nonsense books under an assumed name, and refuse to answer even to that.) All this is a very Kafka piece of symbolism, less at ease than the preceding one; *Wonderland* is a dream, but the *Looking-Glass* is self-consciousness. But both are topical; whether you call the result allegory or "pure nonsense" depends on ideas about progress and industrialization, and there is room for exegesis on the matter.

The beginning of modern child-sentiment may be placed at the obscure edition of *Mother Goose's Melodies* (John Newbury, 1760), with "maxims" very probably by Goldsmith. The important thing is not the rhymes (Boston boasts an edition of 1719. My impression is that they improved as time went on) but the appended maxims, which take a sophisticated pleasure in them. Most are sensible proverbs which the their charm (mainly for the adult) of the story you must take if they are child had better know anyway; comes from the unexpected view not to be irrelevant.

> AMPHION'S SONG OF EURYDICE.
>
> I won't be my Father's Jack,
> I won't be my Father's Jill,
> I won't be the Fiddler's Wife,
> And I will have music when I will.

T'other little Tune,
T'other little Tune,
Prithee Love play me
T'other little Tune.

MAXIM.—Those Arts are the most valuable which are of the greatest Use.

It seems to be the fiddler whose art has been useful in controlling her, but then again she may have discovered the art of wheedling the fiddler. The pomp of the maxim and the childishness of the rhyme make a mock-pastoral compound. The pleasure in children here is obviously a derivative of the pleasure in Macheath; the children are "little rogues."

Bow wow wow
Whose dog art Thou?
Little Tom Tinker's Dog.
Bow wow wow.

Tom Tinker's Dog is a very good Dog; and an honester Dog than his Master.

Honest ("free from hypocrisy" or the patronizing tone to a social inferior) and *dog* ("you young dog") have their *Beggar's Opera* feelings here; it is not even clear whether Tom is a young vagabond or a child.

This is a pleasant example because one can trace the question back. Pope engraved a couplet "on the collar of a dog which I gave to His Royal Highness"—a friendly act as from one gentleman to another resident in the neighborhood.

I am his Highness' dog at Kew.
Pray tell me, sir, whose dog are you?

Presumably Frederick himself would be the first to read it. The joke carries a certain praise for the underdog; the point is not that men are slaves but that they find it suits them and remain good-humored. The dog is proud of being the prince's dog and expects no one to take offense at the question. There is also a hearty independence in its lack of respect for the inquirer. Pope took this from Sir William Temple, where it is said by a fool: "I am the Lord Chamberlain's fool. And whose are you?" was his answer to the nobleman. It is a neat case of the slow shift of this sentiment from fool to rogue to child.

Alice, I think, is more of a "little rogue" than it is usual to say, or than Dodgson himself thought in later years:

> *loving as a dog ... and gentle as a fawn; then courteous,—courteous to* all, *high or low, grand or grotesque, King or Caterpillar ... trustful, with an absolute trust....*

and so on. It depends what you expect of a child of seven.

> *... she had quite a long argument with the Lory, who at last turned sulky, and would only say, "I'm older than you, and must know better." And this Alice would not allow, without knowing how old it was, and as the Lory positively refused to tell its age, there was no more to be said.*

Alice had to be made to speak up to bring out the point—here the point is a sense of the fundamental oddity of life given by the fact that different animals become grown-up at different ages; but still, if you accept the Lory as a grownup, this is rather a pert child. She is often the underdog speaking up for itself.

A quite separate feeling about children, which is yet at the back of the pertness here and in the Goldsmith, since it is needed if the pertness is to be charming, may be seen in its clearest form in Wordsworth and Coleridge; it is the whole point of the "Ode to Intimations" and even of "We are Seven." The child has not yet been put wrong by civilization, and all grownups have been. It may well be true that Dodgson envied the child because it was sexless, and Wordsworth because he knew that he was destroying his native poetry by the smugness of his life, but neither theory explains why this feeling about children arose when it did and became so general. There is much of it in Vaughan after the Civil War, but as a general tendency it appeared when the eighteenth-century settlement had come to seem narrow and inescapable; one might connect it with the end of dueling; also when the scientific sort of truth had been generally accepted as the main and real one. It strengthened as the aristocracy became more puritan. It depends on a feeling, whatever may have caused that in its turn, that no way of building up character, no intellectual system, can bring out all that is inherent in the human spirit, and therefore that there is more in the child than any man has been able to keep. (The child is a microcosm, like Donne's world, and Alice too is a stoic.) This runs through all Victorian and Romantic literature; the world of the adult made it hard to be an artist, and they kept a sort of taproot going down to their experience as children. Artists like Wordsworth and Coleridge, who accepted this fact and used it, naturally come to seem the

most interesting and in a way the most sincere writers of the period. Their idea of the child, that it is in the right relation to Nature, not dividing what should be unified, that its intuitive judgment contains what poetry and philosophy must spend their time laboring to recover, was accepted by Dodgson and a main part of his feeling. He quotes Wordsworth on this point in the "Easter Greeting"—the child feels its life in every limb; Dodgson advises it, with an infelicitous memory of the original poem, to give its attention to death from time to time. That the dream books are

> *Like Pilgrim's withered wreaths of flowers*
> *Plucked in a far-off land*

is a fine expression of Wordsworth's sense both of the poetry of childhood and of his advancing sterility. And the moment when Alice finds herself dancing with Tweedledum and Tweedledee, so that it is difficult to introduce herself afterwards, is a successful interruption of Wordsworthian sentiment into his normal style.

> *... she took hold of both hands at once: the next moment they were dancing round in a ring. This seemed quite natural (she remembered afterwards), and she was not even surprised to hear music playing: it seemed to come from the tree under which they were dancing, and it was done (as well as she could make it out) by the branches rubbing one across another, like fiddles and fiddle-sticks.... "I don't know when I began it, but somehow I felt as if I'd been singing it a long long time!"*

This is presented as like the odd behavior of comic objects such as soup tureens, but it is a directer version of the idea of the child's unity with nature. She has been singing a long long time because she sang with no temporal limits in that imperial palace whence she came. Yet it is the frank selfishness of the brothers, who, being little boys, the horrid, are made into a satire on war, and will only give her the hands free from hugging each other, that forces her into the ring with them that produces eternity. Even here this puts a subtle doubt into the eternities open to the child.

For Dodgson will only go halfway with the sentiment of the child's unity with nature, and has another purpose for his heroine; she is the free and independent mind. Not that this is contradictory; because she is right about life, she is independent from all the other characters who are wrong. But it is important to him because it enables him to clash the Wordsworth sentiments with the other main tradition about children derived from rogue-sentiment. (For both, no doubt, he had to go some way back; the intervening

sentiment about children is that the great thing is to repress their Original Sin, and I suppose, though he would not have liked it, he was among the obscure influences that led to the cult of games in the public schools.)

One might say that the *Alices* differ from other versions of pastoral in lacking the sense of glory. Normally the idea of including all sorts of men in yourself brings in an idea of reconciling yourself with nature and therefore gaining power over it. The *Alices* are more self-protective; the dream cuts out the real world and the delicacy of the mood is felt to cut out the lower classes. This is true enough, but when Humpty Dumpty says that glory means a nice knock-down argument, he is not far from the central feeling of the book. There is a real feeling of isolation and yet just that is taken as the source of power.

The obvious parody of Wordsworth is the poem of the White Knight, an important figure for whom Dodgson is willing to break the language of humor into the language of sentiment. It takes off "Resolution and Independence," a genuine pastoral poem if ever there was one; the endurance of the leech-gatherer gives Wordsworth strength to face the pain of the world. Dodgson was fond of saying that one parodied the best poems, or anyway that parody showed no lack of imagination, but a certain bitterness is inherent in parody; if the meaning is not "This poem is absurd" it must be "In my present mood of emotional sterility the poem will not work, or I am afraid to let it work, on *me*." The parody here will have no truck with the dignity of the leech-gatherer, but the point of that is to make the unworldly dreaminess of the Knight more absurd; there may even be a reproach for Wordsworth in the lack of consideration that makes him go on asking the same question. One feels that the Knight has probably imagined most of the old man's answers, or anyway that the old man was playing up to the fool who questioned him. At any rate, there is a complete shift of interest from the virtues of the leech-gatherer onto the childish but profound virtues of his questioner.

The main basis of the joke is the idea of absurd inventions of new foods. Dodgson was well-informed about food, kept his old menus, and was wine-taster to the College; but ate very little, suspected the High Table of overeating, and would see no reason to deny that he connected overeating with other forms of sensuality. One reason for the importance of rich food here is that it is the child's symbol for all luxuries reserved for grownups. I take it that the fascination of soup and of the Mock Turtle who sings about it was that soup is mainly eaten at dinner, the excitingly grown-up meal eaten after the child has gone to bed. When Alice talks about her dinner she presumably means lunch, and it is rather a boast when she says she has already met whiting. In the White Knight's song

and conversation these little jokes based on fear of sensuality are put to a further use; he becomes the scientist, the inventor, whose mind is nobly but absurdly detached from interest in the pleasures of the senses and even from "good sense."

> "*How* can *you go on talking so quietly, head downwards?" Alice asked, as she dragged him out by the feet, and laid him in a heap on the bank.*
>
> *The Knight looked surprised at the question. "What does it matter where my body happens to be?" he said. "My mind goes on working all the same. In fact, the more head downwards I am, the more I keep inventing new things.*
>
> *"Now the cleverest thing that I ever did," he went on after a pause, "was inventing a new pudding during the meat-course."*

This required extreme detachment; the word "clever" has become a signal that the mind is being admired for such a reason. The more absurd the assumptions of the thinking, for instance those of scientific materialism, the more vigorous the thought based upon it. "Life is so strange that his results have the more chance of being valuable because his assumptions are absurd, but we must not forget that they are so." This indeed is as near the truth as one need get about scientific determinism.

One reason for the moral grandeur of the Knight, then, is that he stands for the Victorian scientist, who was felt to have invented a new kind of Roman virtue; earnestly; patiently, carefully (it annoyed Samuel Butler to have these words used so continually about scientists), without sensuality, without self-seeking, without claiming any but a fragment of knowledge, he goes on laboring at his absurd but fruitful conceptions. But the parody makes him stand also for the poet, and Wordsworth would have been pleased by this; he considered that the poet was essentially one who revived our sense of the original facts of nature, and should use scientific ideas where he could; poetry was the impassioned expression of the face of all science; Wordsworth was as successful in putting life into the abstract words of science as into "the plain language of men," and many of the *Lyrical Ballads* are best understood as psychological notes written in a form that saves one from forgetting their actuality. The Knight has the same readiness to accept new ideas and ways of life, such as the sciences were imposing, without ceasing to be good and, in his way, sensible, as Alice herself shows for instance when, in falling down the rabbit-hole, she plans a polite entry into the Antipodes and is careful not to drop the marmalade onto the inhabitants. It is the childishness of the Knight that lets him combine the virtues of the poet and the scientist, and one must

expect a creature so finely suited to life to be absurd because life itself is absurd.

The talking-animal convention and the changes of relative size appear in so different a children's book as *Gulliver*; they evidently make some direct appeal to the child, whatever more sophisticated ideas are piled onto them. Children feel at home with animals conceived as human; the animal can be made affectionate without its making serious emotional demands on them, does not want to educate them, is at least unconventional in the sense that it does not impose its conventions, and does not make a secret of the processes of nature. So the talking animals here are a child-world; the rule about them is that they are always friendly though childishly frank to Alice while she is small, and when she is big (suggesting grown up) always opposed to her, or by her, or both. But talking animals in children's books had been turned to didactic purposes ever since Aesop; the schoolmastering tone in which the animals talk nonsense to Alice is partly a parody of this—they are really childish but try not to look it. On the other hand, this tone is so supported by the way they can order her about, the firm and surprising way their minds work, the abstract topics they work on, the useless rules they accept with so much conviction, that we take them as real grownups contrasted with unsophisticated childhood. "The grown-up world is as odd as the child-world, and both are a dream." This ambivalence seems to correspond to Dodgson's own attitude to children; he, like Alice, wanted to get the advantages of being childish and grown up at once. In real life this seems to have at least occasional disadvantages both ways; one remembers the little girl who screamed and demanded to be taken from the lunch table because she knew she couldn't solve his puzzles (not, apparently, a usual, but one would think a natural reaction to his mode of approach)—she clearly thought him too grown-up; whereas in the scenes of jealousy with his little girls' parents, the grown-ups must have thought him quite enough of a child. He made a success of the process, and it seems clear that it did none of the little girls any harm, but one cannot help cocking one's eye at it as a way of life.

The changes of size are more complex. In Gulliver they are the impersonal eye; to change size and nothing else makes you feel "this makes one see things as they are in themselves." It excites wonder, but of a scientific sort. Swift used it for satire on science or from a horrified interest in it, and to give a sort of scientific authority to his deductions, that men, seen as small, are spiritually petty and, seen as large, physically loathsome. And it is the small observer, like the child, who does least to alter what he sees and therefore sees most truly. (The definition of potential, in all but the most rigid textbooks of electricity, contents itself with talking about the force on a small charge which doesn't alter the field much. The objection that the small

alteration in the field might be proportional to the small force does not occur easily to the reader.) To mix this with a pious child's type of wonder made science seem less irreligious and gave you a feeling that you were being good because educating a child; Faraday's talks for children on the chemical history of a candle came out in 1861, so the method was in the air. But these are special uses of a material rich in itself. Children like to think of being so small that they could hide from grownups and so big that they could control them, and to do this dramatizes the great topic of growing up, which both *Alices* keep to consistently. In the same way the charm of "Jabberwocky" is that it is a code language, the language with which grownups hide things from children or children from grownups. Also, the words are such good tongue-gestures, in Sir Richard Paget's phrase, that they seem to carry their own meaning; this carries a hint of the paradox that the conventions are natural.

Both books also keep to the topic of death—the first two jokes about death in *Wonderland* come on pages 3 and 4—and for the child this may be a natural connection; I remember believing I should have to die in order to grow up, and thinking the prospect very disagreeable. There seems to be a connection in Dodgson's mind between the death of childhood and the development of sex, which might be pursued into many of the details of the books. Alice will die if the Red King wakes up, partly because she is a dream-product of the author and partly because the Pawn is put back in its box at the end of the game. He is the absent husband of the Red Queen who is a governess, and the end of the book comes when Alice defeats the Red Queen and "mates" the King. Everything seems to break up because she arrives at a piece of *knowledge*, that all the poems are about fish. I should say the idea was somehow at work at the end of *Wonderland* too. The trial is meant to be a mystery; Alice is told to leave the court, as if a child ought not to hear the evidence, and yet they expect her to give evidence herself.

> *"What do you know about this business?" the King said to Alice.*
> *"Nothing," said Alice.*
> *"Nothing* whatever?" *persisted the King.*
> *"Nothing whatever," said Alice.*
> "That's very important," *the King said, turning to the jury. They were just beginning to write this down on their slates, when the White Rabbit interrupted*: "Un*important, your Majesty means of course," he said, in a very respectful tone; but frowning and making faces as he spoke.*
> "Un*important, of course, I meant," the King hastily said, and went on to himself in an undertone, "important—unimportant—unimportant—important—" as if he were trying which word sounded best.*

There is no such stress in the passage as would make one feel there must be something behind it, and certainly it is funny enough as it stands. But I think Dodgson felt it was important that Alice should be innocent of all knowledge of what the Knave of Hearts (a flashy-looking lady's man in the picture) is likely to have been doing, and also important that she should not be told she is innocent. That is why the King, always a well-intentioned man, is embarrassed. At the same time Dodgson feels that Alice is right in thinking "it doesn't matter a bit" which word the jury write down; she is too stable in her detachment to be embarrassed, these things will not interest her, and in a way she includes them all in herself. And it is the refusal to let her stay that makes her revolt and break the dream. It is tempting to read an example of this idea into the poem that introduces the *Looking-Glass*.

Come, harken then, ere voice of dread,
With bitter summons laden,
Shall summon to unwelcome bed
A melancholy maiden![1]

After all, the marriage bed was more likely to be the end of the maiden than the grave, and the metaphor firmly implied treats them as identical.

The last example is obviously more a joke against Dodgson than anything else, and though the connection between death and the development of sex is, I think, at work, it is not the main point of the conflict about growing up. Alice is given a magical control over her growth by the traditionally symbolic Caterpillar, a creature which has to go through a sort of death to become grown up, and then seems a more spiritual creature. It refuses to agree with Alice that this process is at all peculiar, and clearly her own life will be somehow like it, but the main idea is not its development of sex. The butterfly implied may be the girl when she is "out" or her soul when in heaven, to which she is now nearer than she will be when she is "out"; she must walk to it by walking away from it. Alice knows several reasons why she should object to growing up, and does not at all like being an obvious angel, a head out of contact with its body that has to come down from the sky and gets mistaken for the Paradisal serpent of the knowledge of good and evil, and by the pigeon of the Annunciation, too. But she only makes herself smaller for reasons of tact or proportion; the triumphant close of *Wonderland* is that she has outgrown her fancies and can afford to wake and despise them. The *Looking-Glass* is less of a dream-product, less concentrated on the child's situation, and (once started) less full of changes of size; but it has the same end; the governess shrinks to a kitten when Alice has grown from a Pawn to a Queen and can shake her. Both these clearly stand for becoming grown up

and yet in part are a revolt against grown-up behavior; there is the same ambivalence as about the talking animals. Whether children often find this symbolism as interesting as Carroll did is another thing; there are recorded cases of tears at such a betrayal of the reality of the story. I remember feeling that the ends of the books were a sort of necessary assertion that the grown-up world was after all the proper one; one did not object to that in principle, but would no more turn to those parts from preference than to the "Easter Greeting to Every Child that Loves Alice" (Gothic type).

To make the dream-story from which *Wonderland* was elaborated seem Freudian one has only to tell it. A fall through a deep bole into the secrets of Mother Earth produces a new enclosed soul wondering who it is, what will be its position in the world, and how it can get out. It is a long low hall, part of the palace of the Queen of Hearts (a neat touch), from which it can only get out to the fresh air and the fountains through a hole frighteningly too small. Strange changes, caused by the way it is nourished there, happen to it in this place, but always when it is big it cannot get out and when it is small it is not allowed to; for one thing, being a little girl, it has no key. The nightmare theme of the birth-trauma, that she grows too big for the room and is almost crushed by it, is not only used here but repeated more painfully after she seems to have got out; the Rabbit sends her sternly into its house and some food there makes her grow again. In Dodgson's own drawing of Alice when cramped into the room with one foot up the chimney, kicking out the hateful thing that tries to come down (she takes away its pencil when it is a juror), she is much more obviously in the fetus position than in Tenniel's. The White Rabbit is Mr. Spooner, to whom the spoonerisms happened, an undergraduate in 1862, but its business here is as a pet for children which they may be allowed to breed. Not that the clearness of the framework makes the interpretation simple; Alice peering through the hole into the garden may be wanting a return to the womb as well as an escape from it; she is fond, we are told, of taking both sides of an argument when talking to herself, and the whole book balances between the luscious nonsense-world of fantasy and the ironic nonsense-world of fact.

I said that the sea of tears she swims in was the amniotic fluid, which is much too simple. You may take it as Lethe in which the souls were bathed before rebirth (and it is their own tears; they forget, as we forget our childhood, through the repression of pain) or as the "solution" of an intellectual contradiction through Intuition and a return to the Unconscious. Anyway, it is a sordid image made pretty; one need not read Dodgson's satirical verses against babies to see how much he would dislike a child wallowing in its tears in real life. The fondness of small girls for

doing this has to be faced early in attempting to prefer them, possibly to small boys, certainly to grownups; to a man idealizing children as free from the falsity of a rich emotional life, their displays of emotion must be particularly disconcerting. The celibate may be forced to observe them, on the floor of a railway carriage for example, after a storm of fury, dabbling in their ooze; covertly snuggling against mamma while each still pretends to ignore the other. The symbolic pleasure of dabbling seems based on an idea that the liquid itself is the bad temper which they have got rid of by the storm and yet are still hugging, or that they are not quite impotent, since they have at least "done" this much about the situation. The acid quality of the style shows that Dodgson does not entirely like having to love creatures whose narcissism takes this form, but he does not want simply to forget it as he too would like a relief from "ill-temper"; he sterilizes it from the start by giving it a charming myth. The love for narcissists itself seems mainly based on a desire to keep oneself safely detached, which is the essential notion here.

The symbolic completeness of Alice's experience is, I think, important. She runs the whole gamut; she is a father in getting down the hole, a fetus at the bottom, and can only be born by becoming a mother and producing her own amniotic fluid. Whether Carroll's mind played the trick of putting this into the story or not, he has the feelings that would correspond to it. A desire to include all sexuality in the girl-child, the least obviously sexed of human creatures, the one that keeps its sex in the safest place, was an important part of their fascination for him. He is partly imagining himself as the girl-child (with these comforting characteristics), partly as its father (these together make it a father), partly as its lover—so it might be a mother—but then, of course, it is clever and detached enough to do everything for itself. He told one of his little girls a story about cats wearing gloves over their claws: "For you see, 'gloves' have got 'love' inside them—there's none outside, you know." So far from its dependence, the child's independence is the important thing, and the theme behind that is the self-centered emotional life imposed by the detached intelligence.

The famous Cat is a very direct symbol of this ideal of intellectual detachment; all cats are detached, and since this one grins, it is the amused observer. It can disappear because it can abstract itself from its surroundings into a more interesting inner world; it appears only as a head because it is almost a disembodied intelligence, and only as a grin because it can impose an atmosphere without being present. In frightening the King by the allowable act of looking at him, it displays the soul-force of Mr. Gandhi; it is unbeheadable because its soul cannot be killed; and its influence brings about a short amnesty in the divided nature of the Queen

and Duchess. Its cleverness makes it formidable—it has very long claws and a great many teeth—but Alice is particularly at home with it; she is the same sort of thing.

The Gnat gives a more touching picture of Dodgson; he treats nowhere more directly of his actual relations with the child. He feels he is liable to nag at it, as a gnat would, and the Gnat turns out, as it is, to be alarmingly big as a friend for the child, but at first it sounds tiny because it means so little to her. It tries to amuse her by rather frightening accounts of other dangerous insects, other grownups. It is reduced to tears by the melancholy of its own jokes, which it usually can't bear to finish; only if Alice had made them, as it keeps egging her on to do, would they be at all interesting. That at least would show the child had paid some sort of attention, and it could go away and repeat them to other people. The desire to have jokes made all the time, it feels, is a painful and obvious confession of spiritual discomfort, and the freedom of Alice from such a feeling makes her unapproachable.

> *"Don't tease so," said Alice, looking about in vain to see where the voice came from. "If you're so anxious to have a joke made, why don't you make one yourself?"*
>
> *The little voice sighed deeply: it was very unhappy, evidently, and Alice would have said something pitying to comfort it, "if it would only sigh like other people!" she thought. But this was such a wonderfully small sigh, that she wouldn't have heard it at all, if it hadn't come quite close to her ear. The consequence of this was that it tickled her ear very much, and quite took off her thoughts from the unhappiness of the poor little creature.*
>
> "I know you are a friend," *the little voice went on*; "a dear friend, and an old friend. And you won't hurt me, though I *am* an insect."
>
> *"What kind of insect?" Alice inquired, a little anxiously. What she really wanted to know was, whether it could sting or not, but she thought this wouldn't be quite a civil question to ask.*
>
> "What, then you don't—" *the little voice began....*

"Don't know who I am! Does anybody not know who I am?" He is afraid that even so innocent a love as his, like all love, may be cruel, and yet it is she who is able to hurt him, if only through his vanity. The implications of these few pages are so painful that the ironical calm of the close, when she kills it, seems delightfully gay and strong. The Gnat is suggesting to her that she would like to remain purely a creature of nature and stay in the wood where there are no names.

> "*... That's a joke. I wish* you *had made it.*"
>
> "*Why do you wish I had made it?*" *Alice asked. "It's a very bad one."*
>
> *But the Gnat only sighed deeply, while two large tears came rolling down its cheeks.*
>
> "*You shouldn't make jokes,*" *Alice said, "if it makes you so unhappy."*
>
> *Then came another of those melancholy little sighs, and this time the poor Gnat really seemed to have sighed itself away, for, when Alice looked up, there was nothing whatever to be seen on the twig, and, as she was getting quite chilly with, sitting so long, she got up and walked on.*

The overpunctuation and the flat assonance of "long—on" add to the effect. There is something charmingly prim and well-meaning about the way she sweeps aside the feelings that she can't deal with. One need not suppose that Dodgson ever performed this scene, which he can imagine so clearly, but there is too much self-knowledge here to make the game of psychoanalysis seem merely good fun.

The scene in which the Duchess has become friendly to Alice at the garden-party shows Alice no longer separate from her creator; it is clear that Dodgson would be as irritated as she is by the incident, and is putting himself in her place. The obvious way to read it is as the middle-aged woman trying to flirt with the chaste young man.

> "*The game's going on rather better now,*" *she said....*
>
> "'*Tis so,*" *said the Duchess: "and the moral of that is—'Oh, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round!'*"
>
> "*Somebody said,*" *Alice whispered, "that it's done by everybody minding their own business!*"
>
> "*Ah, well! It means much the same thing,*" *said the Duchess, digging her sharp little chin into Alice's shoulder as she added, "and the moral of that is—'Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves.'*"
>
> "*How fond she is of finding morals in things!*" *Alice thought to herself.*

Both are true because the generous and the selfish kinds of love have the same name; the Duchess seems to take the view of the political economists, that the greatest public good is produced by the greatest private selfishness. All this talk about "morals" makes Alice suspicious; also, she is carrying a flamingo, a pink bird with a long neck. "The chief difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her flamingo ... it *would* twist itself round and look up in her face."

> *"I dare say you're wondering why I don't put my arm round your waist," the Duchess said, after a pause: "the reason is, that I'm doubtful about the temper of your flamingo. Shall I try the experiment?"*
>
> *"He might bite," Alice cautiously replied, not feeling at all anxious to have the experiment tried.*
>
> *"Very true," said the Duchess: "flamingoes and mustard both bite. And the moral of that is—'Birds of a feather flock together.'"*

Mustard may be classed with the pepper that made her "ill-tempered" when she had so much of it in the soup, so that flamingos and mustard become the desires of the two sexes. No doubt Dodgson would be indignant at having this meaning read into his symbols, but the meaning itself, if he had been intending to talk about the matter, is just what he would have wished to say.

The Duchess then jumps away to another aspect of the selfishness of our nature.

> *"It's a mineral, I* think," *said Alice.*
>
> *"Of course it is," said the Duchess, who seemed ready to agree to everything that Alice said: "there's a large mustard-mine near here. And the moral of that is—'The more. there is of mine, the less there is of yours.'"*

One could put the same meanings in again, but a new one has come forward: "Industrialism is merely as greedy as sex; all we get from it is a sharper distinction between rich and poor." They go off into riddles about sincerity and how one can grow into what one would seem to be.

This sort of "analysis" is a peep at machinery; the question for criticism is what is done with the machine. The purpose of a dream on the Freudian theory is simply to keep you in an undisturbed state so that you can go on sleeping; in the course of this practical work you may produce something of more general value, but not only of one sort. Alice has, I understand, become a patron saint of the Surrealists, but they do not go in for Comic Primness, a sort of reserve of force, which is her chief charm. Wyndham Lewis avoided putting her beside Proust and Lorelei, to be danced on as a debilitating child-cult (though she is a bit of a pragmatist too); the present-day reader is more likely to complain of her complacence. In this sort of child-cult the child, though a means of imaginative escape, becomes the critic; Alice is the most reasonable and responsible person in the book. This is meant as charmingly pathetic about her as well as satire about her elders, and there is some implication that the sane man can take no other view of the world, even for controlling it, than the child does; but this is kept a good distance from

sentimental infantilism. There is always some doubt about the meaning of a man who says he wants to be like a child, because he may want to be like it in having fresh and vivid feelings and senses; in not knowing, expecting, or desiring evil; in not having an analytical mind; in having no sexual desires recognizable as such, or out of a desire to be mothered and evade responsibility. He is usually mixing them up—Christ's praise of children, given perhaps for reasons I have failed to list, has made it a respected thing to say, and it has been said often and loosely—but a man can make his own mixture; Carroll's invective hardly shows which he is attacking. The praise of the child in the *Alices* mainly depends on a distaste not only for sexuality but for all the distortions of vision that go with a rich emotional life; the opposite idea needs to be set against this: that you can only understand people or even things by having such a life in yourself to be their mirror; but the idea itself is very respectable. So far as it is typical of the scientist, the books are an expression of the scientific attitude (e.g. the Bread-and-butter-fly) or a sort of satire on it that treats it as inevitable.

The most obvious aspect of the complacence is the snobbery. It is clear that Alice is not only a very well-brought-up but a very well-to-do little girl; if she has grown into Mabel, so that she will have to go and live in that poky little house and have next to no toys to play with, she will refuse to come out of her rabbit-hole at all. One is only surprised that she is allowed to meet Mabel. All through the books odd objects of luxury are viewed rather as Wordsworth viewed mountains: meaningless, but grand and irremovable; objects of myth. The whiting, the talking leg of mutton, the soup-tureen, the tea-tray in the sky, are obvious examples. The shift from the idea of the child's unity with nature is amusingly complete; a mere change in the objects viewed makes it at one with the conventions. But this is still not far from Wordsworth, who made his mountains into symbols of the stable and moral society living among them. In part, the joke of this stands for the sincerity of the child that criticizes the folly of convention, but Alice is very respectful to conventions and interested to learn new ones; indeed, the discussions about the rules of the game of conversation, those stern comments on the isolation of humanity, put the tone so strongly in favor of the conventions that one feels there is nothing else in the world. There is a strange clash on this topic about the three little sisters who lived on treacle, discussed at the Mad Tea-Party. "They couldn't have done that, you know," Alice gently remarked, "they'd have been ill." "So they were," said Dormouse, "*very* ill." The creatures are always self-centered and argumentative, to stand for the detachment of the intellect from emotion, which is necessary to it and yet makes it childish. Then the remark stands both for the danger of taking as one's guide the

natural desires ("this is the sort of thing little girls would do if they were left alone") and for a pathetic example of a martyrdom to the conventions; the little girls did not mind *how* ill they were made by living on treacle, because it was their rule, and they knew it was expected of them. (That they are refined girls is clear from the fact that they do allegorical sketches.) There is an obscure connection here with the belief of the period that a really nice girl is "delicate" (the profound sentences implied by the combination of meanings in this word are [*a*] "you cannot get a woman to be refined unless you make her ill" and, more darkly, [*b*] "she is desirable because corpse-like"); Dodgson was always shocked to find that his little girls had appetites, because it made them seem less pure. The passage about the Bread-and-butter-fly brings this out more frankly, with something of the willful grimness of Webster. It was a creature of such high refinement that it could only live on weak tea with cream in it (tea being the caller's meal, sacred to the fair, with nothing gross about it). A new difficulty came into Alice's head.

> *"Supposing it couldn't find any?" she suggested. "Then it would die, of course."*
>
> *"But that must happen very often," Alice remarked thoughtfully.*
>
> *"It always happens," said the Gnat.*
>
> *After this, Alice was silent for a minute or two, pondering.*

There need be no gloating over the child's innocence here, as in Barrie; anybody might ponder. Alice has just suggested that flies burn themselves to death in candles out of a martyr's ambition to become Snap-dragon-flies. The talk goes on to losing one's name, which is the next stage on her journey, and brings freedom but is like death; the girl may lose her personality by growing up into the life of convention, and her virginity (like her surname) by marriage; or she may lose her "good name" when she loses the conventions "in the woods"—the animals, etc., there have no names because they are out of reach of the controlling reason; or, when she develops sex, she must neither understand nor name her feelings. The Gnat is weeping and Alice is afraid of the wood but determined to go on. "It always dies of thirst" or "it always dies in the end, as do we all"; "the life of highest refinement is the most deathly, yet what else is one to aim at when life is so brief, and when there is so little in it of any value." A certain ghoulishness in the atmosphere of this, of which the tight-lacing may have been a product or partial cause,[2] comes out very strongly in Henry James; the decadents pounced on it for their own purposes but could not put more death wishes into it than these respectables had done already.

The blend of child-cult and snobbery that Alice shares with Oscar Wilde is indeed much more bouncing and cheerful; the theme here is that it is proper for the well-meaning and innocent girl to be worldly, because she, like the world, should know the value of her condition. "When we were girls we were brought up to know nothing, and very interesting it was"; "Mamma, whose ideas on education are remarkably strict, has brought me up to be extremely short-sighted; so do you mind my looking at you through my glasses?" This joke seems to have come in after the Restoration dramatists as innocence recovered its social value; there are touches in Farquhar and it is strong in the *Beggar's Opera*. Sheridan has full control of it for Mrs. Malaprop.

> I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman.... But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts; and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might learn something of the contagious countries; but, above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not misspell, and mispronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying.

Dodgson has an imitation of this which may show, what many of his appreciators seem anxious to deny, that even *Wonderland* contains straight satire. The Mock Turtle was taught at school

> *Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with ... and then the different branches of Arithmetic—Ambition, Distraction, Uglification and Derision ... Mystery, ancient and modern, with Seaography; then Drawling—the Drawling-master ... used to come once a week*; he *taught us Drawling, Stretching, and Fainting in Coils.*

Children are to enjoy the jokes as against education, grownups as against a smart and too expensive education. Alice was not one of the climbers taught like this, and firmly remarks elsewhere that manners are not learned from lessons. But she willingly receives social advice like "curtsey while you're thinking what to say; it saves time," and the doctrine that you must walk away from a queen if you really want to meet her has more point when said of the greed of the climber than of the unself-seeking curiosity of the small girl. Or it applies to both, and allows the climber a sense of purity and simplicity; I

think this was a source of charm, whether Dodgson meant it or not. Alice's own social assumptions are more subtle and all-pervading; she always seems to raise the tone of the company she enters, and to find this all the easier because the creatures are so rude to her. A central idea here is that the perfect lady can gain all the advantages of contempt without soiling herself by expressing or even feeling it.

> *This time there could be* no *mistake about it: it was neither more nor less than a pig, and she felt that it would be quite absurd for her to carry it any further.*
>
> *So she set the little creature down, and felt quite relieved to see it trot away quietly into the wood. "If it had grown up," she said to herself, "it would have made a dreadfully ugly child; but it makes rather a handsome pig, I think." And she began thinking over other children she knew, who might do very well as pigs, and was just saying to herself, "if only one knew the right way to change them—" when she was a little startled by seeing the Cheshire Cat sitting on the bough of a tree a few yards off.*
>
> *The Cat only grinned when it saw Alice. It looked good-natured, she thought: still it had* very *long claws and a great many teeth, so she felt that it ought to be treated with respect.*

The effect of cuddling these mellow evasive phrases—"a good deal"—"do very well as"—whose vagueness can convey so rich an irony and so complete a detachment while making so firm a claim to show charming good will, is very close to that of Wilde's comedy. So is the hint of a delicious slavishness behind the primness, and contrasting with the irony, of the last phrase. (But then, Dodgson feels the Cat deserves respect as the detached intelligence—he is enjoying the idea that Alice and other social figures have got to respect Dodgson.) I think there is a feeling that the aristocrat is essentially like the child because it is his business to make claims in advance of his immediate personal merits; the child is not strong yet, and the aristocrat only as part of a system; the best he can do, if actually asked for his credentials, since it would be indecent to produce his pedigree, is to display charm and hope it will appear unconscious, like the good young girl. Wilde's version of this leaves rather a bad taste in the mouth because it is slavish; it has something of the naive snobbery of the high-class servant. Whistler meant this by the most crashing of his insults—"Oscar now stands forth unveiled as his own 'gentleman'"—when Wilde took shelter from a charge of plagiarism behind the claim that a gentleman does not attend to coarse abuse.

Slavish, for one thing, because they were always juggling between what they themselves thought wicked and what the society they addressed thought wicked, talking about sin when they meant scandal. The thrill of *Pen, Pencil and Poison* is in the covert comparison between Wilde himself and the poisoner, and Wilde certainly did not think his sexual habits as wicked as killing a friend to annoy an insurance company. By their very hints that they deserved notice as sinners they pretended to accept all the moral ideas of society, because they wanted to succeed in it, and yet society only took them seriously because they were connected with an intellectual movement which refused to accept some of those ideas. The Byronic theme of the man unable to accept the moral ideas of his society and yet torn by his feelings about them is real and permanent; but to base it on intellectual dishonesty is to short-circuit it, and leads to a claim that the life of highest refinement must be allowed a certain avid infantile petulance.

Alice is not a slave like this; she is almost too sure that she is good and right. The grownup is egged on to imitate her not as a privileged decadent but as a privileged eccentric, a Victorian figure that we must be sorry to lose. The eccentric, though kind and noble, would be alarming from the strength of his virtues if he were less funny; Dodgson saw to it that this underlying feeling about his monsters was brought out firmly by Tenniel, who had been trained on drawing very serious things like the British Lion weeping over Gordon, for *Punch*. Their massive and romantic nobility is, I think, an important element in the effect; Dodgson did not get it in his own drawings (nor, by the way, did he give all the young men eunuchoid legs) but no doubt he would have done so if he had been able. I should connect this weighty background with the tone of worldly goodness, of universal but not stupid charity, in Alice's remarks about the pig: "I shall do my best even for you; of course one will suffer, because you are not worth the efforts spent on you; but I have no temptation to be uncharitable to you because I am too far above you to need to put you in your place"—this is what her tone would develop into; a genuine readiness for self-sacrifice and a more genuine sense of power.

The qualities held in so subtle a suspension in Alice are shown in full blast in the two Queens. It is clear that this sort of moral superiority involves a painful isolation, similar to those involved in the intellectual way of life and the life of chastity, which are here associated with it. The reference to *Maud* (1855) brings this out. It was a shocking book; mockery was deserved; and its improper freedom was parodied by the flowers at the beginning of the *Looking-Glass*. A taint of fussiness hangs over this sort of essay, but the parodies were assumed to be obvious (children who aren't forced to learn Dr. Watts can't get the same thrill from parodies of him as the original children did) and even this parody is not as obvious as it was. There is no doubt that

the flowers are much funnier if you compare them with their indestructible originals.

> ... whenever a March-wind sighs
> He sets the jewel-print of your feet
> In violets blue as your eyes ...
>
> ... the pimpernel dozed on the lea;
> But the rose was awake all night for your sake,
> Knowing your promise to me;
> The lilies and roses were all awake ...
>
> Queen rose of the rosebud garden of girls....
>
> There has fallen a splendid tear
> From the passion-flower at the gate.
> She is coming, my dove, my dear;
> She is coming, my life, my fate;
> The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near;
> And the white rose weeps, "She is late;"
> The larkspur listens, "I hear, I hear;"
> And the lily whispers, "I wait."

> *"It isn't manners for us to begin, you know," said the Rose, "and I really was wondering when you'd speak." ...*
>
> *"How is it you all talk so nicely?" Alice said, hoping to get it into a better temper by a compliment....*
>
> *"In most gardens," the Tiger-lily said, "they make the beds too soft, so that the flowers are always asleep."*
>
> *This sounded a very good reason, and Alice was quite pleased to know it. "I never thought of that before!" she said.*
>
> *"It's* my *opinion that you never think at all," the Rose said, in a rather severe tone.*
>
> *"I never saw anybody that looked stupider," a Violet said, so suddenly, that Alice quite jumped; for it hadn't spoken before....*
>
> *"She's coming!" cried the Larkspur. "I hear her footstep, thump, thump, along the gravel-walk!"*
>
> *Alice looked round eagerly and found that it was the Red Queen—*

the concentrated essence, Dodgson was to explain, of all governesses. The Tiger-lily was originally a passionflower, but it was explained to Dodgson in

time that the passion meant was not that of sexual desire (which he relates to ill-temper) but of Christ; a brilliant recovery was made after the shock of this, for Tiger-lily includes both the alarming fierceness of ideal passion (chaste till now) and the ill-temper of the life of virtue and self-sacrifice typified by the governess (chaste always). So that in effect he includes all the flowers Tennyson named. The willow-tree that said Bough-wough doesn't come in the poem, but it is a symbol of hopeless love anyway. The pink daisies turn white out of fear, as the white ones turn pink in the poem out of admiration. I don't know how far we ought to notice the remark about beds, which implies that they should be hard because even passion demands the virtues of asceticism (they are also the earthy beds of the grave); it fits in very well with the ideas at work, but does not seem a thing Dodgson would have said in clearer language.

But though he shied from the Christian association in the complex idea wanted from "Passion-Flower," the flowers make another one very firmly.

> *"But that's not* your *fault," the Rose added kindly. "You're beginning to fade, you know—and then one can't help one's petals getting a little untidy."*
>
> *Alice didn't like this idea at all: so, to change the subject, she asked "Does she ever come out here?"*
>
> *"I daresay you'll see her soon," said the Rose. "She's one of the thorny kind."*[3]
>
> *"Where does she wear the thorns?" Alice asked with some curiosity.*
>
> *"Why, all round her head, of course," the Rose replied. "I was wondering you hadn't got some too. I thought it was the regular rule."*

Death is never far out of sight in the books. The Rose cannot help standing for desire, but its thorns here stand for the ill-temper not so much of passion as of chastity, that of the governess or that involved in ideal love. Then the thorns round the Queen's head, the "regular rule" for suffering humanity, not yet assumed by the child, stand for the Passion, the self-sacrifice of the most ideal and most generous love, which produces ugliness and ill-temper.

The joke of making romantic love ridiculous by applying it to undesired middle-aged women is less to be respected than the joke of the hopelessness of idealism. W. S. Gilbert uses it for the same timid facetiousness but more offensively. This perhaps specially nineteenth-century trick is played about all the women in the *Alices*—the Ugly Duchess who had the aphrodisiac in the soup (pepper, as Alice pointed out, produces "ill-temper") was the same person as the Queen in the first draft ("Queen of

Hearts and Marchioness of Mock Turtles") so that the Queen's sentence of her is the suicide of disruptive passion. The Mock Turtle, who is half beef in the picture, with a cloven hoof, suffers from the calf-love of a turtledove; he went to a bad school and is excited about dancing. (He is also weeping for his lost childhood, which Dodgson sympathized with while blaming its exaggeration, and Alice thought very queer; this keeps it from being direct satire.) So love is also ridiculous in young men; it is felt that these two cover the whole field (Dodgson was about thirty at the time) so that, granted these points, the world is safe for chastity. The danger was from middle-aged women because young women could be treated as pure, like Alice. Nor indeed is this mere convention; Gilbert was relying on one of the more permanent jokes played by nature on civilization, that unless somewhat primitive methods are employed, the specific desires of refined women may appear too late. So far as the chaste man uses this fact, and the fact that men are hurt by permanent chastity less than women in order to insult women, no fuss that he may make about baby women will make him dignified. Dodgson keeps the theme fairly agreeable by connecting it with the more general one of self-sacrifice—which may be useless or harmful, even when spontaneous or part of a reasonable convention, which then makes the sacrificer ridiculous and crippled, but which even then makes him deserve respect and may give him unexpected sources of power. The man playing at child-cult arrives at Sex War here (as usual since, but the comic Lear didn't), but not to the death or with all weapons.

The same ideas are behind the White Queen, the emotional as against the practical idealist. It seems clear that the *Apologia* (1864) is in sight when she believes the impossible for half an hour before breakfast, to keep in practice; I should interpret the two examples she gives as immortality and putting back the clock of history; also, Mass occurs before breakfast. All through the Wool and Water chapter (milk and water but not nourishing, and gritty to the teeth) she is Oxford, the life of learning rather than of dogmatic religion. Everyone recognizes the local shop, the sham fights, the rowing, the academic old Sheep, and the way it laughs scornfully when Alice doesn't know the technical slang of rowing; and there are some general reflections on education. The teacher willfully puts the egg a long way off, so that you have to walk after it yourself, and meanwhile it turns into something else; and when you have "paid for" the education, its effects, then first known, must be accepted as part of you whether they are good or bad. Oxford as dreamy may be half satire, half acceptance of Arnold's "adorable dreamer" purple patch (1865).

Once at least in each book a cry of loneliness goes up from Alice at the oddity beyond sympathy or communication of the world she has entered—

whether that in which the child is shut by weakness, or the adult by the renunciations necessary both for the ideal and the worldly way of life (the strength of the snobbery is to imply that these are the same). It seems strangely terrible that the answers of the White Queen, on the second of these occasions, should be so unanswerable.

> *By this time it was getting light. "The crow must have flown away, I think," said Alice: "I'm so glad it's gone. I thought it was the night coming on."*

Even in the rhyme the crow may be fear of death. The rhymes, like those other main structural materials, chess and cards, are useful because, being fixed, trivial, odd, and stirring to the imagination, they affect one as conventions of the dream-world, and this sets the tone about conventions.

> *"I wish I could manage to be glad!" the Queen said. "Only I never can remember the rule. You must be very happy, living in this wood, and being glad whenever you like."*

So another wood has turned out to be nature. This use of "that's a rule" is Sheridan's in *The Critic*; the pathos of its futility is that it is an attempt of reason to do the work of emotion and escape the dangers of the emotional approach to life. There may be a glance at the Oxford Movement and dogma. Perhaps chiefly a satire on the complacence of the fashion of slumming, the remark seems to spread out into the whole beauty and pathos of the ideas of pastoral; by its very universality her vague sympathy becomes an obscure self-indulgence.

> *"Only it is so* very *lonely here!" Alice said in a melancholy voice; and, at the thought of her loneliness, two large tears came rolling down her cheeks.*
>
> *"Oh, don't go on like that," cried the poor Queen, wringing her hands in despair. "Consider what a great girl you are. Consider what a long way you've come to-day. Consider what o'clock it is. Consider anything, only don't cry!"*
>
> *Alice could not help laughing at this, even in the midst of her tears. "Can you keep from crying by considering things?" she asked.*
>
> *"That's the way it's done," the Queen said with great decision: "nobody can do two things at once, you know. Let's consider your age to begin with—how old are you?"*

We are back at once to the crucial topic of age and the fear of death, and pass to the effectiveness of practice in helping one to believe the impossible; for example, that the aging Queen is so old that she would be dead. The helplessness of the intellect, which claims to rule so much, is granted under cover of the counterclaim that since it makes you impersonal, you can forget pain with it; we do not believe this about the Queen chiefly because she has not enough understanding of other people. The jerk of the return to age, and the assumption that this is a field for polite lying, make the work of the intellect only the game of conversation. Humpty Dumpty has the same embarrassing trick for arguing away a suggestion of loneliness. Indeed, about all the rationalism of Alice and her acquaintances there hangs a suggestion that there are, after all questions of pure thought, academic thought, whose altruism is recognized and paid for, though meant only for the upper classes to whom the conventions are in any case natural habit; like that suggestion that the scientist is sure to be a gentleman and has plenty of space, which is the fascination of Kew Gardens.

The Queen is a very inclusive figure. "Looking before and after" with the plaintive tone of universal altruism, she lives chiefly backwards, in history; the necessary darkness of growth, the mysteries of self knowledge, the self-contradictions of the will, the antinomies of philosophy, the very Looking-Glass itself, impose this; nor is it mere weakness to attempt to resolve them only in the direct impulse of the child. Gathering the more dream-rushes, her love for man becomes the more universal, herself the more like a porcupine. Knitting with more and more needles, she tries to control life by a more and more complex intellectual apparatus—the "progress" of Herbert Spencer; any one shelf of the shop is empty, but there is always something very interesting—the "atmosphere" of the place is so interesting—which moves up as you look at it from shelf to shelf; there is jam only in the future and our traditional past, and the test made by Alice, who sent value through the ceiling as if it were quite used to it, shows that progress can never reach value, because its habitation and name is heaven. The Queen's scheme of social reform, which is to punish those who are not respectable before their crimes are committed, seems to be another of these jokes about progress:

> *"But if you* hadn't *done them," the Queen said, "that would have been better still; better, and better, and better!" Her voice went higher with each "better," till it got quite to a squeak at last.*

There is a similar attack in the Walrus and the Carpenter, who are depressed by the spectacle of unimproved nature and engage in charitable work among

oysters. The Carpenter is a Castle and the Walrus, who could eat so many more because he was crying behind his handkerchief, was a Bishop, in the scheme at the beginning of the book. But in saying so one must be struck by the depth at which the satire is hidden; the queerness of the incident and the characters takes on a Wordsworthian grandeur and aridity, and the landscape defined by the tricks of facetiousness takes on the remote and staring beauty of the ideas of the insane. It is odd to find that Tenniel went on to illustrate Poe in the same manner; Dodgson is often doing what Poe wanted to do, and can do it the more easily because he can safely introduce the absurd. The Idiot Boy of Wordsworth is too milky a moonlit creature to be at home with Nature as she was deplored by the Carpenter, and much of the technique of the rudeness of the Mad Hatter has been learned from Hamlet. It is the ground-bass of this kinship with insanity, I think, that makes it so clear that the books are not trifling, and the cool courage with which Alice accepts madmen that gives them their strength.

This talk about the snobbery of the *Alices* may seem a mere attack, but a little acid may help to remove the slime with which they have been encrusted. The two main ideas behind the snobbery, that virtue and intelligence are alike lonely, and that good manners are therefore important though an absurd confession of human limitations, do not depend on a local class system; they would be recognized in a degree by any tolerable society. And if in a degree their opposites must also be recognized, so they are here; there are solid enough statements of the shams of altruism and convention and their horrors when genuine; it is the forces of this conflict that make a clash violent enough to end both the dreams. In *Wonderland* this is mysteriously mixed up with the trial of the Knave of Hearts, the thief of love, but at the end of the second book the symbolism is franker and more simple. She is a grown Queen and has acquired the conventional dignities of her insane world; suddenly she admits their insanity, refuses to be a grown Queen, and destroys them.

> *"I can't stand this any longer!" she cried, as she seized the tablecloth in both hands: one good pull, and plates, dishes, guests, and candles came crashing down together in a heap on the floor.*

The guests are inanimate and the crawling self-stultifying machinery of luxury has taken on a hideous life of its own. It is the High Table of Christ Church that we must think of here. The gentleman is not the slave of his conventions because at need he could destroy them; and yet, even if he did this, and all the more because he does not, he must adopt while despising it the attitude to them of the child.

Notes

1. The second line of this poem is quoted by Martin Gardner as reading "with bitter tidings," not "summons." [Ed.]

2. It was getting worse when the *Alices* were written. In what Hugh Kingsmill calls "the fatal fifties" skirts were so big that the small waist was not much needed for contrast, so it can't be blamed for the literary works of that decade.

3. Empson here quotes from the early text of the second chapter of *Looking-Glass*, perhaps Dent's Everyman's Library. The later text, as reprinted in The Modern Library edition and elsewhere, has the Rose reply, "She's one of the kind that has nine spikes, you know." Just as Carroll changed his Passionflower to a Tiger-lily when it was pointed out to him that the name was an allusion to Christ, so too must he have come to see the crown of thorns as a Christly reference and changed it in later versions [Ed.].

ELIZABETH SEWELL

The Balance of Brillig[1]

It is important to take a fairly wide field, because the authoritarian Humpty Dumpty, backed up later by Carroll himself, has suggested an over-simple explanation. Humpty Dumpty undertakes to interpret the hard words, says that *brillig* is four o'clock in the afternoon, when you start broiling things for dinner, and then goes on to *slithy* which he maintains is a combination of lithe and slimy: 'You see—it's like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word.' To this Carroll adds in the Snark Preface: 'Humpty Dumpty's theory, of two meanings packed into one word like a portmanteau, seems to me the right explanation of all.' As Mr. Partridge[2] points out, this is no explanation of genuine inventions such as the *Jubjub*, or Lear's *Moppsikon-Floppsikon*. Alice herself seems reassuringly sceptical, for to Humpty's suggestion about *brillig* she replies, 'Yes, that will do very well,' which implies a good deal of reserve or at least the understanding that a number of other interpretations would do equally well. There is a more interesting remark earlier in the conversation, and it may be as well to start here rather than with the portmanteau theory. Alice and Humpty have been having a difference of opinion about the noun 'glory', to which Humpty attributes an entirely personal meaning. When Alice complains, Humpty says that he intends to be master of his own house, and continues with the remark that adjectives are pliable and verbs tough. 'They've a temper, some

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From *Alice in Wonderland*, Donald J. Gray, ed. © 1989 W.W. Norton. Originally published in *The Field of Nonsense*.

of them—particularly verbs: they're the proudest—adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs.' It is certain that in Nonsense vocabulary nouns and adjectives play by far the biggest part. Mr. Partridge in his classification of the vocabulary of *Jabberwocky* gives four new verbs, *gimble*, *outgrabe*, *galumphing* and *chortled*, to ten new adjectives and eight new nouns. In the list of Lear's neologisms the proportions are even more marked, with over two pages of new nouns and a page of adjectives to six verbs and one adverb.

It is worth noticing at the beginning that it is possible to classify Nonsense words into the normal grammatical categories. This is something we take very much for granted with Lear and Carroll, but it need not necessarily be so. For example, no classification is possible in this bit of Lear gibberish:—

> There was an old man of Spithead,
> Who opened the window, and said—
> 'Fil-jomble, fil-jumble, Fil-rumble-come-tumble!'
> That doubtful old man of Spithead.

any more than in the ballad refrain 'Hi diddle inkum feedle!' Nonsense inventions which are to serve as nouns and which might be hard to identify in isolation, *dong* for instance, or *rath*, are given their context carefully, either by a definite or indefinite article, or by means of adjectives or other attributes: 'the dong with a luminous nose', or 'the mome raths'. Very often, too, they are given capital letters. The adjectives are nearly always recognizable by a typical adjectival suffix: *tulgey*, *uffish*, *manxome*, or Lear's *scroobious* and *borascible*. The verbs follow the same lines, and where form alone would be insufficient indication, syntax makes the word's function clear.

We can assume that the writers wanted their sentences containing Nonsense words to look like genuine sentences bearing reference, and that they found nouns and adjectives better for their purpose than verbs. If Nonsense words are to appear to be one of a class, it must be in order that they should carry conviction as words rather than gibberish. *Brillig*, *Cloxam*, *Willeby-Wat* have no more reference than *Hey nonny no* or *Hi diddle diddle*, but they seem to have, because they are presented to us as nouns or adjectives, and remind us of other words which have reference. As regards the preference for nouns and adjectives over verbs, it is interesting that Mallarmé, that most logical of poets, should have shared it to a marked degree. (*Vide* Jacques Scherer, *L'Expression Littéraire dans l'Oeuvre de Mallarmé*, Droz, Paris, 1947, pp. 87–113). In logic, a verb expresses a relation, and this suggests two reasons for the few invented verbs in

Nonsense. The first is the impossibility of inventing new relations in logic. The second is that a verb is an expressed relation, and relations in logic have to be simple and exact. If a Nonsense verb is invented, the mind can only deal with it as it deals with Nonsense words in general: it will produce from its memory all the other words the neologism resembles, and this will multiply relationships and associations in a manner quite alien to the operation of logic. The latter is concerned with implied relations between certain data, and it is well, therefore, to keep the expressed relations as simple as possible, since they are the groundwork. The verbs have to be simple because they are important. The terms and the nature of them, i.e. in this case nouns and adjectives, are, as we have seen, much less important to the working of the system, and so they can be played with to a much greater degree. An example from Carroll's *Symbolic Logic will* illustrate the point:—

(1) No kitten, that loves fish, is unteachable;
(2) No kitten without a tail will play with a gorilla;
(3) Kittens with whiskers always love fish;
(4) No teachable kitten has green eyes;
(5) No kittens have tails unless they have whiskers.

We can move on now to an example of Nonsense wording; a very short one will do to start with:—

... and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch.

The verb is simple and familiar; we are left with a noun and an adjective. Humpty Dumpty's commentary on the poem does not go beyond the first verse, but the similar phrase, 'the slithy toves' is dealt with as follows: 'Well, "*slithy*" means "lithe and slimy" ... "*toves*" are something like badgers—they're something like lizards—and they're something like corkscrews.' The noun is treated as if it were a technical term, a label and no more, and is invested at once with Nonsense properties of the kind we have observed in the last few chapters. The adjective is an example of Humpty Dumpty's portmanteau, and *frumious* is of the same type. Carroll says of it in the Snark Preface that it is a combination of 'fuming' and 'furious'. To take the adjectives first, *slithy* and *frumious*, it seems curious that Humpty Dumpty should have got by so easily on his portmanteau theory, for when one looks at it, it becomes very unsatisfactory. It would fit a pun well enough, in which there are precisely that—two meanings (or more than two) packed up in one word. But *frumious*, for instance, is not a word, and does not have two

meanings packed up in it; it is a group of letters without any meaning at all. What Humpty Dumpty may have meant, but fails to say, is that it looks like two words, 'furious' and 'fuming', reminding us of both simultaneously. It is not a word, but it looks like other words, and almost certainly more than two. In the examples given below one can see the sort of thing that happens, for each mind will vary in the particular words recalled by these Nonsense formations. I give Mr. Partridge's, from *Here, There and Everywhere*, and my own.

FRUMIOUS:

Carroll: furious, fuming.
Partridge: frumpish, gloomy.
Myself: fume, with a connection with French *brume* and English *brumous*, frumenty, rheumy.

BANDERSNATCH:

Partridge: bandog, (?) *Bandar*, from Hindustani, snatching proclivities.
Myself: Banshee and bandbox.

BORASCIBLE:

Partridge: irascible, boring.
Myself: Boreas, boracic, connection with Eastern Europe, through, I think, the prefix 'Bor', as in General Bor-Komorowski.

STAR-BESPRINGLED:

Partridge: bespangled and besprinkled.
Myself: connection with 'tingled', through the Tennysonian line: 'A cry that shivered to the tingling stars'; the name 'Pringle', connecting with dress-making (? through a story), also perhaps 'pin-prick'.

MOPPSIKON-FLOPPSIKON BEAR:

Partridge: 'with a great plop of hair and a floppy gait?'
Myself: Connection with Russia, through the 'ikon' ending. (Cf. Partridge's comment on 'Soffsky-Poffsky trees': 'of Siberian habitat?')

These are not intended as interpretations. They merely show that these words, though possessing no meaning themselves, remind the reader of

many words which have reference. Nonsense words which do not act in this way, *Jubjub*, for instance, must have their function as technical terms made clear at once, and this in fact is what happens:

> Beware the Jubjub bird ...
>
> Should we meet with a Jubjub, that desperate bird,
> We shall need all our strength for the job!

On the whole, however, the first of these two forms is the commoner, a Nonsense word reminding the mind of other words which it resembles. It is important, for if a word does not look like a word, so to speak, the mind will not play with it. Carroll coins examples of this sort, *Mhruxian* and *grurmstipths* from *Tangled Tales* or the 'occasional exclamation' of the Gryphon, *Hjckrrh* from *The Mock Turtle's Story*. Words such as these do not interest the mind; but dongs and toves look strangely familiar, and the mind can enjoy itself with them. Mr. Partridge has some delightful examples, making Lear's *Gramblamble* into *Grand Lama*? *grand brambles*? or Carroll's *Ipwergis* pudding from *Sylvie and Bruno* into *Walpurgis* and *haggis*. We are left with a half-conscious perception of verbal likenesses, and, in consequence, the evocation of a series of words.

It looks as if Nonsense were running on to dangerous ground here, for two of its rules are (a) no likenesses are to be observed, and (b) no trains of association are to be set up. At this point we shall have to go back to the Snark Preface for a moment, for, although we have rejected Carroll's suggestion that Humpty Dumpty's theory will cover all the Nonsense words, making the portmanteau into an umbrella, there is an interesting remark a little later on. Discussing the alternative of saying 'fuming-furious' or 'furious-fuming', Carroll says, 'but, if you have that rarest of gifts, a perfectly balanced mind, you will say "frumious".' It is a hint that here as elsewhere Nonsense is maintaining some kind of balance in its language.[3] After all, Humpty Dumpty who is the chief language expert in the Alices is himself in such a state; Carroll could have made any of his characters discourse upon words, and it is interesting that the one who in fact does so was 'sitting, with his legs crossed like a Turk, on the top of a high wall—such a narrow one that Alice quite wondered how he could keep his balance'. What is the nature of this balance where Nonsense words are concerned, and why is it precarious?

One might suppose the danger to be that these Nonsense words break two important rules of the Nonsense game. In fact, however, this infringement is only apparent. We have seen already that although Nonsense plays on the side of order, its aim and method is to defeat disorder with

disorder's own weapons. It allows disorder in the mind a certain amount of selected material apparently suitable for dream purposes (images and so on), and in this way draws the disordering faculty into play, but manages never to let it gain control. Exactly the same thing is happening here. The mind is encouraged by means of these Nonsense words to notice likenesses; but the likenesses are to other *words*. It is the purely verbal memory and associative faculty which is called into play. The danger for Nonsense is that likenesses perceived between images may run together into a poetic and dreaming unity; this almost happens with Lear's 'star-bespringled' for instance, but Nonsense words must in general avoid anything of this kind. To take another example, Lear's *Pobble* suggests to Mr. Partridge poodle and wabble, to myself bobble and pebble. Each of us has two good words plus the Nonsense original, but with the references one can do nothing. They will not fuse; and from this it may be seen that we have not really shifted one foot off our safe Nonsense ground of one and one and one. Pebbles, poodles, bobbles and wabbles are as good a Nonsense series as any another, and quite as intractable to the fusing powers of the dream. Provided that enough words are called up by a Nonsense neologism and provided that the references are sufficiently incompatible, Nonsense is as safe in this part of the game as in any other.

In the same way it is interesting to note that what I have called the technical terms, where no immediate chorus of connected words springs to the mind, are frequently doubled on themselves, as if to make up for their absence of evocation by creating inside themselves a tiny alliterative, rhyming or repetitive series of their own. *Jabberwocky* produces the *Jubjub*, '*Callooh! Callay*!', *snicker-snack*; Lear has *Soffsky-Poffsky*, *Clangle-Wangle*, *Boss-Woss*. They go as the vorpal sword went, one two, one two, and we are still safe inside the world of numbers and series. The same principle holds good in the Nonsense manoeuvre of transplanting words from their normal context. There is only one example of this in Carroll, in the Snark:—

> As the man they called 'Ho!' told his story of woe
> In an antediluvian tone.

but Lear has a number, 'You luminous person of Barnes', 'That incipient old man at a casement', 'That intrinsic old man of Peru', and many more both in his Nonsense and his letters. The words have meanings but the mind is unable to fit the meanings, as assembled, together, and the effect once again is that of one and one and one.

That effect, however, is extremely important; it is vital that the effect should be one and one, and not nothing. So far we have been looking only at

one side of the question, one half of the balancing process. We have seen how the Nonsense words, by the usual Nonsense methods, play against the mind's tendency to oneness, the tendency towards poetry and dream; but they have equally to make sure that the Nonsense words do not create a nothingness in the mind. Either form of infinity is dangerous to Nonsense, and it is between the two, between 0 and 1 as it were, that Nonsense language has to maintain its balance.

Nonsense has a fear of nothingness quite as great as its fear of everythingness. Mr. Empson says in *Some Versions of the Pastoral* that the fear of death is one of the crucial topics of the Alices, but it will be simpler for us at present to think of it as a fear of nothingness.

> ... '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?'
>
> 'You know very well you're not real.'
>
> 'I *am* real!' said Alice, and began to cry.

The Snark breaks the rules here, for in Fit the Seventh someone has 'softly and suddenly vanished away', that is, has become nothingness. Nonsense does not deal in any kind of physical or metaphysical nothingness, one needs to remember. It deals in words. Where these are normal and are acting normally, there cannot be a nothingness in so far as they are concerned, for words have reference to experience. 'Word implies relation to creatures' [Aquinas], *Summa* [*Theologica*], Pt. I, Q. 34, Art. 4). The only way in which nothingness could set in might be by some sort of separation between words and things, by things having no words attached to them or by words without reference to things. It comes down to a question of names.

Names come in for a good deal of attention in the Alices. 'What's your name, child?' is the first remark of the Queen of Hearts to Alice. Humpty Dumpty also enquires what her name is, but makes the rather interesting remark that it is unsatisfactory because it does not mean anything. Alice questions the need for names to mean anything, but Humpty insists on the point, as if he were trying to set up a closer connection between the name and the thing, in the case of proper nouns. Generally, we use proper nouns as pointers and nothing more. Poetry makes much use of this, using them where possible as series of lovely sounds but not entirely devoid of reference or at least of connections, since they have associational power if not much in the way of content. The content is not enough to distract the mind from the succession of sounds, but the associations will prevent the complaint that the poet is talking gibberish:—

> And all who since, baptized or infidel,
> Jousted in Aspramont or Montalban,
> Damasco, or Marocco or Trebisond,
> Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore
> When Charlemain and all his peerage fell
> At Fontarabia....
>
> MILTON

None the less it is noticeable that when poetry does this, it very often intersperses the proper nouns with names of things, as if to feed the mind adequately with creatures, lest it be lulled by music, a way of working which is only partially appropriate to poetry.

> Sail of Claustra, Aelis, Azalais,
> Raimona, Tibors, Berangerë,
> 'Neath the dark gleam of the sky;
> Under night, the peacock-throated,
> Bring the saffron-coloured shell....
> Mirals, Cembelins, Audiarda,
> Remember this fire.
> Elain, Tireis, Alcmena,
> 'Mid the silver rustling of wheat....
>
> (EZRA POUND)

> The men of Arvid with thine army were upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers ... Syria ... occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and broidered work, and fine linen, with coral, and agate. Judah, and the land of Israel ... traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.
>
> Damascus was thy merchant ... for the multitude of all riches; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool. Dan also and Javan going to and fro occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus were in thy market....
>
> (From Ezekiel xxvii)

Nonsense, as we have seen, eschews beauty, but its proper nouns work in the same way as these, though the associations are verbal, the isles of Boshen recalling the Biblical land of Goshen, Chankly Bore seeming a metamorphosis of Branksome Chine, Tinniskoop of Tinnevelly and so on. The names in Nonsense are not nothingnesses; they work by association, as

the names in poetry do, but their associations are with words. Here, too, in its own way, Nonsense preserves the connection between these names and things, and we are given details:—

> Landing at eve near the Zemmery Fidd
> Where the Oblong Oysters grow.
> (Lear, *The Dong with a Luminous Nose*)

> ... the Soffsky-Poffsky trees,—which were ... covered with blue leaves ...
> (Lear, *The Seven Families*)

Of the Jubjub:—

> Its flavour when cooked is more exquisite far
> Than mutton, or oysters, or eggs:
> (Some think it keeps best in an ivory jar,
> And some, in mahogany kegs).

Nothingness in all these cases is successfully defeated by the number of the verbal reminiscences called up by the Nonsense words, by their close association with things, and by illustrations. The Jabberwock is pictured for us, and so are the Pobble and the Dong and the Jumblies and nearly all of Lear's inventions. The Nonsense words are sufficiently protected from nothingness; but what happens if the reverse process takes place, and things are separated from, words in some way, becoming nameless?

It is interesting that such a case is dealt with explicitly in *Through the Looking-Glass*, in Alice's entry into the wood where things have no name. This is at the end of Chapter III, *Looking-Glass Insects*, a very significant chapter despite its rather limited title, for it is all about words and names. It starts with Alice trying to make a survey of the country and attempting to name, as one might do in geography, the mountains and rivers and towns. Then comes the scene in the railway carriage * * * with [its] remark, 'Language is worth a thousand pounds a word!' Soon after this, two remarks are made to Alice about knowing her own name and knowing the alphabet, and then begins a series of puns, made by the Gnat. It is as if, having got words and references put together at this point (as they were not at the beginning of the chapter, where Alice says, 'Principal mountains—I'm on the only one, but I don't think it's got any name') and having realized the value of it—worth a thousand pounds a word—one can start playing with it. Puns, as we have seen, are a safe enough game for

Nonsense, because they are real portmanteaux, where the two meanings are distinct but are incongruously connected by an accident of language formation. After the puns, Alice and the Gnat discuss the purpose of names, and whether they have any use. Then follows another game with words: Alice's horse-fly becomes a rocking-horse-fly, the butterfly a bread-and-butter-fly. A piece of each word is allowed to develop, rather as Lear's people develop enormous noses, all out of proportion. Images in Nonsense are not allowed to develop, to turn into or mingle with other images as happens in dreams and poetry; but words may do so, provided they merely develop into another word, and by their development accentuate an incongruity. Here again, circumstantial details are given at once: 'Its wings are thin slices of bread-and-butter, its body is a crust, and its head is a lump of sugar.' Looking-Glass Insects, in fact, are not insects at all but compounds of words to which are added lists of properties in the best Nonsense manner.

The next stage is a further discussion on names. 'I suppose you don't want to lose your name? .. only think how convenient it would be if you could manage to go home without it!' Alice is a little nervous about such an idea, and the Wood where things have no names, to which she proceeds immediately after this conversation, is frighteningly dark. Once in it, she cannot remember her own name or give a name to any of the objects round her. This is a terrifying situation, but Carroll preserves the readers from it by subjecting Alice alone to the experiment; the passage in the book makes no attempt to forgo the use of names. It is at this point that Alice meets the Fawn, a pretty creature 'with its large gentle eyes ... Such a sweet soft voice it had!' It asks her name, and she makes a similar enquiry, but neither can remember, and they proceed lovingly—the word is Carroll's own—till they emerge from (the wood. There each remembers its name and identity, and in a flash they are parted.

This passage is one of the most interesting in the Alices. There is a suggestion here that to lose your name is to gain freedom in some way, since the nameless one would no longer be under control: 'There wouldn't be any name for her to call, and of course you wouldn't have to go, you know.' It also suggests that the loss of language brings with it an increase in loving unity with living things. It is words that separate the fawn and the child, just as they separate the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò and his love in that wood of Bongtrees where we began:—

'Though you're such a Hoddy Doddy,
'Yet I wish that I could modi-
    'fy the words I needs must say!

'Will you please to go away?'

Nonsense is a game with words. Its own inventions wander safely between the respective pitfalls of 0 and 1, nothingness and everythingness; but where words without things are safe enough, things without words are far more dangerous. To have no name is to be a kind of nothing:—

'What do you call yourself?' the Fawn said ...
She answered rather sadly, 'Nothing just now.'

But it is also to have unexpected opportunities for unity and that is a step towards everythingness. We are safe with *brillig* and the *Jabberwock* because that is a fight, a dialectic and an equilibrium; but despite the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò and the Bong-trees—words which as we have seen play the Nonsense game in the usual way—and despite the early pumpkins and the jug without a handle, something has crept in here which words cannot cover, cannot split up and control. There is a nostalgia in each of these scenes:—

Alice stood looking after it, almost ready to cry with vexation
at having lost her dear little fellow-traveller so suddenly.

On that coast of Coromandel,
In his jug without a handle
Still she weeps, and daily moans;
On that little heap of stones
To her Dorking hens she moans ...

But Nonsense can admit of no emotion—that gate to everythingness and nothingness where ultimately words fail completely. It is a game to which emotion is alien, and it will allow none to its playthings, which are words and those wielders of words, human beings. Its humans, like its words and things and Nonsense vocabulary, have to be one, and one, and one. There is nothing more inexorable than a game.

Notes

1. From Elizabeth Sewell, *The Field of Nonsense* (London: Chatto and Windus Ltd., 1952), pp. 116–29. Reprinted by permission of Chatto and Windus Ltd, and Christy & Moore Ltd.

In her study of the nonsense of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, Miss Sewell describes the practices and purposes of nonsense as those of a game. A game she defines as "the active manipulation, serving no useful purpose, of a certain object or class of objects,

concrete or mental, within a limited field of space and time and according to fixed rules, with the aim of producing a given result despite the opposition of chance and/or opponents" (p. 27). The objects manipulated in the game of nonsense are words, and in nonsense the mind uses words so that "its tendency towards order [will] engage its contrary tendency towards disorder, keeping the latter perpetually in play and so in check" (p. 48). In the section of her book reprinted here, Miss Sewell considers how nonsense uses language so that words and syntax maintain a balance between a disorder of discrete objects entirely without relation to one another, and the coherence and similitudes of dream or poetry.

2. Eric Partridge, "The Nonsense Words of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll," in *Here, There and Everywhere* (London, 1950), pp. 162-88 [*Editor*].

3. Belle Moses in *Lewis Carroll in Wonderland, and at Home* quotes him as saying of his Nonsense language, 'A perfectly balanced mind could understand it.' (Ch. I, p. 6).

ALEXANDER L. TAYLOR

Through the Looking-glass

The first chapter of *Through the Looking-glass* was sent to the press 'a few days after the publication of *Phantasmagoria*' which appeared in January, 1869.[1] Dodgson must therefore have been writing, as opposed to jotting down ideas, at least since his removal to Tom Quad. On 19 April, 1870, he wrote to Miss Mary Marshal, 'I don't know when it will be finished'.[2] It was published in December, 1871. Fortunately Tenniel had relented and did supply the illustrations.

In *Alice's Adventures* Dodgson had ingeniously concealed certain amusing little problems and 'leg-pulls'. He deliberately cast *Through the Looking-glass* in the form of an enigma, a form which appealed to his love of innocent deception and which Kingsley had suggested in *The Water Babies*:

> Come read me a riddle
> Each good little man:
> If you cannot read it
> No grown-up folks can.

> And if you will read this story nine times over, and then think for yourself, you will find out why. It is not good for little boys to be told everything, and never to be forced to use their wits.

From *The White Knight: A Study of C.L. Dodgson.*

Compare with this the old sheep's remark: 'I never put thing into people's hands; that would never do. They must get then for themselves.'

In 1888 he wrote to Nellie Knight from Eastbourne: 'I'm rather puzzled which book to send to Sydney. He looks so young for *Through the Looking-glass*. However, he found out one puzzle ... that I don't remember anyone of his age ever guessing before, so I think it won't be too old a book for him.' What Sydney made of it as a puzzle is not recorded. No doubt he enjoyed it as a story.

It is not my intention to go through the book squeezing the last drop of meaning from every word. That would take a very long time—supposing it to be possible, which is by no means certain. As Dodgson said in a letter to a friend in America, words mean more than we mean to express when we use them; so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer means.[3] Let us, however, examine some of the ideas on which the book is based.

In the first place he used the time-honoured dream-machinery, that mediaeval framework for allegory and satire, but he used it with a difference. How long does a dream last? By the clock, Alice's dream lasts hardly any time at all. When it begins Dinah is washing her white kitten and she is still washing it when Alice awakes—if she has ever been asleep. She has been in some kind of trance, like 'the vision of the prophet Mahommed, in which he saw the whole wonders of heaven and hell, though the jar of water which fell when his ecstasy commenced had not spilled its contents when he returned to ordinary existence'.

In *Bruno's Revenge* (1867) Dodgson had explained what he meant by the 'eerie' state. Twenty-six years later, in the Preface to Sylvie and Bruno Concluded, he elaborated his views:

> It may interest some of my Readers to know the *theory* on which this story is constructed. It is an attempt to show what might possibly happen, supposing that Fairies really existed; and that they were sometimes visible to us and we to them; and supposing also, that human beings might sometimes become conscious of what goes on in the Fairy-world—by actual transference of their immaterial essence, such as we meet with in 'Esoteric Buddhism'.
>
> I have supposed a Human Being to be capable of various psychic states, with varying degrees of consciousness, as follows
>
> (*a*) The ordinary state, with no consciousness of the presence of Fairies;
>
> (*b*) The 'eerie' state, in which, while conscious of actual

> surroundings, he is also conscious of the presence of Fairies;
>
> (*c*) A form of trance, in which, while unconscious of actual surroundings and apparently asleep, he (i.e. his immaterial essence) migrates to other scenes, in the actual world, or in Fairyland, and is conscious of the presence of Fairies.
>
> I have also supposed a Fairy to be capable of migrating from Fairyland into: the actual world, and of assuming at pleasure a Human form; and also to be capable of various psychical states, viz.
>
> (*a*) The ordinary state, with no consciousness of the presence of Human Beings.
>
> (*b*) A sort of 'eerie' state, in which he is conscious, if in the actual world, of the presence of actual Human Beings, if in Fairyland, of the presence of the immaterial essences of Human Beings.
>
> I will here tabulate the passages in both Volumes, where abnormal states occur.

And he does.

In *Through the Looking-glass* Alice is in the normal state at the beginning and the end of the story. She is 'eerie' in Looking-glass House and when she has 'entered the palace', just before she awakes. In the garden and on the chess-board she is in the trance state.

The chess-pieces, too, have their various states. In Looking-glass House they are unconscious of Alice's presence; that is, they are in 'the ordinary state, with no consciousness of the presence of Human Beings'. But in the game they are conscious of the presence of Alice's immaterial essence. Near the end of the game the Queens fall asleep and dream of Alice's world. They are presumably in the trance state then. The Red King is in the trance state throughout and the White Knight might be said to be permanently 'eerie'.

The rather irritating question 'Which dreamed it?' with its Kantian or Berkeleyan overtones derives from Dodgson's original ending to *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*:

> But her sister sat there some while longer, watching the setting sun, and thinking of little Alice and her adventures, till she, too, began dreaming after a fashion, and this was her dream.
>
> She saw an ancient city, and a quiet river winding near it along the plain, and up the stream went slowly gliding a boat with a merry party of children on board—she could hear the voices and

> laughter like music over the water—and among them was another little Alice, who sat listening with bright, eager eyes, to a tale that was being told, and she listened for the words of the tale, and lo, it was the dream of her own little sister.

Less original was the looking-glass idea. It cannot be a coincidence that within a year of each other appeared *Through the Looking-glass* (1872) and *Erewhon* (1871), both about worlds where everything is the mirror-image of what we regard as normal. Yet it is as certain as anything can be that the books were written independently. Kingsley had used a similar idea in *The Water Babies*, where Tom found the Other-End-of Nowhere much more like This-End-of-Somewhere than he had been in the habit of expecting. And before that there was the Taylor sisters' *Signor Topsy Turvey's Wonderful Magic Lantern; or The World Turned Upside Down* (1810). Yet Dodgson's use of the looking-glass idea was all his own.

The difference between *Erewhon* and *Through the Looking-glass* is profound. Butler begins realistically, as Swift did in *Gulliver's Travels*, but soon throws aside all pretence and reveals his purpose as satirical. Dodgson pretends throughout to be writing 'nonsense'. He acknowledges no obligation to stick to one subject but slides from topic to topic by subtle associations of ideas. Nevertheless, meaning is always there, flowing along like a deep, dark river, with the puns and patter as the play of light on the surface.

Again, Butler used his reversals to cast doubts on the moral and ethical standards of Victorian England. His looking-glass was the circle of stone figures at the head of the pass, six or seven times larger than life, of great antiquity and ten in number, our tribal taboos, the Ten Commandments. Dodgson's satire was directed, as on previous occasions, against controversy in religious matters, while his explorations were mainly in that no-man's-land between mathematics and theology into which he had already made some short expeditions.

Another basic idea was that of sending his heroine into a game of chess, and for this he had made, as we have seen, some preliminary sketches from life. Drawing from life was a matter of principle with him and he recommended it in the most explicit manner to all his illustrators, even overruling Tenniel, who said he no more needed a model in front of him than Dodgson needed a multiplication table.

Chess to Dodgson was something far more than a game. As a mathematician he saw the board like a sheet of graph-paper on which it is possible to represent almost anything, and as a theologian he saw in the two

sides a far more powerful means of expressing the opposing factions in Church and University than any he had previously hit upon.

Let us begin by examining the most striking and original episode in the whole book, the Red Queen running. Alice, it will be remembered, had met her—by walking away from her—in the garden of live flowers. With her she went to the top of the Principal Mountain and saw all the world she was to enter spread out beneath her in the form of a large chess-board.

> 'It's a great game of chess that's being played—all over the world—if this *is* the world at all you know.'

Alice longed to join in and would have preferred to be a Queen, but at first she could only be the White Queen's Pawn, though the post held good prospects of eventual Queendom.

> Just at this moment, somehow or other they began to run.
>
> Alice never could quite make out, in thinking it over afterwards, how it was that they began: all she remembers is, that they were running hand in hand, and the Queen went so fast that it was all she could do to keep up with her: and still the Queen kept crying 'Faster!'

Stranger still was the fact that 'the trees and the other things round them never changed their places at all: however fast they went, they never seemed to pass anything'.

No doubt many of the clever and profound things said of this running are perfectly true. It may anticipate Einstein. It may be a spiritual journey which leaves her where she started. But the basis of the running is a mathematical trick. In our world speed is the ratio of distance to time: s = d÷t. For a high speed, the distance is great and the time small; so many miles per hour. Through the Looking-glass, however, speed is the ratio of time, to distance: s = t÷d. For a high speed the time is great and the distance small. The higher the speed, the smaller the distance covered. The faster Alice went in time, the more she stayed where she was in space.

> 'Now *here*, you see, it takes all the running *you* can do to keep in the same place.'

This is Fechner's variable 't' which became the fourth co-ordinate of space.

> 'Are we nearly there?'
>
> 'Nearly there?' the Queen repeated. 'Why, we passed it ten minutes ago! Faster!'

They had left our space behind and were running in time.

> The Queen propped her against a tree, and said kindly, 'You may rest a little now.'
>
> Alice looked round her in great surprise. 'Why I do believe we've been under this tree all the time! Everything's just as it was.'

Note 'all the time'. No wonder the clock on the chimney-piece had the face of a little old man and grinned at her!

The White Queen, too, was at home in this unfamiliar element, as her 'living backwards' shows. In this, Dodgson was using an idea developed by Plato in the *Statesman* and by Fechner in his 'Space Has Four Dimensions'. Plato's reversal of time involves an earth-shaking convulsion, after which the dead rise from the earth and 'live in the opposite order'. This, he says, was the fabled golden age. Fechner's is set in the future but is upon the same cosmic scale. 'Growing old will cease,' he says, 'but all life will consist of rejuvenation.' He goes further than Plato and returns us all to our grand ancestor Adam in the Garden of Eden, and Adam, with the whole earth and sea and the sun and the stars, into the Oneness of God.

Dodgson's treatment of the idea is quite different, but certainly not less effective. In the simplest possible terms, he states and then illustrates the principle:

> 'It's 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.

This, of course, follows from the game of chess, as well as the looking-glass oppositeness. If the length of the board is time, then one direction must be forwards and the other backwards. The King's Messenger, for instance, Hatta (the Mad Hatter) is 'in prison now, being punished: and the trial doesn't even begin till next Wednesday: and of course the crime comes last of all'.

All through this particular *reductio ad absurdum* the White Queen is plastering her finger. Then she screams that it is bleeding, though she has not pricked it yet. She will—and does—when she fastens her shawl again.

> 'That accounts for the bleeding, you see,' she said to Alice with a smile. 'Now you understand the way things happen here.'
>
> 'But why don't you scream now?' Alice asked, holding her hands ready to put over her ears again.
>
> 'Why, I've done all the screaming already,' said the Queen. 'What would be the good of having it all over again?'

Alice was a pawn. 'Let's pretend we're kings and queens,' she had said to her sister, but a pawn she had to be. In time, we human beings are the merest pawns. We move in one direction, forward from one moment to the next, as a pawn moves forward from one square to the next. A pawn's world is Fechner's world of one dimension, pure progress, or Hamilton's abstract, ideal or pure time, like that space which is the object of geometry. Nevertheless, the pawn's world is not a knife edge, a time-line. Alice does not appear to be able to see even the whole of one square all at once, yet she has some knowledge of the square on either side of her. Dodgson is no doubt conventionalizing the taking move, which does affect the square on either side one ahead. Alice is not interested in 'taking' anything, unless we count 'taking notice'. Or he may be thinking of the fact that pieces are not always set exactly in the centre of the square they occupy, but jostle each other a little and overlap into adjoining squares. 'J'adoube.'

At all events, Alice when she is a pawn is continually meeting chessmen, red and white, and according to the key, they are always on the square next to her on one side or the other. To the right, she meets the Red Queen, the Red King, the Red Knight, the White Knight and, at the end of the board, the Red Queen again. To the left, she meets the White Queen, the White King and, at the end of the board, the White Queen again. Of what is happening in the other parts of the board she has no knowledge. She sweeps a narrow track, and events more than one square distant to either side, or behind, or ahead of her, are out of her world. A certain lack of coherence in her picture of the game is understandable, particularly as it is in an advanced stage when she begins to move.

In the *Lewis Carroll Handbook*, Falconer Madan regrets that 'the chess framework is full of absurdities and impossibilities' and considers it a pity that Dodgson did not bring the game, as a game, up to chess standard, as, says Mr Madan, he could easily have done. He points out that among other absurdities the white side is allowed to make nine consecutive moves, the

White King to be checked unnoticed; Queens castle, and the White Queen flies from the Red Knight when she could take it. 'Hardly a move,' he says, 'has a sane purpose, from the point of view of chess.'[4] There is also a mate for White at the fourth move (Dodgson's reckoning): W.Q. to K.'s 3rd instead of Q.B.'s 4th. Alice and the Red Queen are both out of the way and the Red King could not move out of check.

Dodgson's own words, in a preface written in 1887, in reply to criticism of this kind, are as follows:

> As the chess problem given on a previous page has puzzled some of my readers, it may be well to explain that it is correctly worked out so far as the moves are concerned. The alternation of Red and White is perhaps not so strictly observed as it might be, and the 'castling' of the three Queens is merely a way of saying that they entered the palace; but the 'check' of the White King at move 6, the capture of the Red Knight at move 7, and the final 'checkmate' of the Red King, will be found, by any one who will take the trouble to set the pieces and play the moves as directed, to be strictly in accordance with the laws of the game.

He was not interested in the game as a game, but in the implications of the moves. Dodgson could easily have 'worked out a problem'. He spent a considerable part of his life doing that kind of thing. But in *Through the Looking-glass* he was otherwise engaged. In the first place it would be illogical to expect logic in a game of chess dreamed by a child. It would be still more illogical to expect a pawn which can see only a small patch of board to understand the meaning of its experiences. And there is a moral in that. This is a pawn's impression of chess, which is like a human being's impression of life.

Alice never grasps the purpose of the game at all and when she reaches the Eighth Square tries to find out from the two Queens if it is over. None of the pieces has the least idea what it is all about. The Red King is asleep. The White King has long ago abandoned any attempt to intervene. 'You might as well try to catch a Bandersnatch.' The Red Knight is quite justified in his battle-cry of 'Ahoy ! Ahoy! Check!' but the White Knight, too, leaps out of the wood, shouting 'Ahoy! Ahoy! Check!' and he is not giving check at all but capturing the Red Knight. Neither of them has any control over the square on which Alice is situated, yet the Red Knight thinks he has captured her and the White Knight that he has rescued her. Alice cannot argue with either of them but is simply relieved to have the matter settled in a manner favourable to herself.

As for the Queens, they 'see' so much of the board that they might be expected to know what is happening fairly well. But, as will appear, their manner of 'seeing' is so peculiar that they know less about it than anybody. To understand one's part in a game of chess, one would have to be aware of the room and the unseen intelligence which is combining the pieces. Deprived of any such knowledge, the chess-men have to explain things as best they can. Nor is this a game between two players. To have made it that would have been tantamount to a confession that he believed in two separate and opposite Powers above us. Dodgson deliberately avoided any such implication.

He based his story, not on a game of chess, but on a chess lesson or demonstration of the moves such as he gave to Alice Liddell, a carefully worked-out sequence of moves designed to illustrate the queening of a pawn, the relative powers of the pieces—the feeble king, the eccentric knight and the formidable queen whose powers include those of rook and bishop—and finally a checkmate. That is to say, he abstracted from the game exactly what he wanted for his design, and expressed that as a game between a child of seven-and-a-half who was to 'be' a White Pawn and an older player (himself) who was to manipulate the other pieces.

Only the other day, it will be remembered, Alice had had a long argument with her sister about playing kings and queens. Alice had been reduced at last to saying, 'Well, you can be one of them, then, and *I'll* be all the rest.' Through the Looking-glass she was 'one of them' and the Other Player 'all the rest'. Perhaps that is how things are. Dodgson certainly hoped so.

Observe the Red Queen about to do her disappearing-trick:

> 'At the end of two yards,' she said, putting in a peg to mark the distance, 'I shall give you your directions—have another biscuit?'

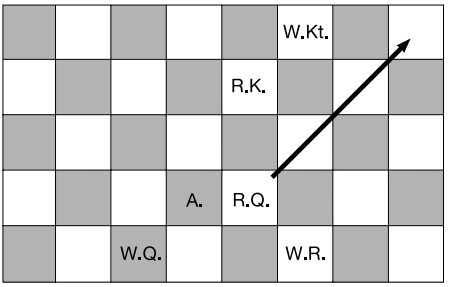
The biscuit is deliberately used to distract our attention from the fact that these pegs mark out the stages of Alice's pawn-life.

> 'At the end of *three* yards I shall repeat them—for fear of your forgetting them. At the end of *four*, I shall say good-bye. And at the end of *five*, I shall go!'
>
> She had got all the pegs put in by this time, and Alice looked on with great interest as she returned to the tree, and then began slowly walking down the row.
>
> At the two-yard peg she faced round, and said, 'A pawn goes two squares in its first move.'

To demonstrate that, she had walked two yards. As a pawn starts from the second square, that takes us to the fourth square on the board. The third peg marks the fifth square, the fourth the sixth and the fifth the seventh. There is still another square, the eighth, but on that Alice will no longer be a pawn. "'In the Eighth Square we shall be Queens together, and it's all feasting and fun!'"

The Red Queen had begun 'slowly walking down the row'. At the two-yard peg she paused to give Alice her instructions. Alice got up and curtseyed, and sat down again. At the next peg the Queen jerked out some staccato remarks. She did not wait for Alice to curtsey this time, but 'walked on quickly' to the next peg, where she turned to say goodbye and then 'hurried' on to the last. She was getting up speed. 'How it happened, Alice never knew, but exactly as she came to the last peg, she was gone.'

What happened we can represent but not really imagine. According to the key, the Red Queen moved away from Alice at an angle across the board (R.Q. to K.R.'s 4th).



So long as the Red Queen was in the square next to her, Alice could see her and hear her, but when she steamed off in a direction which did not as yet exist for Alice, she simply vanished.

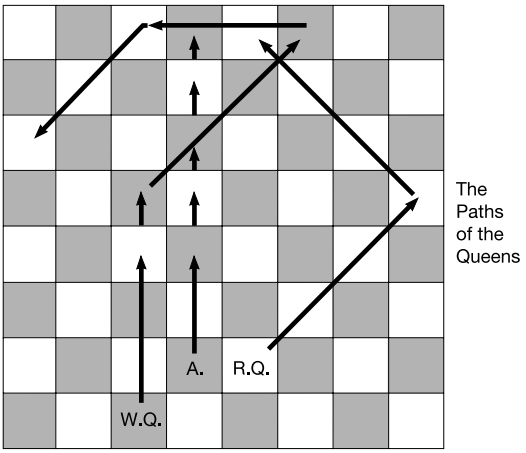
> Whether she vanished into the air, or ran quickly into the wood ('and she *can* run very fast!' thought Alice), there was no way of guessing, but she was gone, and Alice began to remember that she was a pawn, and that it would soon be time to move.

The moves of the two Queens are inexplicable to Alice because of a limitation in her powers. She is unable to conceive of such moves as R.Q. to K.R.'s 4th or W.Q. to Q.B.'s 4th. They can zig-zag about the board, sweep from end to end of it if they like, or from side to side. She must laboriously crawl from square to square, always in one direction, with a half-

remembered promise to spur her on: '"In the Eighth Square we shall be Queens together, and it's all feasting and fun!"'

But if the length of the board is time, the breadth of the board must be time also, a kind of time known only to mathematicians and mystics: the kind of time we call eternity.

> For was and is, and will be are but is;
> And all creation is one act at once,
> The birth of light: but we that are not all
> As parts, can see but parts, now this now that,
> And live, perforce from thought to thought and make
> One act a phantom of succession; thus
> Our weakness somehow shapes the Shadow, Time.



What Tennyson put in poetry, Dodgson represented on his chessboard. Alice as she trotted along could see but parts, now the Red King to her right, now the White Queen to her left, but once she became a Queen there was a change:

> Everything was happening so oddly that she didn't feel a bit surprised at finding the Red Queen and the White Queen sitting close to her, one on each side: she would have liked very much to ask them how they came there,

(we can follow their moves by the key)

> but she feared it would not be quite civil.

She could see them both at once; in the language of psychology, she could attend to a plurality of impressions to which formerly she would have attended in succession.

However, she was by no means sure of herself or her crown as yet, and the Queens put her through her paces:

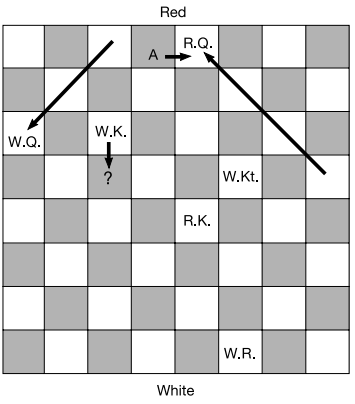
> 'In *our* country,' Alice remarked, 'there's only one day at a time.' The Red Queen said, 'That's a poor thin way of doing things. Now *here*, we mostly have days and nights two or three at a time, and sometimes in the winter we take as many as five nights together—for warmth, you know.'
>
> 'Are five nights warmer than one night, then?' Alice ventured to ask.
>
> 'Five times as warm, of course.'
>
> 'But they should be five times as *cold*, by the same rule—'
>
> 'Just so!' said the Red Queen. 'Five times as warm, *and* five times as cold just as I'm five times as rich as you are, *and* five times as clever!'

(Note clever and rich as opposites here.)

> Alice sighed and gave it up. 'It's exactly like a riddle with no answer!' she thought.

It is, however, the answer to the 'chess-problem', or at any rate, one part of it, the checkmate which, Dodgson said in the 1887 Preface, was strictly in accordance with the laws of the game, while Mr Madan in the *Handbook* gives him the lie direct: 'whereas there is no attempt at one'.

According to the key, the position would appear to be:



'All sorts of things happened in a moment.'

There is therefore something very like a checkmate and a fairly complicated one. The only objection is that the White King must have been in check while the White Queen moved to Q.R. 6th (soup) at Move 10. On the other hand, when Alice was on the Seventh Square she was still a pawn. The White King was behind her and if he had moved to Q.B. 5th she would not have known and he would not have been in check.

As to the succession of the moves, Dodgson admitted that was 'perhaps not so strictly observed as it might be'. When Alice reached the Eighth Square and became a Queen she naturally acquired new powers, but not all at once. She could now see from end to end of the board, but her sweep of vision from side to side was limited by the presence of the White Queen on one side and the Red Queen on the other. Whenever the White Queen moved to Q.R. 6th Alice had to wake up. '"I can't stand this any longer!" she cried', and as the chess world collapsed in ruins she seized the Red Queen and accomplished the checkmate.

Dr Bell in a footnote to his *History of Mathematics* makes a two-fisted attack upon Priestley and Dunne for the use they have made of 'mathematical' ideas; Mr Priestley in his time-plays, Mr Dunne in his dream-philosophy. It is a good thing, Dr Bell thinks, that the literary world has still not discovered the elliptic functions 'whose double periodicity leads at once to a two-dimensional time', expressed, says Dr Bell, 'in the lozenges of a skewed chess-board'. On the other hand, he thinks there might be dollars in it.[5] Too late, Dr Bell! It has been done.

But Dodgson had other reasons for departing from the rules of chess and for avoiding a normal checkmate. These Queens, whose powers in time are far more remarkable than those of the Time Traveller in the 'scientific' romance by H. G. Wells, are none the less flatlanders. They live—or think they live—on a surface, a time-surface. But the cream of the jest is that their world is no more flat than ours. Like the people of the Middle Ages, they are on a globe and do not know it.

When Alice went Through the Looking-glass, she went into the room she had just left, the other way round. It was the drawing room and the door was open. She went along the passage, downstairs, and out by the 'front door' into the front garden, reversed. In the game of chess she went down the length of the board and at the end came to a door. By this time she was a Queen and could look both ways, forward and back (in time). Which door had she come to, the front door or the back door?

> She was standing before an arched doorway, over which were the words QUEEN ALICE in large letters, and on each side of it

> there was a bell-handle; one marked 'Visitors' Bell', and the other 'Servants' Bell'.

Visitors' Bell: the Front Door. Servants' Bell: the Back Door.

Time had gone full circle, or rather, Alice had gone full circle on time, which unknown to her was a little planet like that in *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, on which 'the vanquished army ran away at full speed, and in a very few minutes found themselves face-to-face with the victorious army, who were marching home again, and who were so frightened at finding themselves between two armies that they surrendered at once'. Her front and back doors—the two ends of the board—were one and the same; in the words of Donne,

> As east and west
> In all flat maps (and I am one) are one.

In the *New Method of Evaluation* Dodgson had shown that the University, like the Church of England and, in a still wider sense, the whole country, was broken up into two 'partial factions'. One of these, the Rationalist faction, had as its locus a superficies, and the other, the extreme High Church party, had as its locus a catenary 'known as the Patristic Catenary', which he defined as 'passing through Origen and containing many multiple points'. A Catenary is a curve formed by a cord or chain suspended at each end and acted upon only by gravity.

No doubt these notions, working in his mind, helped him towards the idea of the two Queens, those mighty opposites in chess, living on a surface which was actually curved and representing once more two partial factions in the University, the Church or the human mind.

'The Red Queen,' said Dodgson, in his *Theatre* article of 1887, 'I pictured as a Fury, but of another type: her passion must be cold and calm; she must be formal and strict, yet not unkindly; pedantic to the tenth degree' (I suspect that he wrote n-th here), 'the concentrated essence of all governesses!' Clearly, she is on the Dogmatic side. She lays down the law to Alice, stresses her title (Apostolic Succession), claims that all the walks belong to her, demands the use of French (Latin services?) and curtseying (genuflection). She is condescending, pats Alice on the head, and has 'heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary'.

The biscuit which the Red Queen offered Alice as a thirst-quencher might be dry on the Looking-glass principle, simply as the opposite of a refreshing drink, or it might partake of the woody nature of visible, tangible chess-pieces and be made of sawdust; but over and above these meanings, its

dryness must be similar to that of the passage read by the mouse in *Alice*. ('This is the driest thing I know. Silence all round, if you please!') Shane Leslie suggests that the biscuits were sermons and it is true that the High Church sermons, regarded as of less importance than sacrament, were often perfunctory.

In his general view of the allegory, Shane Leslie is wide of the mark. He identifies the Red Queen as Archbishop Manning and the White Queen as Dr Newman, who were on the same side in everything of any significance. It is true that they had their disagreements, but to regard the Queens as both representing Catholics reduces the allegory to triviality. The grand opposites of Dodgson's day were Reason and Dogma, and to regard the two sides as anything less fundamental is to underestimate him. Besides, he had already represented these great principles as they worked themselves out in Oxford over the serio-comic business of Jowett's salary, and represented them as superficial in mathematical terms.

'Lastly,' said Dodgson in *The Theatre* of 1887, 'the White Queen seemed to my dreaming fancy, gentle, stupid, fat and pale; helpless as an infant; and with a slow maundering, bewildered air about her just suggesting imbecility, but never quite passing into it; that would be, I think, fatal to any comic effect she might otherwise produce.'

Dodgson repeatedly asserted that he was 'no conscious imitator' in the *Alice* books, and so far as the general design is concerned, his claim was just. But certain resemblances to passages in Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, *Battle of the Books* and *Gulliver's Travels* are too close to be mere coincidence.

'Once upon a time,' says Swift in *A Tale of a Tub*, 'there was a Man who had Three sons by one Wife, and all at a Birth, neither could the Mid-wife tell certainly which was the Eldest.' Wotton's footnote reads: 'By these three sons, Peter, Martyn and Jack, Popery, the Church of England, and our Protestant Dissenters are designed' (Martyn: Martin Luther, Jack: John Calvin). Each was left a new coat and a copy of the Will, containing instructions for wearing it. In *Through the Looking-glass* the coats become shawls; otherwise the White Queen is Jack, the Red Queen Peter.

The White Queen has trouble with her shawl, and Alice has to help her to put it on again while the White Queen looks at her in a helpless, frightened sort of way and whispers something that sounds like 'Bread-and-butter, bread-and-butter'. Compare this with Jowett signing the Articles for the sake of his tum-tum.

Again, she has been 'a-dressing' herself. 'Every single thing's crooked,' Alice thought to herself, 'and she's all over pins!' These pins are no doubt the counterpart of the Red Queen's thorns. The latter was wearing a crown of thorns when Alice met her, only the thorns were turned outward. '"She's one

of the thorny kind," said the Rose.' Because she was a-dressing herself, because every single thing was crooked and she was all over pins, the White Queen must represent the side of the Church which argued, protested and tried to re-interpret religious ideas by the light of reason—the Protestant side of the Church of England and in particular the Rationalist 'mode of thinking'.

Alice herself does duty in the allegory for Martin or the Church of England, though she certainly does not represent the Church of England as it was in Dodgson's day. Rather she is the essential quality of the Christian religion—the one all the sects seemed to have forgotten—love.

She tools the place of Lily, the White Queen's Imperial Kitten—no doubt the Imperial Church of England which might be expected to result from the first 'Pan-Anglican' Conference at Lambeth in 1867. That was why Lily was too young to play and also why she was the child of the King and Queen of Controversy. Alice was the True Church, hoping all things, believing all things, suffering long. In the *Theatre* article, she was to be 'loving as a dog' and 'gentle as a fawn', courteous

> even as though she were herself a King's daughter and her clothing of wrought gold: then trustful, ready to accept the wildest impossibilities with all that utter trust that only dreamers know; and lastly curious—and with the eager enjoyment of Life that comes only in the happy hours of childhood.

Compare with Dodgson's 'even as though she were herself a King's daughter and her clothing of wrought gold' his father's words about his ideal Church:

> so did He prepare for His Church a covering, hidden within these ordinances for her spiritual nakedness, 'a clothing of wrought gold' (Ps. xix, 13) rendering her meet to be brought into the Palace of the Heavenly King.[6]

To have used a real chess-problem would have been fatal to the allegory, for it was by no means Dodgson's view that the opposition of the two sides Red and White, two aspects of the same Church, sprang from the operations of two Hostile Players. On the contrary, the two Queens are really two kittens who come from one cat, Dinah, and Dinah in Tenniel's final illustration is both black and white.

The Queens and Alice were used as mathematical symbols to illustrate certain ideas about time and space. They were also used satirically and

allegorically, as described above. In addition there are signs that he borrowed ideas for the appearance and nature of each character from real persons, and in Alice's case we know the original. It is true that the process of remaking her in accordance with his own ideas and attitude to life has gone far, but we can still recognize the first Alice in the last.

It has been suggested that Dodgson's own parents sat for the portraits of the chess Queens,[7] but I think the Dean and Mrs Liddell are much more likely models. Dodgson's relations with his father and mother were never anything but happy and normal, whereas a state of emotional tension, in which there was jealousy on both sides, the insolence of office on theirs and the pangs of despised love on his, existed between him and Alice's parents.

The Red Queen was tall, half a head taller than Alice, which was about the Dean's superiority in height to Dodgson. She had heard nonsense, compared to which 'that would be as sensible as a dictionary' and it would be difficult for Dodgson or anybody at Christ Church to use the word 'dictionary' without thinking of Liddell and Scott. Her coldness, too, her pride and pedantry, suggest the Dean.

There was emphatically no outward resemblance between the White Queen and Mrs Liddell, who, according to Sir William Richmond, was dark and beautiful.[8] But she was once pinning a dress on Alice when the Prince of Wales burst in unexpectedly and Alice fled. Mrs Liddell hid her agitation and the Prince did not add to it until about to depart, when he remarked, 'Tell Alice I saw her.'[9] If Dodgson knew the story it was the kind of thing to worry him, and may have suggested the situation Through the Looking-glass, with the figures transposed and Alice pinning on the White Queen's shawl. The allegorical and mathematical ideas would coat the rather dangerous and embarrassing idea of Alice incompletely dressed, as mother-of-pearl coats an irritant within the oyster-shell.

Working as he did by associations of ideas, there was no limit to the variety of topics he could introduce. His art was to keep variety from becoming chaotic, to make some unexpected departure lead back to the last remark but one. Why some topics appealed to him and others did not is an enquiry which would take us over the threshold of consciousness and into that dark region where ambiguous forms and uncouth hybrids loom and dwindle. Psycho-analysis, however, is no technique for amateurs. We must be content to follow those trains of thought in which we can perceive intention, and we shall lose little by this, for the intention is fundamental.

There is in existence a photograph just published (1949)[10] but taken by Dodgson in 1858. It shows two of his aunts, the Misses Lutwidge, playing chess. One wears a dark dress and plays black against a dark background; the

other, in a chequered or tartan dress, much lighter in tone, plays white against a pale background. The effect is of a battle of light and shade. The disposition of the pieces bears no relation to that in the *Looking-glass* chess problem, but the germ of the idea is there in the opposed forces. In the course of his chess lessons to Alice, Dodgson transferred the conflict from the players and setting to the chess pieces, in particular to the two Queens. Their powers of movement brought in his mathematics; their opposition suggested the theological controversies of his time, and because he disliked controversy, the Queens also acquired some characteristics from his more personal antipathies.

In Fechner's 'Space Has Four Dimensions' the opposites are the Naturalists, who believe only what they see, and the Philosophers, who see only what they believe. The Naturalists, like Dodgson's White Queen, 'know only length and breadth—except that is for the astronomers who are forced by the fall of bodies to recognize the third dimension, at least as a hypothesis'. In this respect Fechner's astronomers resemble Dodgson's White Knight, whose ballad he re-wrote for *Through the Looking-glass*, adding the lines

> Or if I drop upon my toe
> A very heavy weight,

as an illustration of the fall of bodies.

Of all the chess-men, the Knight alone has the power of leaping. This is the symbolism of chess, the horseman's leap expressed by allowing the Knight to move two squares in any direction and one at right angles to that direction—a cross-section of a leap. Nevertheless, it makes no difference to the Knight if the intervening squares are packed with friends or foes. He can leap to a vacant square, take an enemy piece or deliver check over their heads. It is this third dimension which enables him to perform his little miracles, his sudden, unlooked-for interventions in the game.

> 'And really,' said Alice,

referring to the game she had played the previous day, on our side of the Looking-glass,

> 'I might have won, if it hadn't been for that nasty Knight that came wriggling down among my pieces.'

In Looking-glass House he was sliding down the poker and balancing very badly. He represents a stage half-way between the Queens, who are flatlanders pure and simple, and Alice, who is a child or Human Being.

It is not necessary to relate the Knight's powers to time-length and time-breadth as in the case of the Queens. Probably Dodgson developed the ideas about the Knight quite separately and fitted them into the general pattern later. However, if it is desired to do so, then his third dimension was the whole of our space.

Of our world he has had only the most tantalizing glimpses, enough to unfit him for his own but not enough to enable him to understand. Yet he is by no means contemptible, this knight in tin armour. He has seen wonders, has even brought back with him odd bits and pieces from *his* Wonderland, which is our common workaday world—beehives and mousetraps, carrots and fire-irons, outlandish bric-à-brac, whose true nature and purpose are externally beyond him but which he collects hopefully and about which he theorizes happily.

He is Science.

By constantly falling on his head, he has grasped that things never fall upwards, you know, and his experience of rain has confirmed this. Accordingly he turns his box upside down, so that the rain will not wet his things, but alas! his theory is incomplete. He has overlooked the possibility that his things might fall downwards and he has lost them.

Then he has thought of a brilliant scheme for turning himself over in our space—a thing, it is safe to say, no other chess-man but a knight could think of doing:

> 'Now first I put my head on the top of the gate—then the head's high enough—then I stand on my head—then the feet are high enough, you see—then I'm over, you see.'
>
> 'Yes, I suppose you'd be over when that was done,' Alice said thoughtfully: 'but don't you think it *would* be rather hard?'

She means the ground.

> 'I haven't tried it yet,' the Knight said gravely: 'so I can't tell for certain—but I'm afraid it *would* be a little hard.'

The charming simpleton is thinking only of the difficulty (for him) of the operation. The consequences to himself have never occurred to him.

Compared to the other inhabitants of the chess-world he is a genius, like Newton, voyaging through strange seas of thought alone. His scheme for training hair upwards, like fruit trees, might be impracticable, or it might not. Experiment would have settled the matter, and he was a little dashed by Alice's lack of enthusiasm—but then so few of his schemes had ever met with an enthusiastic reception. In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is thought to suffer from hallucinations.

The principle which eluded the White Knight was, of course, gravity. The word gravity is carefully avoided during the whole of this chapter, but he looked a little grave, and more than once he remarked gravely. The pun had no existence for himself or Alice. His elevated and vertical position on horseback was extremely precarious. Even when sliding down the poker he balanced very badly. As a planesman or inhabitant of the surface 'balance' was art idea he had failed to grasp. He was unbalanced. But his difficulties were due to no lack of practice. He had had *plenty* of practice—both in mounting and in dismounting.

There is something sublime in his persistence and in his ability to rise above circumstance, to theorize from a head-downward position. Moreover, he had realized that he would probably never be able to stay on horseback without some sort of support and so had invented a helmet in the form of a sugar-loaf. This was a conical mass of sugar displayed in confectioners' windows in our grandfathers' day. The White Knight's sugar-loaf helmet was like a large fool's cap and touched the ground all round him. True he lost himself in it (as one is apt to do in a theory) and the other knight put it on, thinking that it was *his* helmet.

But his cleverest invention was a pudding—during the meat course. It was not cooked in time for the next course, or the next day:

> 'In fact,' he went on, holding his head down, and his voice getting lower and lower, 'I don't believe that pudding ever was cooked! In fact, I don't believe that pudding ever will be cooked! And yet it was a very clever pudding to invent.'

After the cone, the sphere. He was trying to frame the notion of a solid sphere but his world was flatland. It contained blotting-paper, which could be bent round into a cylinder, or twisted into a cone, but no matter how he stuck it together with sealing-wax, he could not make even a hollow sphere out of it, much less a solid one. He even thought of blowing it to pieces with gunpowder and then re-assembling the minute fragments. Theoretically, if the fragments were small enough, the feat should be possible. Practically, he had almost abandoned hope of that pudding.

> 'It began with blotting-paper,' the Knight answered with a groan. 'That wouldn't be very nice, I'm afraid—'
>
> 'Not very nice *alone*,' he interrupted, quite eagerly: 'but you've no idea what a difference it would make, mixing it with other things—such as gunpowder and sealing-wax. And here I must leave you.'

The White Knight's appearance without his helmet is worth noting:

> 'Now one can breathe more easily,' said the Knight, putting back his shaggy hair with both hands, and turning his gentle face and large mild eyes to Alice.

Does not this suggest a dog or a horse, rather than a man? The Knight is being compared to one of the higher animals which has some rudimentary intelligence; an animal which is gentle, unselfish and uncomplaining. The equation may be stated: man attempting to reason about the universe is like one of the higher animals attempting to understand our world. Both collect data and frame theories. Neither has any chance of understanding the reality. And the symbol by means of which Dodgson demonstrated this profound truth was the knight in chess with his leap over the intervening squares, in the course of which he lost contact with the surface and, however briefly, glimpsed our world.

> Of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through the Looking-glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly. Years afterwards she could bring the whole scene back again, as if it had been only yesterday—the mild blue eyes and kindly smile of the Knight—the setting sun gleaming through his hair and shining on his armour in a blaze of light that quite dazzled her—the horse quietly moving about, cropping the grass at her feet—and the black shadows of the forest behind—all this she took in like a picture, as, with one hand shading her eyes, she leant against a tree, watching the strange pair, and listening in a half-dream to the melancholy music of the song.

The song was 'Upon the Lonely Moor', the parody of Wordsworth's 'Resolution and Independence' which Dodgson had sent to *The Train* in 1856, but had partly rewritten and garnished with four new titles. Some of the changes are mere improvements in the verse; for example:

> He said 'I look for butterflies
> That sleep among the wheat'

is much better than

> He said 'I look for soap-bubbles
> That lie among the wheat.'

Others seem, if anything, more nonsensical than what he had written at first:

> But I was thinking of a plan
> To dye one's whiskers green,
> And always use so large a fan
> That they could not be seen.

However, 'a-sitting on a gate' is a significant attitude for his aged, aged man. If the White Knight's plan of standing on his head on the top bar was likely to prove 'hard', it was at least original and showed a desire to go somewhere. Again, the new lines,

> But I was thinking of a plan
> To feed oneself on batter
> And so go on from day to day
> Getting a little fatter,

suggest the White Knight trying another method of inventing, or, at all events, producing the sphere, and Dodgson returned to this in his Spherical Professor (*Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*) who finally succeeded in making himself into a perfect sphere and in acquiring sufficient momentum to fly off the Earth at a tangent. But the main lines were already laid down in the 1856 version and it seems quite clear to me through all the nonsense that the White Knight is Pure Science and the Aged, Aged Man is Applied Science.

The book, so far from having no moral, is thus a new kind of Morality. The characters are all abstractions and we are prevented from realizing this only by sheer verbal sleight-of-hand. The symbols are deceptively simple—but so are the properties of a great conjuror. It is the second-rate magician who requires elaborate scaffoldings of chromium-plated tubes and other complicated apparatus. Give Dodgson a ball of wool, a kitten, some chessmen, a looking-glass and a little girl out of the audience—and watch carefully.

Notes

1. Coll., p. 138; *Handbook*, p. 236.
2. *Letters of Lewis Carroll*, ed. E. M. Hatch, p. 79.

3. Coll., p. 173.
4. *Handbook*, pp. 48–9.
5. E. T. Bell: *History of Mathematics*, p. 555, Note 15.
6. *Ritual Worship*, p. 13.
7. F. B. Lennon: *Lewis Carroll*, pp. 174–5.
8. Ibid., p. 131.
9. *Cornhill Magazine*, July, 1932.
10. Helmut Gernsheim: *Lewis Carroll, Photographer*.

PHYLLIS GREENACRE

From "The Character of Dodgson as Revealed in the Writings of Carroll"

Dodgson was regarded as an eccentric by his students and his contemporaries, and although some saw him as dull and boring, the picture in retrospect is interesting and at times colorful. In his boyhood he had been so adept manually that he not only made his own marionettes and theater, but on one occasion he made for a sister a very tiny set of tools, complete in a case, only one inch long. He, like the White Knight, was an inventor—of gadgets, of puzzles, riddles, games, and conundrums, as well as many mnemonic devices.[1] During a great deal of his adult life he apparently suffered from an intractable insomnia; and he constructed many of his inventions, seemingly, as a way of keeping his mind busy during the long hours of the night. He invented an instrument which he called a nyctograph for making records in the dark. He worked out most of his inventions entirely in his mind, only making a record on completion.

To those who did not know him well he seemed "stiff and donnish" (Collingwood's words), and Mark Twain found him "the stillest and shyest full-grown man" except for Uncle Remus that he had ever met. During several hours of conversation in a group, Carroll contributed nothing but an occasional question.[2] On the other hand, Twain found him interesting to look at. The shyness may have been increased by his stammering and by his deafness (left ear), but it was almost all-pervasive, except with his little girls.

From *Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dreamchild as Seen Through the Critics' Looking-Glasses*, Robert Phillips, ed. © 1971 by The Vanguard Press. Originally published in *Swift and Carroll*.

Only occasionally in some meeting would he flash out with an incisive witticism—and he was generally more amusing when enticed into a monologue than in a conversation. He was slight ... and rather drab in appearance. It is said that the two sides of his face did not match. He habitually put his right hand in front of his mouth while lecturing and was sufficiently self-critical that he drew a caricature of himself in this position. As he grew older, his face became more feminine in cast, an effect possibly enhanced by his wearing his hair rather long. His effeminacy was sufficiently obvious that some of his less sympathetic students once wrote a parody of his parodies and signed it "Louisa Caroline."

He disliked garish colors, preferred pinks and grays, and is said to have requested one of the little girls not to visit him in a red dress.[3] He himself wore unobtrusive clothing, except that he habitually went without an overcoat, wore a tall hat, and black cotton gloves. He stood so straight that he seemed to be leaning backward, and is also said to have staggered a little, i.e., veering more to one side than the other. In spite of this he was a tremendous walker—and in 1897, six months before his death, he noted walking seventeen to twenty miles on each of two days with only one day in between.

There was a tinge of the crank inventor in his attitudes. For the most part he carried out his mental researches without much reference to the activities in the outer world, although he was a habitual publisher of his ideas, either in articles in magazines or by letters to the newspapers. Thus he invented a new method of reckoning postage which he sent to the post-office department; a new method of scoring and eliminating in tennis matches, sent to the Lawn Tennis Association; a new method of voting when more than two choices are present. In 1876, he "invented" proportional representation, although it had been invented by Thomas Hare and debated in Parliament in 1867.

From an early age he was interested in time, and wrote and lectured many times on the subject "Where does the day begin?" He spent much time writing people all over the world to discover how they dated letters at a specific time, but he paid no attention to the Prime Meridian Conference held in Washington, D.C., to settle the question of the International Date Line. He seemed always to be in some kind of battle with time, attempting to avoid being caught by time or trying to entrap time himself. He often refused invitations for a specific time but would announce his intention to come at a later, unspecified time.

For twenty-one years (approximately 1870–1891), he consistently wrote in purple ink; and then suddenly stopped. The significance of this is unclear. But ink itself had great meaning. Throughout his stories it is

used as the agent for reviving creatures who faint out of terror or excitement.

Not only was he a compulsive publisher of his ideas, but he was a compulsive indexer. He kept a record of all the letters he wrote or received, cross-indexed for topical content. At the time of his death, this registry contained more than 98,000 items. He was something of a collector, too, having a number of music boxes and more than two hundred fountain pens.

He frequently carried a little black bag, much like a doctor's bag, filled with safety pins, puzzles and games of his own making, pencils and paper, handkerchiefs and other articles to aid little girls on railroad trains and at the seashore, and to entice them into a fuller acquaintance. One is reminded here of the original railroad whose victims must be thrice flattened by the engine of Love before first aid is granted. Now, Mr. Dodgson being older, gave prophylactic help.

With adults he was sometimes pompous. For over forty years he kept a record of all his dinner parties, including a statement of the seating arrangements and the menu for the occasion. He often invited little girls to lunch, with instructions to them to leave their brothers at home. In his middle life he frankly loathed little boys, and refused to stand in church until after the boy choir had passed, as he wished to prevent the boys from becoming conceited. He was known to invite a lady to dinner but stipulate that she should leave her husband at home.

His sensitivity to fits and convulsions has already been described. He also had a recurrent preoccupation with cords and knots—not only was the baby tied into a knot by Alice, but the Mouse's tail was also knotted, as was the Tangled Tale. Carroll also sent Macmillan a diagram of just how all packages to him should be wrapped, how the cords should be tied, and where the knots should be placed. In packing for vacation trips, he had a great many portmanteaus (luggage as well as words) with contents wrapped in paper in individual packets, sometimes tied as well. Consequently paper very much increased the size and weight of his luggage.

The illustrators of Carroll's books found him a difficult man to work with: exacting in the extreme, wishing to dictate many details to the illustrator who should somehow reproduce exactly Carroll's own mental picture of the scene, almost as though the artist might photograph Carroll's own imagery. Sir John Tenniel, Henry Holiday, and Harry Furniss all found their tasks arduous, and Furniss, a conscious caricaturist and much younger than Carroll, tried to outdo him in eccentricity and threatened to strike when Carroll became too strongly demanding. While Furniss' account has been discredited by some as burlesquing the situation—and he almost surely embellished his description of it somewhat—yet it is too much in accord with

other traits of Dodgson-Carroll to be completely discarded. Furniss, who was the illustrator for *Sylvie and Bruno*, worked with Carroll from 1885 to 1892, when Carroll had more and more retired into Dodgson and his peculiarities had somewhat deepened. He had become solitary, had given up much of his always moderate social life, abandoned his photography and his teaching, but continued to live at Oxford and work on his manuscripts. He is generally reported to have become increasingly vain, secretive, and even a little suspicious. He rarely accepted invitations to dine, but would "drop in" at a less exactly appointed time; if he did go out to dinner, he sometimes took his own bottle of wine with him. He became more and more burdened by his own prominence and had refused to accept mail addressed to Carroll at Oxford; at the same time he published frequently and that, often trivia. According to Furniss' account, Carroll sent him an elaborate document committing him to secrecy about the manuscript. He seemed to wish to make sure that Furniss' wife did not see a picture or look at the manuscript before publication—a stipulation to which Furniss did not agree and so refused to sign the document. But still cautious that others might see prematurely the precious *Sylvie and Bruno* manuscript, which he considered his best work, he prepared the manuscript by cutting it into horizontal strips of four or five lines each, then placed the whole lot in a sack and shook it up. Taking out piece by piece, he pasted the strips down as they happened to come. All strips had already been marked with code hieroglyphics according to which they might be properly reassembled. Furniss reports that he sent the whole batch back with another threat to strike. This jumbled manuscript had been delivered at night.[4] Furniss found that Carroll wanted him to assemble his illustrations from almost as many fragments as were represented in the manuscript. The author would send the illustrator quantities of photographs showing this or that feature which be found inspiring, or would request him to visit friends or even strangers to collect "fragments of faces" which Carroll had thought suitable for the illustrations.

Roger L. Green (editor of the *Diaries* recently published), in a *Story of Lewis Carroll*, neutralizes the Furniss account of the misch-masch manuscript, explaining it rather on the basis that the manuscript, which was frankly made up of a number of short stories and sketches, had not yet been properly assembled. That Carroll had a feeling for misch-masch as well as for order and was constantly taking things apart, jumbling them, and reassembling them, cannot be denied.[5] How much Furniss caricatured is an additional question.

Two other preoccupations were so conspicuous both in his life and in his writing as to be clinically noteworthy, viz. 1) special attitudes toward eating and breathing, and 2) his relationship to animals, especially to cats.

Attitudes toward Eating and Breathing

Eating (or drinking) and breathing are of course psychologically very close together. In certain respects the latter appears as a kind of ghost or spirit of the former. Both were exceedingly important in Carroll's life. He was himself rather slight in stature. This, combined with his somewhat stiff erectness made him appear taller than he was. He was abstemious, eating and drinking little. A biscuit and sherry constituted his lunch very often. He was somewhat appalled by the healthy appetite of some of his little girl friends. Nonetheless, he was greatly preoccupied with eating. His early sketches tended to make people either abnormally fat or abnormally thin. The interest in food and its "nothingness" represented in air is interestingly apparent in one of his early drawings: a sketch of a family taking food in homeopathic doses, in which a butler announces that only a billionth of an ounce of bread is left in the house and that this must be saved for next week, and the mother orders that a trillionth more should be ordered from the baker. One child asks whether another should have "another molecule" and an older sister deplores that her present glasses have not permitted her to see a nonillionth which has come her way. The whole family party has the grim appearance of those suffering from anorexia nervosa, and the humor has an "Emperor's New Clothes" type of satire, expressed of course in another medium. This cartoon appeared in the *Rectory Umbrella*, which dates from Dodgson's period between Rugby and Oxford. A complementary cartoon, appearing in the same magazine, was a sketch purporting to be a caricature of Joshua Reynolds' painting, "The Age of Innocence." The Dodgson version shows a young hippopotamus, obviously well fed, who, "seated under a shady tree, presents to the contemplative mind a charming union of youth and innocence" (written by Charles L. Dodgson, the Editor of the *Rectory Umbrella*).

The question of eating or being eaten is introduced into the Wonderland adventures before Alice gets fairly down the rabbit-hole, with her ponderings as to whether cats eat bats or bats eat cats. Subsequently, eating and drinking magically change her body size; the contents of the "Drink Me" bottle, which she finds on the glass table, suddenly shrinks her; whereas the "Eat Me" cake reverses this. Similarly, nipping from another bottle near the looking-glass in White Rabbit's house enlarges her and the pebbles that turn into cakes reduce her. And so it goes. She frightens the Mouse by talking about Dinah the cat, who is such a good mouser, and she finds herself singing about the Crocodile who "welcomes little fishes in with gently smiling jaws." Time is suddenly involved when the turning of the

earth on its axis gets mixed with the preparation of the soup by the Duchess's cook; and again, this problem crops up in the eternally revolving and mad tea-party in which the old subject "When does the day begin?" is revived. Food is the source of trouble and guilt with the Seven of Hearts threatened with decapitation for bringing the cook tulip bulbs instead of onions, and again in the grand trial scene when the Knave of Hearts is being tried for having stolen the tarts.

This same gastrointestinal axis to the world's turning appears in some of the early poetry written during Charles's adolescence, especially the moralistic poems dealing with hostility between siblings: "Brother and Sister" (1845), a rollicking rhyme ending with the moral "Don't stew your sister"; and "The Two Brothers" (1853), which relates the tale of a boy who baited his fishhook with a younger brother and so broke their sister's heart "into three" and provoked the lament, "One of the two will be wet through and through and t'other will be late to tea." Similarly, in parody "The Lady of the Lake" becomes "The Lady of the Ladle."

One can well imagine that sibling rivalry may have been expressed early and drastically among the children of the Daresbury clergyman, in terms of food preference and privileges. Edwin, who was probably the target of the "Age of Innocence" cartoon, was born after the family had moved to Croft and somewhat more affluent circumstances. He was an innocent infant of three to four at the time of the drawing of the cartoon (1849–1850). The Caucus-Race in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, in which all the animals, large and small, must have prizes, appears as the solution for, or warding off of, such jealousy and rivalry, with Alice rather than the youthful Charles playing the role of arbiter.

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, changes in body size and proportions are lacking, but the time–space relationship is still puzzling and appears in changes in space appreciation outside the body as indicated by the varying rates of speed necessary to cover apparently similar distances, or sometimes any distance at all. Volcanic explosions seem to have occurred when Alice picked up the White King and Queen and moved them so rapidly that they became breathless. Alice herself floated rather than walked downstairs simply by touching the handrail with her fingertips. Again, there was the eventful race in which the Queen seized Alice by the hand and ran breathlessly and with toes barely touching the ground, but without actually changing their location on the chessboard. A little later the Queen said good-bye and vanished seemingly into thin air. Then there was the railroad journey in which the entire train rose straight up in the air, in crossing a brook, and Alice presently found herself talking to a giant Gnat which fanned her with its wings. At this point flying seems to pervade the picture.

The Rocking-horse-fly swung itself from branch to branch while a Bread-and-butter-fly crawled at her feet. People were threatened with the extinction of going out like the flame of a candle; and in the final scene, which is a banquet rather than a trial (in contrast to Wonderland), Alice finds herself pressed between the two Queens in a way that lifts her into the air, while the candles suddenly shoot upward to the ceiling and all the dishes develop wings. Food was certainly not unimportant in the Looking-Glass World, only it was not as ubiquitous as in Wonderland. In the former, movement through the air appears rather as the reverse of passage of food into the body.

Charles Dodgson considered whether air was healthy or morbid with nearly the same intensity of concern which he gave to food and drink, which he catalogued so constantly. His apprehension of infection was great and he had such concern about contaminated or unhealthy air in general that at times he stuffed all the cracks under doors and windows, and had an elaborate system of keeping the temperature equalized throughout his rooms, causing him to make repeated daily rounds of his series of thermometers.

Gertrude Chataway, one of Carroll's little girl friends to whom he dedicated *The Snark*—and it will be recalled that the Boojum Snark caused any onlooker to vanish into thin air—described Mr. Dodgson as follows:

> Next door there was an old gentleman [actually aged 43!] who interested me immensely. He would come onto his balcony which joined ours, sniffing the air with his head thrown back and would walk right down the steps on to the beach with his chin in the air, drinking in the fresh breezes as if he could never have enough ... Whenever I heard his footsteps, I flew out to see him coming and one day when he spoke to me my joy was complete ... In a very little while I was as familiar with the interior of his lodgings as with my own ... He often took his cue [in telling stories] from [the child's] remarks ... so that the story seemed a personal possession ... It was astonishing that he never seemed tired or to want other society ... He [later] told me it was the greatest pleasure he could have to converse freely with a child and feel the depths of her mind ... I don't think he ever really understood that we whom he had known as children, could not always remain such.

A letter from Carroll to little Miss Chataway, written October 3, 1875, explains that he *will drink her health* instead of sending her a present. Then, finding a pun in this phrase, he continued,

> *But perhaps you will object ... If I were to sit by you and to drink your tea, you wouldn't like that. You would say "Boo-hoo! Here's Mr. Dodgson's drunk all my tea and I haven't got any left!" I am very much afraid Sybil will find you sitting by the sad sea-wave and crying "Boo! Hoo! Mr. Dodgson's drunk my health and I haven't got any left!" Your mother will say [to the doctor] "You see she would go and make friends with a strange gentleman, and yesterday he drank her health! ... The only way to cure her is to wait until next birthday and then for her to drink his health." And then we shall have changed healths. I wonder how you'll like mine! Oh Gertrude, I wish you would not talk such nonsense! ... Your loving friend. Lewis Carroll.*

Miss Chataway's first description of the man breathing in health with his exuberant sniffing of the sea air is a reverse side of the same picture as that given elsewhere of his elaborate precautions against breathing in contaminated air, especially that emanating from a letter received from one of the Bowman children who suffered from scarlet fever. In this Chataway letter, the idea of the gift of drinking the health and the turning by a pun of this intensely positive attitude to the extreme opposite—a destructive vampirish sucking or swallowing up—is implicitly suggested, with a merry ghoulishness. It also contains an elaboration of childhood's idea—with its modicum of truth—that our bodies and hence our identities are determined by what we eat.

The Relation to Animals

The animals in the *Alice* books far outnumber the human beings, even as they probably did in the gardens at Daresbury and Croft, and Charles continued always to be in communion with them. He has his favorites and his dis-favorites (to coin a Carrollian word), Among the less loved were dogs. Although an oversized puppy appears amiably enough in the Wonderland garden, there is evidence that in actual life Dodgson did not enjoy dogs, and when one rushed violently at him on a visit to the Arnolds, he refused ever to return there unless the dog were destroyed. (One may venture the conjecture that the dog was a male.) He sent the Arnolds an exact diagram of the canine tooth marks on his trouser leg, and when the dog was not abolished, he continued on friendly terms with the family but arranged to see them outside of their own home. In general, however, he seems to have been charming with and charmed by small animals and to have treated them in whimsy as somewhat superior to human beings, whom they either replaced or in part represented.

Among all the animals, the cat has a special place. Not only were there Dinah, the white kitten, and the black kitten (who became royalty), but there was the Cheshire Cat as well.[6] In Carroll's letters (about 1863) to another little girl friend, Agnes Hughes, he developed fantasies about cats in quite a significant way. He had sent Agnes many kisses, apparently with some instructions for dividing them up, at which the child apparently demurred. He replied:

> *You lazy thing! What? I'm to divide the kisses myself, am I? Indeed and I won't take the trouble to do anything of the sort. But I'll tell you how to do it. First you take four of the kisses, and that reminds me of a very, curious thing that happened to me at half-past four yesterday. Three visitors came knocking at my door, begging me to let them in. When I opened the door, who do you think they were? You will never guess. Why they were three cats! ... They all looked so cross and disagreeable that I took up the first thing I could lay my hands on which happened to be the rolling pin and knocked them all down as flat as pancakes: "If you come knocking at my door," I said, "I shall come knocking at your heads." That was fair, wasn't it? Yours affectionately. ...*

Again, one ventures the thought that the troublesome cats were little males (or at least made him aware of maleness); and it is worth noting that the preceding letter to Agnes carried a postscript in which Carroll had sent his love to the little Agnes and his kindest regards to her mother, but "to your fat impertinent ignorant brother my hatred—and I think that is all." It was in turn followed by more cat letters:

> *About the cats, you know. Of course I didn't leave them lying flat on the ground like dried flowers. I picked them up, and I was as kind as I could be to them. I lent them a portfolio for a bed—they would not have been comfortable in a real bed, you know; they were too thin; but they were quite happy between the sheets of blotting paper, and each of them had a pen wiper for a pillow. Well then I went to bed; but first I lent them three dinner bells to ring in the night in case they wanted anything in the night. You know I have three dinner bells,—the first (which is the largest) is rung when dinner is nearly ready; the second (which is rather larger) is rung when it is quite ready; and the third (which is as large as the other two put together) is rung all the time I am at dinner. Well, I told them they might ring if they happened to want anything—and as they rang all the bells all night, I suppose they*

did want something or other, only I was too sleepy to attend to them. In the morning I gave them some rat-tail jelly and buttered mice for breakfast, and they were as discontented as they could be. They wanted some boiled pelican but of course I knew that would not be good for them. So all I said was "Go to Number two Finborough Road and ask for Agnes Hughes and if it's really good for you, she'll give you some." Then I shook hands with them all and wished them good-bye, and drove them up the chimney. They seemed very sorry to go and they took the bells and the portfolio with them. I didn't find this out until after they had gone, and then I was sorry too, and wished them back again. How are Arthur, and Amy, and Emily? Do they still go up and down Finborough Road and teach the cats to be nice to the mice? I'm very *fond of* all *cats in Finborough Road. Give them my love—Who do I mean by "them"? Never mind. Your affectionate friend—*

And another letter to Amy, the sister of Agnes, contained the following:

You have asked after those three cats. Ah, the dear creatures. Do you know, ever since that night they first came, they have never left me? *Isn't it kind of them? Tell Agnes this, she will be interested to hear it. And they are so kind and thoughtful: Do you know, when I had gone out for a walk the other day, they got all my books out of the book-case and opened them all to page 50 because they thought that would be a nice useful page to begin at. It was rather unfortunate, though: because they took my bottle of gum, and tried to gum pictures upon the ceiling (,which they thought would please me), and by accident they spilt a quantity of it all over the books. So when they were shut up and put by, the leaves all stuck together and I can never read page 50 again in any of them! However they meant it very kindly, so I* wasn't *angry. I gave them a spoonful of ink as a treat, but they were ungrateful for that and made dreadful faces. But of course, as it was given them as a treat, they had to drink it. One of them has turned black since: it was a white cat to begin with. Give my love to any children you happen to meet. Also I send two kisses and a half for you to divide with Agnes, Emily, and Godfrey, Mind you divide them fairly. Yours affectionately—*

These letters are perhaps as self-revealing as anything, except *Sylvie and Bruno*, that Carroll ever wrote. They show readily enough the fluctuating aggressiveness with an urge to cruelty and then to affectionate playfulness; but there are expressed, further, more disguised but equally powerful

complex trends which will be delineated in the discussion of the dynamics of the Carroll-Dodgson character formation.

The Main Themes in Carroll's Writing

The two *Alice* books, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, furnish naturally a starting place for the study of the thematic content of Carroll's fantasies; then *The Hunting of the Snark* and *Sylvie and Bruno*—with of course secondary consideration of his poetry and miscellaneous writings.

Wonderland

Alice in a state of sleepy boredom saw a rabbit run past her, nervously looking at his watch and talking to himself about being late. Her curiosity aroused, she followed him down a rabbit-hole which seemed very long indeed, but after a time turned into another long passage, which in turn became a long low hall with locked doors all around it. She found a tiny golden key which opened a small door hidden behind curtains, and gave her a view into a beautiful garden which she longed to enter. The story deals with her vicissitudes in getting into the garden and finally with the unexpected events within.

In brief, Alice goes through a series of bodily changes, always induced by eating or drinking something, except in the last instance, where her change in form is due to the fan (nosegay of flowers in the first version) which she picks up and holds after it has been dropped by the Rabbit.[7] Sometimes she is enlarged and again she becomes too small to reach even the door handle. In two of her enlarged states it is her neck which grows especially long, and she is once mistaken for a serpent as she coils her neck down through the tree branches in order to see underneath them. In her small states, she once suffers from her chin hitting her feet and apparently has no neck at all, and again is threatened with going out like a candle.

She has feelings of alienation both from her body and from her mind, believes that she may have become somebody else, and tests her identity with problems in arithmetic, trials of her memory, and school lessons to see if she still knows the things she has learned, as she has repeatedly found herself saying nonsense. The great charm of the tale lies in the panorama of grotesque caricature expressed in the general mixture and fusion of identities of the animals, insects, and strange human beings whom Alice meets. Through all this is a cacophony of cruelty so extreme as to be ridiculous:

animals eat each other up, a baby turns into a pig and is abandoned to wander away into the forest, decapitation is a general threat, and a Cheshire Cat does appear smiling, though separated from its own body. Even words are always changing *their* identities through punning. All this appears against a backdrop of illogical time and spatial relations, and an attitude of gentle puzzlement on Alice's part. In general, the irrational changes in size are confined to sudden changes in Alice's own body.

Finally, however, entrance into the beautiful garden, the home of the royal family, is achieved. But the bedlam is, if anything, worse. The main characters are an animated pack of cards: the Spades are the gardeners, the Clubs are the police force, the Diamonds are the courtiers, and the whole garden is ruled by the Hearts. It is interesting to consider here that the suit of cards, the Royal Family, has exactly the same number of members as the Dodgson family. There are admonitions of love, but a threat of execution permeates the place, and the Queen of Hearts seems madly lustful for everyone's head. Irritability and rage prevail, only, as the Mock Turtle explains, the executions, like everything else, are not real. "It's all her [the Queen's] fancy, that: they never executes nobody, you know." Finally it develops that the Knave of Hearts is being tried for having stolen tarts made by the Queen, and he in turn is in danger of execution. Alice is surprised to find herself called as a witness, and upsets the courtroom both literally (for she has again become gigantic) and figuratively by her rebellion against the nonsensical course of the trial. A final bit of evidence is produced in the form of an unsigned letter, written in rhyme, indicating that the tarts have been returned. It is a masterpiece of confused identities, expressed in pronouns, and concludes—

They all returned from him to you,
Though they were mine before....

My notion was that you had been
(Before she had this fit)
An obstacle that came between
Him, and ourselves, and it.

The Queen goes into another fit of rage while denying that she is subject to fits and demands an indefinite sentence. Alice declares a verdict must be given first and finds herself threatened with decapitation by the Queen, and defiantly replies: "Who cares for a pack of cards?" Whereupon the whole pack rises up in the air to hurl itself against her, and she awakes to find that she had been having a nightmare.

In a curious epilogue to the main tale, Alice recounts the dream to her sister, who in turn dreams the dream over, and in a half-awake state:

> *... pictured to herself how this same little sister of hers would, in the aftertime, be herself a grown woman; and how she would keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood; and how she would gather about her other little children, and make* their *eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale, perhaps even with the dream of Wonderland of long ago*

—truly an immortality of innocence as unreal and fantasied as were the executionary threats of the Queen of Hearts.

Looking-Glass

This was written seven years after Carroll had told the tale of *Wonderland* to the three little girls on the river and Alice is a little older than she was in *Wonderland*. Its plot follows, with similarities and reversals, that of *Wonderland*. The story opens with the theme of punishment; Alice reproaching her kitten for its faults and threatening punishment, only to think of her own fate if her punishments were accumulated and given to her at once. In a final threat to put the kitten through the mantel looking-glass, Alice discovers she can go through herself into that land of reversal, only a small bit of which can be seen ordinarily. It is the space behind the clock. Thus *Looking-Glass* begins with guilt and possible punishment rather than ending so; and time is involved (in the White Rabbit's watch and the mantel clock) in both adventures. In *Looking-Glass*, inanimate objects have come alive; the pictures on the wall move and the face of the clock grins, while the chess pieces on the hearth become the active inhabitants of the land. The motif of the game, expressed in the card game of *Wonderland*, is now experienced more fully as the game of chess, and concern about external space, not merely our own body change, plays a primary role, with the time theme secondary. In fact, in all *Looking-Glass* Land, Alice never once changes size herself, although objects external to her change frequently and distance has a troublesome way of contracting, expanding, and reversing itself. There is the same wish to get into the garden, but this is achieved early in the tale and without trouble. Alice floats downstairs so rapidly that she steadies herself by clutching the doorknob at the garden entrance.

The garden is full of pert flowers whom Alice finally threatens to decapitate (pick) in order to subdue them. While attempting to reach a hill from which to have a better view of the garden, Alice encounters the Red

Queen of chess, now grown life-size, whom she has previously seen on the hearth and frightened by lifting her rapidly through the air. There is now a reversal, in that the Red Queen forces Alice to run breathlessly through the air with her, but without reaching anyplace. The rest of *Looking-Glass* is involved with Alice's progress through the chess game of life until she can be crowned a queen herself, on attaining the Eighth Square. Each square has its own adventures, which in general are not so frightfully exciting as those of *Wonderland*. Alice is repeatedly confronted with the facts that space, time, and even memory and cause-and-effect may be reversed and run in either direction, this unreliability causing much confusion. The Red King and Queen are the main characters, much less fierce than the King and Queen of Hearts, and they have counterparts in the untidy but well-meaning White King and Queen. Several fights or threats of fights occur—notably between Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and the Lion and the Unicorn. Finally, Alice encounters the White Knight, who plays a role partly like and partly opposite to that of the Knave of Hearts in *Wonderland*. The White Knight cannot possibly be accused of any crime—he is just too muddled, awkward, and generally impotent. He continually falls from his horse in every direction except over its head, and he carries dangling from his saddle any number of futile contrivances, each of which he owns to be his own invention. Alice has repeatedly to pick him up and get him seated again, and in one final rescue has to pull him out of a ditch, where he has plunged head foremost. The Knight amiably explains: "What does it matter where my body happens to be? My mind goes on working all the same. In fact the more head downward I am, the more I keep inventing new things." (Thus the White Knight seems to be in a state of chronic partial alienation between head and body, resembling in this the Cheshire Cat.) Finally the White Knight sings Alice a song about an old man a-sitting on a gate, which is sung to the tune of "I give thee all, I can no more"[8] and parodies Wordsworth's "The Leech-Gatherer."[9] He is disappointed that Alice does not weep. The White Knight then says farewell, foolishly smiling and begging her to wave her handkerchief in good-bye to him by way of encouragement, after which she will go on into the Eighth Square and queenship, as indeed happens.

As preparation for queenship, Alice is sent through a course of training by the Red and White Queens—a training and an examination which have a shadowy resemblance to a trial; and she is finally obligated to give a dinner party to celebrate her royal debut—all this under the malicious and officious direction of the Red Queen. The party ends, however, in chaos and confusion, not unlike the end of the trial scene—

only again, instead of Alice changing size, the objects on the dinner table become large and animated: the candles shoot up to the ceiling, the plates develop wings, the soup ladle is threatening, and complete pandemonium is about to prevail until Alice, in reaction to the emergency, literally turns the table by pulling the cloth off and dumping the whole mess on the floor. She then turns to attack the Red Queen who had provoked the perversity of the dinner party, but finds the Queen again shrunken to chess-piece size. She awakes shaking the Red Queen, only to find she is really shaking her kitten.[10]

While the manifest plots of the *Alice* books are thus similar and simple in structure, it is not their plots which are generally remembered, but their various absurdly irrational incidents with the apparent triumph of sheer but rhythmical nonsense. Perhaps no book except the Bible is quoted as often in unlikely places and by improbable people as *Alice*. For in the account of Alice's experiences there is always some vividly mad vignette which can be used for comparison and relief in most of life's troubling dilemmas. The plot, however, the penetration into the hidden or secret garden and the difficulties encountered there, is in essence the most universal plot of mankind, whether stimulated by the sub-librarian's vision of the little girls playing in the Dean's garden, or from the gardens at Croft and Daresbury traversed by the engine of Love and inhabited by the civilized but combatant worms and caterpillars, or more remotely derived from that garden where Adam and Eve ate of the apple and the serpent of sophistication lurked nearby.

Notes

1. Dodgson "turned out nearly 200 little printed pamphlets, many of which consist of only a single sheet. Nearly 60 were devoted to topics in mathematics and logic; over 30 were concerned with games he invented or were schemes for ciphering. Nearly 50 were related to Christ Church—its little quarrels, its proposals for change, its regulations.... Over 50 were devoted to miscellaneous subjects—how not to catch cold, how to score tennis tournaments, on secondhand books, proposals for a new dramatic institute and for a bowdlerized Shakespeare for young girls, how to play billiards on a circular table ... how to write and register correspondence, common errors in spelling, on the profits of authorship, an advertisement for selling a house, a questionnaire based on the rules for commissions chargeable on overdue postal orders, how to memorize dates, etc. etc.... In one series [of pamphlets] he describes an unbelievably complicated variant on croquet, successive editions making it less and less likely that anyone would ever learn the rules." Quoted from Warren Weaver.

2. See Editor's Note in the *Diaries* under July 26, 1879.

3. Warren Weaver, who has examined many of Lewis Carroll's manuscripts, letters, and notations, writes in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland: Its Origin and Its Author" (*Princeton University Library Chronicle*, *XIII*, 1951)

"Every example I have ever seen is written with black ink up to June 27, 1870; in purple from Dec. 16, 1870 to Dec. 7, 1890; and then black thereafter, except

a) one item dated January 27, 1871, written in purple ink but corrected in black.
b) one item dated June 10, 1872, in black.
c) one item dated June 12, 1872 in black with purple corrections.

Every example I have seen dated February 5, 1891, or later is in black."

4. Compare this with the account of Swift's anonymous delivery of his manuscript at night.

5. Compare the alleged treatment of the manuscript with the following stanza from *Poeta Fit, Non Nascitur*:

For first you write a sentence
And then you chop it small;
Then mix the bits and sort them out
Just as they chance to fall:
The order of the phrases makes
No difference at all.
In *Phantasmagoria*, 1869

6. The Cheshire cat did not originate with Carroll, but is part of the folklore of the county in which he was born. Its appearance in *Wonderland*, however, has made it so famous that its earlier existence is often overlooked. The phrase "grinning like a Cheshire cat" or "grinning like a chessy cat" appears in various writings before 1865. Wolcott (Peter Pindar) wrote in 1792, "Lo, like a Cheshire cat our court will grin." There seem to be two main theories regarding its origin: One is based on the fact that a cheese was formerly made in Cheshire molded like a grinning cat. This has a peculiar Carrollian appeal, as it provokes the fantasy that the chessy cat may eat the rat that would eat the cheese. It reminds one further of the current phrase for a smugly smiling person, "He looks like the cat that has eaten the canary," and again we ask with Alice, "Do cats eat bats, or bats eat cats?" The explanation for the grin given by Brewer, however, is that the cats there knew that Cheshire is the County Palatine, and the idea is so funny that they are perpetually amused by it. (Certainly a cat may look at—and laugh at—a king.) Another explanation offered is that a lion rampant being the crest of an influential noble family of Cheshire, a cat's head became substituted for it due to the maladroit work of a painter who made signs for inns and other public places. Thus the cat became associated with Cheshire. The most coherent explanation, offered by Michael Perkins, relates the grinning Cheshire cat to the "witch cat" which began to grin on Hallowe'en in the Isle of Man and frightened observers all the way to Scotland. This cat was probably derived from the Palug Cat which the Welsh Triads record as having been kittened by the sow Henwen under the spell of the magician Coll, at Collfrew, at the Black Stone in Menai Straits. In North Wales, the cat bogey (which reappears in our grinning Jack-o'-Lantern) was a black hog with a "cutty" tail. It seems related then to the Manx cat of the Isle of Man. The Dodgsons made a family excursion to Beaumaris when Charles was a young boy, and the Menai Bridge reappears in his rhymes about the aged, aged man. The cat without a tail, or the Manx cat, becomes then converted into the cat without a head, or the head without a body, and is part of the decapitation and body-mutilation theme so apparent in Carroll's writing.

7. The close connection between the air (which is set in motion by the fan or given special significance when breathed in from the nosegay) and eating and drinking is again apparent.

8. Thomas Moore: "My Heart and Lute," in *Poetry and Pictures*.

9. "Resolution and Independence."

10. This whole picture reminds one inevitably of Carroll's attack on the cats of Finborough Road.

RICHARD KELLY

Poetry

The Poetry of Wonderland

Most of the poems in the two *Alice* books are parodies of poems or popular songs that were familiar to Carroll's contemporaries. The first to appear in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is "How doth the little crocodile," a parody of Isaac Watts's moralistic little poem "Against Idleness and Mischief."[23] Watts uses the bee as an example of wholesome industriousness: "How skillfully she builds her cell! / And labours hard to store it well / With the sweet food she makes" (p. 39). Carroll's crocodile, on the other hand, does its work by remaining passive and merely opening its jaws: "How cheerfully he seems to grin, / How neatly spreads his claws, / And welcomes little fishes in, / With gently smiling jaws" (p. 38). Again, there is the theme of oral aggressiveness noted by Phyllis Greenacre, and it is very aptly applied here. Watts's sentimental vision of the animal world is replaced by Carroll's Darwinian view of survival of the stronger. There is considerable pleasure to be derived from having such a cold picture of animal behavior, presented in the rhyme, meter, and near language of Watts's storybook view. Only the smile of the Cheshire Cat can exceed the sinister gentleness of the crocodile's smiling jaws. The very human—and non-Darwinian—attributes which Carroll gives to his predator suggest all too graphically the reality of social Darwinism. John Ciardi chooses to read this poem as a criticism of the hypocrisy in Watts's poem: "Is it too much to argue that the crocodile is a

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From *Lewis Carroll*.

happy hypocrite piously gobbling up the trusting fishes (including the poor fishes among the readers who are willing to take Watts's prettily shallow morality as a true rule of life)?"[24]

Although shaped verse can be traced back to ancient Greece, Carroll's mouse's tale is one of the best known examples of the form. An earlier version, which appeared in *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, tells the story of some mice who were crushed beneath a mat by a dog and a cat that were pursuing a rat. The revision deals with a dog named Fury who suggests to a mouse that they both go to court, for "we must have a trial" (p. 51). The mouse protests that a trial without judge or jury would be meaningless, to which Fury responds: "I'll be judge, I'll be jury," and "I'll try the whole cause and condemn you to death." Unlike the original tale, the revision is absurd and violent. Fury wants a trial simply because "this morning I've nothing to do," and his view of justice is exceeded only by the Snark (which serves as judge, jury, and counsel for the defense). If this poem is a satire on the legal profession that aspect of it is incidental. It is primarily a piece of nonsense, a playing with language—seen in the shape of the poem and the punning introduction: "Mine is a long and sad tale!" said the Mouse. "'It is a long tail, certainly,' said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse's tail" (p. 50). The puns, the tail shape of the verse (like an illustration), Fury's lack of motivation (a dog not being the natural enemy of the mouse—whereas, in the early version, a mouse offers a good reason for disliking both cat and dog), and the non sequiturs are the essential aspects of the poem's nonsense. Its "statement," therefore, must be read in the context of Wonderland, where violence is usually verbal and impotent to harm the real world, represented by Alice.

In Wonderland Alice has difficulty in saying things as she remembered them. When she attempted to recite Watts's poem she spoke the parody. Now, at the request of the caterpillar, when she tries to repeat Robert Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them," she utters still another parody. As the Caterpillar later comments, her recital "is wrong from beginning to end." This poem is reminiscent of "Upon the Lonely Moor" in its unconventional treatment of old age. Southey's old man is incredibly smug about the comforts that his righteous behavior bestowed upon his age: "In the days of my youth I remember'd my God. / And He hath not forgotten my age" (p. 69). Carroll's old man is also proud of the youthful prowess he still retains, but is wonderfully short-tempered: "'I have answered three questions, and that is enough,'" / Said his father. "'Don't give yourself airs! / Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff? / Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs!'" (p. 71). Part of the humor of this conclusion comes from the old man's confusion of a literary convention with a

personality—one does not expect him to take on the faceless speaker of the refrain "You are old, father William" because he is simply the conventional questioner who appears in the traditional ballad.

The lullaby which the Duchess sings to the pig-baby is a burlesque of G. W. Langford's "Speak Gently," which counsels that it is better to rule by love and gentleness than by fear: "Speak gently to the little child! / Its love be sure to gain; / Teach it in accents soft and mild; / It may not long remain" (p. 85). This saccharine advice is translated into that of comic violence and absurdity: "Speak roughly to your little boy, / And beat him when he sneezes: / He only does it to annoy, / Because he knows it teases" (p. 85). In some of the poems previously examined there was no explanation for why the characters behaved the way they did. Here the Duchess's advice is predicated upon the motive of a child teasing its parents, as if he could control his sneezing in a room full of pepper. When one expects motivation in Wonderland, it is not given; and when one does not expect it, it is made explicit. The poem intensifies the nonsense of Wonderland even when one does not know Langford's poem. When one thinks of the image of childhood presented by the nineteenth-century authors, Carroll's parody seems all the more refreshing and innovative.

Jane Taylor's well-known poem "The Star" is parodied in the Mad Hatter's song: "Twinkle, twinkle, little bat! / How I wonder what you're at! / Up above the world you fly, / Like a tea-tray in the sky. / Twinkle, twinkle—" (pp. 98–99). Elizabeth Sewell has analyzed the process by which Carroll turned the original four lines ("Twinkle, twinkle, little star, / How I wonder what you are!? / Up above the world so high, / Like a diamond in the sky!") into nonsense by attempting to answer why bats and tea-trays are more suitable to nonsense than are stars and diamonds:

> A star is something exceedingly remote and beyond control; it has no apparent parts and can be assigned by the ordinary observer no definite qualities other than those of size and degree of brightness; it is beautiful ...; it is one of an unnumbered multitude. A bat is something near at hand, reasonably familiar, small; it is a creature whose appearance and habits are familiar; it is grotesque and we feel no attraction toward it; it usually appears alone. The other substitution, that of a tea-tray for a diamond, works on much the same principles, abandoning beauty, rarity, preciousness and attraction for ordinariness. It adds one further distinction, for a tea-tray is the work of man. In other words, the artificial is here preferred to the work of nature. Smallness, ordinariness, artificiality,

> distinctness of units, and a tendency to concentrate on the part rather than the whole are all helpful in the playing of Nonsense.[25]

One very important element which Sewell omits is the surprise that comes with the substitutions. Because we know the original poem the appearance of a bat startles us. Even without knowing the original, however, the bat is surprising because the two "twinkles" are totally inappropriate verbs to describe the actions of a bat. Furthermore, as Sewell does point out, the reader is unable to fuse together the image of the bat with the tea-tray, thereby keeping the two images discrete. One's imagination can, on the other hand, fuse stars and diamonds without any difficulty.

The Mock Turtle's song parodies the first line and employs the meter of Mary Howitt's poem "The Spider and the Fly." The opening stanza of Howitt's version reads:

> "Will you walk into my parlour?" said
> the spider to the fly.
> "'Tis the prettiest little parlour that
> ever you did spy.
> The way into my parlour is up a
> winding stair,
> And I've got many curious things to
> show when you are there."
> "Oh, no, no," said the little fly, "to
> ask me is in vain,
> For who goes up your winding stair can
> ne'er come down again." (p. 133)

The Mock Turtle sings very slowly and sadly:

> "Will you walk a little faster?" said a
> whiting to a snail,
> "There's a porpoise close behind us,
> and he's treading on my tail.
> See how eagerly the lobsters and the
> turtles all advance!
> They are waiting on the shingle—will
> you come and join the dance?
> Will you, won't you, will you, won't you,
> will you join the dance?

Will you, won't you, will you, won't you,
won't you join the dance?" (p. 134)

The Mock Turtle, living up to its name, appears to be mocking here the moral of Howitt's poem. There is clearly no lesson to be learned from the song. Rather, it is an invitation to play, to dance. The rollicking rhythm of Howitt's poem is retained for its energetic playfulness, but the intrusive moral lesson has been left out of Wonderland. The whiting, the lobsters, and the snail, unlike the fly of Howitt's verse, have nothing to fear—for although they will be thrown out to sea, the experience will be "delightful" and, furthermore, as the whiting explains, if they are then far from England, they will be closer to France. It would be wrong to take this as anti-Gallic sentiment. It is a statement of simple optimism—all that is and will be is right. The whiting concludes by exhorting the "beloved snail" to enter in the excitement of the dance, that is, into the amoral world of play. Donald Rackin has this further point: "Note how the Mock Turtle's song that accompanies the Lobster Quadrille twists the sadistic original ... into an innocuous nursery rhyme. This parody demonstrates that Wonderland refuses to be consistent to itself: if the above-ground rhymes tend to hide or deny Darwinian theory, Wonderland's poems will be vengefully Darwinian; but if above ground rhymes admit the cruelty of nature, then Wonderland produces harmless nonsense verses."[26]

When Alice attempts to recite another moralistic poem by Watts, "The Sluggard," she again distorts it into an amoral, cruel, Darwinian commentary on nature. While Watts's poem preaches the gospel of hard work, Carroll's parody tells of a panther who "shares" a meat pie with an owl. The panther gets the meat pie and allows the owl to have the dish and the spoon. Then "the Panther received knife and fork with a growl. / And concluded the banquet by—" (p. 140). The grim final words, "eating the owl," appear in the 1886 printed edition of Savile Clarke's operetta. This poem not only makes fun of the self-righteousness of Watts's verse but comically subverts the sentimental picture of animal (and human?) behavior that characterized so much of children's literature in the Victorian era. An angry Vicar in Essex actually wrote a letter to *The St. James' Gazette* accusing Carroll of irreverence because of the Biblical allusion in the first line of his parody.[27] Such an attack is surprising, since Carroll's line "'Tis the voice of the Lobster," is practically the same as Watts's "'Tis the voice of the sluggard."

The Mock Turtle's mawkish song about beautiful soup is, of course, an appropriate commentary upon his own destiny and, like the poem Alice just finished reciting, depends upon oral aggressiveness for some of its humor.

"Turtle Soup" is a parody of the popular song "Star of the Evening," by James Sayles, which opens,

> Beautiful star in heav'n so bright,
> Softly falls thy silv'ry light,
> As thou movest from earth afar,
> Star of the evening, beautiful star.
> Chorus:
> Beautiful star,
> Beautiful star,
> Star of the evening, beautiful star. (p. 141)

The Mock Turtle, in "a voice choked with sobs," begins: "Beautiful soup, so rich and green, / Waiting in a hot tureen! / Who for such dainties would not stoop? / Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup! / Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup!" (p. 141). The substitution of "soup" for "star" turns the parody into nonsense. A romantic apostrophe to a star, suggestive of beauty, aloofness, and purity is fairly conventional. But soup is not usually thought of as beautiful and an exclamatory song of praise for such a common food turns the parody into good nonsense.

The response of a Victorian reader to these poems from Wonderland would, of course, be very different from that of a twentieth-century reader. The poems that are parodied were familiar if not known by heart, to Carroll's contemporaries. The recognizable meter, imagery, and morals of these works had an *immediate* effect upon them. Carroll's poetry, furthermore, asserted a daring challenge to conventional, didactic children's poetry and satirized Victorian morality. The Victorians took seriously the familiar poetry of Watts, Southey, Langford, Taylor, Howitt, and Sayles. These respectable poets appeared in all the popular readers and, until Carroll, no one had reason to question their sanctity. A modern reader, on the other hand, is likely to be ignorant of the original poems. Nevertheless, Carroll's parodies survive and continue to delight. In their absurdity they have generated new meanings that no longer depend upon the verses that are parodied.

The Poetry of Looking-Glass Land

The first poem to appear in *Through the Looking-Glass* is "Jabberwocky," perhaps the best known and most frequently discussed of all of Carroll's poetry. Martin Gardner draws an interesting analogy between it and abstract painting:

> The realistic artist is forced to copy nature, imposing on the copy as much as he can in the way of pleasing forms and colors; but the abstract artist is free to romp with the paint as much as he pleases. In similar fashion the nonsense poet does not have to search for ingenious ways of combining pattern and sense—he takes care of the sounds and allows the sense to take care of itself. The words he uses may suggest vague meanings, like an eye here and a foot there in a Picasso abstraction, or they may have no meaning at all—just a play of pleasant sounds like the play of non-objective colors on a canvas.[28]

Characteristically, most of the nonsense words are nouns or adjectives. Carroll apparently wanted his sentences to look genuine (nouns, verbs, and predicates are usually easy to detect) so that he could avoid mere gibberish. Elizabeth Sewell offers an explanation as to why most of the verbs are not nonsense words: "In logic, a verb expresses a relation, and this suggests two reasons for the few invented verbs in Nonsense. The first is the impossibility of inventing new relations in logic. The second is that a verb is an expressed relation, and relations in logic have to be simple and exact."[29] Sewell does not accept on face value Humpty Dumpty's explanation of the words in "Jabberwocky" as portmanteaus: "*frumious*, for instance, is not a word, and does not have two meanings packed up in it; it is a group of letters without any meaning at all ... it looks like other words, and almost certainly more than two."[30] The mind will play with a nonsense word and perhaps associate with it several genuine words, but as Carroll says, "if you have that rarest of gifts, a perfectly balanced mind, you will say 'frumious.'" Sewell goes on to comment that "the mind is encouraged by means of these Nonsense words to notice likenesses; but the likenesses are to other *words*. It is the purely verbal memory and associative faculty which is called into play."[31] The likenesses between images, however, are not perceived in nonsense; and the mind cannot fuse the verbal similarities together into a poetic unity.

There is, nevertheless, formal unity in "Jabberwocky," inasmuch as it is a mock-heroic ballad about an encounter between a young man and an adversary and appears to have a beginning, a middle, and an end (although the last stanza repeats the first). The young man, after being warned by his father of the Jabberwock, the Jubjub bird, and the Bandersnatch, goes off to do battle, slays the Jabberwock, and victoriously returns to his approving father. The conventional ballad stanza, the clear story line, the traditional syntax, and the many common words all provide a sensible framework of reference. The element of nonsense is restricted to the use of certain

neologisms strategically placed in each stanza. If pure nonsense is conceived of as a field of closed language which resists an interpretation based upon some other system (e.g., ordinary prose, allegory, symbolism, etc.), then "Jabberwocky" is not pure nonsense. There are not enough "structures of resistance," as Michael Holquist calls them,[32] to close out of the poem ordinary meaning—in the battle between sense and nonsense, sense wins out in "Jabberwocky," despite the structures of resistance provided by the nonsense words.

Nevertheless, the central interest in "Jabberwocky" is not in its story line but in its language. Our unfamiliarity with "slithy toves," "borogoves," and "Bandersnatch" makes the poem fun. The words conjure up associations in our minds that provide a "feeling" for their meanings. The word "galumphing" illustrates the failure of pure nonsense. In the sentence "He left it dead, and with its head / He went galumphing back," the syntax makes it clear that "galumphing" describes how he went back. As the only nonsense word in an otherwise perfectly conventional sentence, the tendency of the mind is to break sense, out of the word (and not to take it as a collection of letters that only has meaning in the context of the work). Consequently, associated words like "galloping" and "triumphantly" arise to help make sense of the sentence. One may, of course, come to accept "galumphing" as a word on its own, one that suggests a triumphant awkward gallop. If another reader makes similar associations, then we could actually converse with that word and be mutually understood. A. L. Taylor, for example, writes that "the little St. George with his vorpal sword is made very attractive in Tenniel's drawing and could not possibly galumph."[33] Carroll's own interpretation of the nonsense words in the poem, though sometimes whimsical, contributes to the reader's impulse to explain and understand them.

In the final analysis, the poem is a work to have fun with. Martin Gardner in his *The Annotated Alice* has enumerated the various explanations of the nonsense words and notes that eight of them reappear in *The Hunting of the Snark*. Some readers, such as A. L. Taylor, insist upon interpreting the poem.[34] He argues that Carroll is satirizing the religious controversies around him, and sees the Tum-tum tree as "certainly the Thirty-nine Articles which people like Jowett signed, according to Dodgson, for the sake of their bread and butter." The Jubjub bird and the Bandersnatch he explains as the Catholic and Protestant aspects of the English Church. "Vorpal" is a concoction of "verbal" and "Gospel." And the repetition of the first stanza at the end signifies that nothing has really changed, that one controversy (the Jabberwock) has been slain but the "out-gribing" is as strident as ever. The difficulty with making an allegory out of the poem, as Taylor has done, is that it is arbitrary, unconvincing, and limits the interest of the poem if we stop

with that reading. The poem has survived and perhaps thrived on countless interpretations of that variety. What the poem finally "means," of course, will never be settled, for it is not a secret language to be eventually decoded but a playful battle between sense and nonsense that can never be completely resolved into simple prose sense. As Alice says, after reading the poem, "'Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't exactly know what they are! However, *somebody* killed *something*; that's clear, at any rate.—'"[35] Perhaps with Alice's response, the poem should be left at that.

Tweedledee's poem, "The Walrus and the Carpenter," satirizes the style of Thomas Hood's *Dream of Eugene Aram*. When Carroll gave the manuscript of his poem to Tenniel for illustrating, be offered the artist a choice of drawing a carpenter, butterfly, or baronet. Tenniel chose the carpenter. Any of the words would have suited the meter and rhyme scheme, and Carroll apparently had no strong preference as far as the nonsense was concerned. Since words in a nonsense poem are interchangeable, one would be well advised not to press such a poem too hard for a meaning. A butterfly or a baronet would serve equally well as a contrasting member of the pair walking near at hand along the beach. The nonsense would be less effective, however, if the walrus were walking with a seal or the carpenter with an electrician.

The opening stanza sets the tone for the absurdities to follow:

> The sun was shining on the sea,
> Shining with all his might:
> He did his very best to make
> The billows smooth and bright—
> And this was very odd, because it was
> The middle of the night. (p. 233)

The nonsense of such "darkness visible" is reinforced by the rhyming of "bright" and "night" and the matter-of-fact regularity of the meter. The Walrus and the Carpenter are as mad as any of the creatures in Wonderland or Looking-Glass Land. They say and do, things without the logic of motivation and transition. The Walrus, for example, after speculating whether seven maids with seven mops could sweep away all the sand on the beach in a half year, beseeches the oysters: "O oysters, come and walk with us!" After the oysters, who wear shoes even though they have no feet, follow the odd couple down the beach aways, the Walrus speaks his famous stanza:

> "The time has come," the Walrus said,
> "To talk of many things:
> Of shoes—and ships—and sealing wax—

Of cabbages—and kings—
And why the sea is boiling hot—
And whether pigs have wings." (p. 235)

The alliteration in the third and fourth lines and the rhyming of "things," "kings," and "wings" suggest an affinity between the words that does not, in fact, exist. "Shoes," "ships," "sealing-wax," "cabbages," and "kings" make up a list of discrete items that can no more be fused together than can the items in a shopping list for a mad tea party. Nevertheless the whole stanza has come to have a meaning almost independent of the poem—namely, that the time has come to get down to essentials and certainties. (In *The Adventures of Ellery Queen*, for example, the first four lines of the stanza are an important factor in the detective's method of frightening a confession out of a murderer).[36] This meaning probably derives from the fact that the Walrus's statement is a chronological, though non-logical; prelude to the eating of the oysters.

The theme of oral aggressiveness reappears in that the Walrus and Carpenter eventually devour all of the personified oysters. The Carpenter is ruthless and the Walrus sentimental, but the fact remains that they both ate the oysters. Alice likes the Walrus best for he was "a *little* sorry for the poor oysters." But Tweedledum then tells her that he ate as many as he could get, leaving Alice to conclude that "they were *both* very unpleasant characters."[37] This poem resembles Mary Howitt's sadistic verse "The Spider and the Fly" in its delicate, playful and fatal seduction of innocent, humanized creatures. The poem surpasses Darwinian vengefulness or "Nature red in tooth and claw," in that Carroll's creatures are humanized, and consequently their cruelty and indifference become monstrous. Still, like Alice, we do not judge them any more harshly than the phrase "very unpleasant" allows. They exist only in the nonsense world of Looking-Glass Land and are, in fact, further removed from Alice (and us) by having their existence in a poem recited by a Looking-Glass character. Cruelty and sadism, no matter how violent in Carroll's writings, are always carefully controlled and tempered.

After Humpty Dumpty explains away the mystery (and fun) of "Jabberwocky," he recites for Alice "In winter, when the fields are white" (p. 273), a poem, he tells her that "was written entirely for your amusement." The trouble is that the poem leaves Alice more puzzled than amused. The narrator of the poem sends a message to the fish: "This is what I wish." They reply: "We cannot do it, Sir, because—" (p. 274). At this point Alice remarks that she does not understand, and Humpty Dumpty assures her that it gets easier further on. The narrator urges the fish to obey his previous order and when they refuse he fills a kettle with water. Someone comes and tells him

that the fish are in bed. The speaker screams into his ear, "Then you must wake them up again" (p. 275). Getting nowhere with this messenger, the narrator takes a corkscrew and goes to wake them up himself. He finds the door closed, and the last line of the poem reads, "I tried to turn the handle, but—" (p. 275). Alice asks if that is all, to which Humpty Dumpty replies, "That's all," and "Good-bye." Alice's relationship with Humpty Dumpty ends as abruptly as his poem.

This has to be the worst poem in the *Alice* books. The language is flat and prosaic, the frustrated story line is without interest, the couplets are uninspired and fail to surprise or to delight, and there are almost no true elements of nonsense present, other than in the unstated wish of the narrator and the lack of a conclusion to the work. But the poem's failure is important for what it reveals about Humpty Dumpty. He is the solemn literary man, the self-appointed critic of language who, though capable of a studious, self-assured explication of hard poems, cannot come up with a successful poem himself.

The last comic poem in *Through the Looking-Glass* is a riddle:

"First, the fish must be caught."
That is easy: a baby, I think, could have caught it.
"Next, the fish must be bought,"
That is easy: a penny, I think, would have bought it.
"Now cook me the fish!"
That is easy, and will not take more than a minute.
"Let it lie in a dish!"
That is easy, because it already is in it.
"Bring it here! Let me sup!"
It is easy to set such a dish on the table.
"Take the dish-cover up!"
Ah, *that* is so hard that I fear I'm unable!
For it holds it like glue—
Holds the lid to the dish, while it lies in the middle:
Which is easiest to do,
Un-dish-cover the fish, or dishcover the riddle?
(p. 333)

Commenting on the riddle, why is a Raven like a writing desk, Elizabeth Sewell argues that "it is essential for Nonsense that the riddle should have no solution. It is propounded to keep the dream and disorder side of the mind in play, but there must be no answer which could set up some kind of unity between the parts."[38] Her point is well taken and may be

applied to the White Queen's fish riddle. A solution would tie the verse together and make sense of it. Perhaps Carroll had no solution in mind but Martin Gardner offers a solution arrived at by a man named Peter Suckling: an oyster.[39] A baby can pick it from an oyster bed, a penny would buy one in Carroll's day, it cooks quickly, it lies in its own dish, it is easily placed on the table, but the "dish-cover" is hard to raise because it is held to the dish by the oyster in the middle. This solution makes perfectly good sense; and one could certainly argue that in Sewell's terms the verse is definitely not nonsense, but simply a conventional riddle. The solution, however, is not important in Looking-Glass Land, for after the White Queen finishes her recitation the Red Queen says to Alice, "Take a minute to think about it, and then guess"; but she then goes on to drink Alice's health and no opportunity is provided for Alice's response.

Notes

23. All of the poems quoted are from *The Annotated Alice*; subsequent page references will be cited in the text.

24. "A Burble through the Tulgey Wood," *How Does a Poem Mean?* (Boston, 1959), pp. 678–85; rpt. in *Aspects of Alice*, p. 258.

25. *The Field of Nonsense*, pp. 100–101.

26. "Alice's Journey to the End of Night," *PMLA*, 81 (Oct., 1966), 324.

27. *The Annotated Alice*, p. 140.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 192.

29. *The Field of Nonsense*, p. 118.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 119–20.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

32. "What is a Boojum? Nonsense and Modernism," *Yale French Studies*, 43 (1969), 145–64; rpt. in *Alice in Wonderland*, ed. Donald J. Gray (New York, 1971), p. 412.

33. *The White Knight*, p. 80.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 80–81.

35. *The Annotated Alice*, p. 197.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 235.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 237.

38. *The Field of Nonsense*, p. 113.

39. *The Annotated Alice*, p. 333.

DONALD RACKIN

Love and Death in Carroll's Alices

I

Considering the internal and external evidence, most readers new to Lewis Carroll would naturally expect to find love playing a major role in the central narratives of his Alices. *Wonderland* ends (as does *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*) with remarks about Alice's "simple and loving heart"; and *Through the Looking-Glass* begins with a poem declaring that Charles Dodgson's "love-gift of a fairy-tale" will elicit a "loving smile" from his dearest little reader, his beloved companion and model Alice Liddell.[1] For Dodgson devoted a great measure of his energy in a life-long service to his love for little girls. Moreover, as a true amateur par excellence, in his everyday affairs and amusements, and throughout his letters, diaries and lesser literary works—from the satirical "Love's Railway Guide" of his juvenilia to his final maudlin opus *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (which ends with an angel's voice whispering "IT IS LOVE")—love was clearly one of his dominant concerns. As Dodgson wrote to an eleven-year-old correspondent when he was fifty-nine, "*love* is the best thing in all the world."[2]

Lewis Carroll is of course Dodgson's "own invention" (if you want to see him as he sometimes imagined himself, look at the frontispiece to *Looking-Glass*), as are Alice and the White Knight. But in real life, too, Dodgson played a genuine Christian knight, giving much of himself

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gratuitously in authentic, loving generosity to the countless Alices, Ediths and Ethels of his wide acquaintance.[3] Love itself was also a crucial topic in Dodgson's milieu, a world where, in fact, some despairing Oxford contemporaries had already turned to love as the only possible refuge on the "darkling plain" of their faithless age ("Dover Beach," incidentally, was published just about halfway between *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*).

Furthermore, the *Alice* adventures themselves offer a variety of internal evidence perhaps more convincing than these biographical and historical facts or than the books' rather sentimental frames (whose relations to the actual adventures remain somewhat problematical), evidence that would also lead readers to expect more on the subject of love from these works. After all, THE KING AND QUEEN OF HEARTS stand prominently at the center of the punning world of Wonderland, and a spirit of love is expected to inform the audience's emotional response to a child protagonist like Alice. Love also lies at the base of several of those important nursery rhymes Alice unwittingly subverts. And despite the Cheshire Cat's assertion that madness reigns in Wonderland, the Ugly Duchess declares with equal finality, "'Tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round!"

But Alice herself, in much the same uncontrollable way that she twists the loving and sentimental messages of her nursery rhymes into dark visions of unloving, predatory, post-Darwinian nature, reminds the insincere Duchess of the Duchess's own earlier declaration: the world goes round, Alice suggests, "by everybody minding their own business!" Indeed, Alice's curt, unloving deflation of love here mirrors an important facet of Carroll's characteristically unsentimental wit, particularly as it works within the *Alices*. Despite the great loving care Dodgson expended in preparing the beautiful *Under Ground* manuscript as a love-gift for his dear Alice Liddell, near the manuscript's end he carefully placed his final drawing—the mad Queen of Hearts, in his own later estimate a heartless "blind and aimless Fury,"[4] as alien from love and love-gifts as any fantasy creature could conceivably be. Inside the *Alice* books, love seems to have no better prospect for survival than do any of the other admirable motives and principles that underlie and make our world go round, and that fall so easily to cool Carrollian wit and satire in the nonsensical madhouses of Dodgson's invention.

The quest structures of the *Alices* offer graphic representations of a failed search for the warm joy and security of love. Once inside Wonderland, Alice desperately seeks to enter the "loveliest garden you ever saw"[5]—that is, for almost everyone in Carroll's original audience, the Garden of Eden. But instead of a tranquil, secluded place of perfect love, the Queen of Hearts' Croquet Grounds turn out to be the grounds for perfect (albeit laughable)

hate and fury—like a comic Blakean Garden of Love, an ironically perverted, dreadfully confused and threatening version of the paradise the child in us seeks in its joys and desires. In *Through the Looking-Glass*—a very different sort of book and one containing several positive but fleeting images of love—Alice's quest for Queenhood does not meet with exactly the same frustration, although it too ends in "dreadful confusion" which Alice must escape because she "ca'n't stand [it] any longer!" In any case, being a Queen, Alice discovers, offers neither the security of attachment nor the sovereignty of freedom to which she refers in her opening words to the White Knight: "I don't want to be anybody's prisoner. I want to be a Queen." Finally, then, Alice's worlds under the ground and inside the mirror turn out, it seems, to be nonsensical places without love, places of sheer and terrifying loneliness: in both, Alice cries bitter tears engendered by that loneliness. "I am so very tired of being all alone here!" she sobs in Wonderland; and with a "melancholy voice" behind the looking-glass, she cries, "it is so very lonely here!"

These apparent contradictions between text and context and within the text itself raise some important critical questions, among them these: Why, in view of Carroll's declared purposes for his *Alice* books and in view of other, abundant evidence (literary, historical, and biographical), do the *Alice* narratives seem to frustrate all impulses towards love—even the impulses their own frames excite? Why does love within the Alices exist, apparently, only fitfully and only in self-centered, infantile forms or in places where, so to speak, things have no names? More specifically, how can these beloved masterpieces of our literature be surrounded by so many frames of human love and yet apparently exclude love from their central stories? Finally, why do adult readers today often remember the *Alices*, despite all this evidence to the contrary, as somehow warm, even loving, experiences and Alice herself as the embodiment of Dodgson's own later vision of her:

> What wert thou, dream-Alice, in thy foster-father's eyes? How shall he picture thee? Loving, first, loving and gentle: loving as a dog (forgive the prosaic simile, but I know no earthly love so pure and perfect), and gentle as a fawn....[6]

II

Elizabeth Sewell's celebrated study of Carroll and Lear, *The Field of Nonsense*,[7] explains why love has no place in nonsense, why, indeed, love and nonsense are ultimately incompatible. Basically, Sewell's argument rests on the firm premise that nonsense is game; consequently, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* (for Sewell, eminent examples of English

nonsense) must turn all life, all fluid human emotions, everything, into cold, discrete, static counters for play within a closed field. The nonsense world inside the *Alices*, claims Sewell, "is not a universe of things but of words and ways of using them, plus a certain amount of pictorial illustration.... In Nonsense all the world is paper and all the seas are ink" (p. 17).[8]

Bearing in mind that the games in Carroll's *Alices* often involve kinetic, changing counters, rather than the static ones required for the game of nonsense postulated by Sewell (and accepted by diverse critics as an apt description of Carroll's chief comic power);[9] keeping in mind, for example, those wriggling, live-animal mallets and live-animal balls of Wonderland croquet, we can nevertheless pursue Sewell's argument profitably. For her, the *Alices* constitute, finally, "a work about itself" (pp. 21–22). Thus, love—whether as a serious subject or as a substantial conceptual element with more than mere game-counter applications, or as the spirit (style, tone, manner, etc.) in which the game of nonsense is played—has no place whatsoever in, indeed is destructive of, the game world we must enter when we enter the non-referential worlds of, say, Lear's poetry or *Jabberwocky*. For what we understand by human love (unlike, incidentally, Dodgson's "pure and perfect" love of dog or of fawn) is fiercely kinetic, its kinesis and imperfection dominating the subject matter of Western literature since at least the Renaissance. Furthermore, human love never is (as every game counter must be) completely discrete, never fully completed, never isolated, and never merely about itself. Indeed, the Romantic sensibility in which so many of us agonize and glory depends heavily on the principle of incompleteness and on dreams of mergers between ordinarily discrete entities and selves (in our day represented most often by sexual unions; in Carroll's day represented most vividly in the operatic vision of love celebrated in Romantic fictions, *Wuthering Heights* being a striking example). A game uses separate entities as playthings; love, like imagination, seeks to dissolve separation and to engender syntheses greater than the sums of their parts (according to Sewell, "The Nonsense universe must be the sum of its parts and nothing more," p. 98).

Thus, accepting Sewell's definition, we must understand love as in a sense destructive of nonsense, as the warm emotional force that naturally resists taking the world the way nonsense presumably takes it, as simply a congeries of cold, discrete "units going one and one and one" (Sewell, p. 67). Love works like a solvent, dissolving isolation and breaking down separateness, making the world more fluid and less static, tending towards fusion and away from discreteness. Therefore, our quest for love in the nonsensical *Alices*, like Alice's nonsensical quest for the tranquil innocence of the lovely Garden or for the permanent freedom of adult Queenhood, seems

therefore nonsensical too and appropriately destined to fail. Hence it appears that, as critics anyway, we must simply declare that the warm (and sometimes sentimental) love which permeates the frame materials of the *Alices* and which is sometimes ridiculed within their narratives has no place there, is finally extraneous, playing no important part in the books' artistic successes. In fact, it looks as though we must as critics declare the few bits of unsatiric or unsatirized love we catch here and there in the *Alices* to be sentimentally generated flaws in the generally pure nonsense which is their principal achievement.

A useful gloss on these matters appears in one of Carroll's minor early fictions, "Novelty and Romancement"[10] (published in *The Train* in 1856 when Dodgson was twenty-four and just getting used to his new pen-name). In brief, "Novelty and Romancement" is the first-person account of one Leopold Edgar Stubbs (among other things, a caricature of an overly Romantic narrator-hero in Poe's fiction), a young man with a feverish imagination and an all-consuming "thirst and passion ... for poetry, for beauty, for novelty, for romancement" (p. 1080).

The target of rather crude Carrollian derision, a Romantic mercilessly lampooned by Carroll's anti-Romantic irony, Stubbs serves as an objective correlative for the spirit motivating the Romantic quest—the foolish, almost nonsensical young lover foolishly in love with love itself. And the cream of Carroll's rather facile jest depends on Stubbs' dim-witted belief that the "romancement" he so ardently seeks (compare here Alice's two quests or the hunting of the Snark) is to be found, simply, in a mechanic's shop on Great Wattles street: he spies the sign "Simon Lubkin. Dealer in Romancement" and thinks he has found the dear object of his life-long quest. "Romancement" (here read "Love"), he fondly believes, can be bought like herring or glue from a working-class shopman.

The climax of "Novelty and Romancement" comes when Stubbs, "with a throbbing and expectant heart," discovers that he has been "deluded by a heated imagination": he has, in his youthful ardor, misread the shopkeeper's sign (this short story, by the way, offers a treasure trove for our current school of semioticians). What he had read on the sign as "Romancement" was, all along, merely "Roman cement." Until the climax, he had never seen the "hideous gap" yawning between the "N" and the "C," "making it not one word but two!" (pp. 1087–1088). Instead of the fused and fusing "romancement" Stubbs has hotly sought, he finds only "Roman cement," as cold and mundane a conception as the two discrete terms used to signify it (again compare the disappointing un-romantic conclusions and the awakenings to a dull reality that end Alice's dreams and quests). Stubbs is obviously from beginning to end a Romantic fool; but his "phantom hope"

for "romancement," the childish dream he held with an "expectant heart," is no more foolish than is the dream-Alice that haunted Dodgson "phantomwise," or the imaginative dream-quests that motivated Alice herself—or the object of warm love any one of us might cherish in a young and hopeful imagination. Before Stubbs discovers the sad truth, Lubkin innocently tells him what the stuff in his shop is used for: "It would piece a most anything together." Stubbs of course misunderstands Lubkin's straightforward remark, thinking it refers to the spirit of "romancement," a spirit, he imagines, that "serves to connect the broken threads of human destiny" (p. 1084)—a view of human love consistent with much that Dodgson wrote in many of his letters, diary entries and imaginative works, a view of human love (and the imagination) to which most of us post-Romantics probably would subscribe.

In any case, the emotional-imaginative cement fusing the two, separate, lifeless, prosaic terms in Stubbs' poetic and "fertile imagination" (p. 1084) suddenly loses its cohesive powers and its own fertility; the frigid, isolated words fly apart into mere individual words again, mere dead counters in the unimaginative game of commerce and commercial communication. The experienced Stubbs puts it neatly at the end, without for once his florid and poetic prose, "the dream was over" (p. 1088). Like a reversed mirror-image of the ends of Alice's dream-quests, like the apparent relationships between the poetic, Romantic frames of the *Alices* and their satirical and nonsensical prose narratives, this ending seems to deflate love into a mere misreading of lifeless signs. As it so often does in Carroll, Romanticism here becomes a matter of poor eyesight. The coherent, unitary vision of a coherent, dynamic world alive and turning on the power of love is shattered into the dreadful but business-like perception of a "real" world of "broken threads" that goes round because each separate entity and each separate word remains separate, minding its "own business," while each seeker of love's coherence remains a fool permanently isolated in a solitary and loveless prison.[11]

Preposterous as it might seem, then, we find ourselves at this point apparently forced by firm and varied evidence to conclude that the supreme and loving creations of a man whose life and religious devotion circled around love have themselves internally little to do with love—except to treat it where it occurs with the same cold mockery they turn on all the other fond fictions and groundless imaginative constructs that help make our mad world livable. Our quest for love inside these texts seems therefore doomed to the fate suffered by similar quests within Carroll's masterpieces: whether we seek it with care and hope or with thimbles and forks, love will, Carroll's great fantasies seem to say, elude us forever. The old signs, the old words declaring

love's fusing magic, like the words on Simon Lubkin's sign proclaiming his prosaic wares, fall before our clear vision into their morally meaningless, discrete parts. "Novelty and Romancement" ends both sadly and comically:

> The signboard yet creaks upon the moldering wall, but its sound shall make music in these ears nevermore—ah! nevermore.
> (p. 1088)

III

But our quest for the sustained and sustaining music of love within the *Alices* need not end with a frustrating Boojum. In the eighth chapter of *Through the Looking-Glass* ("It's My Own Invention"), that quest yields some authentic results. And, in spite of the apparent incoherent randomness of Carroll's nonsense materials, this chapter might even suggest for the *Alices* the possibility of a satisfying moral shape.

Besides finding in "It's My Own Invention" some of the best evidence of the loving nature that Dodgson claimed was Alice in Wonderland's chief virtue, we witness in this late, concluding episode something which, in terms of our own search for love, is much more significant—a response to that loving nature in the only genuine, fully human exchange within all of Alice's adventures: a poignantly brief, disturbingly realistic farewell between a foolish old White Knight and Alice, that Knight's beloved seven-and-a-half-year-old maiden in distress.[12]

At this late and pivotal point in her adventures underground and behind the looking-glass, Carroll's imprisoned pawn-princess is freed and is now about to awaken to autonomous Queenhood (Chapter Nine is called simply "Queen Alice"). Meanwhile, Alice's thinly disguised creator Carroll/Dodgson (after surreptitiously admitting that she too is his "own invention") prepares to lose forever his Galatea as she races off eagerly and unthinkingly to adulthood and out of the dream worlds he has lovingly invented for her, worlds where real death seems almost a stranger and where her natural aging process has been slyly slowed to a Wonderland rate closer to his heart's desire—a mere half-year's maturation for something like every nine years on the other side of the looking-glass.[13] Carroll's sadly ineffectual persona, meantime, that aged and impotent prince-charming, that familiar nonsense-inventor, the ever-falling, pitiable White Knight, sings his last song and bumbles off towards some isolated and ridiculous death:

> As the Knight sang the last words of the ballad, he gathered up the reins, and turned his horse's head along the road by which

> they had come. "You've only a few yards to go," he said, "down the hill and over that little brook, and then you'll be a Queen—But you'll stay and see me off first?" he added as Alice turned with an eager look in the direction to which he pointed. "I sha'n't be long. You'll wait and wave your handkerchief when I get to that turn in the road? I think it'll encourage me, you see."

In this chapter, Carroll finally brings to the surface and objectifies for his readers what they have at best only dimly sensed in their journeys with Alice through the loveless realms of heartless queens and unfeeling flat characters from the worlds of nonsense game and nursery rhyme. Until now, the only possible evidence of real love, it seemed, had been so deeply embedded among the nonsense adventures that we could have easily called *lovelessness* the keynote of the *Alices*. Until this late chapter of Carroll's last *Alice*, it appeared as if the only cogent and critically defensible way for us to justify continuing our quest for love was to claim perhaps that the narrative act itself—the narrator's gentle structuring of the inherently unstructurable, separate, discrete components of Alice's dreams into a pleasurably coherent text—comprises an act of love, a love-gift that provides Alice, and the reader with a fictive shape which allows them to survive with some measure of sanity in a mad world. But this seems to me an unsatisfying, overly theoretical approach to our actual experience of the *Alices*. Now, however, in the poignant passage I have just quoted, we begin to see some reason to hope for real success in our quest.

But before continuing, let us turn for a moment to Carroll's prefatory poem, specifically to a passage that promises a particular emotional immunity. The poem ends:

> *And, though the shadow of a sigh*
> *May tremble through the story,*
> *For "happy summer days" gone by,*
> *And vanish'd summer glory—*
> *It shall not touch, with breath of bale,*
> *The pleasance of our fairy-tale.*

The narrative following this promise, however, fails to sustain such an emotional immunity. Indeed, the emotional charge underlying the haunting farewell between the White Knight and Alice is so powerful it breaks through the neat nonsense surfaces of Alice's adventures, letting readers and listeners hear distinctly and directly a different but vaguely familiar tone—that nostalgic "shadow of a sigh" which, though we hardly suspected it, has,

as Carroll admits, "tremble[d] through the story" ever since Alice first followed Dodgson's White Rabbit down the rabbit hole.

The intrusion of such a nostalgic "sigh" subverts Carroll's own intention to give his audience a love-gift of game-like, pure, nonsensical pleasure untouched alike by any breath of "bale" or by any warm, fluid emotions that can threaten the static discreteness upon which the "pleasance" of nonsense games rests. (In Dodgson's day, incidentally, "pleasance" signified, among other things, [1] a pleasant, unthreatening emotional experience, [2] for him, Alice Pleasance Liddell, his real girl-love, and [3], a secluded garden.) Admitting to the field of nonsense an emotion as alien as nostalgia risks opening its pleasant seclusion to other disturbing strangers, among them Death. Here in Chapter Eight, Death is no longer a stranger, a separate word, a mere uncharged sign and discrete counter for endless games where "they never executes nobody" and where Death's agent Time can itself die, or stop dead forever in a mad, unending tea-party. And the "voice of dread" that, as Carroll's poem reminds us, inevitably "summon[s] to unwelcome bed" every "melancholy maiden"[14] here also breaks through, becoming fully manifest for the only time in all the adventures, but thereby revealing it has been a dynamic element singing at the back of Carroll's tales of Alice's nonsensical experiences of life, love, death and disorder.

Carroll himself understood the threat such a "breath of bale" poses for nonsense games. Consciously, he believed that the approaching, inexorable "bedtime" his poem alludes to must not, would not play any part in the adventures themselves (except heavily disguised in such elements as the many silly and unthreatening death and sex jokes that punctuate the *Alices*). But here in "It's My Own Invention"—the chapter Carroll apparently considered central to the book (look at that frontispiece again)—the baleful "frost," the "raving blast" of fall and winter which is our common lot and the basis for much of our love comes alive dramatically in the comic narrative's overt and realistic portrayals of aging, old age, and falling to earth (the text alludes to the old Knight's falling at least thirty times), as well as in its covert plays on the word "grave" and its many references to gravity—a no-nonsense, inescapable force pulling us all down to earth and our common grave. And the tone that conveys all this, the emotional aura suffusing this autumnal scene which reaches its climax with the spectacle of an aged man (not a mere nonsense creature, mind you, but a *man*) singing, as his final love-gift for a departing child, his nonsense song "The Aged Aged Man," that melancholy tone we hear distinctly in "It's My Own Invention" reveals, finally and with a direct immediacy, a fundamental thematic element that has subtly informed all of the *Alice* books, making them something much more referential, much richer and more human than the insulated nonsense we might have easily

mistaken them for. Paradoxically, this grave tone emanates from Carroll's fortunate failure to keep his nonsense pure, free from that "shadow of a sigh" he himself admits. The tone emanates from a deep, abiding and inescapable sense that human love springs from time and human mortality. Hardly a fit subject for the closed fields of nonsense, but just the right subject for literary works quoted as often as Shakespeare's sonnets.

Much of the love Dodgson bore for the innumerable little Alices of his own fleeting life was of a kind adult readers know well. His letters and diaries (and his lesser literary works) are fully open about that sense of advancing age that leaves us fallen "bare ruined choirs" and makes us "love that well which [we] must leave ere long." The depth and intensity of Dodgson's preoccupation with this particular emotional and spiritual experience can be gauged by the heavy emphasis placed upon it in this structurally crucial chapter, especially in the chapter's continual iteration of two intertwined motifs—old age and falling. Like Shakespeare's May-time beloved beholding the final decline of a winter-time lover, like Humbert Humbert's pitiful adoration of his indifferent nymphet fading before him into a future he cannot share, like any of the countless figures in our literature that dramatize and celebrate this notion of love springing from fallen man's doomed race against world and time, against the imprisoning Biological Trap or the "blight man was born for," the *Alice* undertexts, amidst all the surface nonsense, have whispered from the beginning of love's intimate relations with inevitable death, but so faintly and subtly that the effect is necessarily—and, I think, appropriately—subliminal. In this late, sunset chapter of the final *Alice*, however, in this autumnal and peculiarly isolated scene of final parting between (foster) father and the child he has created, the grave undercurrent themes of age, evanescent and unrequited love and youth's impatience for autonomous life become for a very brief moment the vivid mainstream and audible melody of Carroll's narrative.

Indeed, we now know that Carroll intended to intensify these themes and make them even more explicit in this chapter: With a characteristic *Looking-Glass* doubling, he meant (although he was finally dissuaded by Tenniel) to add immediately after the White Knight episode a parallel scene of young Alice parting from another aged man—the even older, dying Wasp in a Wig, who sings a sometimes gruesome song about his own last days:

So now that I am old and gray,
And all my hair is nearly gone,
They take my wig from me and say
"How can you put such rubbish on?"[15]

But although the Wasp episode does bear a number of similarities to the White Knight section it was meant to follow, it might not appear to be about love, the goal of our own critical quest. For while the "*very* unhappy" Wasp represents the sadness of approaching death (being November behind the looking-glass, it is already well past the "unwelcome bedtime" of most wasps) and while Alice again represents impatient youth (she turns back to the aged Wasp "rather unwillingly, for she was *very* anxious to be a Queen"), readers might nevertheless find it difficult to discover in this Wasp fragment any hint of the love-out-of-death theme I have been delineating. But the distinct change Alice's polite indulgence effects in this irascible old creature should be read in the light of its full context, representing as it does the sudden engendering of warm human emotion in the coldest, most rigid and elderly figure in Carroll's extensive collection of cranky, inflexible, waspish grown-ups. In the final words of this episode, the Wasp suddenly reaches emotionally towards Alice, displaying some true civility—a delicate social sign that for fastidious Dodgson sometimes conveyed private love:

> "Good-bye, and thank-ye," said the Wasp, and Alice tripped down the hill again, quite pleased that she had gone back and given a few minutes to making the poor old creature comfortable. (p. 21)

Such genuine civility—here in response to Alice's acts of genuine noblesse oblige for a "poor creature" of the lower orders (lower biologically, socially, morally)—coming so spontaneously and from such an improbable source, represents, I think, the miraculous regenerative power loving childhood offers to the dying old: a spiritual solvent that can teach us to love and can free us from our emotional and class-conscious rigidity and isolation, as it so often freed Charles Dodgson from his.

In any case, Lewis Carroll's concentration on his peculiar child-love version of the eros–thanatos principle, his bitter-sweet and sentimental vision of a fallen old man's innocent and fruitless love for an even more innocent, unattainable child, shapes many features of "It's My Own Invention." And comprehending Carroll's strategies for transforming that vision into the nonsensical parting of a ludicrous White Knight and an eager Alice—a parting that also comically announces the approaching end of his Alices and the approaching end of their loving inventor—will allow us to understand better the love in the *Alices*.

For one thing, "It's My Own Invention" dramatizes a strikingly realistic encounter between two human figures as familiar in literary convention as they are in ordinary life—the aged, inept, foolish and sometimes doting lover

and the indifferent, impatient, lively young object of his love. Carroll naturally employs several screens, and his treatment of this traditional material differs widely from the standard comic and tragic sentimentality with which his audience was most familiar. But many of the principal elements of the convention operate in Carroll's nonsense rendition. For example, what is often emphasized in such a couple (for tragic as well as for comic purposes) is their essential incompatibility. Here that incompatibility is deftly underscored and elaborated in some noteworthy ways. Alice, for instance, looks upon the aged Knight as a laughable old fool, but she takes pains to conceal her youthful amusement and "dares not laugh" at him; she generously allows him to mistake her "puzzled" thoughts about his ridiculous invention of a Platonic pudding for "sad" thoughts about her eagerly awaited departure. The Knight, for his part, considers his sentimental and funny song beautifully sad, while, upon hearing it, Alice finds "no tears [come] into her eyes," and even he is forced to observe gently that she did not cry as much as he thought she would. From all of this emerges a subtle, curious emotional exchange, a kind of loving mutuality we have not seen directly before in the adventures and one that, on Alice's side, represents far more than just her well-bred politeness. The fleeting love that whispers through this scene is, therefore, complex and paradoxical: it is a love between a child all potential, freedom, flux and growing up and a man all impotence, imprisonment, stasis and falling down.

While the White Knight's continual falling and his outlandish horsemanship also suggest sexual impotence (his name, it, should be noted, constitutes a pun on a familiar term for a sleepless night—a "white night"—in the context of these great dream books itself a mark of stasis and impotence, as well as a reference to the kinetic, waking world of love and mortality that keeps breaking through this chapter), that falling bears a more immediate and wider reference to other sharp contrasts between him and Alice, who has now attained the evanescent ability to handle, with the grace of childhood, some rather tricky matters of gravity and balance. Indeed, some of the conversation here sounds as if Alice is now the knowing grown-up and the Knight the innocent child (a role reversal mirrored in a number of *Looking-Glass* and *Wonderland* episodes). Considering his propensity for falling, for example, Alice at one point declares, "You ought to have a wooden horse on wheels, that you ought!" and he sheepishly asks, "Does that kind go smoothly?" It is this sort of second-childhood childishness, his near-senile frailty and dependence on a fickle child, that makes him here laughable and pitiable at the same time (surely an undesirable fusion in the game of nonsense). And it is the utter hopelessness of his attachment to the departing child that, I submit, makes him a haunting figure of universal reference.

When the Knight, "a faint smile lighting up his gentle foolish face," sings his parting song for Alice, adult readers might easily overlook, in all its silly nonsense, the serious, common-sensical aspects of the song and of the entire scene. But the child Alice is not nearly so insensitive—she somehow grasps the episode's strange gravity:

> Of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly. Years afterwards she could bring the whole scene back again, as if it had been only yesterday—the mild blue eyes and kindly smile of the Knight—the setting sun gleaming through his hair ... and the black shadows of the forest behind—all this she took in like a picture ... listening, in a half-dream, to the melancholy music of the song.

For the open-hearted Alice has unwittingly heard the poignant, hopeless love of The Aged Aged Man that moves secretly beneath the song's surface nonsense. And, as Carroll subtly suggests, there is a reasonable chance that Alice Liddell (in her own "half-dream," halfway between her actual, listening, reading, waking self and her fantasy self inside the dream-fiction) has heard similarly that same melancholy music here and there throughout the nonsensical adventures—Dodgson's trembling, grave "shadow of a sigh" that makes Carroll's best nonsense books timeless and universal in ways far beyond the capacity of mere unreferential nonsense.

The tune of "The Aged Aged Man," as Alice says to herself, "isn't his own invention" as he claims; the tune (and Alice apparently identifies its source correctly) comes from Thomas Moore's "My Heart and Lute," a poignant love lyric that no seven-and-a-half-year-old could completely understand. As Martin Gardner suggests, "It is quite possible that Carroll regarded Moore's love lyric as the song that he, the White Knight [and Charles Lutwidge Dodgson], would have liked to sing to Alice [and to Alice Pleasance Liddell] but dared not."[16] In any case, Alice's politely unspoken recognition of the underlying love lyric here bespeaks her acute child's ear, her high-bred diplomacy, and her precocious sensitivity to the oblique voice of love beneath the nonsense of his song and, I submit, beneath all her fantastic adventures.

If we join Alice in recognizing such a faint but powerful loving counterpoint, we add a new dimension to our understanding of the *Alices*. Moore's song begins, "I give thee all—I can no more— / Though poor the off'ring be. / My heart and lute are all the store / That I can bring to thee." The White Knight's song, in turn, is also a poor offering, like the many poor

nonsensical offerings of another aged and silly inventor, given also in tones of modest love to an unattainable child impatient for life and ultimately incapable of understanding the pathetic depth of such grown-up melancholy music. Moore's singer sings of a "soul of love" and a "heart that feels / Much more than lute could tell." Carroll's nonsense music likewise cannot—must not—tell fully what Dodgson's heart feels. Alice, of course, while capable of recognizing the poignant love song beneath the nonsense words, is, ironically, blessedly incapable of understanding fully what that curious blend of words and music tells about herself, about the old man singing before her and about the human condition: "She stood and listened very attentively, but no tears came into her eyes." Fortunately, only adults can hear, if they listen very attentively, all of Carroll's gravity and melancholy love. Only adults can hear the full sad irony, for example, of this little nonsensical exchange between innocent Alice and her experienced White Knight:

> ... people don't fall off quite so often, when they've had much practice."
>
> "I've had plenty of practice," the Knight said very gravely: "plenty of practice!"

Before leaving this discussion of the melancholy tone of love upon which Carroll's nonsense tales are based, we should remind ourselves that the oral element, the sound of the human voice (particularly, the spoken words of a wise and kindly, upper-middle-class Oxford don, the product of Christ Church, Rugby, and a well-bred family) can play a major, critically legitimate role in our assessments of the *Alices*. The fact that Alice and her original adventures grew out of their inventor's extemporaneous, oral story-telling seems to me important. And when we add to this the fact that references to the literal occasion for the first telling of *Under Ground* whisper here and there through the texts themselves (the last words of *Looking-Glass*, for example, take us suddenly back twenty years to a boat-full of real Liddells eagerly and with "willing ear" waiting "to hear" Dodgson's "simple tale"), we can probably assume that Carroll wrote all three *Alices* with the sounds of the human voice constantly and vividly in mind. That assumption becomes a critical certainty when we comprehend the extent and importance of Carroll's countless stage and musical directions—here say it "gravely" (seriously and with full knowledge of the grave); there say it with "a scream of laughter." These directions can serve of course as oral performance notes for a grown-up storyteller as much as they can serve as simple modifiers for

imaginative silent readers, be they adults or children. And such matters deserve careful investigation.

But such an investigation must wait for another occasion. Suffice it to say that the sense of a stable, orderly and correct voice (without the stammer from which Dodgson often suffered when talking to most adults), speaking in calm tones, and with great sympathy for its child subject and for its child audience, informs the *Alices*, guiding our responses, fusing and shaping the discrete nonsense materials with a warm and consistently loving tone. Many readers of the *Alices* today probably hear, consciously or not, that voice of love beneath the silly adventures, like the Moore love lyric beneath the nonsense song "The Aged Aged Man." And for those who do hear, that voice somehow humanizes Carroll's games of nonsense, making the whole Alice experience into a love-gift as worthy of the childlike teller as it has been of his countless childlike listeners ever since.

"And here I must leave you.... You are sad," says the White Knight to Alice; but "in an anxious tone" he adds, "let me sing you a song to comfort you." No one else in Alice's many adventures has ever addressed her quite this way. It is as if the narrator and the narrator's gentle, loving voice have crossed over some boundary between reality and fiction, between Alice's adventures and Carroll's telling of them. It is the White Knight Carroll's last farewell and last love-gift to his beloved invention Alice. After this he must, like his inventor Dodgson (who has had plenty of sad practice saying good-bye to real girls entering queenhood), continue his well-practiced falling, alone and unaided to the end. In his later years Dodgson writes to a former girl friend now about to enter the dubious queenhood of Victorian marriage:

> My child-friends are all marrying off, now, terribly quick! But, for a solitary broken-hearted old bachelor, it is certainly soothing to find that some of them, even when engaged, continue to write as "yours affectionately"! But for that, you will easily perceive that my solitude would be simply desperate![17]

"Desperate" is perhaps too strong a word here—certainly too strong for a Victorian clergyman like Dodgson, and probably too strong to describe the White Knight's own parting words and song. But "desperate" is not so wide of the mark: both Alice and the Knight, after all, recognize that "The Aged Aged Man" is full of very "melancholy music." And, in many senses, so is the nonsensical chapter that contains it. For the impending loneliness, the approaching loss of love and life for which both Dodgson and his "anxious" White Knight have been practicing so long in their inventive imaginations, is far from a laughing matter. It is serious enough to make them both seek

soothing comfort and faint hope in the merest crumbs of affection from a loving child's fickle heart.

IV

Carroll's doomed attempts to keep his beloved child-friends forever "dreaming as the summers die," his brilliant deployment of "magic words" to "hold [them] fast," his perfectly composed photographs that try to fix them forever in their passing youth—all these things represent a glorious and futile struggle of loving art against separating Time, that most-abused and ridiculed figure of Carroll's many fantasies. In "It's My Own Invention," Time is finally displayed openly in its full relation to the human condition, a relation usually well masked by Carroll's sprightly nonsense. Here Carroll's many allusions to Time in the *Alices* and elsewhere seem to come into sharp emotional and moral focus, offering suddenly a brief but clear and feeling vision of Time's human significance—the despised irresistible agent of our ludicrous mortality and our wonderful love.

Nearing fifty, Dodgson writes in a letter to an adult friend, "the experience of many years [has] taught me that there are few things in the world so evanescent as a child's love."[18] And because the poignantly familiar love of an aged man for a young and innocent child intensifies that evanescence several-fold, it serves as a fine symbol (in literary fantasies as well as in everyday psychology) for the evanescence and preciousness of all love and of life itself. Thus, the terribly brief encounter between a child about to experience for the first time "queenhood" and its concomitant knowledge of death's "unwelcome bed" and a loving, protecting but foolish adult who has had "plenty of practice"—that evanescent moment permanently stopped by art's saving magic—should be understood as Carroll's special message to us, his fellow grown-ups: his own, covert interpretation, if you will, of the *Alices*, an interpretation at least as graphic as the frontispiece he chose, presumably, to depict their central theme of youth and age.

Essentially, the *Alices* stop time in their surface nonsense, presenting to the child in their readers and listeners an unthreatened and unthreatening vista of seemingly endless play, play (like the Caucus Race or Tweedle brothers' battle) curiously, charmingly static and full of discrete counters within a safe, closed field. But for their adult audience they give something more: they also whisper some sad truths about the world of flux beyond that pleasant field. The walls of Carroll's nonsense are thus constantly, if surreptitiously, breached by Time and Death and consequently, as I have argued here, by the love that springs from them both. So while Carroll's

love-gift of the *Alices* helps the child Alice "keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood," another voice sings softly at the same time to other ears, to those for whom childhood's dreams might already be like a "pilgrim's wither'd wreath of flowers / Pluck'd in a far-off land."

Because it breaks open the closed field of nonsense with love, we can say that Carroll's finest comedy is much better than the cool nonsense he is often credited with. Better because it is about much more than mere nonsense is about; better because it takes account of a familiar human world charged with love and fear of death. And better because it is, finally, morally superior to the most elegantly cerebral nonsense, telling us fellow humans, in tones of love, truths about our nature in a manner that somehow makes delight of our foibles and lovely, evanescent joys of our sorrows. Like so much Victorian comedy from Carlyle and Dickens to Eliot and Meredith, Carroll's *Alices* are great and good because they rest finally upon the warm, fusing morality and sentiment the Victorian age cherished as "humor"—not upon those surface games which have brought Carroll so much critical esteem in recent years, but which his own age probably would have considered mere entertaining "wit."

Therefore, Carroll is for yet another reason one of our best writers of subversive comedy, this time because of his treatment of love.[19] Like his satire, his witty nonsense often subverts love and sentimentality; of this we are all well aware. But in addition, as we might not have noticed, his love subverts his nonsense and satire. In this Carrollian world of mixed-up signs and sensibilities, the question, as one of Carroll's most unloving characters would say, is "which is to be master—that's all." Dodgson, probably, would have chosen love and romance as the masters of nonsense. The more important question of whether or not Carroll would have made the same choice can be answered in only one place, the *Alices* themselves. And these wonderful adventures seem to tell us, finally, that there is no need for any masters here; indeed, neither nonsense, nor death, nor love can master the rich, fused music of all three that makes the peculiar, abiding romancement of the *Alices* so delightfully complex.

Postscript

"*unless this miracle have might*"

Carroll probably had the last word, so to speak, on these matters of nonsense, referentiality, time, death and love in his *Alices*—not exactly in a word, but in a picture. The last words of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* (and

of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, too) are these: "... remembering her own child-life, and the happy summer days." But between those last two discrete but resonating terms "summer" and "days," at the very end of the *Under Ground* manuscript sits Carroll's referent herself, the real dream-child Dodgson really loved, the real Alice Liddell gazing from her own "summer days"—out of the 1860's and Dodgson's lovely photograph and right into our eyes.

Although this little picture was meant for Alice's eyes alone, it still can play an important part in our understanding of love and death in Carroll's *Alices*.[20] For in this haunting photograph of Alice—set into the beautifully hand-wrought, illustrated *Alice* text and joining (as well as separating) those two, final, discrete words—Carroll embodies the motives and issues that first stirred his heart to create the nonsensical *Alices* and to animate them with a special, curious melancholy music beyond the reach of nonsense. Here before our eyes, then, is his sensitive portrait of the child who is both his heroine and his beloved audience; both a creature in his fictional texts and a real child living outside them; both a thing fashioned from mere words and the living vessel for the "loving heart of childhood." Before us is the actual little recipient of a very precious love-gift, the only copy of one of the world's greatest fictions. Through the loving devotion of a brilliant and meticulous photographer, Alice here somehow defies Time—as if some mad inventor from Alice's dream worlds had, with the magic of his words and art, found a way in her waking world to defy gravity and stop aging and death by means of an improbable Wonderland light-machine and some Looking-Glass Roman-cement.

The *Under Ground* photograph records one discrete moment in the actual life of one discrete child. Moreover, it records that moment without recourse to an inevitably generalizing verbal medium (even the precious name "Alice" is a name many can share). In the wood where things have no names, Alice seems to find, for a moment, the elusive love she seeks. Here in this picture of his beloved Alice, Carroll pierces through his own verbal medium to a place beyond names and beyond art, bringing into his text life itself and, in a real sense, the love we all seek—embodied in one specific, very real little girl. In my mind, then, whatever else Alice's *Under Ground* photograph tells us, it certainly speaks the last word about nonsense, referentiality, time, death and love in Carroll's *Alices*.[21]

Notes

1. All quotations from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* are based on the texts in *Alice in Wonderland: Authoritative Texts of Alice's Adventures in*

Wonderland, *Through the Looking-Glass*, *The Hunting of the Snark*, ed. Donald Gray (New York, 1971).

2. *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Morton N. Cohen (New York, 1979), p. 869. (Hereafter cited as *Letters*.)

3. In her recent, provocative biography, Anne Clark stresses love as a formative element in Dodgson's character and makes a rather convincing case that Dodgson wanted to marry Alice Liddell. See Clark's *Lewis Carroll: A Biography* (New York, 1979).

4. Lewis Carroll, "*Alice* on the Stage," in *The Theatre*, 1887. Reprinted in Gray, p. 283.

5. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (1971) lists a number of definitions of "lovely" that, although generally obsolete today, might have been operative in Dodgson's mind in 1862: "loving, kind, affectionate"; "lovable, worthy of love, suited to attract love."

6. Carroll, "Alice on the Stage," in Gray, p. 283. This highly sentimentalized view of Alice's nature is not of course always sustained by the evidence in the *Alice* texts. Several shrewd critics have in their penetrating analyses made a point of delineating Alice's flaws and shortcomings. See, for example, James R. Kincaid, "Alice's Invasion of Wonderland," *PMLA*, 88, No. 1 (January 1973), 92–99; Nina Auerbach, "Alice in Wonderland: A Curious Child," *Victorian Studies*, 17 (September 1973), 31–47; and Peter Heath, "Introduction" to *The Philosopher's Alice* (New York, 1974). Carroll himself joked, just two short years after the publication of *Wonderland*, that his book about Alice was, he thought, about "malice"—*A Selection from the Letters of Lewis Carroll to his Child-Friends*, ed. Evelyn Hatch (London, 1933), p. 48.

7. London, 1952. Hereafter, all page references to this book are to this edition and are cited directly in my text.

8. The fact that Professor Sewell has altered her views of Carroll's nonsense and now sees much that is referential in the *Alices* does not invalidate my use here of her *Field of Nonsense*. For the definition of Nonsense as a literary genre that Sewell developed in her book still operates in the speculations of many of today's most sophisticated scholars of Nonsense and critics of Carroll. See, for example, Susan Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore and London, 1978); Gilles Deleuze, "Le Schizophrène et le mot," *Critique*, 24, Nos. 255, 256 (August/September 1968), 731–746; and Robert Polhemus, "Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*: The Comedy of Regression," in *Comic Faith: The Great Tradition from Austen to Joyce* (Chicago and London, 1980), pp. 245–293.

9. See note 8 above. Several Carroll critics, on the other hand, have pointed out that the *Alices* are not, technically, nonsense at all. In his introduction to *The Philosopher's Alice*, Peter Heath, for example, makes the point forcefully: "Carroll's fame as a nonsense-writer is by now so firmly established that it is probably too late to persuade anyone that, apart from a few isolated instances such as the *Jabberwock* poem, he is not strictly a writer of nonsense at all.... Carroll stands at the opposite pole from the true nonsense-writer. Although as a literary category the term had not been invented in his day, the proper genre is that of the absurd." I agree that in many ways the *Alices* do not belong in the category of Nonsense. Nevertheless, Sewell's views can be very useful in an empirical search for the meaning of the *Alices* and the sources of their power; for Nonsense does play an important, if subordinate, role in them.

10. In *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll* (New York, 1937), pp. 1079–1088. Hereafter all page references to "Novelty and Romancement" are to this edition and are cited directly in my text.

11. The title "Novelty and Romancement" contains a complicated pun that deserves our notice: "novel" and "roman" are of course the same word in two languages; "ty" can easily transform to "tie," which is very close in meaning to "cement." By Carrollian punning, then, the two discrete terms combine into one. Such comic visions of language occur, of course, throughout Carroll's writings. Here, as elsewhere, the wordplay has profound philosophical significance.

12. The White Knight, a proper but silly, upper-middle-class protector of young girls, is, as many Carroll scholars agree, clearly one of Dodgson's best self-portraits. Moreover, the emotional matrix of this scene is one with which any reader of Dodgson's letters and diaries must be familiar.

13. Although Alice Liddell (1852–1934) was ten when Dodgson first told his extempore *Alice* tale (1862), she is seven in *Wonderland* (1865) and seven and a half in *Looking-Glass* (1871). The heartfelt Carrollian arithmetic here occurs in a number of other contexts. For example, Carroll writes to one of his child friends in 1876: "I want to do some better photographs of you.... And mind you don't grow a bit older, for I shall want to take you in the same dress again: if anything, you'd better grow a *little* younger—go back to your last birthday but one" (*Letters*, p. 238).

14. This passage has of course a distinct sexual connotation. Although sex has a very small independent role in the *Alices*—indeed, I once argued that there was *no* sex in them (see my essay "What You Always Wanted to Know about Alice but Were Afraid to Ask," *Victorian Newsletter*, No. 44 [Fall 1973], 1–5)—here sex is used to underscore the frightening transience of life, conflating in a kind of portmanteau bed the first flush of full human development with its last gasp.

15. Lewis Carroll, *The Wasp in a Wig: A "Suppressed" Episode of Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, ed. Martin Gardner (New York, 1977), p. 19. Although some scholars consider this episode an unnecessary repetition of the White Knight scene, Carroll obviously did not. He saw it through the galley-proof stage and carefully corrected the galleys themselves. A probable explanation for the suppression is that Tenniel saw himself caricatured in the Wasp and chose not to join his collaborator Carroll in his loving farewell to their mutual invention Alice. Tenniel, by the way, was some twelve years older than Dodgson.

16. *The Annotated Alice* (New York, 1960), p. 311.

17. *Letters*, p. 862.

18. *Letters*, p. 441.

19. Carroll's subversiveness has been an important subject of some of the best Alice criticism from the interpretation by William Empson in 1935 (*Some Versions of Pastoral*) to that of Robert Polhemus in 1980 (see note 8 above).

20. We should recognize the open attitude towards photography current among the educated classes in Dodgson's day. Dodgson himself had no prejudices about photographs—for him they possessed the inherent capacity to make the same contributions to a literary text that Tenniel's illustrations made to his two great *Alices*. Indeed, Dodgson shared with many of his contemporaries the view that photography held all the artistic potential that fine arts like painting held.

21. I am indebted to Professor Phyllis Rackin of the University of Pennsylvania for suggesting this interpretation of the Alice photograph.

NINA DEMUROVA

Toward a Definition of Alice*'s Genre: The Folktale and Fairy-Tale Connections*

The two slender volumes of *Alice* by Lewis Carroll hold a special place in world literature. The number of critical appreciations of them alone bears witness to this. Among various aspects and problems analyzed by students of Carroll, that of genre occupies the least prominent place. We all agree, of course, that the two *Alice* books are literary fairy tales; and it has been suggested, although not pursued significantly, that they belong to late Romanticism. However, such general comments do not seem adequate; the very originality of Carroll's method suggests specific types of genre-forming characteristics. Let us try to single out some of them at least.

The problem of the genre of the *Alices* is, in fact, the major problem of Carroll's poetics. What follows are a number of preliminary, tentative remarks in connection with this wide and complex theme. In this essay I look at the *Alices* in the context of the tradition of fairy tales in the nineteenth century, noting the changes and reinterpretations evidenced in Carroll's work; I look at Carroll's use of folklore and nursery rhymes, including indirect influences on Carroll's work-among them possibly that of Edward Lear; and finally I look at the literary dialogue that is so much a part of the fabric of the *Alices*. I proceed from the assumption that Carroll's work developed within the framework of late Romanticism, varying in a few major points from the classical pattern of early nineteenth-century Romantic

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From *Lewis Carroll: A Celebration* Edward Guiliano, ed.

writing. One may say, in fact, that his work presents a somewhat reduced variation on the usual Romantic pattern of a lonely hero's (or heroine's) wanderings in strange lands full of wonders.[1] The reductions were brought about by a number of different causes, not least among them the particular stability of the Victorian age as compared with the Romantic period.

I

In England—unlike Germany or other continental countries, where such popularity had come earlier—the genre of literary tales gained wide popularity only by the middle of the nineteenth century. John Ruskin's *King of the Golden River* (written in 1841, published ten years later), Thackeray's *The Ring and the Rose* (1855), Charles Kingsley's *Water Babies* (1863), Charles Dickens's "The Magic Fish-Bone" (*Holiday Romance*, 1868), to name but a few, all drew on the rich tradition of English folklore. Rehabilitation of the theory of the fairy tale as a genre—pitting the fantasy of folklore against the didacticism of utilitarian and religious writing—had been attempted by the early Romantics in England as far back as the beginning of the nineteenth century, although it is true that in their own work the English Romantics made little use of the prose fairy tale, their interests lying in other genres. However, the acknowledgment of the fairy tale in Romantic theory of the early nineteenth century and the introduction of various other folklore forms in poetic practice prepared the soil for the later blossoming of the literary folktale in England. An important dimension of the development of the new genre in England emerged when writers became acquainted with Romantic, especially German, prose. Equally stimulating were the first translations of Grimms' (1824) and Anderson's (1846) fairy tales.

The writers who took up the genre of literary fairy tale developed it in accordance with their individual ideas and concepts. Ruskin, Kingsley, and MacDonald used the folktale "morphology," with its various functions of character-types,[2] to create their own fairy-tale narratives in the spirit of Christian ethics and morals—remaining, on the whole, within the folktale structure, with the kind of reductions, changes, and assimilations that are permissible there. "Confessional" and "superstitious" changes or substitutions (to use Propp's terminology again) are of special importance in the context of these writers' tales.[3] Dickens's and Thackeray's fairy tales have a different character, since both these writers introduce an element of parody, and not infrequently, self-parody. They blend, phantastically, typical themes of their own realistic narratives with mock-romantic and fairy-tale motifs, adding a rich dosage of irony and satire; yet, they retain the most important characteristics of folktale structure.

Alice in Wonderland and *Through the Looking-Glass* are, undoubtedly, close to this English ironic development of the fairy-tale tradition. However, they, in their turn, differ substantially from other English literary fairy tales of the period. There is, primarily, a certain difference in the functional character of Carroll's irony itself. In Dickens's and Thackeray's fairy tales, irony is directed against popular second-rate books of melodrama or adventure, as well as against certain aspects of their own works. In both cases one finds in their fairy tales ironic models based on themes, characters, and motifs they or other writers have used elsewhere, and their irony serves primarily the aim of parody (or self-parody). Carroll's irony has, in principle, a different quality. In its very character it stands closer to that more general category that, in relation to German Romantic writers, is known as "Romantic irony." To quote from N. Berkovsky, who made a special study of German Romanticism: "Irony, on the purely cognitional level, meant that the particular method of perceiving reality, practiced in the given work, was considered as nonfinite by the author himself, although attempts to go beyond it were also seen as purely subjective and hypothetic." (Translations throughout are mine.) This is why Tieck in his conversation with Keppke drew his attention to the double nature of irony: "It is neither mockery nor sneering, as the terms are usually understood; but, rather, profound earnestness that is connected with joking and true joy." Irony is both the sorrow of impotence and the merry breaking of positive "frontiers."[4] This sort of irony includes the elements of parody and self-parody, but it goes further than that.

With a varying degree of probability, one may assume that Carroll knew the fairy tales written by his contemporaries. Leaving aside, for lack of factual data, the question of whether Carroll knew Thackeray's *The King and the Rose* at the time he was writing *Alice in Wonderland* from 1862 through 1865 (Dickens published his "Magic Fish Bone" three years later), suffice it to mention that by the time *Through the Looking-Glass* was published in 1871, Carroll must have been acquainted with it. He must also have known Ruskin's fairy tales as well as Kingsley's. He was acquainted with Ruskin, who taught at Oxford, and was on friendly terms with the Kingsleys and the MacDonalds. In the texts of the two *Alices* we may find not a few passages echoing certain episodes of these writers' tales.[5] Still, the similarities do not extend beyond a number of details. Religious or didactic allegory within the fairy-tale structure was never attempted by Carroll.

Under Carroll's pen the folktale structure undergoes certain changes. One such change occurs as early as the very first chapter of *Wonderland*, which presents what Propp calls an "initial situation." Alice's departure down

the rabbit-hole is sudden and in no way premeditated; it is quite spontaneous—"... burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it [the Rabbit]," etc. Neither is it brought about by "misfortune," "villainy" or "insufficiency" (which Propp calls also "lack" or "shortage"), situations that traditionally inaugurate the plot of the folktale.[6]

In fact, Alice feels the insufficiency only when, looking through the keyhole, she sees the beautiful garden beyond the locked door. It is then that Carroll introduces a series of minor insufficiencies, connected with the changing proportions between Alice's height, the height of the table on which the key lies, the size of the keyhole, the width of the little passage leading to the garden, etc. Eliminating the main insufficiency (toward the end of Chapter 7 when Alice, at last, unlocks the door with the little golden key and gets through to the beautiful garden) does not lead to denouement, since the beautiful garden proves to be a kingdom of chaos and fear.

The Queen's croquet party; Alice's meeting the Duchess, the Gryphon, and the Mock Turtle; the trial and the waking up are yet to follow. None of these episodes is prepared for by what proceeds it; none forms a pair with any of previous ones. Neither the knotting nor the unknotting of the tale is caused by any of the traditional devices. It is true that sometimes the folktale can also do without the traditional insufficiency—which may become apparent only later, after the hero's necessary departure; so that in this respect, at least, *Wonderland* exhibits a certain closeness to the traditional pattern. But the arbitrariness (from the traditional point of view) of the unknotting, or denouement, represents a drastic change from the folklore norm. The rigid structure of cause and effect, characteristic of the folk fairy tale, is openly broken in *Wonderland*. The book does not end when Alice succeeds in eliminating the main insufficiency, nor because she does so—the dream simply ends, and with it the fairy tale.

Other functions of different dramatis personae—these molecules that make up the fairy tale—also undergo similar transformations. They are not completely discarded or broken, they are still felt, but their quality and interrelations are radically changed. In both *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* we come across "donors" who test, interrogate, or attack the heroine "in preparation for receiving either a magical agent or helper."[7]

In *Alice in Wonderland*, these are the blue Caterpillar, who provides Alice with the magic mushroom; the White Rabbit, in whose house Alice finds the bottle with the magic drink, etc. In *Through the Looking-Glass* there is the White Queen, who makes Alice run and who later explains to her the rules of the chess game; there are also the two queens, who ask Alice questions and riddles and then invite her to her own feast. Of all these, it is only the Caterpillar who actually plays the part of a donor as it should be

played. Even then, characteristically, the results of the interrogation, or test, have no bearing whatsoever upon what follows. Alice, in fact, has not answered any of the Caterpillar's questions, so that the receipt of the magic agent, i.e., the mushroom, is quite unexpected, not only for the reader but for Alice herself.

The donor role differs from the traditional fairy-tale pattern to an even greater extent with the other characters Alice encounters. The White Rabbit, who at first takes Alice for somebody else, sends her upstairs, inadvertently helping her to find the little bottle with the magic potion. Later, when—suddenly and catastrophically grown—she takes up the whole house, he leads an attack, giving her, again inadvertently, another magical agent, i.e., the pebbles that, turning into little cakes, enable her to grow small again. Perhaps what is important here is not so much the inadvertency of donation, for this sometimes happens in the folktale too, but rather the fact that the donor himself never learns about his own particular function. In different interrogations and tests suggested by either or both of the two queens, Alice also fails—at least from the queens' point of view. Nevertheless *after* these interrogations, tests, and trials—but not *because* she has succeeded in them—Alice invariably learns what further steps she should take. The cause-and-effect pattern in all of these episodes is extremely weak.

The impression is created in the reader that Carroll is playing with these traditional elements of folktale and that finally, in the process of this game, he destroys them, though they are never totally excluded. "Contrariwise," they are invariably present, as if to afford the author the possibility of playing with them and to make them undergo these significant changes. Here again, the dream device is instrumental in destroying these traditional elements.

To a certain extent, a number of other personages in the two tales may also be considered variables of donors. They also interrogate the heroine and make her undergo different tests; however, they don't present her with the magical agent, but simply send her on to the next donor. The Queen in *Wonderland* plays the role of the hostile donor; her function is also weakened, however, since she only threatens attack and execution, but never carries out her threats.

Other functions of the traditional fairy tale undergo similar changes in Carroll's two tales. This affects "spacial translocation between two kingdoms," or "guidance." A tunnel, i.e., a "stationary means of communication," is made use of at the beginning of *Wonderland*, whereas in *Through the Looking-Glass* another type of "transference" is used. Similarly weakened is the important function of "struggle," in which, according to

Propp, "the hero and the villain join in direct combat." Here it takes the form of verbal competition, and sometimes comes quite close to a squabble.

The weakening of these and certain other folktale functions is carried through not only with the help of disorganization of cause-and-effect patterns and of disorganization of the type and interrelation of primary folktale elements, but also with the help of ironic interpretation of all the events that take place, a particular romantic characteristic that Carroll possessed in the highest degree. The dream device, mentioned above, forms one of the tale's most effective methods too.

Carroll's fairy tale, for all its outward similarity to the humorous folktale, is in fact very unlike it. This could be accounted for by a cardinal difference in the very quality of laughter in Carroll's work.

In his interest in folklore, Carroll did not limit himself to fairy tale alone. He turned his attention to nursery rhymes as well-which he also interpreted in his own way. The nature of these interpretations varies however.

A few nursery rhymes are directly incorporated into the text. This occurs mostly in *Through the Looking-Glass* (Humpty Dumpty, The Lion and the Unicorn, Tweedledum and Tweedledee), but the concluding chapters of *Alice in Wonderland*, in which the trial of the Knave of Hearts takes place, are also based on an old nursery rhyme. Its first stanza is cited in the text, whereas the second one, in which the Knave brings back the tarts and vows he'll steal no more, is not taken into account at all. Carroll not only includes these nursery rhymes in his fairy tale, he develops them into episodes and chapters, keeping the peculiar spirit of folklore events and characters intact.

Apart from direct citations and borrowings from nursery rhymes, one may trace some other direct or indirect folklore influences. One of the channels for these could be the limericks of Edward Lear (although this is merely conjectural, since we do not know whether Carroll read Lear). The Carroll/Lear similarity is sometimes very striking, however. Indeed, it seems not at all impossible that some of Carroll's imagery was suggested by Lear's nonsense, such as his early *Book of Nonsense* (1846)—which is itself indebted to the folklore tradition of madmen and eccentrics.[8]

There was an Old Man of Coblenz,
The length of whose legs was immense;
He went with one prance, from Turkey to France,
That surprising Old Man of Coblenz.

There was an Old Man with an owl,
Who continued to bother and howl,

He sat on a rail, and imbibed bitter ale
Which refreshed that Old Man and his owl.

There was an Old Man of Leghorn,
The smallest as ever was born;
But quickly snapt up he was once by a puppy,
Who devoured that Old Man of Leghorn.

There was an Old Man who said, "Well!
Will nobody answer this bell?
I have pulled day and night, till my hair has grown white,
But nobody answers this bell!"

There was an Old Man with a beard,
Who sat on a horse when he reared;
But they said, "Never mind! you will fall off behind,
You propitious Old Man with a beard!"

"The Old Man of Coblenz" may have inspired the episode in which Alice bids good-bye to her legs, and the similarity is further enhanced if one compares the drawings of the two authors. Lear's other "old men" may have suggested Carroll's "aged man a-sitting on a gate" from the White Knight's ballad, whereas the White Knight himself, who is constantly falling off his horse, has something in common with those old men of Edward Lear's who suffer similarly through poor horsemanship. It is, perhaps, not completely incidental that both Lear and Carroll identified themselves, in a way, with these unfortunate characters. In Lear's drawings they invariably looked like him, whereas Carroll's White Knight has not a little of self-parody.

The number of these examples could be multiplied, but I shall not cite many; it is sufficient for my purpose just to mention the fact of certain similarities between Lear's and Carroll's nonsense. It could well be that Lear's limericks were instrumental in Carroll's acceptance of one of the aspects of the old folk tradition of madmen and eccentrics. This, of course, is only one possible explanation. Others are to be looked for in a certain affinity in the mental makeup of the two writers and in the aims they set for themselves within the peculiar literary context of the period.

II

Apart from traditional fairy tales and nursery rhymes, Carroll's muse drew upon another treasure-house of national folklore. In Carroll's *Alice* a few

characters came to life that owe their natures—and, in fact, their very existence—to old proverbs and sayings: the March Hare, the Mad Hatter, and the Cheshire Cat, as well as a few others. The proverbial stupidity of oysters was "revived," according to R. L. Green, "to a new life" by Tenniel's cartoon in *Punch* (January 19, 1861), and may have suggested the oyster sequence in "The Walrus and the Carpenter."[9] It is, indeed, difficult to overestimate the importance of these characters in Carroll's fairy tale. Deeply rooted in the national consciousness, under Carroll's pen they turn into extended metaphors that define the nature of these personages and their very behavior, providing the structure for the story and its development.

Carroll's madmen and eccentrics have a special place in his fairy tale. They are, directly or indirectly, connected with that "powerful and wild"[10] folklore tradition that constitutes one of the most brilliant features of the English national self-consciousness. It is these madmen and eccentrics (and apart from Alice and a few minor characters, that description embraces practically all the characters in the two books) who inhabit—and indeed, one almost feels entitled to say create—that particular "antiworld," that "irreality,"[11] that topsy-turvydom that is the very essence of English nonsense. One could discern distant echoes of the roaring carnival laughter of bygone ages, preserved by folklore tradition. It is true that the laughter is heard as a faint and very distant reverberation, "the carnival is undergone in solitude" and "translated into the subjective language of the new epoch."[12]

Scholars who are to some extent familiar with M. M. Bakhtin's theory of carnival and carnival laughter may feel tempted to perceive Carroll's nonsense in the light of this theory. Could it not prompt an answer to the paradox that has been mystifying critics of different trends for so many years? Could it not help us to understand the contradiction between Dodgson's law-abiding personality, his addiction to meticulous order, his piety, on the one hand, and the very essence of his fairy tales on the other—which are "unlawful," "irreligious," topsy-turvy?

Bakhtin's conception proceeds from the underlying premise that in the medieval and Renaissance consciousness, the world was dual. The official, serious world was countered by the world of carnival ritual and pageantry—based on what Bakhtin terms carnival laughter. The carnival presented a completely different, patently unofficial, aspect of the world—of man and human relations extraneous to church and state. It was another world and another life on the other side of all officialdom. It was this life and this world of which all medieval people were more or less a part and in which they lived at certain seasons. It is a duality of a particular kind, and a full comprehension of that duality is essential for an understanding of both medieval and Renaissance culture. To ignore or to underrate the people's

laughter in the Middle Ages would be to distort the picture of the whole subsequent historical development of Western culture.[13]

The history of laughter during subsequent periods of the history of culture in general, and of English culture in particular, still awaits investigation. Here we can only point out that Bakhtin's theory may suggest new ways of interpreting Carroll's nonsense. In it, perhaps, resound echoes of the second world of the Middle Age and the Renaissance, conveyed through folklore into the middle of the nineteenth century. Bakhtin's remark on the "element of play" in carnival forms may be important for a better understanding of Carroll's work. "Because of their visual, concrete and sensual character and the presence of a strong play element, they [i.e., the carnival forms] stand close to imaginative arts, to theater and pageantry ...," writes Bakhtin. "But the main carnival core of this culture is not purely art, theater, or pageantry; in fact, it does not belong to the sphere of art at all. It exists on the borderline between art and life itself. It is, in fact, life itself, taking a specific play form."[14]

Here again, in the subjective, reduced, formalized devices of Carroll's nonsense, one may distinguish echoes of a strong folk tradition. The first fairy tale that was narrated to the Liddell girls was, in fact, a kind of game in which everybody present participated—the audience not just listening passively, but suggesting themes, moves, and clues. This tale was also *shown* to the audience—not in action, it is true, but in a series of drawings (presenting dramatis personae as well as the mise-en-scène) that Carroll later reproduced in his manuscript of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*. The first episodes of *Alice in Wonderland* were narrated orally—improvised, as it were, as a kind of commedia dell'arte is improvised: prompted, to a large extent, by what has just happened to the participants, who appear in it as some sort of masks with accompanying names, nicknames, characteristic gestures, etc. Later, in the literary, final version of *Alice*, this improvised freshness was somewhat reduced, but it is still felt even now, constituting one of Alice's major charms and peculiarities. One may also speak of a specific theatrical or dramatic quality of *Alice*. With the exception of initial descriptions—in which the author seems to lay down the conditions of the game, the time and the place of dramatic action (slightly longer in *Wonderland*, where he was just feeling his way, than in *The Looking-Glass*)—the two *Alices* fall, easily and naturally, into scenes: The participants first conduct a dialogue, which often takes the form of a competition, quarrel, or squabble, and this is followed by actions characteristic of a burlesque or a puppet show. The knights in *The Looking-Glass* hit each other furiously with clubs that they hold with their arms, as if they were Punch and Judy. The Cook throws everything within her reach at the Duchess, the fire irons, saucepans, frying pans, plates, dishes. The Duchess, in her turn,

throws the baby at Alice. In fact, in the two *Alice* books somebody is always hitting, banging, beating, kicking, teasing, threatening, scolding, or killing (but not quite) someone. Many of Carroll's jokes and puns, especially those on the death theme, show ties with the fairground tradition. Here again, one may find traces of the popular open-air theater of long ago—partially preserved in Carroll's day in the popular fairground and puppet tradition.

The squabbles of the actors in the *Alices* are singularly laconic, dynamic, and expressive. In fact, Carroll reveals an extraordinary genius for theatrical dialogue. His descriptions and introductions to scenes are invariably short, his use of detail invariably sparing; he never says anything that is not strictly necessary for action and dialogue. His dialogue is always a kind of duel (not necessarily verbal); it is a competition in which his dramatis personae realize themselves. Alice's thoughts are no less expressive and dramatic; as a rule, they are presented as inner monologues.

The illustrations play a specific role in the text of the two tales as Richard Kelly and others have demonstrated in essays in this volume. They make up for the economy of description, which otherwise might have been felt to be a flaw, and from the very beginning Carroll's story is patently oriented toward them. They not only illustrate the text, but develop it—being a necessary and organic part of the story. A comparison of Carroll's own drawings for *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* with Tenniel's illustrations (as well as their letters to each other) shows how close Tenniel's illustrations were to Carroll's concepts. In fact, many of Tenniel's illustrations realize the ideas of Carroll's sketches.

Finally, in creating his topsy-turvy world, Carroll, more than anybody else, follows what Charles Lamb called the *wild* spirit of folklore. Carroll turns the situations upside down and inside out, making the cause follow the effect; he alienates attributes and parts of the body and creates things and creatures that cannot, and should not, be imagined; he *realizes* worn-out idioms and phrases and breathes new life into old metaphors; he parodies; he laughs at death; etc., etc. I am far from suggesting that Carroll's nonsense is a direct development from folk carnival tradition. Bakhtin develops his brilliant theory upon the material of archaic cultures that constitute a different stage of development from that of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless, I feel it not completely irrelevant to point out the possibility of some genetic connection of Carroll's fairy tales with this old tradition.

III

Another powerful element in the *Alices* is that of literary dialogue, which is constituted by parodies, allusions, borrowings, quotations, etc. Carroll seems

to be carrying on a never-ending dialogue with invisible interlocutors, many of whom are long deceased. A level of this kind is found in every work of literature, since they all take part—directly or indirectly—in a kind of dialogue that is the essence of every culture. What draws our attention in Carroll's fairy tales is, primarily, the multitude of intonations and the types of dialogue inferences.

Critics often speak of parodies in the *Alices*; among these they cite "Father William," the lullaby sung by the Duchess, "How doth the little crocodile ...," and "Beautiful Soup" from *Alice in Wonderland*, and "The Walrus and the Carpenter," "The Aged Aged Man," and the chorus in the Queen Alice chapter from *Through the Looking-Glass*. However, the term *parody* in relation to these poems can hardly be considered completely accurate. True, all of these poems are, in one way or another, connected with some original text, which can be sensed through Carroll's apparently lowering parody. But in each particular case, the degree and the type of connection with the original is different. Sometimes Carroll's poems follow the original very closely, making use of its vocabulary, arrangement of lines, and general structure, while in other cases they preserve only a few details of the original—the rhythmic pattern, or meter for example. In fact, Carroll's attitude toward the original and the aims of his parody varies.

In "Father William," for instance, Carroll seems to lower the text of Southey's didactic poem "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them." Southey's moralizing and edifying reflections give place to Carroll's happy nonsense—following a rule that is openly and provocatively stated in the second stanza.

> "In my youth," Father William replied to his son,
> "I feared it might injure the brain;
> But, now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,
> Why, I do it again and again."[15]

Keeping the same heroes and the question-and-answer pattern of Southey's poem, and retaining a number of descriptive phrases, the meter, and the rhyme scheme, Carroll transforms Southey's original into an irresponsible "standing on one's head." What are the aims of this transformation? The answer seems to be self-evident: satire. Carroll, one is tempted to say, mocks at Southey's dull didacticism and pious moralizing. But here we have to face a difficulty, since Southey's dull and pious moralizing was far from being alien to Carroll. In fact, when Carroll was not busy writing nonsense, he thought, felt, and wrote in exactly the same vein as Southey. In his sermons and letters, in the serious and, in many ways, autobiographical

portions of *Sylvie and Bruno*, even in prefaces to his nonsense books, Carroll enlarged upon the same themes. Could it be, then, that the object of Carroll's parody were certain formal aspects of Southey's poetry that were indeed far from being perfect? But, in that case, Carroll would have followed another course, placing satiric emphasis directly upon these formal elements.

We are faced with the same sort of problem when we consider "How doth the little crocodile, ..." which the reader feels (or, at least, felt in Carroll's day) contains echoes of Watts's "Little busy bee"; or when we examine "Tis the voice of the Lobster, ..." which again follows Southey's original. Carroll, who wrote at length and with feeling on the necessity of avoiding idleness, for idleness breeds sinful thoughts, could hardly have satirized Watts's poem, which he must have found congenial. The same can be said about "Twinkle, twinkle, little bat, ..." based on Jane Taylor's "Star"; Carroll's general agreement with the poem's sentiment did not stop him from parodying the poem.

In the Duchess's lullaby, Carroll seems to depart even further from the original than in the poems discussed above; but his position and approach seem unchanged. In "The Walrus and the Carpenter," as well as in the White Knight's song, "Beautiful Soup," and the "Lobster Quadrille," the connection with the original is still more distant and is only imperfectly felt. The satirical elements are practically absent; the underlying text is hardly perceived at all and is felt only in intonation, or in a particular turn of phrase. Perhaps this is so because here Carroll uses the texts of Wordsworth and Tennyson, poets whom he admired greatly, and who, from a poetic point of view, were superior both to Southey and to the children's poets of the former decades.

The question arises as to whether Carroll presents in these poems a kind of poetic synthesis—an attempt to express through parody his attitude toward the chosen poet.[16] I believe that this question should also be answered in the negative. Carroll's "parodies" form an important part in the "intellectual holiday," strictly limited both in time and space, that G. K. Chesterton wrote about.[17] Satire and synthesis are present in Carroll's parodies only in a certain sense: only in that degree to which the reader tends to read them in; and what is more important, only in that degree to which they were allowed in by that particular dual, carnival quality that—with all the modifications of its forms—was characteristic of Carroll's work. It is also possible that there was a measure of deep, unconscious ambivalence in Carroll's attitude not only toward such poets as Southey, Taylor, or Watts but even toward Wordsworth, and Tennyson, and that this ambivalence found its expression in his nonsense parodies. Following Eric Partridge, who has

spoken of Lear's echoing words,[18] these parodies could be called echoing poems.

The dialogue, or echoing, character of Carroll's *Alices* is not limited to poetic parodies alone. It has been pointed out that the question concerning cats and bats was probably suggested by Norman MacLeod's "Gold Thread" (1861), whereas a tiny golden key may have been suggested either by George Macdonald's poem "The Golden Key" (published in *Victoria Regis*, 1861) or by his "famous allegorical fairy story of the same name," which Carroll may have read in manuscript by 1862.[19] There are some distant echoes as well of William Roscoe's "Butterfly's Ball" (1806) in the scene with the blue Caterpillar and the mushroom. *Through the Looking-Glass* enlarges on still another theme suggested by George Macdonald (among others) in his romantic story of Cosmo Verstahl, a poor student of Prague University, which was included in his *Phantastes* (1858). Carroll's White Knight reminds us of the Knight in the Rusty Armour in Macdonald's "faerie romance," and, possibly, of Don Quixote.[20] It has been noted that in the opening paragraphs of *Through the Looking-Glass* Carroll was subconsciously recollecting the beginning of a parody of Dickens's *Cricket on the Hearth* that was published in *Blackwood's Magazine* in November 1845,[21] whereas quotations from Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Virgil's *Aeneid* have been found in *Alice in Wonderland*.[22] These quotations and allusions are of particular interest for the Carrollian student, since a few of them introduce a new interpretation of the original images and themes. Quotations, "others' words," incorporated into the new text live a double life; they do not altogether lose the connection with their source, yet they may present a kind of comment upon the new text in which they appear. Carroll's tale reverberates with these distant others' voices—which add, in a new and quite unexpected way, to the misleadingly simple melodies of Alice.

Of special interest are reminiscences of Shakespeare, whom Carroll knew well and loved. Roger Lancelyn Green has pointed out not a few hidden quotations from Shakespeare that are used in the dialogue.[23] To these should be added Alice's conversation with the Gnat ("Looking-Glass Insects"), in which one may hear an echo of Hotspur's and Glendower's words in *1 Henry IV*:

> "What sort of insects do you rejoice in, where *you* come from?" the Gnat inquired.
>
> "I don't *rejoice* in insects at all," Alice explained, "because I'm rather afraid of them—at least the large kinds. But I can tell you the names of some of them."

> "Of course they answer to their names," the Gnat remarked carelessly.
>
> "I never knew them do it."
>
> "What's the use of their having names," the Gnat said, "if they wo'n't answer to them?" (p. 132)

Compare *1 Henry IV* (Act III, Scene i, lines 53–55):

> *Glendower*. I can call spirits from the vasty deep.
>
> *Hotspur*. Why, so can I, or so can any man;
>
> But will they come when you do call for them?

Perhaps more important than such details is the underlying principle. The method of diffused metaphor that is so characteristic of Shakespeare's work in general—and of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest* in particular—forms the foundation for the two *Alices*, while Carroll's treatment of time and space also offers a few similarities with Shakespeare's.

Finally, I could go on probing more and more levels diffused throughout the *Alices*. I could follow Martin Gardner's masterful lead in interpreting and unraveling Carroll's scientific intuitions; I could build upon Elizabeth Sewell's brilliant study of nonsense based upon the principles of game; or I could travel the linguistic course previously traversed by M. V. Panov and R. D. Sutherland, among others. The scientific, the nonsensical, the linguistic—one thing is perfectly clear about these two books, with their unexpected twists and depths: Carroll's fairy tales realize in most original and unexpected forms both literary and scientific types of perception. And this is why philosophers, logicians, mathematicians, physicists, psychologists, folklorists, politicians, as well as literary critics and armchair readers, all find material for thought and interpretation in the *Alices*. Perhaps this is the reason why *Alice* is, according to Louis Untermeyer, the most inexhaustible tale in the world.[24]

Notes

1. See U. R. Vogt's interesting discussion of different folktale functions in *Problemi Romanitisma* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1967), especially pp. 77–92.

2. See Vladimir Propp, *Morfologia skaski* [1928], 2nd ed. (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), p. 166; published in English as *Morphology of the Folktale*, trans. Laurence Scott, 2nd ed. (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1968). Propp defines functions as actions of the character-types related to the general importance of action in the folktale. He suggests that character-type functions are an unchanging element of the folktale, invariably found in it

regardless of other details, including plot, and they thus provide the most important pattern of the folktale. The number of actions of character-types is strictly limited, their sequence is fixed, and some of them are arranged in pairs (departure and return, lack of something and the elimination of this lack, etc.). Propp identifies a series of functions in the folktale, such as "departure" (the hero leaves home), "lack or insufficiency" (one of the members of the family lacks something or wants something), "testing" by a donor (the hero is tested, interrogated, even attacked, before receiving a "magic agent" from the donor), etc.

3. Vladimir Propp, "Transformatsiia volshebnykh skasok," in *Folkor i deistvitel'nost'* (Moscow: Nauka, 1976), pp. 153–73. Propp discusses different types of modifications in the folktale over time and speaks, among other things, of "confessional" or "superstitious" assimilations that occurred when elements or people with religious or superstitious aspects were incorporated into the folktale (e.g., the devil instead of a dragon).

4. See N. Berkovsky, "Nemetzky romantizm" [German Romanticism], *Nemetzkaya romanticheskaya povest* (Moscow: Academia, 1935), I, xxx.

5. Nina Demurova, "O literaturnoy skazke victorianskoy Anglii (Ruskin, Kingsley, MacDonald)" [On the literary fairy tale in Victorian England], *Voprosy literatury i stilistiky germanskikh yazykov* (Moscow: 1975), pp. 99–167.

6. See Propp's *Morfologia skaski* [*Morphology of the Folktale*].

7. See note 2, above, and Propp's *Morfologia skaski*, p. 40.

8. It might be enlightening to recall the publication dates of Lear's and Carroll's major works, as the two nonsense writers may have influenced each other in their later years:

1846 *A Book of Nonsense* (Lear)
1865 *Alice in Wonderland*
1871 *Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany and Alphabets* (Lear)
1871 (December) *Through the Looking-Glass*
1872 *More Nonsense Pictures, Rhymes, Botany, etc.* (Lear)
1876 *The Hunting of the Shark*
1877 *Laughable Lyrics* (Lear)

9. Roger Lancelyn Green, *Lewis Carroll* (London: Bodley Head, 1960); rpt. as "Alice" in *Aspects of Alice*, ed. Robert Phillips (New York: Vintage, 1977), p. 27.

10. K. I. Chukovsky, *Ot dvukh do pyati* [*From Two to Five*], 11th ed. (Moscow: Detskaya kniga, 1956), p. 258. The "powerful and wild" distinction is Chukovsky's; see his book for a discussion of this concept.

11. These terms are quoted from D. S. Likhackev and A. M. Panchenko "*Smekhovoi mir" drevnei Rusi* [*The "World of Laughter" in Ancient Russia*] (Leningrad: Nauka, 1976), p. 17.

12. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaya kul'tura Srednevekov'a i Renessansa* (Moscow: Goslitisdat, 1965), pp. 43–44; published in English as *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1968).

13. Ibid., p. 8.

14. Ibid., pp. 9–10.

15. *Alice in Wonderland: Authoritative Texts of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking-Glass, The Hunting of the Snark*, ed. Donald J. Gray, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), p. 37. All subsequent citations to the *Alice* books are to this edition. Page numbers are cited parenthetically.

16. See V. Novikov. "Zachem i komu nuzhna parodia," *Vosprosi literaturi*, No. 5 (1976), p. 194; A. Morosov, "Parodia kak literaturny zhanr," *Russkaya literatura*, No. 1 (1960); and N. Tynianov "O parodii," *Poetika. Istoria. literature Kino* (Moscow: Nauka, 1977), pp. 284–310.

17. G. K. Chesterton, "Lewis Carroll," in his *A Handful of Authors*, ed. Dorothy Collins (London and New York: Sheed and Ward, 1953).

18. Eric Partridge, "The Nonsense Words in Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll," in *Here*, *There*, *and Everywhere* (London, 1950).

19. See Roger Lancelyn Green's commentary in his edition, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland/Through the Looking-Glass and what Alice found there* (London and New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 254.

20. See John Hinz, "Alice Meets the Don," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 52 (1953), 253–66; rpt. in *Aspects of Alice*, ed. Phillips, pp. 143–55.

21. See Kathleen Tillotson, "Lewis Carroll and the Kitten on the Hearth," *English*, 8 (1950),136–38.

22. Green, ed., *Alice's Adventures*, pp. 256, 261.

23. See Green's notes to his edition of *Alice's Adventures*.

24. Louis Untermeyer, Introduction to *Alice in Wonderland/Through the Looking-Glass* (New York: Collier, 1962), p. 5.

KAROLINE LEACH

The Unreal Alice

> No one knows what Alice really felt as a child for 'Mr Dodgson', though some have filled in the gap in a spirit of sentimental Alice-olatry, partly perhaps because they confuse Alice and 'Alice'... or simply because they hope it was like that.
>
> —Colin Gordon, *Beyond the Looking-Glass*

'Alice' is Carroll's twin in mythology. In Oxford heritage shops and in biography they are, inevitably, sold as a pair. Separate them and like antique candlesticks they lose a lot of their value and most of their meaning. In the guidebooks that tourists buy and in scholastic life stories they walk, hand in hand, through an eternity of loosely defined golden afternoons. In a way this is only right. Alice as a symbol, as a meaning, was unquestionably overwhelmingly important to Dodgson. She was his dreamchild, his aspiration, a key to his inner world. But who or what was she?

With our modern love of literalism we have interpreted his 'Alice' as the real-life Alice he knew when he wrote the story. We confuse their separate identities in Jungian, suggestive ways. Biographers write things like 'Alice Liddell, the little girl who was the heroine of Wonderland ... moved into the Deanery at Christ Church on 25th February 1856'; they caption the Tenniel drawing of Alice on the mantelpiece as 'Alice going through the

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From *In the Shadow of the Dreamchild: A New Understanding of Lewis Carroll.*

looking glass at Hetton Lawn, her grandmother's house near Cheltenham'.[1] To us, 'Alice' and Alice Liddell are synonymous. The consensus in modern biography is that Alice Liddell was the 'dreamchild' and, beyond that, the key to Dodgson's inner mind, his muse, the love of his life: the cipher by which we read his soul.

This view began to emerge around the time of the centenary of Dodgson's birth, when Florence Becker Lennon was beginning her research and when romantic stories of unrequited love were beginning to feature in the press. It was popularized and legitimized by Alexander Taylor in the early 1950s. Writing before the diary had been published, even in edited form, he was forced to guess what the documentation he was forbidden to see might have said and to construct a theory out of that guesswork. In *The White Knight* he told the story that is now so familiar of a man who fell in love with a little girl and renounced 'all intention of marrying because of a child not yet out of the nursery'.

His theory was, inevitably, largely fiction, in that it was based entirely on his imaginative reconstruction. And, as we saw earlier, how much he ever believed in it himself must be debatable, since it was added to his book (which was originally intended to be simply an analysis of the chess puzzles in *Looking-Glass*) only as an afterthought. But however half-hearted Taylor may have been about it, his image of Alice as the 'little ghost' in Dodgson's life proved immensely popular. His portrait is, after all, a love entirely suitable to the image of the bizarre chastity of the patron saint of children—pure (indeed if not in desire), self-sacrificing and lonely, tapping directly into the religious and renunciatory roots of the myth. Its dramatic potential is obvious.[2]

Dennis Potter's 1965 television play, *Alice*, took its inspiration directly from Taylor's book. Its dramatization of the nervous, lonely, helplessly stammering Dodgson, gripped by a suppressed and tragic passion for his dreamchild, became the Carroll image for the mass-media age. Its repetition in colour twenty years later, as the film *Dreamchild*, with added soft-focus suggestiveness, further gave the impression that this was art as definitive biography, and in apparent confirmation of this the biographers themselves took up the image and disseminated it even more widely. Today it exists as the central theme of Dodgson's biography. A detailed narrative is provided that goes something like this:

Dodgson 'fell in love' with Alice Liddell soon after he met her. It was his unprecedented adoration of her, his passionate desire to please her, that made him create the story of 'Alice' just for her. After he told the story in the boat on that dreamy afternoon of 4 July 1862 his devotion inspired him to sit up all night writing the whole tale down for her. Thus, in a spirit of distorted

sacrifice, was a work of genius born. Alice the child was the love of his life and the passion of his tragically deviant soul, and for a brief while she gave him happiness. But then, goes the story, things got out of hand. He became too obvious in his affection, may even have proposed marriage to the eleven-year-old girl. This is said to have precipitated a crisis in his relationship with her family, dated in the summer of 1863. A particular page, cut from his diary by a later hand, is assumed to have told the story of this confrontation. Her shocked parents are said to have banned him from her presence and burned his letters to her. Thus 'the little girl whom he had immortalized by his writing and whom he had photographed with such love was lost to him', and thus his life was wrecked.

Individual biographers are very certain about their facts here. 'There is no doubt at all that Alice became his dream child ... he never fully recovered from the pain that accompanied the severance of their relationship, and ... for years he went on dedicating the fruits of literary labours to her and her alone', writes Anne Clark. 'Dodgson did not know then, as we do now, how important his friendship with Alice was to be, but he sensed something special about her from the first day,' writes the very recent biographer Stephanie Stoffel.

Morton N. Cohen, one of the first biographers to recognize the significance of Dodgson's private psychological pain, unhesitatingly connects the period of his 'sin' and guilt to this story and to Dodgson's alleged passion for the child Alice, and thus she becomes the means of understanding almost every crucial aspect of the man's life. This certitude is infectious. The presentation of this story as fact by authorities such as Cohen suggests that it has an extensive and well-researched historical basis. But surprisingly, as with the 'child-friends', close examination shows that this is not so. In fact the evidence on which this story is based is extremely thin.[3]

Dodgson's extant and aggravatingly elliptic diaries give no indication that he had any special attachment to Alice over and above his affection for the entire family. She appears mostly as one of the undifferentiated 'Liddells' (by which he seems to mean mother and children or sometimes just the children) with whom he shares croquet games, river trips and pleasant winter evenings. In fact there are only three or four remotely significant individual references to Alice at all, none of them revealing of his feelings in any way, unless we count one brief statement of his intention to write a poem about her (that he seems never to have written). Nor do his surviving letters contain any hint of passion or desire or even any reference to such feelings in the past. In fact none of his personal papers contain any evidence in support of the Alice Liddell story at all. Upon what, then, apart from legend does the current image base itself?

After half a lifetime of research Cohen, a convinced believer in Alice Liddell as the 'dreamchild', has managed to discover only two pieces of documentation that can be claimed to offer it any corroboration. One is a fragment of rumour, dating from the late 1870s, when Alice Liddell was twenty-six and had long ceased to be a child. The other is a cryptic reference in Dodgson's diary to someone he calls 'A.L.'

The rumour, repeated by Lord Salisbury in a slightly jokey aside in a private letter, suggested Dodgson had recently asked for 'the real Alice's' hand, had been refused and 'gone out of his mind'. Cohen makes quite a bit of this, even back-referring it fifteen years to fit in with his theory of a marriage proposal when Alice was eleven. But even if we do not balk at using a rumour from 1878 to back a story about 1863, this is a fragile piece of evidence. After all, similar rumours circulated at different times about Alice's mother, her governess and her older and younger sisters. Do we accept them all as 'evidence' and conclude that Dodgson enjoyed at least four separate liaisons with different members of the family? No. Rumour can be used to corroborate existing evidence, and even to suggest possibilities, but it cannot ever be evidence in its own right. In any good methodology this story, unfortunately, is a horse that will not run, at least not without a little help. What is needed is good prima-facie material to suggest that this rumour has some basis. But there is very little of this, and what there is leaves a great deal to be desired.

Dodgson's journal for 17 October 1866 makes this observation: 'On Saturday Uncle S. dined with me, & on Sunday I dined with him at the Randolph, & on each occasion we had a good deal of conversation about Wilfred, & about A.L.—it is a very anxious subject.'[4]

Wilfred was Dodgson's younger brother, who was causing his family some, embarrassment at the time in various ways. This is at least part of what Dodgson and his uncle discussed over their dinner. But who was A.L. and what did he or she have to do with it?

The most obvious explanation is a slip of the pen. The principal difficulty with Wilfred at that time was his continued courting of a girl called Alice Donkin. She was young (aged fifteen), and Wilfred had no job and no money and was therefore in no position to offer a formal proposal. His family were worried about potential indiscretions in this volatile situation, and Charles even suggested Wilfred go abroad for a while to calm the situation down. It seems most likely that the 'anxious subject' was their love affair and that Dodgson, in a momentary slip, wrote 'A.L.' in mistake for 'A.D.'

But because there is so little else this reference has been weighted with an enormous significance by the many biographers anxious to establish Alice

Liddell's ascendancy in Dodgson's life. The 'A.L.' has been assumed, without question, to refer to Alice Liddell, and, although there is nothing in the wording to suggest so, to be a tacit admission on Dodgson's part of his love for her, a suggestion that he sat over dinner with his favourite uncle and discussed Wilfred's love problems and his own. Some extravagant claims have been made on its behalf.

'A.L. can only have been Alice Liddell and Dodgson must have been haunted by the spectre of what he had lost,' urged Michael Bakewell. 'This close association of his anxieties about Wilfred's romantic affairs and his own relationship with Alice Liddell is one of the strongest arguments for concluding that he was romantically attached to the Dean's daughter and wished to marry her,' wrote Clark, while Cohen was equally convinced and convincing about what this reference meant: 'the two brothers, both in their prime, were attached to two teenage youngsters named Alice'.[5]

I think we have a surfeit of logical fallacies here, starting with 'he mentions "A.L."; Alice Liddell's initials were "A.L."; therefore he mentions Alice Liddell' and proceeding from there in a perfect circle. If we consider the evidence more coolly we have to admit that this is reasoning rather a long way ahead of the data.

Even if we allow that 'A.L.' is indeed A.L., and not a mistaken reference to 'A.D.', there is nothing in the entry even to suggest the sex of the unknown person, never mind any hint that he or she is some kind of love-object for Dodgson. In fact it is perfectly obvious from the phrasing that, whoever A.L. was, that person was connected with Wilfred in a single 'anxious subject', and under this circumstance 'A.L.' is far more likely to be the brothers' Aunt Lucy (who was at least referred to in Dodgson's diary as 'Aunt L.') or some man lost to history to whom Wilfred owed money than it is to be Alice Liddell. It just might be her of course, but it just might be almost anyone, and biography is supposed to be a study of the probable, not an accretion of undisprovable negatives.

It is understandable that Cohen and others seek to give this fragment such significance, since it is, evidentially, almost all there is. But in discovering here their 'proof' of Dodgson's attachment to Alice Liddell they are expressing only the intensity of their need to find what they are looking for. There is no evidence beyond remote supposition to justify linking this diary entry with Alice Liddell at all and absolutely nothing to suggest it means she was Dodgson's love-object.

The one other piece of evidence to offer support for any part of the Alice/Dodgson story is not contemporary and is very dubious in content. It is a strange self-serving letter written by the first biographer and possible destroyer of the missing diaries, Stuart Collingwood, to his cousin Menella.

It was written in February 1932, and the date is significant. The centenary celebrations of Lewis Carroll's birth were cranking up. The story of Alice Liddell as 'dreamchild' and object of desire was beginning to take shape, and the family was beginning to be pestered for information more urgently than ever before. In the midst of this, Menella, who as keeper of the family papers was at the centre of this unwanted attention, wrote to Collingwood asking for some biographical information, possibly with a view to making a public statement in the press. It is possible to reconstruct her questions from his answers.

What, she wanted to know, had happened to the four missing volumes of the diary? Was there any truth in the newspaper rumours then circulating connecting Dodgson romantically with, first, the actress Ellen Terry and, second, various members of the Liddell family? And what had Collingwood meant by his reference in his biography to the autobiographical 'shadow of disappointment' that lay over his uncle's love poetry?

Collingwood's reply to this honest inquiry from a member of his own family was a massively disingenuous composition, conceived, apparently, more as some sort of apology to posterity than as a private reply to a private letter. It makes it obvious that, as far as Collingwood was concerned, there were some things he had to keep even from his own relatives. He lied to his cousin, claiming never to have had the 'complete diary' and vouchsafing the assurance that he had 'not the least idea' where the missing volumes might be. 'But,' he added in an obvious piece of attempted blame-shifting on to the conveniently dead, 'possibly Uncle Wilfred had it.' His response to the other inquiries was even more circumspect and infinitely stranger:

> Nothing I have read in L.C.'s diaries or letters, suggested—to the best of my memory—that he had ever had any *affaires de coeur* ... I *think* that Aunt Fanny once told me that it was the family's opinion that Uncle Charles had had a disappointment in love, & that they also thought (or she also thought) that the lady in question was Ellen Terry ... The 'shadow' I hinted at had no other basis than what I had heard from Aunt Fanny.

But after this oddly qualified affirmation that he knew absolutely nothing about his uncle's love life beyond the vaguest of second-hand remarks Collingwood suddenly drew a metaphorical and physical line across his narrative and abruptly changed his tack. Come to think of it—he *did* know about Lewis Carroll's love-life after all. And in the stroke of a pen the man who *thought* his Aunt Fanny might have said something once became the man who knew almost everything:

> When Ellen Terry was just growing up—about 17—she was lovely beyond description (I have seen a photo of her, which belonged to L.C., at about that age), and it is highly probable that he fell in love with her; he may even have proposed to her.

But this was not the only passion in Dodgson's life; Collingwood had suddenly remembered another one as well:

> Whereas, in regard to the Liddells, it was Alice who was undoubtedly his pet, and it was his intense love for her (though she was only a child) which pulled the trigger and released his genius. Indeed it is quite likely that Alice's marriage to Hargreaves may have seemed to him the greatest tragedy of his life.[6]

Biographers wisely tend to dismiss this self-contradictory and self-serving account. It is, after all, not even internally consistent, the second portion frankly countering the first and implying an extraordinarily high level of dishonesty. It is described even by the gentle and kindly Derek Hudson as 'not entirely reliable', but some writers try to make an exception for the Alice part, suggesting that Collingwood's 'speculation about the Alice affair is more to the point'. However, this is hard to sustain objectively. Collingwood demonstrably lied about his own actions and the extent of his own knowledge. The claim that he never had the complete diary is untrue. The claim about a proposal to Ellen Terry is lifted straight from newspaper stories circulating at the time and is, as Cohen himself pointed out, 'out of the question', since the woman was married before Dodgson even met her. The claim about Alice Liddell is lifted from the same romanticized sources and is supported by almost no independent evidence at all. In what sense is it 'more to the point'? Perhaps in terms of what is currently believed, but that is all. It is not Collingwood baring his soul: it is Collingwood saying what he wants others to believe and manifestly making it up as he goes along. As with the 'child-friends', another image that he helped to create, he is simply re-telling a popular story while keeping selected realities to himself.[7]

Almost certainly he knew more about Dodgson's '*affaires de coeur*' than anyone else alive. But equally certainly he had decided long ago to say nothing about what he knew. He had stated publicly that there was nothing to be gained by 'lifting the veil' on Dodgson's private pain and the 'shadow' that afflicted him. Whole chunks of his uncle's diary had been removed—probably by him—in order to conceal something even from other members of the family, and this letter of his continues the process of concealment and

dissimulation. Indeed if the text suggests anything it is that he would not have been so keen to use either the Terry or the Alice story if he had known them to be connected in any way to the aspects of Dodgson's life he wanted to conceal. This final piece of 'Alice evidence' is ruled suspect, if not inadmissible, by its own multifarious dishonesties.

It is plain that the source of the historical data that can be called in support of the Alice story is not rich. Up to the present time Taylor's portrayal of Alice Liddell as Lewis Carroll's 'lost love, the withered rose in his filing cabinet, the little ghost that was to come crying in the night to the windows of his bachelor apartments in Tom Quad', followed as it is by almost every mainstream biographer, remains a hypothesis bare of almost any corroboration.[8]

To those who have seen the Potter play and read the life stories, this paucity might seem incredible. After all, what about the marriage proposal to the eleven-year-old child? The banishment from the Deanery that wrecked Dodgson's life? Surely there must be some evidence for this, however small and fragmentary?

But, actually, no; there is not. The entire story of Dodgson's marriage proposal to the eleven-year-old girl, his banishment from the Deanery, has always been a piece of guesswork, an attempt to explain the strange anomalies in his relationship with the Liddell family by what was thought the most likely means. There has never been even the smallest shred of evidence for it. If it builds itself on anything, beside biographical imagination, it is on the crucial and famous missing page in Dodgson's diary from 27 to 29 June 1863.

This cut page—chopped out untidily by one of his descendants with what seem to have been nail scissors—occurs right in the midst of Dodgson's personal experience of guilt and sin, during a summer when, after a brief lull, he begins to feel the sting of his old anguish again. The last entry before the cut ends ambiguously where a sentence travelled over on to the now missing page. It reads: 'wrote to Mrs Liddell, urging her either to send the children to be photographed...'

The subsequent cut seems to cover a crisis of some kind in his relationship with the Liddell family. Before this erasure, he is seeing them regularly; after it, they disappear from his narrative for several months and not just because of the intervening vacation. When he mentions them again, on 5 December, he observes that he has 'held aloof from them' all that term.[9]

The cut page, is, as Cohen himself says, 'crucial'. Obviously something happened between Dodgson and the Liddells at that time. But what? For the lack of anything else concrete this 'absence' has achieved the status of a keystone in the Alice story. Surely this jagged stump is the place where the

much-needed evidence would have been. Surely the page was cut out by Dodgson's descendants because it contained a confession of his love for Alice, his desire to marry her, and if it had not been erased we would be able to read in his own words the story that is so conspicuously not told anywhere else. This is how the proposal/banishment is worked into the narrative.

There have always been obvious difficulties with this interpretation. For example, Dodgson's diary records that on 17 December 1863, some six months after he is supposed to have been banished from the Deanery for inappropriate conduct with the child Alice, he wrote to Mrs Liddell offering to call, and she invited him to the house the following Saturday. He went there for the evening, stayed to dinner and spent a few hours playing with the younger girls and, according to his diary, their mother was there only 'part of the time'. The rest of the evening, presumably, he was alone with the children, since he does not say that the governess was in attendance. It has always been difficult to make any of this seem consistent with his having been discovered to have dangerous sexual feelings for one of these children.[10]

Beyond these anomalies, however, the 'missing page' has remained the Alice story's most powerful *raison d'être*, and biographers remain all but convinced of what must have been written there: 'The most obvious conclusion is that Dodgson had asked the Dean if he might court Alice.' 'What was the alternative that Dodgson "urged" on Mrs Liddell? ... The most commonly advanced explanation is that Dodgson asked for Alice's hand in marriage.'[11]

While I was researching in the Dodgson archive in early 1996 I came across a small piece of paper I have referred to briefly earlier. Never published or even seen before, it was torn out of an account book and written in the hand of Dodgson's niece, Violet, who, with her sister Menella, was a guardian of the family papers between 1929 and 1966. On the back were some details of the births and deaths of various members of the Liddell family. But on the front there was a heading 'Cut Pages in Diary' and a brief resume of three entries from Dodgson's diary.

Almost immediately certain things became apparent. The paper was evidently very private, never intended to find its way into a public archive. Violet wrote it as a personal *aide-mémoire* of material she and Menella were intending to cut out of Dodgson's diaries, and in fact two of the three pages referred to are now missing, while the third is still there but heavily crossed out. It is possible to read the text of this entry beneath the scribble. It is a brief, unflattering observation about Alice being in a bad mood through ill health—'Alice was in an unusually imperious and ungentle mood'—which sheds an interesting light on how actively the sisters were trying to preserve the popular image of his unfailing adoration

of the girl by removing his unflattering comments on her. This has a significance of its own.

However, the really important entry of the three on this little page is the second, headed 'Vol. 8, page 92', because this is *the* missing page, the one for 27–29 June 1863, that all the fuss is about, the one described as 'crucial' by Cohen, the one assumed to have contained the story of Dodgson's marriage proposal and his banishment from the Deanery. Here, on this little, scruffy document, Violet had written a one-sentence summary of what that page had really contained, and this is what she wrote:

> Vol. 8 Page 92. L.C. learns from Mrs Liddell that he is supposed to be using the children as a means of paying court to the governess—He is also supposed [unreadable] to be courting Ina.

When we read this the mystery of what actually happened at that time begins to be unravelled.[12]

'L.C.' is, of course, Dodgson. As he says in his last diary entry before the break, he 'wrote to Mrs Liddell' with a suggestion that she send the children over to be photographed. This new diary document shows that on the same day, or soon after, he either received a reply or spoke to Lorina in person. She told him that there was damaging gossip circulating about his continued visits to the Deanery. Either she told him, or they agreed, that he should keep away for a while, until the gossip died down. Hence, he 'held aloof' from her and her children for the next few months, not out of bad feeling but out of caution, and hence, when danger might seem to be past, he wrote to ask if he could come back and she said yes. This is the reality, according to all evidence, of what happened between Dodgson and the Liddells in the summer of 1863.

This amounts to something of a bombshell for the Alice story. If Violet's note is to be believed—and there is no shred of evidence to suggest it should not—Dodgson was not banished from the Deanery for indiscretion with the child; he was advised to stay away for a while because of a spate of gossip about him and two members of the household, the governess and 'Ina', neither of which was Alice. The missing page 92 in his diary is indeed a 'crucial' entry but not in quite the way that might have been imagined. It is crucial because it effectively eradicates the last fragment of assumptive reasoning that provided some form of backing for the 'Alice Liddell story'.

With the revelation that the most famous missing page of Dodgson's diary did not, according to the evidence, contain any reference to Alice at all, let alone confirm the story of marriage proposals and banishments, certain

conclusions become inevitable. It suggests irresistibly that the time has come for a major reassessment.

Currently, Alice Liddell—and Dodgson's supposed passion for her—is used as a cipher for interpreting almost every aspect of his work, as well as his emotional and creative life. She is, after all, the ultimate demonstration of his strangeness. But it is apparent that the evidential justification for this is—has always been—almost non-existent. There remains no contemporary evidence linking Dodgson romantically with Alice Liddell in any way during the all-important 1860s, when his life turned briefly upside down, and only the slightest rumour to link him with her at all. There is no evidence that he was in love with her, no evidence that her family worried about his attachment to her, no evidence that they banned him from her presence. There are no letters or private diary entries to suggest any kind of romantic or passionate attachment or even to indicate he had a special interest in her for any but the briefest time. There is no evidence, either prima-facie or secondary, cryptic or elliptic, to suggest he proposed to the eleven-year-old girl or even considered doing so. The fine academic Cohen can find no more to say in support of his own belief that 'Charles, aged 31, proposed marriage to Alice, aged 11' than to claim 'Oxford gossip had it so'. But even this fragile rationale is untrue. Oxford gossip did not have it so. Nothing and no one ever had it so—except Cohen and his fellow biographers.[13]

In 1888 Dodgson met the young man Reginald Hargreaves who had recently married Alice. If modern biography and Collingwood's heated prose are to be believed, he was encountering the man who had robbed him of his one chance of happiness, the man who had married the girl to whom he had proposed marriage when she was eleven or, according to Cohen's interpretation of the A.L. reference, when she was fourteen or again, according to rumour, when she was a young woman of twenty-six. Dodgson wrote of this meeting: 'I met him [Hargreaves] in our Common Room not long ago. It was hard to realize that he was the husband of one I can scarcely picture to myself, even now, as more than 7 years old.' He made almost exactly the same comment at the same time in the privacy of his journal.

Even Taylor had to admit that this did not fit with his own theory of life-long passion. 'That does not ring true,' he wrote, and we have to agree with him. As he points out: 'Alice was ten in the boat, thirteen when the book was published and twenty-eight when she left Christ Church to be married.' It is unquestionably difficult to imagine that any man who cherished these memories, who regarded this girl as the love of his life and her marriage as the 'greatest tragedy', who had asked for her hand when she was eleven, fourteen or twenty-six, would be unable to remember her as any more than seven years old. Taylor's only option was to conclude that Dodgson did not

really mean it, but it is a dangerous moment when biography elects to put its own beliefs and its fragmentary hearsay evidence before the subject's own experience of himself.[14]

Beyond the mythology, Dodgson's own writings say more about the probable limitations of his feelings for Alice Liddell than for many of the other girls and women in his life. It is just that in the rush to believe in Alice as dreamchild no one has paid much attention to what he said. Ironically, she seems to have been one of the very few girls that he really did lose interest in when she reached puberty. His diaries, his letters, tell the simple story of early affection for a 'dear child' turning to bland indifference as she grew up.

At seven Alice Liddell was his 'ideal child-friend', the linchpin of his quasi-paternal role in her family. But it was a brief role for her. By the early 1860s, when he first told the story of *Alice's Adventures* to the 'children three' in the boat, her special status was probably already beginning to fade. There are only three or four even vaguely significant references to her by name throughout the 1860s, and two of these are grossly unflattering. At eleven she is 'in an unusually imperious and ungentle mood, not at all improved by being an invalid'; at thirteen she is 'changed a good deal, and hardly for the better'.[15] This suggests that adolescent Alice was already growing into an adult personality he found less than congenial, and this was a tendency that seems to have continued. Her elder sister Ina by contrast is referred to repeatedly in ways that suggest continuing affection.

She did—and posterity has to be grateful to her for that—ask him to write down the Alice story, after he first told it on the famous July river trip, and he did promise to do so, but the image of his sitting up that night, writing by candle-light, is pure legend. After all, he did not know that an impromptu story about a rabbit hole would make him immortal. The Liddell girls loved 'Alice's adventures', but he was less impressed. Sometimes their demand for the 'interminable' tale irked him, and he wanted to do other things. Only in later years would he re-light this bumpy reality in the soft glow of pure middle-aged nostalgia.

At the time he evidently forgot all about Alice's request almost immediately. He was preoccupied with other things—his burgeoning artistic career, his London friends, the looming problem of the priesthood, the sense of sin that haunted him. She asked him to write it down, he said he would, but in his usual manner he did not get round to it. Only a chance meeting with the Liddell girls in the quad, four months later on 13 November, rescued his promise, and his story, from oblivion.[16]

He started work on it that evening, probably with a little shiver of guilt at the delay. It took another two years of very intermittent labour to finish the book and, somewhere along the way, getting it ready for Alice began to

take second place to finding a publisher for what he began to realize was a potentially commercial story. The entrepreneur in him came to the fore. He had always wanted to think of a book that would 'sell well', and now he had. His influential writer friends, Tenniel his illustrator, Macmillan his publisher, all read his manuscript before Alice did. In fact by the time she eventually received her story-book in late 1864 *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was nearing publication.

He evidently felt guilty about how long it had taken him to fulfil his promise to the 'dear child' and perhaps about the way in which his gift had been transformed into a career move. He probably remained in a sense both guilty and grateful to her for the rest of his life. She had, after all, indirectly helped to change that life and make him the literary figure he had wanted to be since his early teens. He did not forget to commemorate her in the four *Alice* volumes; he paid her the nice little compliment of using her birthday as a leitmotif and wrote a lovely verse just for her at the end of *Looking-Glass*. In the circumstances he might have thought it ungracious to do much less. And he never did more. He never confused Alice with 'Alice' as we do. She was never his 'dreamchild', and he never pretended that she was.

His Alice, the dreamchild, shared her name, but she enjoyed an entirely independent existence; 'my dream-child (named after a real Alice, but none the less a dream-child)', a creature of his fancy, whose separateness he guarded jealously, almost pointedly. Even when he wrote the first draft of the Wonderland story his 'little heroine' was already carefully differentiated from the real child whose name she shared. In this proto-story it is his dream-Alice who tumbles down the rabbit hole and has adventures. Alice Liddell only appears at the end, as 'another Alice', a little girl in a boat, listening to the tale of his Alice's adventures. By the time he wrote *Looking-Glass* the dream-child was fleshed out in his mind, but her long hair trailing in the stream is not Alice Liddell's neat bob. Even in his personal dedication in her copy of the 1886 facsimile of *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* Dodgson carefully emphasizes that it was not her but her 'namesake' who 'inspired his story'. For him, 'dream-Alice' reigned paramount. Alice Liddell soon became largely irrelevant. In his middle age, her contribution to it all had been reduced, by the author himself, to a mere accident of nomenclature.[17]

There are few references to Alice Liddell in Dodgson's journal for the last thirty years of his life. Politeness, banality and distance characterized their later and barely existent correspondence. His warmest sign-off to her was 'sincerely yours', cool indeed compared to the love and kisses he dispensed to so many of his female correspondents. His favourite people were always those who preserved the laughter, the spontaneity of childhood, into their adult years. Perhaps Alice Liddell did not do that. She became very

'county', married an amateur cricketer, played bridge. Perhaps her social conformity chilled him.

She asked him to be godfather to one of her children.[18] He declined, not out of spite but because he had too many godchildren already and had promised himself to take on no more. He made an exception of this rule for his sister's child; but not for Alice's.

For her part, as an adult she seems to have resented the success he had built on borrowing her name and his continued exploitation of the Alice phenomenon. He was the first one to market his own legend. She observed him publish two volumes of the original stories, a *Nursery Alice* for tots and eventually even a Wonderland Stamp Case. But when, in 1885, he wrote asking to borrow back the original manuscript of *Alice*, the little book it had taken him so long to finish for her twenty-two years before, so that it could be published in facsimile, she was stung. She did not want to let him have her book back and wrote to her father asking if she really had to, considering he had already sold 120,000 copies of the story he had told her. Her father wrote back to say that he thought she could not deny Mr Dodgson, even though he had been so successful.[19] In receipt of the paternal advice, Alice, with who knows what reluctance, wrote to Dodgson to say he could have her book but that he must take care of it. He did, and in the end she got it back.

Subsequently, they had very little, almost nothing, to do with one another. When he died she sent a wreath, but her own father had died not long before and she did not attend Dodgson's funeral. As she became old, and mythic in her own right, she evidently was not comfortable with the growth of the legend. She never seemed to want to be dubbed 'the real Alice', perhaps because she knew that she never really had been that person. When the celebrations for the centenary of Dodgson's birth got under way, and she began to be hymned as the 'dreamchild' all over the world, she entered into the game with tight lips and few words. Although she could have made a fortune out of her memoirs she preferred to say as little as possible, and the only manuscript she ever produced was written 'with her son [Caryl] almost literally guiding the pen'. Even though he tried to put as much golden gloss on it as possible, the sting of old bitterness still comes through from time to time—little drops of acid in Caryl's thickly applied sugar coating. While he dealt in the generalities of the legend, her detailed personal memories told their own little muted story. She remembered Dodgson himself slightly venomously, as looking 'as if he had swallowed a poker'. She remembered going on the river with his sisters. 'They seemed to us rather stout, and one might have expected that with such a load in it the boat would have been swamped.' She remembered old omissions: 'One Boxing Day, the horse I was riding crossed its legs and came down with me

on the Abingdon Road ... I was on my back for six weeks, with a broken thigh. During all these weeks, Mr Dodgson never came to see me.' Even though there was so much profit to be made out of being 'Alice' she could not suppress the prickly reality she remembered and play the game her son so evidently wanted her to play. Perhaps this was why she took refuge in silence.

This is the evidential reality of Carroll and the second daughter of Henry and Lorina Liddell. He did not 'continue for years to dedicate the fruits of his labour to her and her alone'. He did not, according to all evidence, find her irreplaceable, 'desire a holy union with her' or consider her the love of his life. She is not, in any way, the solution to the puzzle of his life or the source of his genius. So why is biography not comfortable with this diagnosis?[20]

Dodgson's 'dreamchild of the mind', a quasi-religious symbol, is something not easily encompassed in an irreligious age that has lost its capacity for metaphysics. Perhaps we make our dreamchild of the only substance we still understand how to worship: Alice Liddell exposing her flesh to Dodgson's camera, Alice Liddell as King Cophetua's beggar maid. As a culture we are obsessed with such things and we apparently want to believe that Dodgson was too. This level of conviction is liable to become in some sense self-fulfilling. Even the best biographers can unwittingly force the story to take the expected path, and two recently discovered letters show this process in operation beautifully.

In the spring of 1930 the very able writer Florence Becker Lennon was making preparations for her biography of Dodgson. She interviewed the one member of the Liddell family who would talk to her, Alice's 81-year-old widowed sister Ina, who was living quietly in retirement. Lennon was fairly convinced of the reality of the burgeoning Alice myth, the blighted marriage proposal and the banishment from the Deanery, and she apparently went to the interview with Ina determined to extract a confession about all this. Ina subsequently wrote two letters to her sister about this interview. The first of these reveals her astonishment as she began to realize that Lennon was fishing for evidence that Dodgson proposed marriage:

> On thinking by myself, I think she tried to see if Mr Dodgson ever wanted to marry you!! She said he had such a sad face, and she thought he must have had a love affair ... and it did occur to me at the time what she perhaps was driving at!! ... I had no idea it was to be put in her book as from me!! However, thank goodness I am to see and correct it.

But the second letter makes it clear that, however astonished she might have been, Ina deliberately encouraged Lennon to continue believing the story, at least in part, for reasons of her own.

> I don't suppose you remember when Mr Dodgson ceased coming to the Deanery? ... I said [to Lennon] his manner became too affectionate to you as you grew older, and that Mother spoke to him about it, and that offended him ... as one had to give some reason for all intercourse ceasing.[21]

The period Ina is referring to, when 'Mr Dodgson ceased coming to the Deanery', must be the crisis covered by the cut page of June 1863, which we now know was nothing to do with Alice. Ina could have told Lennon the truth about that time, the truth that we are just beginning to uncover, but instead the old lady told the biographer what she wanted to hear. She told the 'Alice story' because she 'had to give some reason' for all intercourse ceasing and did not want to bring the awkward reality out into the light of day. In the grip of the myth Lennon let her get away with it and did not notice the sleight of hand.

Today the still-growing weight and bulk of the Alice Liddell mythology flattens out Dodgson's monopolized life like a flayed skin. His work is assumed to be about Alice Liddell or about nothing. His poetry is assumed to be about Alice Liddell or it does not signify. His two most famous books are said to do far more than simply play with her name and other familiar Oxford images; they somehow *are* Alice Liddell in a way Peter Pan has never been thought to *be* any one of the Llewellyn-Davies boys.

It is time to restore a little balance. The only book truly written for Alice Liddell was *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, the manuscript version of the little tale Dodgson originally told in the boat. Thereafter, as in every creative process, the story, and 'Alice', stopped being Alice Liddell's and became Dodgson's. As any author inevitably must, he used the narrative to explore his own inner and outer worlds, and the stories evolved as a reflection of his experience. *Wonderland* is already significantly his own literary voice in an assured way not present in *Under Ground*. It plays with the themes of politics and female dominance in ways that reflect his personal obsessions of the time. *Looking-Glass* was written on the other side of the great divide in his life by a man who was just emerging from a prolonged depression, whose father, with whom he had always shared an ambiguous relationship, had just died unexpectedly, leaving him a quasi-paternal figure to his own brothers and sisters, burdened for the first time with family responsibilities. The book's themes

of autumn, renunciation and loss have plenty of echoes here, and the White Knight is obviously a powerful symbol of dying father as well as childhood's end.

However, the mechanistic *reductio ad absurdum* of the Alice story dismisses all this as irrelevant and says that Dodgson is using the White Knight not to say goodbye to his father or his own youth or his innocence but to—Alice Liddell. The sadness and darkness are not because of the emotional and psychological turmoils through which he has recently come; they are because he does not have—Alice Liddell. His touching introductory poem for *Looking-Glass*, 'Child of the Pure Unclouded Brow', is presented as a poem of love for—who else?—Alice Liddell, because it uses the word 'pleasance' in the last verse (Pleasance being Alice Liddell's middle name) when it is evidently, and far more sensitively, a poem to the child-reader of future ages whom he would never see.

> I have not seen thy sunny face,
> Nor heard thy silver laughter:
> No thought of me shall find a place
> In thy young life's hereafter—
> Enough that now thou wilt not fail
> To listen to my fairy-tale ...[22]

These lines are completely meaningless if addressed to the Alice Liddell who lived across the quad from him and whose face he had, to the best of anyone's knowledge, seen quite a few times, but they are full of poignancy in their true context. When biography loses this to the Alice legend it loses an important truth about the man. The future haunted him, more than the past. The thought of his work, which he already sensed to have immortality in it, living on through generations that he would know nothing about was something that obsessed him. 'Think of me in 1924,' he told one girl-friend, and he wrote his verse as another small personal message to every child of the future who would pick up his book and find something good there.[23]

It makes little sense to put so much of this richness aside; to suppose, as biography does, that it is about a girl he was almost certainly never in love with and who had ceased to be a part of his life many years before is not simply counter to the evidence, it is counter to the reality of life and the creative process. At present almost every aspect of his life is processed through the Alice machine and comes out Alice-shaped. Little or nothing escapes. Even his mathematical story, 'Dynamics of a Particle', about the friendship between two straight lines, even the confused entirety of *Sylvie*

and Bruno, have been turned by some into an exploration of his supposed worship of this one girl whose moment of real meaning in his real life was so evidently transient. Charlotte Zeepvat, author of a biography of Prince Leopold, youngest son of Queen Victoria, shows more acuity over the strange and pernicious nature of the Alice Liddell myth than any Dodgson biographer has yet managed. Leopold is another man with whom a fairly amorphous legend links her, her romance with him being recounted with as much certitude as any aspect of the Dodgson story. He is even supposed to have named his daughter Princess Alice after her, although he actually named her after his own and beloved dead sister and said so in his own words. Commenting on the skewed nature of this widespread myth, Zeepvat observes: '[Prince Leopold] was in love. There was talk of a marriage, which the Queen put a stop to. The question remains: who was the girl?' There were contemporary hints linking Leopold with someone in the Liddell family but no suggestion as to who, but 'modern attention focuses exclusively on Alice because of her association with the book' and thus 'the disappointed romance between Alice Liddell and Leopold has become an accepted part of the Alice mythology)'.[24]

In fact, says Zeepvat, it seems more likely that the girl Leopold briefly courted was Alice's younger sister Edith. Substitute Dodgson's name for Leopold's in the above quotation and we have an important truth about how biography has interpreted his relationship with the Liddells.

If there is likely to be any truth at all in the idea that Dodgson was actively courting one of the sisters in the 1860s, then there is far more evidence to suggest that girl was Alice's older sister, Ina. In 1863 she was an attractive and physically developed teenager. Dodgson himself was aware that she was no longer a child; his comment that 'I quite think Ina is now so tall as to look odd without an escort' shows a full recognition of her maturity and, according to one possible interpretation of the 'Cut Pages in Diary' document, it was this fourteen-year-old that gossip linked him with at the time. Of the three famous sisters it was most certainly Ina who most often wrote to him at this time and Ina who received most individual recognition in his journal. Dodgson even carefully noted the exact number of times she had been with him on the river: 'her fourteenth time', he observed, and one can almost hear the sigh. (He never made any such poignant and sentimental comment about Alice.) Their mutual friendship continued until Dodgson's death. And an undergraduate satire from 1874, *Cakeless*, written as a 'celebration' of Ina's marriage to William Skene, puts Dodgson (thinly disguised as 'Kraftsohn') in the role of disconsolate objector. There is even a scribbled note on one extant copy of this work that reads 'Dodgson had been rejected'.[25]

Was Dodgson 'courting' Ina? In contrast to the Alice story this possibility is well documented and plausible. It has yet to be recognized or followed up, only because 'Alice' obliterates all other realities.

But, while this must remain a possibility, to see the Dodgson of the 1860s as lovelorn suitor for any of the Liddell daughters makes very little sense in terms of his own self-knowledge or his relationship with the family. His expressed affection for all the girls is profoundly paternal and protective. Everything in his demeanour, in his writing, in the fashion in which he remembered these girls suggests that they were seen by him as a ready-made family, stepchildren to play at father with, not as potential wives or sexualized love-objects.

The elderly Ina's letters to her sister quoted above make it evident that she used Lennon's own Alice story as some form of camouflage for whatever had really been going on between Dodgson and her family at that time, presumably because it was too private or too potentially harmful to be revealed. She knew, just as the evidence is beginning to make clear today, that Dodgson did not really become too affectionate to her sister and that her mother did not speak to him about it, and her admission that she told Lennon these things because she 'had to give some reason for all intercourse ceasing' raises the obvious question, why? Why did she feel the need to invent along with Lennon's expectations? Why could she not simply tell the truth, whatever that might have been?

The same question could be asked many times about different aspects of the relationship between the Liddells and Dodgson. It is an inescapable fact that while his life was at its most turbulent the Liddells were involved with him in an anomalous and curious way. His diary is full of oblique references that imply entanglements with them beyond anything recorded. He encounters them, apparently by accident, on his daily walks, on trains, while holidaying in London, with a frequency and in circumstances that imply a deliberate arrangement he never acknowledges. Almost everything about his contact with them speaks of secrecy and subtext.

Mrs Liddell, the other Lorina, destroyed his letters (not simply those to Alice, as the state of the archive shows, but those he wrote to herself and her other children). She is said sometimes to have 'hated' him, yet she continued to write to him and invite him into her home until the end of his life. She kept photographs of him but would not allow her husband's biographer to mention his name. Dodgson's diary hints at bad relations between him and Lorina's mother, Mrs Reeve, but gives no explanation. The Dean broke college rules in an unprecedented fashion to allow Dodgson to keep his job without taking holy orders, yet the two were political enemies. Alice obviously resented him, would not talk about him

even when there was serious money to be made out of doing so, yet she felt the need to name her youngest son 'Caryl' while denying it was any kind of tribute.

None of this seems applicable to a situation in which the family have been merely the recipients of an unwanted marriage proposal. It implies much deeper and more secretive involvement. This is stated most baldly by the author who has, to date, had the most unrestricted access to the Liddell private papers. 'To put it at its most melodramatic,' writes Colin Gordon, 'was Dodgson a skeleton in the Oxford closet, not to be rattled at all costs?'[26] It seems likely that, as far as the Liddells were concerned, he was.

The episode of June 1863 has long been supposed to hold the key to Dodgson's puzzling relationship with these people, and it probably does. It was evidently as sensitive a topic for the Liddells as it was for the Dodgson nieces who destroyed the relevant entry in their uncle's diary.

In a way the cryptic information of the 'cut pages in diary' document and the subsequent behaviour of Dodgson and Mrs Liddell raises more questions than it answers. There had been gossip for years about Dodgson and this family. He had himself recorded earlier rumours about him and the astonishingly ugly governess with wry disbelief. Such talk had never bothered Mrs Liddell before, nor had it prompted the guardians of his reputation to cut out the references in his diary. What was different about this time? Why was it necessary for him to 'hold aloof' from the family for six months? Why did Mrs Liddell make sure she invited him back into her home on a day that her husband was away?

And how does this connect with Dodgson's own sense of sin that so evidently haunted his contact with her family?

The greatest weakness with the image of Alice as love-object, and indeed with any suggestion of Dodgson as suitor to one of the Dean's children, is that it requires us to reject such a large amount of his own experience of himself at that time as biographically irrelevant. We must dismiss his self-identification with David the adulterer and his own confessional poetry of erotic indulgence. We have to assume his guilt to have been masturbatory, even though the circumstances surrounding it clearly suggest that it was not. This does not seem sensible, unless there are no other options available.

I think there are explanations that take better account of the vast and disparate factors at work here, but so far they have been simply overlooked because the pre-eminence of the Carroll myth made them appear impossible.

After all, 'Ina' is a shortening for 'Lorina', the name of the Dean's daughter but also of the Dean's wife—and we cannot be certain whether the shortened form or the full name was used in Dodgson's original diary entry.

In short, there is an ambiguity about which Lorina is being referred to here. If, indeed, it was the mother and not the daughter then we might be able to understand why Menella and Violet felt the need to cut out the entire entry and, if the cause of his pain had been not one of the Dean's daughters but their mother, it would certainly make him guilty of David's sin, and his repeated evocation of Psalm 51 would suddenly make sense. If we assume this possibility then we may at last have a cogent reason for the snipped-out pages, the careful circumspection of his own descendants and the secrecy and nervousness with which the Liddells remembered him. If the Dean's wife had been guilty of adultery there would have been ample reason for her daughters' nervous silence about Mr Dodgson, ample reason to make things up, 'as one had to give some reason'. His poetry of desire for his 'star of perfect womanhood', his poetic confessions of secret pleasure with a powerful seductress who tempts him and nearly destroys his life are then no longer anomalies, wandering homeless through his biography. Circumstantially, the case for the 'Ina' of the document being not the daughter but the mother seems stronger than anything else presented in explanation of this strange and troubled time in his life. But is there more to it than circumstance? Is there any evidence to lend it the credibility and corroboration the Alice story so eminently lacks?

Notes

1. Deborah Manley, *Oxford Town Trail: Alice and Lewis Carroll* (Oxford: Heritage Tours, 1991), p. 4; Mavis Batey, *The World of Alice* (Oxford: Pitkin Guides, 1991), p. 20.
2. Taylor, pp. 32, 34.
3. Bakewell, p. 246; Clark, pp. 124, 144; Stephanie Lovett Stoffel, *Lewis Carroll and Alice* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997), p. 38; Cohen, *Lewis Carroll*, p. 219.
4. MS Diary, Vol. 5, 17 October 1866.
5. Clark, p. 143; Bakewell, p. 149; Cohen, *Lewis Carroll*, p. 101.
6. DFC, Cat. No. F/17/2.
7. Hudson, p. 192; Cohen, *Lewis Carroll*, p. 342.
8. Taylor, pp. 32–3.
9. *Diaries*, Vol. 4, pp. 214, 264.
10. Cohen, p. 103; *Diaries*, Vol. 4, p. 266.
11. Stoffel, p. 82; Bakewell, p. 127.
12. *Diaries*, Vol. 4, p. 193; document in Dodgson archive, DFC, Cat. No. F/17/1.
13. Cohen, *Lewis Carroll*, p. 100.
14. *Letters*, Vol. 2, p. 876; MS Diary, 1 November 1888; Taylor, p. 197.
15. MS Diary, 11 May 1865.
16. *Diaries*, Vol. 4, pp. 115, 141–2.
17. *Letters*, Vol. 1, p. 607; Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* (London: Pavilion Books, 1985), introduction, p. 17, Chapter 10.
18. *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, foreword by Mary Jean St Clair (Alice's granddaughter), p. 8.

19. Letter from Dean Liddell to Alice dated March 1885.

20. Gordon, p. 92; Cohen, *Interviews and Recollections*, pp. 84–7; Clark, p. 144; Cohen, *Lewis Carroll*, p. 101; Bakewell, p. 173.

21. Edward Wakeling, 'Two Letters from Lorina to Alice', *Jabberwocky*, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 91–3.

22. *Collected Works*, p. 123.

23. Cohen, *Interviews and Recollections*, p. 114.

24. Charlotte Zeepvat, *Prince Leopold* (Stroud: Sutton, 1998), pp. 90–2.

25. *Diaries*, Vol. 4, pp. 115, 192; British Library MS No. 11779 B5 (3).

26. Gordon, p. 85.

HUGH HAUGHTON

Alice's Identity

"'Who in the world am I?' That's the great puzzle!"

In the opening chapter of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* we are told Alice is 'fond of pretending to be two people', but early in her shape-changing adventures she fears 'there's hardly enough of me left to make one comfortable person'. Wondering if she'd been changed in the night, she asks, "'Who in the world am I?'" In a book humming with puzzles, this is probably the greatest puzzle of all for Alice.

It is the question that the best novels and children's stories return to again and again. If the heroine is at one level the straight guy in a series of bizarre comic turns, at another her adventures compose a miniature *Bildungsroman* in nonsensical form. It is as if what Harold Bloom called 'the internalization of the Quest Romance' in Romantic poetry, with its obsession with questions of identify, were rewritten as a utopian comedy of manners—a combination of Shelley's *Alastor* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. The queerness of nonsense language and the bizarre rules and regulations the creatures try to impose on Alice tell us much about the terrifying arbitrariness of the world she has to operate in, but also about who she is. One of the great appeals of the *Alice* books is that, like Kafka's *The Trial* and *The Castle*, they dramatize the puzzling nature of identity in a world dominated by rules and rulers that remain obstinately unpredictable and

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From Alice's Adventures in Wonderland *and* Through the Looking Glass.

indecipherable. In one of the early shape-changing scenes in *Wonderland*, Alice goes to a table to 'measure herself by it'. There is a sense in which this is what is happening all through both narratives.

In fact, when Alice worries about her identity, she reveals herself to be very much a child of her time and class. In this she is like Alice Liddell, the daughter of the Dean of Christ Church, born into the heart of the English establishment, a well-educated upper-middle-class Oxonian girl, versed in good manners, good verse, and the rules of chess, cards and croquet.[100] Christ Church was the smartest Oxbridge college, where the Prince of Wales became an undergraduate in 1859, and Queen Victoria visited the Liddells in the Deanery in 1860. Not long after *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice was briefly involved with Prince Leopold (who'd attended her sister Lorina's wedding in 1874 and had been photographed by Dodgson), so that the royal scenario that pervades both stories reflects on her own social status, as well as on the romance conventions of fairy tales and the games of cards and chess she is caught up in. The fictional Alice measures herself by her superior knowledge and social status: '"I'm sure I ca'n'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!"' Her adventures test her sense of identity to the full. Her worries have something in common with those Elizabeth Bishop dramatizes in her searching autobiographical poem 'In the Waiting Room' about a young girl exactly Alice's age, who, looking into the mirror of other people, reflects on who she is herself. 'Why should I be my aunt, / or me, or anyone?' she asks:

> I said to myself: three days
> And you'll be seven years old.
> I was saying it to stop
> the sensation of falling off
> the round, turning world
> into a cold, blue-black space.
> But I felt: you are an *I*,
> you are an *Elizabeth*,
> you are one of *them*.[101]

Alice's fall down the rabbit-hole induces a comparable identity crisis. The descent into the 'deep well' shakes all the assumptions of her waking self. When she tries to re-establish her poise by reciting the improving verses of Isaac Watts's 'How doth the little busy bee', the admirably industrious bee turns into a predatory crocodile with 'gently smiling jaws.' Having travestied the pious hymn, she fears she must be Mabel after all: '"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!"'

When the White Rabbit takes her for a 'housemaid' soon afterwards, Alice exclaims, '"How surprised he'll be when he finds out who I am."' Whoever she is, she couldn't be one of the servant classes in a 'poky little house'. Hers is a world of governesses, school-rooms, middle-class etiquette, tea-parties, croquet lawns, visiting royalty, and querulous pedants—just like Alice Liddell's (and Dodgson's own). By and large those she meets in her adventures are upper and middle class too; with the exception of the Rabbit's stage-Irish gardener, Hattan and Haigha and a few other bit-part players with vaguely cockneyfied voices, the creatures generally speak what Alice calls 'good English'. As I hope the notes to this edition show, Dodgson constructed Alice's dream worlds out of the details of Alice Liddell's actual environment, and did so with something of the meticulous literalism of contemporary paintings such as Ford Maddox Brown's *Work*, Frith's *Derby Day*, or the domestic genre scenes of painters admired by Dodgson, such as Arthur Hughes and Millais. Tenniel therefore proved an inspired choice of illustrator for Alice and her world. His graphic idiom, however fantastic and allegorically grotesque, is as pedantically referential as an exhibition catalogue of Victorian social types, settings, furniture and costume—just like Dodgson's own. When Alice travels underground and through the glass, it is not only her unconscious dream world that she finds—but Victorian England, and the world of the Oxford establishment she shared with Dodgson.

Alice's unconscious parody of Watts's hymn about the busy bee invokes not Protestant industry and moral purposiveness, but a crocodile's 'jaws' and 'claws', and William Empson has pointed out how high a proportion of the jokes, poems and parodies in the *Alice* books hinge upon death and eating. The secure domestic order of Alice's moral universe is exposed to reveal terror and appetite. 'Wonderland' sounds Edenic, as do many of Dodgson's accounts of childhood, but the world of the stories is grins as well as comic. There's a 'lovely garden' there but also a 'pool of tears'; nature in Wonderland is more akin to Tennyson's 'Nature red in tooth and claw' than Wordsworth's 'fair seed-bed'; it's overshadowed by the fear of death and extinction (think of the Dodo), and reverberations of the Darwinian debate about evolution that had taken place in Oxford in 1859–60. The Wonderland garden is no childhood Eden, but a life-and-death croquet match presided over by a homicidal Queen shouting 'Off with their heads' every second minute. Faced with all this random violence and competitiveness, Alice notes '"they're dreadfully fond of beheading people here"', '"the great wonder is

there's anyone left alive"'. Even Alice herself, when she gets to the 'lovely garden' is taken to be a marauding snake (a 'serpent') by the outraged maternal Pigeon of Wonderland, not a 'human child' (she inspires comparable terror in the fawn of *Looking-Glass* as soon as they leave the wood of no names). '"We're all mad here"', says the grinning Cheshire Cat; the Carrollian grin, like the crocodile's, reveals a disconcerting madness and violence at the heart of its order—both the 'natural' order of the garden, and the legal order of the Trial, with its travesty of justice. In all this, Alice emerges as the book's nonsensometer (she dismisses the court's verdict as 'stuff and nonsense') and, as much as any Jane Austen heroine—its intellectual conscience. Sense-making is imperative in this world, but it's a lonely business.

In the tonally bleaker, more elegiac *Through the Looking-Glass*, the winter sequel to the Maytime trip to Wonderland, Alice's sense of self hardens in the colder, more political climate she finds six months later behind the glass. The air grows cold in the region of mirrors. The looking-glass, like Keats's 'magic casement', leads into the world of Victorian medievalism and the 'dark wood' of Spenserean Romance, albeit in a comically warped form. It is a world where modern railways, newspapers and postal systems interlock with Quixotic knights, lions and unicorns. It is dominated by political battling—the competing Kings and Queens, the battling Tweedle brothers, the Lion and Unicorn, the White and Red Knights, and the political images of Gladstone and Disraeli in the railway carriage. In the carriage, as in the shop, wood and palace, Alice's attempts to decipher the world around her become more critical and anxious. Even the garden of live flowers offers a pricklier, colder pastoral than that of Wonderland, as can be seen in the less than rosy world-view of the Rose Alice chats to:

> "You're beginning to fade, you know—and then one ca'n't help one's petals getting a little untidy."
>
> Alice didn't like this idea at all: so, to change the subject, she asked "Does she ever come out here?"
>
> "I daresay you'll see her soon," said the Rose. "She's one of the kind that has nine spikes, you know."
>
> "Where does she wear them?" Alice asked with some curiosity.
>
> "Why, all round her head, of course," the Rose replied. "I was wondering you hadn't got some too. I thought it was the regular rule."[102]

Against the cruel pathos of seeing the seven-and-a-half-year-old Alice as a fading flower, the Rose presents adulthood with a certain grim realism.

She is referring to the Red Queen with her spiky chess crown ('the essence of all Governesses', as Dodgson called her),[103] and the Queens as representatives of the queenliness Ruskin ascribed to all women, are at best a grisly duo—the one all bossiness and bile, the other all slovenliness and resignation, the one manically over-assertive (like Humpty Dumpty and the Tweedles), the other ineffectually depressive (like the gnat and Knight). In the chess world of *Through the Looking-Glass* it seems to be the regular rule that creatures (even the two bona fide children, the Tweedles) protect themselves by a rather acerbic style of conversational prickliness; though they tend to be sticklers for their own rules and regulations, their style is domineering and their order profoundly irrational.

Despite this, Alice, who starts out as a pawn in the game, 'would like to be a Queen best'. These Queens are not like the idealized stereotypes envisaged by Ruskin in his tract on women's education, 'Of Queens' Gardens', but studies in power and powerlessness. However well-mannered Alice may be, she aspires to be a Queen too, and a powerful one, and as the story draws towards a close, she aspires towards an impressive vision of feminine autonomy in the face of the bullying she faces on all sides.

When Tweedledum says she is only part of the Red King's dream and isn't real, Alice retorts '"I am real!"' and begins to cry. Though she succumbs to tears, she is able to argue her corner ("'If I wasn't real ... I shouldn't be able to cry"') and attempts to dismiss the disconcerting Berkleyan idealism of the Tweedles as 'nonsense'. Still, faced by the dark wood, the battling philosophical twins and the monstrous crow, she keeps her composure as best she can. When she meets that arrogant egghead Humpty Dumpty, who murderously advises her to 'Leave off at seven', she comes out with one of the great defiant lines of nineteenth-century childhood literature (not unlike Oliver Twist's 'I want some more'): '"I never ask advice about growing"'. After the battle between the Lion and Unicorn, she says, '"I do hope it's *my* dream"', '"I don't like belonging to another person's."' Later, after the shambolic battle between the two knights which the White Knight calls a 'glorious victory', she affirms her freedom with characteristic defiance, '"I don't want to be anybody's prisoner. I want to be a Queen."' Having shown admirable kindness and good humour towards the absent-minded quixotic Knight, she eventually gets her crown, but this isn't the end of her subjection to the bossiness endemic in Carrollian nonsense. She immediately finds herself peppered with regal advice by the other Looking-Glass Queens and finds she really doesn't like 'being found fault with so much'. Eventually, when she rises to give a speech at her coronation banquet, and the tediously formal dinner-party breaks up into pandemonium, she cries out with her most powerful blast of self-assertion, '"I can't stand this any longer!"'—thus

freeing herself from the game, the dream and the mirror. Though she 'wins' her crown and the game, it seems she outgrows both at the very moment when the dream of being a Queen is realized and found to be as nightmarish as her time as a child and pawn.

Though Dodgson inherits the first generation of Romantic poets' sense of childhood (Humpty Dumpty's 'glory' recalls Wordsworth's as does the opening poem of *Looking-Glass*) and the second generation's interest in romance and dreams, his own 'dream-child' pursues her quest through a world which is as profoundly social as that of Jane Austen. In the frame poems of each book, and in the account he gives in '"Alice" on the Stage', the author writes as if Alice travels to some fairyland of pastoral childish innocence. As Isa Bowman noticed, however, Dodgson himself 'cared for neither flowers nor animals',[104] and the language of *Wonderland* is a product of culture, not nature. In it Alice is confronted by grave travesties of most of the institutions which govern her and her author's life—the monarchy, the rule of law, education, grammar and social etiquette. So, after the fall and bodily metamorphoses of the opening chapters of *Wonderland*, Alice is caught up first with a Caucus Race with wild animals (a parody of competitive 'natural selection' and democratic procedure), then the fussy domestic life of a fastidious bachelor rabbit (complete with maid and gardener). Having discussed growth and reproduction with a caterpillar and pigeon, and madness with a brainy disembodied cat, Alice finds herself in the more complex rituals of Wonderland society—first the endlessly rotating Mad Tea Party, with its parodies of a parlour-song recital, children's story (as told by the dormouse) and tea-tune etiquette; then the shambolic royal Croquet Game with the Queen, her courtiers and minions all flaunting the rules of that popular new middle-class game (regularly played by the Liddells on the Deanery lawn) and playing havoc with the garden; then, to cap it all, the Mock Turtle and Gryphon's nostalgic Old Boys' duet about their schooldays. The Mock Turtle and Gryphon are two highly artificial creatures, fathered not by biology but language, and their mournfully punning chronicle of distant school-days recollected in tranquillity parodies not only the established curriculum of private education in the public schools of the day, but the entire educational system based on 'reeling and writhing'. There's a particular pungency in the allusions to classical 'Laughing and Grief' (Latin and Greek, but also the classical genres of comedy and tragedy), since these were intimately associated with Alice's father, Dean Liddell, co-author of the famous Greek lexicon used in schools. '"How the creatures order one about, and make one repeat lessons"', Alice observes, '"I might just as well be at school at once"'. The Gryphon and Mock Turtle are parodic products of the education system they romanticize so tearfully, just as their performance of

'The Lobster Quadrille' is a galumphing parody of fashionable ballroom dancing (an institution that played a positively Darwinian role in the struggle of nineteenth-century girls for suitable husbands). Nonsense thrives on travestying authority, and Alice's last view of Wonderland is the absurd court scene, where the Knave of Hearts is accused of stealing tarts, and tried before a court dominated by an incompetent King, tyrannical Queen and abject jury. The nonsense theatre of Wonderland, with its haywire kings and queens, comes to a climactic finale in this finely tuned satire on the social order. It offers a deadpan comedy of (bad) manners.

The social world of *Through the Looking-Glass* is dominated by the nominal kings and queens of chess, and is, if anything, more systematically constricting than that of the earlier book. It begins in an untidy Janus-faced version of the *haute bourgeoisie* drawing-room of Alice's home, peopled by quarrelling kings and queens, but soon moves into another garden, a caricature of the lush flower garden evoked by the disappointed lover in Tennyson's *Maud* and part of a wider landscape which is modelled, not on any natural or picturesque order, but on a geometrically mapped out chessboard. This may seem less anarchic than *Wonderland* but it's no less threatening as a mirror of modernity. 'It's all a great game of chess that's being played—all over the world', we are told, where 'it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place' as the Red Queen says, and where people in the railway-carriage think (in chorus) that 'time is worth a thousand pounds a minute', land 'a thousand pounds an inch' and language 'a thousand pounds a word'. In the Looking-Glass Insects' episode where she takes the train, Alice is caught up as a cypher in the communication networks of Victorian England. She has to produce a ticket to validate her travel, but is told she could as well be sent by luggage, telegraph or post (since, like a stamp, she 'had a head on her') and gets classified in terms of ticket-offices, alphabets and (in a chapter about names) her name. Throughout all this, she is confronted by two imposing male figures who in Tenniel's drawing look suspiciously like the two politicians who dominated parliamentary politics at this time, William Gladstone and Benjamin Disraeli (the latter appropriately dressed in paper and reading a newspaper). She is also subjected to aggressive public scrutiny.

> All this time the Guard was looking at her, first through a telescope, then through a microscope, and then through an opera-glass. At last he said "You're traveling the wrong way," and shut up the window, and went away.

Alice's progress, as befitting a pawn in the game of chess, is made through a series of bewilderingly abrupt and involuntary jumps from place to

place and from time to time. Despite the projections of the modern political order of Victorian Britain that shape so much of the looking-glass world, and those archetypal modern settings, the train and the shop, *Looking-Glass* is haunted by the past—in disconcertingly parodic nonsensical forms. 'Jabberwocky', the first poem Alice encounters, is a telegrammatic *reductio* of a dragon-slaying northern epic, and after her railway journey Alice finds herself in the wood of no names—an eerie place where she loses her own name ('"and who am I?"' she wonders) and, during her brief Pan-like communion with the Fawn, her identity as a 'human child'. Though she recovers her name, she isn't out of the wood yet. The bulk of the rest of her journey is set against the backdrop of a dark forest that is a legacy of both Spenserean romance and German fairy tales. It is there that she meets a series of characters from traditional nursery rhymes[105]—Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the Lion and the Unicorn and Humpty Dumpty—and the White Knight, a sad quixotic figure who is both an eccentric inventor (like Dodgson) and a travesty of the heroic Pre-Raphaelite medievalism of Rossetti, Morris and the Laureate's *Idylls of the King* (Tenniel's frontispiece illustration of the White Knight guys the lumbering pictorial medievalizing of *Sir Isumbras at the Ford* in the same vein). *Through the Looking-Glass* has some affinity with the Gothic revivalism of Pugin's Houses of parliament and, nearer hone for Dodgson, the fake antique frescos recently designed for the Oxford Union, but revels in its own nonsensical anachronism. Even as the book takes us through the iconography of the chivalric and royal past—Humpty Dumpty characteristically assumes Alice has read about him in a 'History of England' and the Lion and the Unicorn survive in the royal coat of arms—its conversational style, manners and tone are unmistakably modern. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Tenniel dresses Alice in the newly fashionable hair-band and striped stockings of her time, and the author always presents her as a thoroughly contemporary girl. Though the story veers back and forth between past and present as dizzily as Twain's *Connecticut Yankee*, Alice's final coronation banquet is clearly represented in the text and illustrations as a Victorian dinner party, complete with decanters and soup tureens. The text ends with a *Dunciad*-like apocalypse of that hierarchical social world, as the story dissolves in Alice's final inpatient gesture of revolt.

> "I ca'n't stand this any longer!" she cried, as she jumped up and seized the tablecloth with both hands: one good pull, and plates, dishes, guests, and candles came crashing down together in a heap on the floor.

Alice's protest is against the irrational nonsense of the mad chess game she has dreamed she is part of—with its comic, but potentially threatening, dream logic. To re-establish her own identity and her faith in the real world of social conduct, she has to reject the awful travesty of proper social life played out by the Queens, Kings and subjects of the Looking-Glass world. Despite his subsequent canonization by the Surrealists, Dodgson was a Euclidean logician, a pious Christian and a political conservative, whose life was fanatically devoted to tidiness and order. Alice mirrors him in this. Nevertheless, it is possible to read her dream adventures as a protest against the world of governesses, teachers, bullies and pedagogues, and all the social rituals they impose on her. The hall-of-mirrors discovered in the Looking-Glass inevitably reflects back on the world of the Victorian drawing-room, school-room and play-room, and the ordinary assumptions of a comfortable middle-class childhood this side of the mirror.

'Who dreamed it?' asks the last chapter, and the book's dream realism is clearly a reflection of the fictional Alice's waking world. It can also be read as a reflection of the real Alice Liddell's domestic universe, as I've suggested earlier. Beyond that, however, we can read the two books as reflexes of their author, Charles Dodgson, also of Christ Church. He appears to have so closely identified with his dream heroine that his problems of identity, of establishing coherent selfhood in the face of the violent changes inherent in human life and the disorder at the heart of the order, seem mirrored in hers.

Looking-Glass is much preoccupied by passing time, violence, ageing and death, as well as the potential for linguistic aberration and disorder discovered in *Wonderland*. The obsessively tidy Dodgson was acutely concerned by contemporary debates which threatened the established order. The dreams of Alice, that Oxford child, and her author abut on to the universe of mid nineteenth-century Oxford, a place that considered itself with good reason to be at the centre of British intellectual life at the time. In *An Oxford Chiel*, published in 1874, only four years after *Through the Looking-Glass*, Dodgson published a series of highly political satirical squibs on university issues written over the previous nine years—about the new belfry commissioned by Liddell for Christ Church, the defeat of Gladstone as MP for Oxford, the salary and status of the Liberal Jowett (who was Professor of Greek and a notoriously 'heretical' contributor to the *Essays and Reviews* of 1861), the terms of Max Müller's professorship of comparative philology, among other burning issues of the time. Though Dodgson disclaimed making any such topical or political allusions in the *Alice* books, controversy is the very air breathed by the embattled creatures in both; Humpty Dumpty is the most belligerently radical of the many philosophers of language who

haunt their pages, but the majority of the creatures Alice meets are comparably argumentative, and constitutionally prone to wrangle about the interpretation of words, names, rules and logic. We should remember that in between the two *Alice* books in 1869, Dodgson published one of his own most sustained exercises in academic controversy, *Euclid and His Modern Rivals*, a work intended to champion and popularize Euclidean geometry for a modern audience. It's a dramatic dialogue, featuring the ghost of Euclid, in which a modern mathematics lecturer (ominously called Minos) and his antagonist Professor Niemand (the German for 'Nobody'), sit in judgement over thirteen rival theorists who challenge the secure order of Euclidean geometry which Dodgson wished to defend. In the disputatious world of *Wonderland* it is possible to hear echoes of such controversies, as well as the more stirring controversies aroused by the Oxford Movement, the Darwinian debate of the 1860s, Ruskinian aesthetics, Max Müller's brand of comparative philology and Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). In one of his Popean satires of the time, Dodgson ironically takes the Liberal side, warning readers to 'shun Conservatism's evil star', and affirm 'the march of Mind' against Oxford's 'wisely slow' traditional order, in which intellectual values were tempered by moral and Christian ones:

> Neglect the heart and cultivate the brain—
> Then this shall be the burden of our song,
> 'All change is good—whatever is, is wrong—'
> Then Intellect's proud flag shall be unfurled,
> And Brain and Brain alone, shall rule the world![106]

Possible ripples and aftershocks of these ideological contests may be detected playing over and under the elusively nonsensical surface of the two children's books the conservative Dodgson wrote for the daughter of the Dean of Christ Church he christened 'the relentless reformer' Liddell.[107]

But if there are echoes of such contemporary debates, they are muted and indirect. The main focus of the two books is Alice's own consciousness, as she struggles to make sense of a world through the looking-glass that is more unstable, changeable and radically nonsensical than her author could acknowledge elsewhere. The 'innocent' language of nonsense associated with Alice, 'the child of [his] dreams',"[108] gives expression to more things than are dreamed of in Dodgson's conscious philosophy—or his culture's dream of order.

Notes

100. For a fuller account of Alice Liddell, see Anne Clark, *The Real Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dream Child*, London, 1981, and Colin Gordon, *Beyond the Looking-Glass: Reflections of Alice and her Family*, London, 1982.

101. Elizabeth Bishop, 'In The Waiting Room', *The Complete Poems 1927–1979*, London, 1983.

102. 'The Garden of Live Flowers', *TLG*, chapter 2.

103. In '"Alice" on the Stage'. See p. 296.

104. Bowman, *Lewis Carroll as I Knew Him*, p. 73.

105. J. O. Halliwell, collector of *Popular Rhymes & Nursery Tales of England* (1849), a book owned by Dodgson, calls his prefatory essay 'Nursery Antiquities'. He argues there that 'the humble chap-book is found to be descended from medieval romance, but also not infrequently from the more ancient mythology, whilst some of our simplest children's rhymes are chanted to this day by children of Germany, Denmark and Sweden, a fact strikingly exhibiting their great antiquity and remote origin' (p. 1).

106. 'The Elections to the Hebdomadal Council', 1866-8, *The Lewis Carroll Picture Book*, pp. 88–9.

107. *The Works of Lewis Carroll*, ed. R. L. Green, Feltham, 1965, p. 950.

108. '"Alice" on the Stage'.

WILL BROOKER

Introducing Alice

Three major new editions of the *Alice* books were published around the turn of the twenty-first century: the centenary Penguin *Wonderland*, *Looking-Glass*, and *Under Ground* in a single volume (1998); the definitive third edition of *The Annotated Alice* (2000); and the Bloomsbury versions of each book with illustrations by Mervyn Peake (2001). Each was a prestigious release, offering up an old favourite for the new millennium with fresh packaging and extra features; each, to some extent, included a modern reassessment of these Victorian children's stories. The Bloomsbury *Alices* showcased short introductions by novelists Zadie Smith and Will Self, Martin Gardner added new annotations and reproduced his prefaces from the previous editions, and the Penguin volume included a substantial essay by the writer and academic Hugh Haughton.

Haughton's is certainly one of the most accomplished engagements with *Alice* I have personally encountered: sharp, deft, and glittering with wordplay, it casts the net wide, drags in details from the two adventures and nimbly carves them open. Haughton is fully aware of the interpretive heritage he inherits here, from Nabokov through Woolf to Disney, and begins by establishing two schools of thought on the books: those who choose to enjoy them merely as a pretty nonsense (broadly speaking, the nineteenth-century approach) and those who insist the text has hidden

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From *Alice's Adventures: Lewis Carroll and Alice in Popular Culture*.

meanings that they want to shake out (to generalise, the twentieth-century method). Which path we opt for depends partly on whether we see the *Alice* books as stories for children or adults, and at this point Haughton agrees with all the analyses in the previous section that what they provide on one level is "a child's view of adulthood ... dismayingly bizarre and perverse."[87] The ability to see *Alice* as delightful whimsy certainly seems to have been lost; whatever age the books are assumed to appeal to, there is an overriding agreement both in this chapter and in the newspaper reports of the last—that this appeal is "dark" and based on the recognition that growing up is an assault-course.

He then takes a detour into biography, and into the least sparkling section of his introduction. The life of Carroll given in these sixteen pages is conventional enough in its details, but Haughton wholeheartedly subscribes to the theory that Carroll was fixated on little girls and, more specifically, was romantically infatuated with Alice Liddell. This is a familiar part of the Carroll myth, but it is surprising that the man introducing *Alice* to a new century embraces it so warmly and uncritically, with less equivocation than either Bakewell, Thomas, or Cohen. The falling back on a pat notion of the repressed paedophile and his child-muse seems strangely old-fashioned, and Haughton's decision to treat the secondary evidence at face value results in a conveniently but misleadingly straightforward account. This may simply be another example of space–time compression, with the uncertainties we would expect in a book-length biography flattened into facts when an entire life has to be crammed into sixteen pages.

Carroll is portrayed here as a rather dull man with one intriguing abnormality: "a dream of childhood, focused on the figure of a beautiful young girl. [...] The anomaly's first name and incarnation was Alice Liddell, and it was in the shadow of Alice's name ... that Dodgson lived his later life."[88] While "the nature of Dodgson's love of Alice remains a subject of speculation"[89] "he never explained the nature of their friendship"—there is no doubt in Haughton's mind that he loved her; not just regarded her with affection, but "was head over heels in love" with her.

This is a pretty solid statement that leaves little room for further guesswork; neither is there much ambiguity in the description of the "haunting, yet subliminally creepy photographs" of the Liddell girls. The images themselves are easily read: Haughton agrees with Bakewell that they "tell us, if nothing else, he was in love with Alice."[90] She was the "only begetter" of *Wonderland*,[91] and the social break from the Liddells—a "dramatic rift"[92]—prompted a lovestruck Carroll to write an elegy for her in the prefatory poem to *Looking-Glass*, "as if she was dead." Haughton mentions all the usual clues to a possible love-relationship between the little

girl and the don—the diary entry about A.L.—"presumably Alice Liddell", he explains—the gossip from Lord Salisbury, and the anguished prayers at the time of his "banishment" from the Deanery.

As already implied, Alice Liddell is represented here as just the primary incarnation of Carroll's internal ideal; his love for her was symptomatic of his "mysterious paedophile sexuality."[93] Like many other commentators, Haughton's makes sly insinuations that whisper of an erotic aspect to Carroll's child-friendships: he had an "obsessive fascination with girls before puberty,"[94] he was "the Casanova of the Victorian nursery", his diaries are a "roll-call of conquests", he used Eastbourne for "cruising."[95] The last word in particular carries connotations of "queer" deviance—"cruising" still implies a gay pick-up—and conjures the stereotype of the predatory loner seeking anonymous sex. The *Alice* books—and here Haughton echoes Morton Cohen's analysis allowed—Carroll to channel this weird erotic drive by placing himself in the persona of a young girl, exploring "his identifications with his child heroine"[96] and combining this intense passion for prepubescent females with his equally fervent investment in questions of mathematical and linguistic meaning.

When he moves on to this latter area, Haughton's findings are far more original and provocative. While not going to the literalist extremes of Gladstone and Jones—or, in places, Donald Thomas—he argues that Carroll's dream worlds were built "out of the details of Alice Liddell's actual environment"[97] and perceptively notes that although Carroll himself presents the stories "as if Alice travels to some fairyland of pastoral childish innocence,"[98] both fantasies are constructions of "culture, not nature".

> ... Alice is confronted by grave travesties of most of the institutions which govern her and her author's life—the monarchy, the rule of law, education, grammar and social etiquette. [...] Having discussed growth and reproduction with a caterpillar and pigeon, and madness with a brainy disembodied cat, Alice finds herself in the more complex rituals of Wonderland society—first the endlessly rotating Mad Tea Party, with its parodies of a parlour-song recital, children's story ... and tea-time etiquette; then the shambolic royal croquet game ... then, to cap it all, the Mock Turtle and Gryphon's nostalgic Old Boys' duet about their schooldays.[99]

There is no attempt to say that the Gryphon was inspired by Ruskin, as Jones and Gladstone characteristically suggest;[100] the point made here is that Wonderland is a stylised Victorian realm on a level that goes beyond

specific links between fictional creature and real-world individual. Looking-Glass Land, Haughton observes, is "if anything, more systematically constricting than that of the earlier book ... less anarchic than Wonderland but no less threatening as a mirror of modernity.[101] Holding up this fictional world like a snow-globe, Haughton examines its juxtaposition of the mythic British past with "the communication networks of Victorian England". His language becomes beautiful.

> In the tonally bleaker, more elegiac *Through the Looking-Glass*, the winter sequel to the Maytime trip to Wonderland, Alice's sense of self hardens in the colder, more political climate she finds six months later ... the air grows cold in the region of mirrors. The looking-glass ... leads into the world of Victorian mediaevalism and the "dark wood" of Spenserean Romance, albeit in a comically warped form. It is a world where modern railways, newspapers and postal systems interlock with Quixotic knights, lions and unicorns.[102]

In this light, Tenniel's artwork is the only possible match for Carroll's monstrously warped version of 1860s culture:

> His graphic idiom, however fantastic and allegorically grotesque, is as pedantically referential as an exhibition catalogue of Victorian social types, settings, furniture and costume just like Dodgson's own. When Alice travels underground and through the glass, it is not only her unconscious dream world that she finds—but Victorian England, and the world of the Oxford establishment she shared with Dodgson.[103]

Again we are reminded that this is a harsh world for a child to wander through; Haughton sees various horrors in the dream landscape: "terror and appetite", a "lovely garden" but also a "pool of tears", a "random violence and competitiveness", "a disconcerting madness." And yet this analysis offers a satisfying reason why Alice should be forced to struggle. *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* deal with the biggest issues in her life, and perhaps in the lives of all her peers: "food and the food-chain, growing and ageing, manners and madness, childhood and adulthood, freedom and rules, authority and identity."[104] These concepts do not merely apply to children, or to the Victorians, and they are huge themes to grapple with: it makes sense that the dreamworlds should involve loneliness, loss, and the threat of death.

While playing down the influence of direct satire, contemporary debates and Oxford squabbles as "muted and indirect", Haughton convincingly locates the books as projections of their specific period in a broader sense. However, their appeal has to be explained beyond a Victorian social allegory, and Haughton maintains that their deeper, most central theme is the construction of identity and meaning. Alice is measuring herself against what she remembers from the real world ("I ca'n't be Mabel ..."), "very much a child of her time and class,"[105] but questions of who we are and what words signify are, of course, broad-ranging enough to apply beyond Alice's schoolroom. "Who am I?" is, Haughton suggests, "the question that the best novels ... return to again and again,"[106] and it recurs constantly in the *Alice* books, from "I'm sure I'm not Ada"[107] to "who are you?"[108] to "you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"[109] The context of the question may be specific to Lewis Carroll, Alice Liddell, and their contemporaries, but the question itself is, arguably, part of what makes us human.

So far, then, some form of consensus is emerging as to what recent commentators feel the *Alice* books are "about". They are grounded in their specific social context, although there is disagreement about the extent to which they intentionally reflect or parody individuals, debates, and locations in Alice Liddell and Lewis Carroll's lives. They are concerned with the child's experience in an adult environment and with the process of growing up, with finding a sense of self. This environment is frequently brutal and cruel; Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land are commonly seen as nightmarish rather than light-hearted dreamworlds. The stories contain something of Lewis Carroll's intense attitudes towards childhood, whether he is understood to have invested himself in the character of Alice or projected his own ideal of Alice Liddell into the protagonist. In any case, they are far from nonsensical: they are packed with heavy-duty, "adult" meanings about language, identity, maturity, and death.

Martin Gardner's contribution to this discussion is probably more influential than any other. Though reissued for 2000 as the final word in Alice encyclopaedia, Gardner's *Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition* reproduces the introduction from his original *Annotated Alice* of 1960 and follows it with the *More Annotated Alice* preface of 1990, which contradicts a number of points from the first essay. The only brand-new introduction is a brief note on the text, a page long. The dominant voice here, then, is from 1960.

Gardner explains his project almost apologetically, anticipating objections to any book that threatens to ruin the innocent fun of *Alice*; "but no joke is funny unless you see the point of it, and sometimes a point has to be explained."

> ... we are dealing with a very curious, complicated sort of nonsense, written for British readers of another century, and we need to know a great many things that are not part of the text if we wish to capture its full wit and flavor. It is even worse than that, for some of Carroll's jokes could be understood only by residents of Oxford, and other jokes, still more private, could be understood only by the lovely daughters of Dean Liddell."[110]

So the books' dependence on a specific context is established, although a more universal meaning is also implied; Gardner does not say we cannot appreciate or enjoy the *Alice* stories at all without knowing the background, only that certain levels of reference will remain obscure. Unlike Cohen, he fears that children of the late twentieth century, especially American children, do not read and enjoy the books; young readers are "bewildered and sometimes frightened by the nightmarish atmosphere of Alice's dreams."[111] The stories' immortality, to Gardner, lies entirely in the fact that they are still studied by adults, by "scientists and mathematicians in particular", and so his own annotations are addressed to this audience. As such he roundly confirms the notion that *Alice* is a dense text for grown-ups, to the point that he places the hopes for the books' future in wholly adult hands. I might point out here that I first read Gardner at age nine, and adored him.

On the whole, *The Annotated Alice* avoids the Jones and Gladstone method of seeking direct parallels between every character and an Oxford notable; his explanations are generally more dependably solid, noting for instance that a fender is a kind of fireguard,[112] that "washing extra" meant a boarding school that sent out the laundry,[113] and that whiting did appear to have their tails in their mouths when laid out in a fishmonger's window.[114] Gardner warns that he has no truck for psychoanalytic readings, which at the time of his writing qualified as "recent". "We do not have to be told what it means to tumble down a rabbit hole," he rumbles, "or curl up inside a tiny house with one foot up the chimney."[115] There will be no room for the "oral sadistic traits of cannibalistic character" here, for Gardner prefers the explanation that "small children are obsessed by eating and like to read about it in their books."

However, Gardner's Carroll does not escape analysis. "The point here is not that Carroll was not neurotic (we all know he was) ..." The account of the author's life that follows is dated, though with some justification given the period in which it was written. His external self was "dull"—this is in keeping with the Virginia Woolf theory that Carroll, as Dodgson, "had no life"[116]—"he was a fussy, prim, fastidious, cranky, kind, gentle bachelor whose life was sexless, uneventful, and happy."[117] Photography was one of

his "hobbies", on the same level as making a mouse from a handkerchief or folding a pistol from paper. He had a "fixation upon little girls" yet "professed a horror of little boys, and ... avoided them as much as possible."[118] He took photographs of nude little girls, of which "none seems to have survived"; Gardner amends this note in the preface to *More Annotated Alice* below, but lets it stand here.

"A long procession of charming little girls ... skipped through Carroll's life, but none ever quite took the place of his first love, Alice Liddell."[119] There is no "hint of impropriety" to his relationships or indication that Carroll consciously approached girls with anything other than "the purest innocence"; there is no evidence that he wanted to marry Alice or "make love to her", but "his attitude towards her was the attitude of a man in love."[120] At this point Gardner offers his parallel with Humbert Humbert, contrasting the carnal passion for "nymphets" with Carroll's feelings of sexual safety in young female company; this idea that Carroll felt his passions comfortingly neutralised by children is, we might remember, the line that was later taken by Donald Thomas.

"It is easy to say," Gardner observes, "that Carroll found an outlet for his repressions in the unrestrained, whimsically violent visions of his *Alice* books.[121] Indeed, this is precisely what Cohen and Haughton conclude. Gardner, however, declines to come down on either side of the question, and leaves it hanging here. As to the broader meaning of *Alice*, he approaches the issue by comparing the books to Kafka and G. K. Chesterton. The ultimate moral in all three, whether expressed through grim fable or "metaphysical nightmare,"[122] is that life is nonsense. It is a tale "told by an idiot mathematician ... we all live slapstick lives, under an inexplicable sentence of death."

In the preface to *More Annotated Alice* that follows directly on the tail of this essay—correcting, contradicting, and sometimes overlapping with the previous piece—Gardner reconsiders the question as to whether the stories channelled Carroll's repressed energies, and wavers towards the conclusion presented by Hugh Haughton. The *Alice* books were, he decides, a flood of creativity produced by the twinning of Carroll's two internal streams—the passion for logic, linguistics, and numbers and the enthusiasm for the company of young girls. The question as to whether Carroll was in love with Alice is reconsidered in the light of more recent data, and we get a sense here of the shifts that occurred in Carrollian studies between the 1960s and 1990s: the cut diary is mentioned as part of the proof that "Mrs Liddell sensed something unusual in his attitude towards her daughter,"[123] and Gardner includes a lengthy quotation in which Morton Cohen changes his mind.

> Actually, I didn't change my mind recently; I changed it in 1969 when I first got a photocopy of the diaries ... I believe now that he made some sort of proposal of marriage to the Liddells, not saying "may I marry your eleven-year old daughter," or anything like that, but perhaps advancing some meek suggestion that after six or eight years, if we feel the same way that we feel now, might some kind of alliance be possible?[124]

The definitive edition of this influential text, then, very strongly gives the impression that Carroll was not just in love with Alice but that he "expressed marital intentions to Alice's parents." There is no more interpretation of the actual books offered in the introduction, but of course Gardner's analysis continues throughout the extensive notes (he admits to rambling) that run in columns of tiny print alongside the text. His comments on Alice fall into several categories, yet for the most part offer inarguable explanations and background rather than speculation; he is true to his word about steering clear of psychoanalysis. Some of his contextualising betrays an American perspective and imagined readership: "treacle" is translated as "molasses,"[125] "barley sugar" is described in ploddingly pedantic terms,[126] and "take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves" is given its origin in the familiar British proverb about pence and pounds.[127]

There are occasional ventures into the Jones and Gladstone field, with a firm statement that the "drawling-master" is "none other than the art critic John Ruskin"[128] and "little doubt" that the man in white paper is Benjamin Disraeli.[129] This confident, possibly overconfident assumption that the dream worlds contain thinly disguised figures from 1860s England intersects with Gardner's theories about Carroll and Alice when he tells us the White Knight's farewell is a secret message from the author to his love: "This scene, in which Carroll clearly intends to describe how he hopes Alice will feel after she grows up and says good-bye ..."[130] The Wasp, from the suppressed Chapter Eight-and-a-half of *Looking-Glass*, is also presented as a mouthpiece for Carroll's appraisal of Alice "there never was such a child!"—but not as another authorial self-portrait; Gardner accepts that the class-conscious Carroll would not have allowed himself to guest-star as a mere drone.

Other notes fulfil Gardner's promise to provide Victorian references for the satire, such as the source for "Father William,"[131] the possible birthplaces of the Cheshire Cat,[132] and the potential causes of the Hatter's insanity.[133] There are occasional discoveries of accidental inconsistency in the text and Tenniel illustration, as when the Cheshire Cat appears in the same tree despite the fact that Alice has "walked on"[134] or the milk-jug fails to appear either in the description or drawing of the Tea Party, yet gets

tipped over two pages later.[135] For the most part, though, the notes are content to point toward trivial and intriguing side roads from the main route of Carroll's story; it is entirely possible to ignore them and the detours may distract, but the off-track rambling is often fascinating.

Finally, the two briefest and most recent introductions from this group: Will Self and Zadie Smith's prefaces to the Bloomsbury *Alice* books are essentially "celebrity" cameos, intended as a showcase for two contemporary, relatively young and high-profile novelists to do a turn about *Alice*. The point, presumably, is more about linguistic flair and idiosyncratic authorial stamp than scholarly analysis, and so these are quite different from either Haughton or Gardner's essays. Self's prose is garnished with arcane, swallowed-a-dictionary vocabulary—"the pun is ... a numinous fulcrum", "these few short scenes ... are wholly ensorcelling"[136]—while Smith's often slips into a grating arm-round-the shoulders familiarity, musing "Oh man, darker, yes" and nodding "yeah, that's what I thought."

Both take a personal, unashamedly subjective view of the books—Smith admits she "couldn't quite remember"[137] *Looking-Glass* when she came back to it after a number of years, and recalls being "more *afraid* of Tenniel's drawings than amused"[138]—but Self is unique in devoting his five opening pages to memories of *Wonderland*.

> The boy sits among a slew of records, 45s and LPs, some in their sleeves, some out. In front of him is a portable record player, a heavy, foursquare cabinet, with grey cloth stretched over its wooden sides, a black lid, and a rubber mat on the turntable ... the LPs are dramatisations of *Treasure Island* and *The Count of Monte Cristo*, there's also a London Symphony Orchestra recording of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, with Peter Ustinov doing the narration.[139]

One of the 45s is an adapted dramatisation of *Alice in Wonderland*, and through "these few short scenes" the young Will Self is drawn into the sticky May afternoon with Alice on the riverbank; "he wanders in her train, through the hypercast of the fervid imagination itself ..."[140] Although the record lasted only fourteen minutes, Self claims that it included the opening scene and rabbit hole, the Pool of Tears, Bill the Lizard, the meetings with the Caterpillar, Duchess, and card-gardeners, and the Hatter's Tea Party. It is pretty hard to see how all these episodes, complete with dialogue and songs, could be crammed into a quarter of an hour, but as the experience is constructed as a precious and unreachable gem from distant childhood, we should perhaps allow for idealisation.

Although he touches on the various cultural uses of *Alice* in the twentieth century—"from James Joyce to Jefferson Airplane"—and makes a topical snipe at the "child abusers on the internet"[141] who stole Wonderland, the remainder of Self's introduction is about what the books mean to him personally. We learn about his first encounter with the pages as opposed to the vinyl of *Wonderland* ("a particularly luxurious edition"[142]), about the role of Carroll's language in his own childhood and in the lives of his children (an "inter-generational epiphany"[143]), and about the part *Alice* plays in his career as a novelist.

> When people ask me (as they often do) what books have influenced me most as a writer I almost always detail the same three: Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. What these three share is a marvellous confidence in the primacy of the imagination, and a conviction that the fantastic is anterior to the naturalistic.

Here Self comes closest to pinning down the "meaning" of *Alice* in his own terms—and comes closest to Martin Gardner when he implies that the books are about the fundamental chaos of the real world, exaggerated and revealed through a parallel universe:

> ... the juxtaposition of the quotidian and the fantastic; the transposition of irreconcilable elements; the distortion of scale and a means of renouncing the sensible in favour of the intelligible; and most importantly, abrupt transmogrification conceived of as integral to the human condition. [...] The word "curious" appears so frequently in Carroll's text that it becomes a kind of tocsin awakening us from our reverie. But it isn't the strangeness of Alice's Wonderland that it reminds us of—it's the bizarre incomprehensibility of our own.[144]

Zadie Smith's approach to *Looking-Glass* is also a closer cousin to Gardner's analysis than to any other interesting, given that his thoughts on the book are more than forty years old. Like him, she brushes aside "Mr Freud and the rest",[145] while proving unable to resist a comparison to Humbert Humbert and Lolita; the difference to her is that Lolita was possessed by Humbert, constructed through the adult gaze, and "seen through his glass", while Alice "remains untouched", "always and everywhere herself."[146] Carroll, she suggests, loved his child-friend and

dreamchild "without at all *impinging* on them"; she calls this hands-off adoration a "noble instinct" in the author, which comes as a refreshing contrast to the whispering campaigns in recent journalism about his predatory perversions.

As in Haughton, Gardner, and the biographies discussed above, Carroll's real-life relationship with Alice Liddell is seen to shape the text intimately. *Looking-Glass* is to Smith, as *Wonderland* is to Cohen, a story about Alice Liddell's growing up to maturity, "from eternal seven-year-old to fully grown woman."[147] In common with Gardner, Smith subscribes to the belief that Carroll inserted himself as the White Knight to say goodbye and wave her off into womanhood: "I think it was very hard for Carroll to watch her go." The real Alice and fictional Alice are confusingly merged in this interpretation, which seems to assume the two are one and the same: the name is used indiscriminately to describe the Dean's daughter and the Carroll character in adjoining sentences.

Smith, like Self, runs through some of the text's broader meanings and cultural significance, although she has little more time for the linguistic uses of Alice—"neither big, I fear, nor clever"[148]—than she does for the Freudians, the "sexologists", or the logicians.[149] She spends a while on her own personal feelings about portmanteaus, making rather strained connections with early-1990s culture such as Nirvana's "Smells Like Teen Spirit" and Norman Schwartzkopf's pronouncements on the Gulf War[150]; Carroll's humour is traced vaguely down through P.G. Wodehouse and Kingsley Amis to Monty Python,[151] and Alice's importance is compared, not altogether flatteringly, with that of Harry Potter. "We have kept her this long," Smith proclaims for her generation, "and we will not lose her yet."[152]

The main reason for these new editions, though, is not Carroll but Mervyn Peake, whose 1940s illustrations have been digitally restored. Unsurprisingly, both Self and Smith approach him through Tenniel, whose images of Alice are, in Self's words, "a given".[153] Peake himself admitted that Tenniel was "inviolate, for he is embedded in the very fabric of childhood memories."[154] However, Self compares Peake's style favourably with the "undifferentiated planes of colour, which typify Tenniel's work."

> These are quite distinct from Peake's own fluidity of line, let alone his subtle interpenetrating of stippling and adumbration. The Tenniel illustrations are hieratic—many of them take the form of tableaux. Certainly Tenniel's Alice is a plangently Victorian miss, a mannish boy-woman, let loose in a crowded, bourgeois drawing-room of painfully arranged knick-knacks and

> taxidermy. Whereas Peake's Alice is more eroticised and more downbeat. In the opening drawing, the curve of her hip acts as an insinuating portal to the netherworld, and her eyes are dilated with dewy astonishment.[155]

This is a chunky piece of writing, convincingly recreating the stilted quality of Tenniel's images: it echoes Haughton's observation above that "however fantastic and allegorically grotesque", Tenniel's depiction of dreams remain "as pedantically referential as an exhibition catalogue of Victorian social types, settings, furniture and costume."[156] Smith's response to the two very different styles is remarkably similar, suggesting perhaps a shared cultural and generational attitude towards Tenniel as the man behind a respected but slightly stuffy establishment *Alice*. She too praises Peake's technique with line, judging it more suited to the "encroaching darkness" of *Looking-Glass* than Tenniel's static, unchanging style from *Wonderland* to the altogether colder world of the sequel: "... perfectly textured background cross-hatching imbues many of the drawings with a certain foreboding; the delicate shadowing on faces, in forests, in wool shops, on walls, creates a kind of scotopia in the reader everything you're looking at is fading, pretty much, or dying, or *leaving* ..."[157]

This vision of *Looking-Glass* as elegiac, a fable of loss, is familiar from Haughton's commentary, and it can also be found in Bakewell, who finds "images of decay, mutability and fading beauty haunt[ing] the pages of the book."[158] However, Smith's real enthusiasm is reserved—oddly, perhaps, after she has hymned his darkness—for Peake's sense of fun.

> Though only a fool would cast any serious cloud over Tenniel ... as a child I remembered being more *afraid* of Tenniel's drawings than amused—such severe-looking birds, such aggressive flowers, such a frowning, school-marmish Alice! It makes a nice change, then, to see a wide-eyed beatific Alice in her crown, not to mention a wide-eyed positively *camp* March Hare (in ballet pumps? And a *skirt*?)[159]

These latter two introductions are most valuable not in what they say about Carroll—apart from the personal reminiscences, their observations can be found in expanded form elsewhere—but in what they suggest about Tenniel's role; what Tenniel makes of Alice and her world, and how it changes when his stage-setting, costuming, and casting is replaced with someone else's vision. And that's another chapter in itself.

Notes

87. Haughton, "Introduction," p. xiii.
88. Ibid., p. xix.
89. Ibid., p. xxi.
90. Ibid., p. xx.
91. Ibid., p. xxiii.
92. Ibid., p. xxi.
93. Ibid., p. xxii.
94. Ibid., p. xix.
95. Ibid., p. xxvi.
96. Ibid., p. xxv.
97. Ibid., p. xlii.
98. Ibid, p. xlvi.
99. Ibid.
100. Jones and Gladstone, *Alice Companion*, p. 11 3.
101. Haughton, "Introduction," p. xlvii.
102. Ibid., p. xliv.
103. Ibid., p. xlvi.
104. Ibid., p. lx.
105. Ibid., p. xli.
106. Ibid., p, xl.
107. Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, reprinted in Gardner, *Annotated Alice*, p. 23.
108. Ibid., p. 49.
109. Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, reprinted in Gardner, *Annotated Alice*, p. 199.
110. Gardner, *Annotated Alice*, pp. xiii–xiv.
111. Ibid., p. xiv.
112. Ibid., p. 20.
113. Ibid., p: 102.
114. Ibid., p. 109.
115. Ibid., p. xv.
116. Woolf, in Phillips, *Aspects of Alice*, p. 47.
117. Gardner, *Annotated Alice*, p. xvii.
118. Ibid., p. xviii.
119. Ibid., p. xix.
120. Ibid., p. xx.
121. Ibid., p. xxi.
122. Ibid., p. xxiii.
123. Ibid., p. xxviii.
124. Cohen, quoted in Gardner, *Annotated Alice*, p. xxix.
125. Ibid., p. 80.
126. Ibid., p. 94.
127. Ibid., p. 96.
128. Ibid., p. 102.
129. Ibid., p. 182.
130. Ibid., p. 262.

131. Ibid., p. 51.
132. Ibid., pp. 61–62.
133. Ibid., p. 69.
134. Ibid., p. 71.
135. Ibid., p. 74.
136. Will Self, "Introduction," Lewis Carroll and Mervyn Peake, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001), p. viii.
137. Ibid., p. ix.
138. Ibid., p. xv.
139. Self, "Introduction," pp. vii–viii.
140. Ibid., pp. viii–ix.
141. Ibid., p. xii,
142. Ibid., p. xi.
143. Ibid., p. xii.
144. Ibid., p. xiii, xvii.
145. Smith, "Introduction," p. vii.
146. Ibid., p. viii.
147. Ibid., p. ix.
148. Ibid., p. xi.
149. Ibid., p. x.
150. Ibid., p. xiv.
151. Ibid., p. xii.
152. Ibid., p. xvii.
153. Self, "Introduction," p. xv.
154. Quoted in Self, ibid.
155. Ibid., p. xv.
156. Haughton, "Introduction," p. xliii.
157. Ibid., p. x.
158. Bakewell, *Biography*, p. 173.
159. Ibid., p. xv. Her liberal use of italics for indignant or astonished stress could be paralleled with the pastiche of Carroll's style I identify in Adair, Noon, and Roiphe's novels in Chapter 5, and with fan "performance" in Chapter 9.

HAROLD BLOOM

Afterthought

I regularly receive unsolicited documents from groups seeking to persuade me that all of Shakespeare was written by the Earl of Oxford. Other sects and covens assert that Christopher Marlowe or Sir Francis Bacon truly were the authors of the plays ascribed to "the man from Stratford." I am not charmed by any of this, but my heart leaps up whenever I hear from another organization which is dedicated to proving that all the works of Lewis Carroll actually were composed by Queen Victoria. It seems a comfort that in a world increasingly less literate, someone (however eccentric) should still care who wrote the *Alice* books.

I would hazard the estimate that, on a global basis, about ten thousand children (and adults) now peruse the Harry Potter books for every child (and adult) who is absorbed by Lewis Carroll. Since I am an experienced veteran of the Canon Wars, and go on fighting, I am not dismayed by this situation. The *Alice* books were first published in 1865 and 1871, and remain timelessly refreshed and refreshing in 2006. If I were to be around in 2065 (I would be merely a hundred and thirty-five years old) I do not think that the Harry Potter Phenomenon would persist, even in the dustbins.

Lewis Carroll is the greatest master of literary fantasy in Western tradition. His peers exist only in related realms of the imagination: William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens, Sigmund Freud. Figures as large as Hans

Christian Andersen, Edward Lear, and even Franz Kafka tend to diminish in too direct a comparison to Carroll. To find equals of the White Rabbit and the Mad Hatter you must turn at last to Shakespeare because Carroll shares the vitalistic inventiveness of the great plays.

Alice herself is Carroll's most remarkable creation, and is certainly the most memorable seven-year-old girl in all literature. Carroll desires her to remain seven forever, though he cannot control her dynamism or her will to live. But as an artist, Carroll triumphed over the obsessions of Dodgson the man. Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world have immolated time. Alice finally breaks out of them into temporal existence, but that means she enters a cosmos no longer Carroll's. While she abides in his domains, she is the triumphant realization of what may have been his impossible dream of love.

Chronology

1832	Charles Lutwidge Dodgson is born on January 27 in Daresbury, Cheshire, to the Reverend Charles Dodgson and Frances Jane Lutwidge Dodgson. He is the third child and eldest son of their eleven children (seven daughters, four sons).
1832–1843	Dodgson is educated at home. He is found to be left-handed and afflicted with a stammer (as are most of his siblings).
1843	The family moves to Croft, in Yorkshire, where the Reverend Charles Dodgson has been made Rector.
1844–1846	Dodgson attends Richmond Grammar School in Yorkshire. He entertains family with poems, drawings, and games.
1846–1850	Dodgson attends Rugby College; although he does well there, he is not happy in the public school atmosphere.
1850	Dodgson is at home, working on family magazines such as *The Rectory Umbrella* and *Useful and Instructive Poetry*.
1851–1854	He attends Christ Church College, Oxford. Enters as a Commoner two days before his mother dies (on January 24). Contributes to the *Oxonian Advertiser* and the *Whitby Gazette*. In 1852, is awarded a Studentship that will provide him with an income for the rest of his life. (The Studentship stipulates that he remain celibate and take Holy Orders.) In 1854, Dodgson becomes Bachelor of Arts, with a First Class degree in Mathematics.

1855 Dodgson is made Sub-Librarian and Master of the House at Christ Church; becomes Mathematical Lecturer. Writes *Mischmasch*, a scrapbook which contains, among other writings, the first stanza of "Jabberwocky," listed as "Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry."

1856 Dodgson publishes a number of parodies, including "Upon a Lonely Moor" ("Resolution and Independence"), under the name Lewis Carroll, derived from Latinate forms of Charles and Lutwidge. Buys his first camera, beginning his lifelong devotion to photography. Meets the daughters of the Dean of Christ Church, among them Alice Pleasance Liddell, who will serve as the model for the character of Alice.

1857 Dodgson takes his M.A. Befriends and photographs various Pre-Raphaelite poets and painters, as well as Thackeray and Tennyson.

1860 First mathematical publications, *A Syllabus of Plane Algebraical Geometry* and *Notes on the First Two Books of Euclid, Designed for Candidates for Responsions*, both intended as aids for students.

1861 Dodgson decides not to take full Holy Orders as the Studentship stipulated, in part because he is an ardent theatergoer. Dean Liddell allows him to be ordained as Deacon instead. In this capacity, he occasionally baptizes infants and officiates at funerals. Begins his Register of Correspondence, an account, with a summary, of every letter he writes or receives: at his death, it numbers 98,721 pieces of mail.

1862 Deacon Dodgson, Canon Duckworth, and the three Liddell sisters take a boat ride up the river to Godstow on July 4. On that trip, Dodgson amuses the children with the story of Alice's adventures under ground. Alice Liddell begs him to write down the account. He begins work on what is to be *Alice's Adventures under Ground*.

1863 Publishes *Enunciations of Euclid*.

1864 Dodgson completes a special, hand-illustrated version of *Alice's Adventures under Ground* as a present for Alice Liddell. In the meanwhile, at the urging of George MacDonald's children, he has begun a revision of the book for publication, to be illustrated by John Tenniel. He sends

Tenniel a photograph of another child-friend, Mary Hilton Badcock, from which to do the illustrations. Publishes *A Guide to the Mathematical Student in Reading, Reviewing, and Working Examples*.

1865 First publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in July; Dodgson is unhappy with the printing. Withdraws the book (sending the poor copies to America) and has it reprinted and published in November. Generally well reviewed, the book sells quite well after a slow start. Publishes the satires "The New Method of Evaluation as Applied to π" and "The Dynamics of Parti-cle."

1866 Second American edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Dodgson publishes *Condensation of Determinants*.

1867 Publishes *An Elementary Treatise on Determinants*. Publishes "Bruno's Revenge" in a children's magazine; the story is the basis for the *Sylvie and Bruno* books. Takes a tour of Russia.

1868 Dodgson's father dies on June 21—"the greatest blow that has ever fallen on my family." Dodgson publishes *The Fifth Book of Euclid Treated Algebraically* and the satire "The Offer of the Clarendon Trustees." A conversation with child-friend Alice Raikes gives Dodgson the idea for *Through the Looking-Glass*.

1869 Publishes collection of verse, *Phantasmagoria*.

1871 *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, with illustrations by John Tenniel, published in December. Immediately successful.

1872 Publishes satire "The New Belfry of Christ Church, Oxford."

1873 Publishes satire "The Vision of the Three T's."

1874 Publishes the book for students *Examples in Arithmetic* and the satire "The Blank Cheque."

1875 Publishes polemic "Some Popular Fallacies about Vivisection."

1876 Publishes *The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits*, with illustrations by Henry Holiday (except for a picture of the Snark, which Dodgson deletes). It is dedicated to child-friend Gertrude Chataway. Refuses to have his caricature done for *Vanity Fair* by Leslie Ward, as "nothing would be

	more unpleasant for me than to have my face known to strangers." Also returns all mail addressed to Lewis Carroll.
1879	Publishes *Euclid and His Modern Rivals*.
1881	Dodgson resigns his Lectureship at Oxford, although he continues to live at Christ Church, hoping to devote more time to his writing.
1882	Elected Curator of the Senior Common Room at Christ Church.
1883	Publishes *Rhyme? And Reason?*, a collection of verse, containing new material and previously published poems.
1885	Publishes *A Tangled Tale*, a series of previously published mathematical problems posed as short stories.
1886	Teaches logic in several girls' schools in Oxford. Facsimile edition published of *Alice's Adventures under Ground*. Stage version of *Alice in Wonderland* produced, created by H. Savile Clark.
1887	Publishes *The Game of Logic*, a serious and nonsensical introduction to logic.
1888	Publishes *Curiosa Mathematica*, *Part I: A New Theory of Parallels*.
1889	Publishes *Sylvie and Bruno*, a highly moral fairy tale, and *The Nursery Alice*, a picture book of *Alice* for the very young.
1893	Publishes *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* and *Curiosa Mathematica*, *Part II: Pillow Problems Thought Out During Sleepless Nights*.
1896	Publishes *Symbolic Logic*.
1898	Dies of bronchial infection at his sisters' home, The Chestnuts, in Guildford on January 14.
1928	Alice Liddell Hargreaves auctions her handwritten manuscript of *Alice's Adventures under Ground* for £15,400—the highest price ever bid for a book in a British auction and more than the buyer had just paid for a Shakespeare first folio.
1932	Alice Liddell Hargreaves is awarded an honorary degree from Columbia University for being Alice.
1934	Alice Liddell Hargreaves dies at her home in Westerham, Kent, on November 16.

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