

alice

THE SIDEWAYS

in

VICTORIAN WORLD

space

OF LEWIS CARROLL



GILLIAN BEER

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## *Acknowledgments*

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Earlier, diverse, and shorter versions of chapter 1, “Alice in Time,” appeared in *Alice in Wonderland through the Visual Arts* (London: Tate Publishing, 2011), 120–28; *Modern Language Review* 106 (October 2011); “The Presidential Address of the Modern Humanities Research Association” (2011), xxvii–xxxviii; and *Nature* 479 (November 2011): 38–39. An earlier version of chapter 6, “Must a Name Mean Something?” appeared in *I colori della narrative: Studi offerti a Roberto Bigazzi*, ed. Andrea Matucci and Simona Micali (Rome: Aracne, 2010), 163–80. Inevitably, with the length of time that books take in production, volumes have appeared since my work was more or less completed that I would have liked to engage with more fully: in particular, Robert Douglas-Fairhurst’s *The Story of Alice* (2015) offers a rich account of the lives of Charles Dodgson and Alice Liddell.

Hugh Haughton’s Centenary Edition (London: Penguin Classics, 1998, and frequently reprinted) gathers all three *Alice* books as well as Lewis Carroll’s later essay “‘Alice’ on the Stage” and two of his prefaces. Together with Haughton’s notes this offers a valuable basis for discussion and it is to this edition that all my *Alice* references refer. I am grateful to Hugh Haughton for his work.

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## INTRODUCTION

The *Alice* books continue to spark ideas for philosophers, graphic novelists, psychoanalysts, pantomime, advertisers, children, astronomers, filmmakers, gamers, and artists. Intensely verbal, they have added many words to the English language: portmanteau words, unbirthdays, galumphing, curiouser and curiouser, frabjous inventions! Yet they also provide material for images, ballet, and silent film, forms where gesture substitutes for talk. They have provoked terms for scientists: the “Red Queen hypothesis” in which parasite and host must keep changing (or co-evolve) in order to remain in the same place; “Alice in Wonderland syndrome” in psychiatry in which the patient experiences the body or body parts as shifting shape and scale, and where near and far become disturbed. What is it about these books that makes them resilient and provocative still? They have a remarkable capacity to absorb new contexts, from science fiction to musical theatre, surrealism to politics. They have also come under the sway of an eroticizing process that speaks to our current needs, while the original texts find freedom by eschewing awakened sexuality. Alice at seven or, later, seven and a half, is lodged in the period of latency. Her latency unfurls an array of alternative worlds and realizes fresh impossibilities. There is always something else, something other, to say about *Alice*.

In the course of my discussion here I will reawaken some of the contexts within which the books first lived and which they sometimes altered.

Such an approach can help us understand Carroll's habits of mind. These are habits, not analyses, and their manifestations in the *Alice* books are fugitive, not systematic. But, as habits, they are not intermittent, rather, always there. Moreover, knowing what is held in common can illuminate what is extraordinary. The books themselves are preoccupied with "rules" and delight in finding them as well as in reversing them. My study explores the *Alice* books at close hand and also looks through their lens to understand more of the ideas by which they were surrounded. Discussions among language-theorists, mathematicians, logicians, writers of philosophical dialogues and pedagogic works, philologists, photographers, parodists, and contributors to *Punch* all fuel the fireworks of these texts. So too, but turned awry, do the domestic pleasures of croquet, tea parties, picnics, and singing. Behind these daytime enjoyments lie night fears and dreaming, darkness and bafflement.

*Gulliver's Travels* changed from being an adults' to a children's book; the trajectory of *Alice* has been in the other direction. Yet the works also survive when simplified for infants into a picture book set of encounters with strange creatures, with very little accompanying text. I want to open my discussion, therefore, by emphasizing that these are indeed books for children and that that constituency of readers is crucial to the works made, as well as to the impulse that led to the making of them. This is important if we are to understand the peculiar language slippages explored and celebrated, the bodily knowledge registered, the categories and jokes that seem strange to adult eyes.

The *Alice* books explore profound affinities with childhood experience and its hidden and abiding presence. The babble conversation of the infant lies beneath adult talk: infant communication is plosive, punctuated by nouns, each with a broad nimbus of meaning, and informed by cadences of inquiry, assertion, and denial. It is revived in puns, exclamations, sing-song, laughter, and cries current in adult speech. Moreover, the child a few years on, learning to read, experiences the blobs on the page as questionable, subject to the drastic revision of adults, generating meanwhile an array of possible shapes and significations. The struggle to stabilize the codes of written language that the child undergoes is a forcing process that obliges her or him to jettison, but perhaps not utterly renounce, alternative clusters of thought that cling to the printed shape.

Twice, then, in entering a specific language and literacy, the child must falter, range, and explore: once in the emergence from infancy (in-fans: without language) and once in the profound acculturation of learning to read and write. So children are an audience skilled and honed by the struggle with language and still rebellious against its constraints. Carroll enters this free zone.

There used to be an orthodoxy that viewed Lewis Carroll as the miraculous product of an incurious and somewhat mediocre mathematician, Charles Dodgson, isolated in his Oxford college of Christ Church. In recent years that view has to some extent dissipated, thanks in large measure to the publication of Edward Wakeling's excellent ten-volume edition of Lewis Carroll's diaries (1993–2007), with its evidence of his array of friends and interests, and now Wakeling's record of Carroll's wide and eclectic professional and personal acquaintance in *Lewis Carroll and His Circle* (2015). Alongside that evidence, we also now have Charlie Lovett's reasoned bibliography *Lewis Carroll Among His Books* (2005): this gathers all the books known to have been owned by Carroll together with other books he read. It makes clear the range and intensity of his reading over an adult lifetime, though much of that lifetime is subsequent to the writing of the *Alice* books. Those books were published while he was still in his thirties and he lived to be sixty-five.

When Charles Dodgson died, most of his books were dispersed and Lovett's volume is a very valuable piece of detective work that gathers much of his reading together again. Of course, the fact that a person owned a book is not in itself evidence that he read it, though he must at one time have meant or hoped to do so, even when they were gifts. On the other hand, books in an individual's private library do not by any means encompass all the reading available to him or her: in the case of Dodgson/Carroll, he had constant access to the books in the library at Christ Church, to the magazines and newspapers taken by the Senior Common Room there, and to the Bodleian Library. During his time in the 1880s as curator of the Common Room at Christ Church he listed for their agenda the thirty-nine newspapers and journals regularly taken. The journals included the *Academy*, *Athenaeum*, *Illustrated London News*, *Punch*, *Saturday Review*, *Spectator*, *Contemporary*, *Fortnightly*, *Nineteenth Century*, *Edinburgh Review*, *Quarterly Review*, numerous railway guides,

and *Murray's English Dictionary*.<sup>1</sup> He was also a frequent play-goer.<sup>2</sup> We know that he personally took *Punch* each week and that he kept scrapbooks of items that struck or amused him. One of those scrapbooks is now on-line from the Library of Congress. We do not have extant notebooks for him of the thoroughgoing kind kept by some other Victorian writers such as George Eliot or Thomas Hardy. At most he records having had to strike a light in the night or stop on a winter's walk to "jot down a few words which should keep the new-born idea from perishing."<sup>3</sup>

No record of reading can ever be complete, nor can all the reactions of the reader be securely gauged at this distance. Nevertheless, the scale and range of Lewis Carroll's library does indicate his lively awareness of controversies and ideas in the world around him, and beyond. So, too, do his eclectic friends. This material has allowed me to pursue connections that long seemed to me implicit in the *Alice* books, now with empirical evidence from outside the text. Logic, law, languages, theology, dictionaries, novels and poetry, stage plays, philosophical dialogues, natural history, and evolution are all abiding interests for him beyond his professional studies of mathematics and logic.

This study ranges across a number of the fields that engaged Carroll's attention. It does not attempt to pursue every one of them.<sup>4</sup> I have not written here, for instance, in detail about his work as a photographer, though that experience clearly informs his writing. Much has already been written, and is being written, by people more expert in that field than I so I have commented only on his understanding of the processes of emergence, reversal, and inversion that go with the photographer's techniques.<sup>5</sup> My concern throughout this inquiry is not just influence but, rather, awareness, a fuller presence for the ideas and explorations current when Lewis Carroll was writing and to which he had access. His responses are sometimes passing, sometimes extensive — almost always questioning.

The *Alice* books present not so much the carnivalesque "world upside down" as the world *sideways on*, an egalitarian zone in which everything becomes possible and nothing is unlikely because all forms of being have presence and can argue: doors, time, eggs, queens, caterpillars, cats and hatters, oysters, gnats, and little girls — all have their say. Alice herself is

the radical principle of the books: she represents infinite readiness. She is always curious, always inquiring, and always able to reason her way through the predicaments she finds herself in. Frédérique Ait-Touati observes astutely:

This work makes me think about Alice as a traveller in a traveller's tale. She does not tell the tale herself, unlike many of the assertive fictions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. She is not justifying what she has seen. What she has seen is never doubted. She is the stable centre of observation in a world of marvels. Yet she enacts in her own person the usual technologies of fantasy travels, of microscope and telescope. . . . Alice upsets the usual hierarchies of travel literature. She is female and a child, two almost impossible categories in travellers' tales. Even Margaret Cavendish in her satire on experimental science, *The Blazing World*, 1666, places an Empress at its centre of judgment, not a young girl.<sup>6</sup>

Adamant Alice, no respecter of persons, also has to ask herself persistently who she is. Identity is no settled matter for her. Yet she is the reader's pellucid guide through the maze. Henry James in the preface to *What Maisie Knew* (1897) says that "Maisie to the end . . . treats her friends to the rich little spectacle of objects embalmed in her wonder. She wonders, in other words, to the end, to the death—the death of her childhood, properly speaking."<sup>7</sup> Alice is a more energetic wonderer, and objects more often escape her reach than become fixed:

"Things flow about so here!" she said at last in a plaintive tone, after she had spent a minute or so in vainly pursuing a large bright thing, that looked sometimes like a doll and sometimes like a work-box, and was always in the shelf next above the one she was looking at. (LG, 176)

Alice endures metamorphoses rather than death or embalming, though death is the haunting alternative to change and growth:

"I never ask advice about growing," Alice said indignantly.  
 "Too proud?" the other enquired.



Alice felt even more indignant at this suggestion. “I mean,” she said, “that one ca’n’t help growing older.”

“*One* ca’n’t, perhaps,” said Humpty Dumpty; “but *two* can. With proper assistance you might have left off at seven.” (LG, 184)

Growing—growing up, growing old, growing apart—is a generative dread that drives the narrative in the *Alice* books: Hilary Schor observes that “storytelling is always tinged with mortality, that mortality (‘growing up’ and then ‘going out like a candle’) is always at the heart of fiction.”<sup>8</sup> And growing is the universal experience undergone and forgotten by us all. But Alice herself is resilient. She seems to emerge from the resilience of shared childhood.

A boy called Charles Dodgson, born in 1832, grew up in a family eventually of eleven children, surrounded by sisters. First, two sisters, Fanny and Elizabeth, then Charles, then Caroline and Mary, before another boy arrived: Skeffington. Then Wilfred, and then three more sisters, Louisa, Margaret, and Henrietta, before the final Edwin. There would always have been little boys in skirts and little girls in skirts around him. (Boys weren’t breeched until five or six and Catherine Robson has explored the disjunction exacted on male identity by the “definitive break between those early years in the feminized nursery and their subsequent careers in the wider world.”<sup>9</sup>) They lived in a quiet vicarage and made their own noisy amusements: sliding down stairs, being late for dinner, coping with domestic chickens and donkeys, drawing, and fishing in the river (all evoked in his early comic verses).<sup>10</sup> Charles didn’t go to school until he was twelve but was taught by his father until then, among his siblings. Eventually he was sent to Rugby, where he suffered, and then to Oxford, where he thrived. He spent his professional life as a mathematician and logician in the company of men, his colleagues at Christ Church and across the university. Only one of his sisters married and they all lived together in a house in Guildford—except Henrietta, the youngest daughter who set up house on her own in Brighton. Charles sometimes visited her there and also spent most vacations with his sisters in Guildford where, eventually, he died rather suddenly at the age of sixty-five. So he alternated between male and female company around the pattern of the

academic year. And a thread of shared childhood could continue through the communal sisters (even the married sister returned to live with them after the death of her husband).

But where did Alice get in? And how did Charles Dodgson become Lewis Carroll? It started young.

The *Letters of Lewis Carroll* opens with a letter from Charles's father to him, dated January 6, 1840, from Ripon. Charles was seven, the same age as he later gives to Alice, and approaching his eighth birthday on January 27. He had written to his father asking for "a file and a screw driver, and a ring" from his father's visit to Leeds. The letter from father to young son reveals a good deal about the family traditions of humor. It is full of inventive mayhem: hyperbole, crossing of sizes and sexes, violence of every kind threatened, commissions received and performed, gifts and promises. The father declares slaughter to the whole citizenry of Leeds and reprieves them when they bring the items.

As soon as I get to Leeds I shall scream out in the middle of the street, *Ironmongers, Ironmongers*. Six hundred men will rush out of their shops in a moment—fly, fly, in all directions—ring the bells, call the constables, set the Town on fire. I WILL have a file and a screw driver, and a ring, and if they are not brought directly, in forty seconds, I will leave nothing but one small cat alive in the whole Town of Leeds, and I shall only leave that, because I am afraid I shall not have time to kill it.<sup>11</sup>

The threatened sack of the city is made alarmingly immediate by the single cat survivor.

So the fantasy begins. But what makes this rodomontade memorable is the rolling up of categories and the promiscuous pairings. Dodgson senior continues:

Then what a bawling and tearing of hair there will be! Pigs and babies, camels and butterflies, rolling in the gutter together—old women rushing up the chimneys and cows after them—ducks hiding themselves in coffee-cups, and fat geese trying to squeeze themselves into pencil cases. (4)

The large are desperate to be small, the powerful to be hidden, parents (or at least mothers) to protect:

At last the Mayor of Leeds will be found in a soup plate covered up with custard, and stuck full of almonds to make him look like a sponge cake that he may escape the dreadful destruction of the Town! Oh! where is his wife? She is safe in her own pincushion with a bit of sticking plaster on the top to hide the hump in her back, and all her dear little children, seventy-eight poor little helpless infants crammed into her mouth, and hiding themselves behind her double teeth. (4)

Gargantua and Lilliput are rollicking together. The precision with which the letter describes these tumbles across size gives it its peculiarly imagistic gusto (the “bit of sticking plaster” disguising the hump in the pincushion, the seventy-eight children hiding behind her double teeth). The final fugue of shifting scales passes a man and a donkey in and out of a body, a teapot, a thimble:

Then comes a man hid in a teapot crying and roaring, “Oh, I have dropped my donkey. I put it up my nostril, and it has fallen out of the spout of the teapot into an old woman’s thimble and she will squeeze it to death when she puts her thimble on.” (4)

And all this imaginative mayhem in the service of a small boy with his intriguingly disparate requests for “a file and a screw driver, and a ring”! The excitement and triumph of the father’s invention feed the child’s sense of omnipotence, a sense that often grows doubtful by eight years old. The letter is a splendid eighth unbirthday present, three weeks in advance of January 27 when the objects themselves will have arrived.

Charles kept the letter, of course, and any addict of the *Alice* books will spot intriguing reminiscences and shared properties: pigs and babies, the mayor in a soup plate, the man in a teapot, the survivor cat, the thimble: “We beg your acceptance of this elegant thimble” (W, 27). When Alice escapes the violent kitchen of the Duchess with the baby, it soon turns into a pig: “it would have made a dreadfully ugly child: but it makes rather a

handsome pig, I think” (56); at the end of the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party “the last time she saw them, they were trying to put the Dormouse into the teapot” (67); at the weltering dinner that abruptly closes *Looking-Glass*: “‘Here I am!’ cried a voice from the soup-tureen, and Alice turned again, just in time to see the Queen’s broad good-natured face grinning at her for a moment over the edge of the tureen, before she disappeared into the soup” (232–33).

The *Alice* books themselves temper his father’s macho mayhem with Alice’s clear-eyed propriety (she rarely laughs though she persistently inquires). But the exuberant commotion of the father’s writing may have encouraged the son’s easy way with catastrophe. Carroll’s catastrophes harm no one (save in the framed poems, where little oysters do get eaten, overdemanding sons get kicked downstairs, and the Jabberwock is slain). Nothing material happened to the city of Leeds as a result of his father’s imagining, but the material presents—ring, file, and screwdriver—did arrive safely for young Charles.

That fascination with the threshold between imagining and acting out runs deep through the *Alice* books: “let’s pretend” is the more self-conscious prelude to *Looking-Glass* as opposed to Alice’s helpless plummeting at the start of *Wonderland*. Alice has a double nature: she is hybrid across fiction and the living. There was a girl called Alice Liddell, for ten years or so, before she grew into a young lady, then a married woman and a mother, two of whose sons died in the First World War, then a widow, then dead herself.<sup>12</sup> There is a girl called simply Alice who derives in some measure from those ten years at the start of Alice Hargreave’s life, but who stands alone, always poised, divested of kin, looking curiously around her.

The twenty-four-year-old Charles Dodgson noted in his diary for February 19, 1856:

I found an old book the other day in the Library, with a head of Janus done in pen and ink, and the motto, (probably the old one of the family) *Respice et Resipisce* [Look back and see reason]. There was also *In futurum et provectum* [Carried also into the future], which most likely was added as an explanation, and did not belong to the original motto.<sup>13</sup>

As Lewis Carroll a few years later, Charles Dodgson certainly fulfilled the family motto: looking at once two ways, producing retrospects that puzzle and illuminate, and providing explanations that do not explain:

“No, no! The adventures first,” said the Gryphon in an impatient tone: “explanations take such a dreadful time.” (W, 91)

Alice never knows what’s coming next. Her creator claimed the same. Lewis Carroll wrote in his essay “‘Alice’ on the Stage” many years after the books, in 1887, that:

I distinctly remember, now as I write, 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. (AS, 294)

Carroll believes himself to have been writing a narrative without a foreseen future, where ideas “seemed to grow of themselves.” Even in revision and addition, he asserts, “every such idea and nearly every word of the dialogue, *came of itself*” (his italics). He goes further: “‘Alice’ and the ‘Looking-Glass’ are made up almost wholly of bits and scraps, single ideas which came of themselves.” Four times in a single page he insists on the autonomy of the works and their contents: they “came of themselves.” They came, also, he suggests as discrete units at odd times and places:

Sometimes an idea comes at night, when I have had to get up and strike a light to note it down—sometimes when out on a lonely winter walk, when I have had to stop, and with half-frozen fingers jot down a few words which should keep the new-born idea from perishing—but whenever or however it comes, *it comes of itself*. (AS, 294)

The insistence is striking, even symptomatic. Carroll is—in contrast to Freud—disclaiming any interference from his *conscious* mind. He is the medium for the tale telling itself (he was a founding member of the Psychical Research Society in 1882 and particularly interested in automatic writing). He seems intent on urging both the depth and the inde-

pendence of these tales, which start up outside his production. He is also denying, professionally, that he feels the strain of authorship as well as the imputation that he uses any journeyman “padding.”

The two stories of creativity embedded here do not quite tally the one with the other. Although Carroll tells the stories and seems to invent them under the eager duress of young listeners, the written versions are as much the product of solitude as of company, perhaps more so. The oral versions of these tales are lost in the long-ago spontaneity of the occasion. As Carroll remarks:

none of these many tales got written down: they lived and died, like summer midges, each in its own golden afternoon. (AS, 293–94)

We cannot know what they were like or even how close they ran to the versions he later wrote down. *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground* may be taken as the nearest likeness to the interchange between him and his known listeners who cunningly insist that “next time” is “now” when he shows signs of wearying and promises them more next time.

And ever, as the story drained  
 The wells of fancy dry,  
 And faintly strove the weary one  
 To put the subject by,  
 “The rest next time —” “It is next time!”  
 The happy voices cry. (W, 6)

The children’s voices can play Carroll at his own game: “next time” is time abutting as well as time future. The children know that desire forces the future back into the orbit of the story.

But Alice Liddell changed the course of things:

there came the day when, as it chanced, one of my little listeners petitioned that the tale might be written out for her. (AS, 294)

The tale he writes out is not quite the one he has already told, if we are to believe his account. Indeed, it may not be like it at all, if we take at its

full force his insistence that he had not “the least idea what was to happen” after Alice “went down the rabbit-hole.”

The tale he is inventing in this late essay “‘Alice’ on the Stage” is about how those early tales were told and captured. If we were hoping for a description of his peculiar creativity his account is distractingly reliant on conventions. It is stocked full of the tropes on how to begin a story: the move from the repeated present (aorist) to the single transforming occasion (“there came a day”); the contingent nature of what happened (“when as it chanced”); the emergence of the heroine (“one of my little listeners”); the establishing of ownership for the work (“petitioned that the tale might be written out for her”).

This story about the making of story marks the difference of genre between oral and written. The ur-stories fly away. The books last. Who is responsible for them? Carroll is pleased to claim them (“I have not consciously borrowed them”) and yet doffs responsibility for them: they have come of themselves. The inside unconscious is outside, arriving with its weekend bag or its portmanteau.

When Carroll revised and added to *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground* for publication as *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* he moved from addressing a known to an unknown reader. So he emphasized the speaking voice in the narrative because the storyteller was no longer there in person. Through punctuation, paragraphing, italicizing, and added adjectives, intensives, and speech tags he scores the text for performance. He indicates the passing of time and the pacing of reading by small cumulative effects, such as separating off a sentence and removing commas that hold back Alice’s fall: as here, for example. *Under Ground* reads:

full of curiosity, she hurried across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. In a moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.

The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly, that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself, before she found herself falling down what seemed a deep well. (249)

*Wonderland* reads:

burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge.

In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again.

The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down, so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well. (W, 10)

Carroll augments the dramatic effects of vocabulary (“full of curiosity” becomes “burning with curiosity,” “hurried” becomes “ran”). He also uses pauses and headlong sentences to substitute for his own voice as present storyteller: “had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down.” He is changing something like a play-script into a performance on the page. Alice Liddell could imagine his performance in person; his unknown readers could not. He restored the voice of the storyteller for readers and listeners alike. He also added many of the characters and episodes now most famous in *Wonderland*: the Cheshire-Cat, the Duchess, the Hatter’s tea party, the Pig and Pepper chapter, and a much expanded trial of the Knave of Hearts. He dropped some material that came direct from the original expedition, such as the visit to a cottage to dry themselves when they were all soaked through, and a couple of names that referred directly in unflattering terms to other girls.

The *Alice* books play across all the registers of listening and of reading aloud or reading silently, as child and as adult. *Looking-Glass* fully incorporates the effects Carroll had earlier learned in the move from domestic to unknown readership. The voice inside the head, or present in the room, is crucial to the intimate experience of these books and evoked by the written text. Many of the jokes also work on the cusp of the oral and the written. And speakers persistently interrupt each other, while events swerve into new paths with the repeated word, “suddenly.”

The first version of *Alice*, presented to Alice Liddell before Christmas



1864, was *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, but this title does not particularly evoke the submerged world of unknown motivation, what Eneas Sweetland Dallas in *The Gay Science* repeatedly called "the hidden soul," nor a return to the womb, nor an instructive tale about mining.<sup>14</sup> What is described after Alice plunges "down the rabbit-hole" is a rabbit warren, with its underground passageways: "The rabbit-hole went on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down" (W, 10).

A rabbit warren might be expected to have a thronging society of rabbits. Instead only one solitary rabbit appears, in a state of extraordinary anxiety because he is late for a Duchess. Carroll forthwith turns his tale away from the parallel world of rabbit life to a more promiscuous mingling of categories. He uses the rabbit hole simply to establish a means of entry. He is not smuggling in any natural history instruction. Any child familiar with the countryside would recognize the sheer inviting scale of those entries to rabbit warrens. They look as if a child could just about enter, though probably get stuck. Country children would know, too, that the creature usually sent down the rabbit hole in pursuit of rabbits is a lithe and predatory ferret, not a little girl. That scene I remember well from childhood, and its fierce outcome.

Unlike the ferret, Alice is not a destroyer, though an intruder. Unlike an ordinary rabbit warren, the ground drops away into a chute down which Alice curiously meanders without the urgency of gravity:

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her, and to wonder what was going to happen next. (W, 10)

The inconsequential sequence of reasoning unhinges logic, to say nothing of Newton. Neither the depth nor the speed of her fall answers to ordinary experience, though they do to dream motion. Yet the fall also marks the extreme literalism of these stories: she is "falling asleep," as we say, and she here acts out that phrase by "falling." This is the first narrative hint that her experience might be a dream, but Carroll avoids diminishing its physical actuality. (See chapter 7 on Dream for further discussion.)

One form of that resilience is the work's resistance to allegory. How firm this resistance is can be seen by comparison with the work of George MacDonald. MacDonald was Dodgson's close friend and was also the person who most encouraged Carroll to publish his work. MacDonald's own first famous book, *Phantastes*, subtitled "A Faerie Romance for Men and Women," was published in 1858 and was much admired by Carroll, who was also a family intimate, and delighted in by all the children who remained in correspondence with him for many years. *Phantastes* seems to provide one model by inversion for Carroll's very different creativity.<sup>15</sup>

*Phantastes* suggestively tracks a boy's symbolic progress into manhood. He enters an animated forest, seizes his "White Lady," becomes a knight, and dies in battle before returning out of the dream this proves to be, into his own body. *Alice* is in some ways a riposte to this high-minded form of dreaming. Her trenchant, down-to-earth conversations and encounters have the matter-of-fact quality of dreams *while they are dreamt*, however they may be interpreted in retrospect.

A fluid and amorphous symbolism is everywhere at work in *Phantastes*. The clue to this is given in the epigraph to chapter 3, the poem "Man" by MacDonald's friend, the Manchester Swedenborgian Henry Sutton:

Man doth usurp all space,  
 Stares thee, in rock, bush, river, in the face.  
 Never yet thine eyes behold a tree;  
 'Tis no sea thou seést in the sea,  
 'Tis but a disguised humanity.  
 To avoid thy fellow, vain thy plan;  
 All that interests a man, is man.<sup>16</sup>

Anthropomorphism blocks the view and turns the eyes back from seeing anything other than self as other. Man "Stares thee, in rock, bush, river, in the face." The image is a powerful figuration of narcissism as the absolute human condition: "Man doth usurp all space." The moral toward which *Phantastes* labors is the eschewing of self.

*Phantastes* is not a book for children. It seems rather to be addressed

to adolescents, insecure in identity and lashing out in search of great deeds. The quality of nightmare is strong here, both in the dark shadow that haunts Cosmo and the delusionary prison that rises around him day by day. In total contrast to Carroll's work where even the violence of Jabberwocky is crunched and secluded by its impenetrable semantics, the violence of the battles with the giants in *Phantastes* is extreme and bloodthirsty and the deaths of the brothers in the dream are deaths in deed.

The dream conditions in *Phantastes* raise problems of belief for the narrator himself, and the work is self-conscious about the boundaries of the dream world and its abutting realities. The place and value of the self is anxiously debated. MacDonald is fond of epigraphs, from German and from earlier English, bolstering the philosophical claims of the text. Chapter 22 declares its theme with these epigraphs:

Niemand hat meine Gestalt als der *Ich*.

*Schoppe*, in JEAN PAUL's *Titan*.

No one has my form but the *I*.

.....

Joy's a subtil elf.

I think man's happiest when he forgets himself.

CYRIL TOURNEUR.—*The Revenger's Tragedy*. (275)

The last chapter, 25, has two epigraphs, the first from Novalis:

Unser Leben ist kein Traum, aber es soll und wird vielleicht einer werden.

NOVALIS.

Our life is no dream; but it ought to become one, and perhaps will.

.....

And on the ground, which is my modres gate,

I knocke with my staf, erlich and late,  
And say to hire, Leve mother, let me in.

CHAUCER. — *The Pardoner's Tale*. (318)

Within the text MacDonald copes with the questions of dream, identity, and half-belief raised in his epigraphs by a rough grotesquerie:

You see this Fairy-land is full of oddities and all sorts of incredibly ridiculous things, which a man is compelled to meet and treat as real existences, although all the time he feels foolish for doing so. This being, if being it could be called, was like a block of wood roughly hewn into the mere outlines of a man; and hardly so, for it had but head, body, legs, and arms,—the head without a face, and the limbs utterly formless. I had hewn off one of its legs, but the two portions moved on as best they could, quite independent of each other; so that I had done no good. I ran after it, and clove it in twain from the head downwards; but it could not be convinced that its vocation was not to walk over people; for, as soon as the little girl began her begging again, all three parts came bustling up; and if I had not interposed my weight between her and them, she would have been trampled again under them. (300–301)

This machinate monster, though made of wood, denies organic life and, as MacDonald declares with a rueful half-humor, “could not be convinced that its vocation was not to walk over people.” The mixture of drollery and threat, the uneasy shifts of tone, make for a sense of strain, a willed credulity, shared by narrator and reader alike.

There are, though, some passages that may have served as hints to Carroll as he mused on the imagination. Cosmo attempts to clean the mirror and then gazes “vacantly for a few moments into the depth of the reflected room.”

But ere long he said, half aloud: “What a strange thing a mirror is! and what a wondrous affinity exists between it and a man’s imagination! For this room of mine, as I behold it in the glass, is the same, and yet not the same. It is not the mere representation of the room I live in, but it looks

just as if I were reading about it in a story that I like. All its commonness has disappeared. The mirror has lifted it out of the region of fact into the realm of art; and the very representing of it to me has clothed with interest that which was otherwise hard and bare; just as one sees with delight upon the stage the representation of a character from which one would escape in life as from something unendurably wearisome. But is it not rather that art rescues nature from the weary and sated regards of our senses, and the degrading injustice of our anxious every-day life, and, appealing to the imagination, which dwells apart, reveals nature in some degree as she really is, and as she represents herself to the eye of the child, whose every-day life, fearless and unambitious, meets the true import of the wonder-teeming world around him, and rejoices therein without questioning? (154–55)

Alice, in contrast to this idealized (boy) child, is full of questions. Alive with curiosity, she seeks that part of the mirrored room she cannot see from her own side of the looking-glass. Things are not raised or idealized in the looking-glass room. Alice is firmly active rather than morally reflective. But Carroll, a devoted theater-goer, may well have relished Cosmo's observation about the transformation that takes place when staging a dull character who thereby becomes a delight to watch (indeed, Carroll borrows the idea much later in *Sylvie and Bruno*). And there is a more general affinity between the looking-glass experience and the idea that the reflected room is so glamorized by inversion that it "looks just as if I were reading about it in a story I like." In almost every other way, though, MacDonald's frontal moralization of the scene is alien to Carroll—and perhaps all the more enjoyed by him because so different.

The soft and claustrophobic world of *Phantastes* is braced in Carroll's writing. Despite all the animals who take part in the narrative, any anthropomorphism is nonchalant and fitful. The White Rabbit is a white rabbit who carries a watch. The Dormouse is a dormouse, hibernating as usual. The Cheshire-Cat is definitively a cat even in his absence. His smile carries no further innuendo. Alice herself undergoes no transformation of the self, although her body bulges and diminishes. She learns a lot, but it is all lateral and inconsequential, not driving on toward

adulthood. Unlike *Phantastes*, the *Alice* books are not quest stories. MacDonald's characters are seeking a self beyond self:

Self will come to life even in the slaying of self; but there is ever something deeper and stronger than it, which will emerge at last from the unknown abysses of the soul: will it be as a solemn gloom, burning with eyes? or a clear morning after the rain? or a smiling child, that finds itself nowhere, and everywhere? (288)

Alice, in all her anxieties about hanging on to her own identity, is determined to be in one place, not everywhere, and certainly not nowhere. She is not taking part in that struggle to become an adult gentleman that shapes *Phantastes* and also Charles Kingsley's *Water-Babies* (1863), the other most accomplished and influential fantasy of child life and death published in the years just before *Alice*. She has the advantage of being a girl child and she shows no interest in becoming a lady. Boys do not enter Alice's worlds; her brother's Latin book has taught her the vocative, "O mouse," but there is no place for him in Wonderland or Looking-Glass Land.

Cosmo, in *Phantastes*, expresses an ideal of boyhood very distant from Alice. There were, of course, other small girls in Victorian literature but rather more common was the young heroine blooming toward romance. Indeed, in the year that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was first published, 1865, Henry James reviewed Louisa May Alcott's novel *Moods* and expressed some irritation:

The heroine of "Moods" is a fitful, wayward, and withal most amiable young person, named Sylvia. We regret to say that Miss Alcott takes her up in her childhood. We are utterly weary of stories about precocious little girls. In the first place, they are themselves disagreeable and unprofitable objects of study; and in the second, they are always the precursors of a not less unprofitable middle-aged lover.<sup>17</sup>

This is an amusing slight in the light of James's later *What Maisie Knew* (1897): Maisie, who proves to be neither disagreeable nor unprofitable as an object of study, as James declares in his preface to the novel:

All this would be to say, I at once recognized, that my light vessel of consciousness, swaying in such a draught, couldn't be with verisimilitude a rude little boy; since, beyond the fact that little boys are never so "present," the sensibility of the female young is indubitably, for early youth, the greater, and my plan would call, on the part of my protagonist, for "no end" of sensibility. I might impute that amount of it without extravagance to a slip of a girl whose faculties should have been well shaken up.<sup>18</sup>

But James's comments on Alcott also distinguish what sets Alice apart: she is not precocious, though she is inquisitive, and no middle-aged lover comes to interrupt the story. The author who loves her is discreet, his attention fixed in the fictional freedom of his created heroine. And that heroine is a child, not an incipient adolescent. It is striking that Alcott's Sylvia is first seen by her future lover as a romantic-looking boy, a gardener's boy, and only a little later recognized as female. She is positioned in the labile state of a twelve- or thirteen-year-old. Alice is placed securely in the midst of latency at seven. From that period of consciousness she can challenge a good deal of adult wisdom on child rearing as well as adult categories for knowledge.

There is a strong element of elegy in the relation between Carroll's heroine and the child who initiated the writing-down of the stories. By May 1865 (not long before the publication of *Wonderland*) Carroll found the thirteen-year-old Alice Liddell "changed a good deal, and hardly for the better—probably going through the usual awkward stage of transition."<sup>19</sup> When *Looking-Glass* appeared at the end of 1871 Alice Liddell was already a young lady. In the two books Alice remains resolutely seven. In the six years between *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* she ages only to "Seven years and six months." But the passage of time is recorded in another vein. Her pet cat, Dinah, in *Wonderland* has become "the old cat," mother of the white and black kittens in *Looking-Glass* who transmogrify into chess pieces.

"Let's pretend that you're the Red Queen, Kitty! I think if you sat up and folded your arms, you'd look exactly like her. Now do try, there's a dear!" (LG, 124)

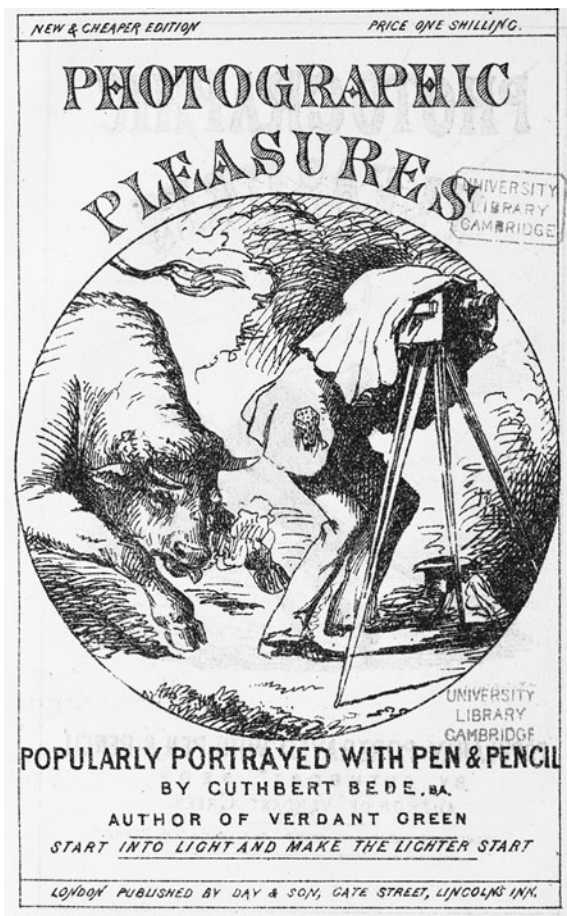
The reader helplessly attempts to make the kitten fold her arms in a mind-picture whose absurdity flaunts and flouts anthropomorphism. Dinah, through all her manifestations in the two books as textbook cat (“Où est ma chatte?”), Cheshire-Cat, Red Queen, White Queen, kitten, alone wanders freely across the zone between dream and waking, Alice’s shape-shifting go-between.<sup>20</sup>

I have called this study *Alice in Space*. “Alice in Space”: not spaced-out Alice, though the caterpillar with his hookah does provide her with a magic mushroom; and not astronomical space only, though mid-nineteenth-century mathematical concepts of space troubled Carroll’s imagination, as my argument will show. *Alice* takes place in interior space: underground, behind the looking-glass, in the head of the reader. The *hortus conclusus* of reading (its enclosed garden) here answers to the story told. It brims with strange plants, its pathways follow wayward trajectories. The interiority of these works matches the intensity of reading; their shifting landscapes map reading’s extension inwards into further and further discovery, without close.

Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* sees space as “neither a ‘subject’ nor an ‘object’ . . . but a social reality—that is to say, a set of relations and forms.”<sup>21</sup> Rabbit warrens, court rooms, chessboards, and tea tables, are all examples of social spaces, true enough. Is a looking-glass a flat space?—Alice determines to discover. And the child’s body, living in a world sized for adults, raises bruising questions about space and the life of objects that lour over those they purport to serve; questions about who owns these spaces, too. Carroll enjoyed positioning his photographic subjects in curious relations between inside and outside, as in his photograph of Alice Donkin perched on a ladder outside an upstairs window, entitled “The Elopement.” He was conscious of the absurdities of photography, too, enjoying Cuthbert Bede’s *Photographic Pleasures* (1855) with its images of photographers as mythical beasts, half man, half machine, joined under a cloth. (See figs. 1 and 2.)

In a favorite book of Carroll’s, Bon Gaultier’s *The Book of Ballads* (first edition 1845; Carroll owned the 1859 edition), we find among the parodies of Wordsworth, Tennyson, Montgomery, Macaulay, and Bulwer Lytton one grand spasmodic poem entitled “The Death of Space” which reaches its climax in two final verses:

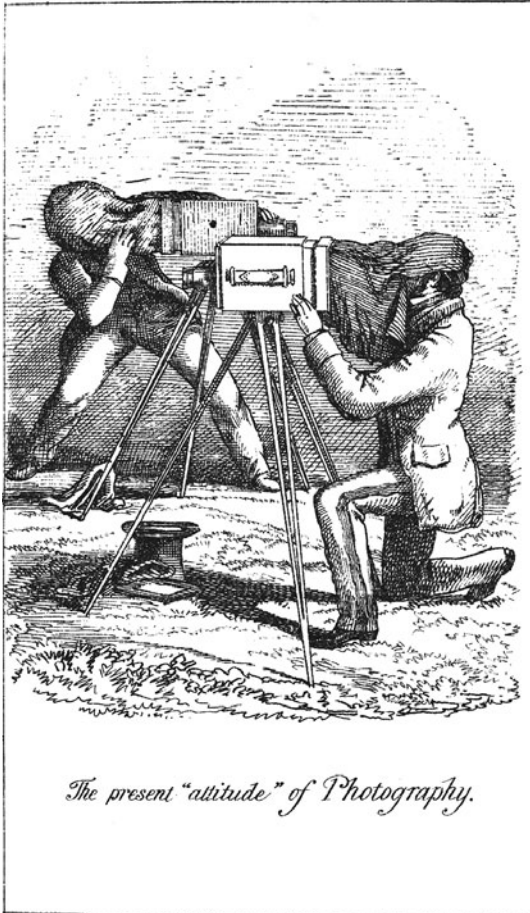




1. [Edward Bradley] Cuthbert Bede, *Photographic Pleasures Popularly Portrayed with Pen and Pencil* (London, 1855). Frontispiece: "Portrait of a Distinguished Photographer who has just succeeded in focussing a view to his complete satisfaction."

And when the King of Terrors breathes his last,  
 Infinity shall creep into her shell,  
 Cause and effect shall from their thrones be cast,  
 And end their strife with suicidal yell.

While from their ashes, burnt with pomp of kings  
 'Mid incense floating to the vanished skies,



2. [Edward Bradley] Cuthbert Bede, *Photographic Pleasures Popularly Portrayed with Pen and Pencil* (London, 1855): "The present 'attitude' of Photography."

Nonentity, on circumambient wings,  
An everlasting phoenix shall arise.<sup>22</sup>

Not quite *Alice's* tone. More the Jabberwock meets Byron. But the questions of scale ("Infinity shall creep into her shell") and of lost causality producing "Non-entity" everlastingly renewed, cast some nicely lurid shadows forward from the 1840s toward the 1860s when the *Alice* books were being written.

The *Alice* books were conceived and written during a period of intense upheaval in scientific theories across a number of different disciplines. These upheavals produced seismic waves across further fields. In a description oddly reminiscent of the changes of scale in *Alice* a contributor to Anthony Trollope's magazine *Saint Paul's* in 1868 commented: "It is not enough to say that the Sciences have grown, — they have shot suddenly from dwarfish into gigantic dimensions."<sup>23</sup> This threshold world of new thinking was later characterized by William James as the radical epistemic shift after 1850:

the enormously rapid multiplication of theories in these latter days has well-nigh upset the notion of any one of them being a more literally objective kind of thing than another. There are so many geometries, so many logics, so many physical and chemical hypotheses, so many classifications, each one of them good for so much yet not good for everything, that the notion that even the truest formula may be a human device not a literal transcript has dawned upon us.<sup>24</sup>

Euclid was still at the basis of learning in Oxford and Cambridge when Lewis Carroll was writing, despite the emergence of new non-Euclidean insights: Darwin, for example, was thrilled by Euclid's power. Francine Abeles explains the general intellectual significance of Euclid for many of Carroll's contemporaries and their forerunners:

Euclid's geometry was the centerpiece because it was thought to be the deductive study of spatial truth, with Euclid's axioms and theorems describing physical space exactly. By extension, Euclidean geometry stood as the model for the attainment of absolute truths by the power of human reasoning generally.<sup>25</sup>

In Cambridge all students had to study Euclid and pass examinations on his work. More than 200 editions were current during the nineteenth century. The first two books of Euclid taught students all their geometry and were tested in Responsions, the first of the examinations that undergraduates had to pass. In Oxford, classics dominated over mathematics so that Dodgson found himself there sustaining a more minority subject,

which depended for its repute on Euclid. Maths had been added to public school education in the first half of nineteenth century but was always secondary to classics:

This classical text represented the essence of the world of Plato and Aristotle and combined both humanistic and formal traditions of the most admired of cultures, that of the ancient Greeks.<sup>26</sup>

Professionally, Dodgson held to the authority of Euclid; as Lewis Carroll he explored in fantasy alternative spaces for thinking, where “absolute truths” are quite as subject to questioning as is the menu for dinner.

The chapters in this book are organized thematically, each in turn focusing on a different aspect of the two books. They work together to reveal particular patterns rather than to proceed irreversibly from stage to stage; by this means I respect the picaresque nature of Alice’s travels and resist seeking a moral progress or an apotheosis that would falsify Lewis Carroll’s achievement. My hope is to augment the reader’s pleasure in these dazzling works and to demonstrate how they interact with some of the most stimulating discussions of the mid-Victorian period. Here, the *Alice* texts are placed in apposition to other works and inquiries intellectual and social, contemporary with Carroll. Particular passages return to the discussion from time to time, set in a different context. The topics addressed in succeeding chapters are time; games, mathematics and arguments about space; puns, *Punch*, and parody; philosophical dialogue, pedagogic writing, and the dialogues of the *Alice* books; taxonomies and classification; names, naming, and the question of Alice’s identity; dreaming and issues of justice; growing and eating.

All these topics bear on the experience of Charles Dodgson, sequestered behind, and altered by, the extraordinary works that as Lewis Carroll he invented. This raises the question of how to refer to that doubled figure: Dodgson/Carroll is sometimes accurate but unbearably ponderous if repeated across the whole work. I have therefore used the name Lewis Carroll, or Carroll, as is normal practice, except where the discussion is concentrated on events and materials such as letters and diaries kept by the young Charles Dodgson before the *Alice* books were written.

Among the figures whose writings are discussed in the course of this study are George MacDonald, John Stuart Mill, Horne Tooke, F. Max Müller, Charles Darwin, James Clerk Maxwell, Thomas Henry Huxley, Emily Brontë, Plato, and writers of recipes. The arguments in which they were all engaged have not disappeared. Some topics remain particularly pressing at the present: how children grow, how child and adult relate to each other, how persistent is identity in aging, how readers navigate the dream-state of reading. The books release and amuse and disquiet readers, and their nonsense always has more meaning hidden in reserve than could have been foreseen. Alice herself remains in the forefront of creativity for women and girls, with her indefatigable curiosity and willingness to test the conditions that prevail.

# I

## ALICE IN TIME

In an 1891 letter to Mrs. Liddell, mother of the original Alice, once his adversary now cautiously a friend again, twenty-five years after the publication of *Alice in Wonderland* and nearly twenty after *Through the Looking-Glass*, Carroll, or Dodgson, muses on the condensations and stayings of time.

It seems but yesterday when the Dean, and you, first arrived: yet I was hardly more than a boy, then; and many of the pleasantest memories of those early years—that foolish time that seemed as if it would last for ever—are bound up with the names of yourself and your children.<sup>1</sup>

Time returns in memory as timelessness (“that foolish time that seemed as if it would last for ever”). But timelessness is delusive; Carroll continues the sentence “and now I am an old man, already beginning to feel a little weary of life.” The Liddells are retiring after thirty-six years at Christ Church. He has grown from boy to “old man” (he was fifty-nine years old). Yet that distant time “that seemed as if it would last for ever” “seems but yesterday.”

These are the ordinary and profound experiences of time passing, common across centuries. Time’s vagaries in memory move slantwise, in waves, not in a receding line. And Lewis Carroll dipped into childhood

games anew whenever he was with children. He entered the entertainment as child and organizing adult at once. Multiple times of life rippled through each other in such moments.

Something of the same double capacity marks the *Alice* books, so intimately lodged alongside the experience of the child reader, while the adult reader enjoys the frisson of re-entering child experience with adult awareness. The collusion between adult reader and narrator never outwits the nonchalant friendship between Alice and the words that carry her story. Alice herself is confident in her occasional role as instructive adult as well as that of inquiring child. She does not observe the time boundaries marked (by adults) between adult experience and childhood innocence. She wants to know and she wants to dispose. Thresholds may daunt her but she crosses them.

Time and its troubling haunt both the *Alice* books. The young Lewis Carroll was already fascinated by time's quandaries long before writing them. He presented two time puzzles in *The Rectory Umbrella*, the domestic magazine he edited as a boy. Where, he asked, does the day begin and end and Tuesday turn into Wednesday?

Where then, in its passage round the earth, does the day change its name? where does it lose its identity?<sup>2</sup>

He suggests that if we followed the sun around the planet we would find it hard to fix boundaries to the day:

there would be no distinction at all between each successive day . . . so that we should have to say, "The Battle of Waterloo happened to-day, about two million hours ago."<sup>3</sup>

His quirky and ingenious mindset challenges all easy assumptions and indeed, here presents a puzzle now besetting air travelers and worldwide markets. In his second puzzle he persuades us to prefer the accuracy of a clock that doesn't go at all to one that loses a minute a day. In these early puzzles the Hatter's tea party is already on its way—and with it all the puzzles about identity and time in the *Alice* books.

As Charles Dodgson, mathematician and logician, he was aware of

the disturbing arguments that in the mid-nineteenth century newly suggested that our view of space and time within the Euclidean order was local, not universal. As Dodgson, Lewis Carroll was a devout Euclidean. As Lewis Carroll, Charles Dodgson stepped across those boundaries.

Problems of temporality are fundamental both to logic and to possible worlds. *Wonderland* is preceded by Tenniel's picture of the dapper White Rabbit earnestly consulting his watch. It's the *watch* that startles Alice. A rabbit with pink eyes runs past her.

There was nothing so very remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!" (when she thought about it afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered about this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural); but, when the Rabbit actually *took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket* [Carroll's italics], and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and, burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. (W, 10)

Belatedness, anxiety, physical props like the watch, all bespeak the individual under the cosh of time-regulated society. This is an animal, a rabbit, that speaks, but that's not what the child finds remarkable: it's the accoutrements of adult business, busy-ness: waistcoat-pocket and watch.

This is no Paleyan watch, abandoned in a field to prompt thoughts of the maker behind the manufactured object and offer assurance that God's design is implied. This is a watch out of kilter, challenging human exceptionalism. The long sentence races on from description into narrative. It's a sentence that propels the reader to the brink of the hole that drops to Wonderland. The watch usually signifies the particularly human capacity to invent complex technology. But here we encounter one rabbit who has a watch and can read it, and that sets off the whole sequence of Alice's adventures.

Watches were established already as the token of human respectability by the time Lewis Carroll was writing *Alice*.<sup>4</sup> Along with the fac-



tory clock, watches were the instruments that controlled industrialized labor. There were several new technologies of regularized time in the early nineteenth century and during the period of Lewis Carroll's life and writing. Carroll was a railway enthusiast and the *Alice* books (1865, 1872) appeared when railways and their timetables had newly required the regularizing of time across the whole of the country.<sup>5</sup> Dan Falk quotes an explanatory note from the Great Western Railway timetable in 1841 that sounds a bit like a passage from *Alice* itself:

London time is kept at all stations on the railway, which is about 4 minutes earlier than Reading time; 5 and a half minutes before Stevenson time; 7 and a half minutes before Cirencester time; 8 minutes before Chippenham time; and 14 minutes before Bridgewater time.<sup>6</sup>

One of Lewis Carroll's own earliest extended inventions, composed around 1850, was a comic operetta for marionette theater, *La Guida di Bragia*. Bradshaw's *Guide* was the bible of all train timetables. The personified Guide has in this play secretly changed all the train times so that the characters have been left in the lurch, too late for departed trains. Comic mayhem ensues. A particular local custom would have persistently reminded Lewis Carroll of the variance between railway time and local time. The Greenwich Mean Time website points out that "Oxford Time," calculated by the line of latitude from Greenwich, is "5 minutes and 2 seconds behind Greenwich." To this day, that difference is registered when, "At 9.05 pm (9 pm 'Oxford Time') every evening, Great Tom, Christ Church's famous bell, rings out 101 times. . . . The bell then remains silent until 8 am the next morning when it returns to striking every hour, on the hour (Greenwich Time) until 9 pm in the evening." Christ Church Cathedral still keeps to local time for its services.

Space and time were during Carroll's lifetime coming to be understood more and more as being in intricate and shifting relations, both locally and worldwide. Chronometers kept time at sea and helped in the mapping of colonial claims, bringing time and space together. The new technology of the photograph, of which Lewis Carroll was an early adept, froze and made portable a moment and a place; it also demanded long

and rigid passivity from its subjects.<sup>7</sup> And, as Jimena Canales has pointed out, a tenth of a second was a newly significant time unit, particularly in measuring the speed of the nervous system and reaction time.<sup>8</sup>

The German physicist and physiologist Hermann von Helmholtz, as so often, was in the van of such new discoveries, including the measurement of the speed of the nerve impulse, in the 1850s and on.<sup>9</sup> In an 1870 *Academy* article, "Axioms of Geometry," he summarized many non-Euclidean insights of the previous two decades, such as the possibility of parallel lines intersecting, most powerfully expressed in Britain by mathematicians William Kingdon Clifford and Arthur Cayley. Helmholtz ended by citing German mathematician Georg Riemann's "somewhat startling conclusion, that the axioms of Euclid may be, perhaps, only approximately true."<sup>10</sup>

His essay asserts the logical congruity of conceiving intelligent beings living on ellipsoids, on "pseudospherical surfaces," in two dimensions, or in four, while he concludes by pointing out "that the axioms on which our geometrical system is based, are no necessary truths" rather, they are "the scientific expression of a most general fact of experience, the fact, namely, that in our space bodies can move freely without altering their form."<sup>11</sup> Not what Alice experiences as she shrinks and swells, is crushed into the space of the Rabbit's house or finds her head swaying on an elongated neck in the canopy of a tree. In this alternative space and time her body's shape is not constant and its relation to its environment is merely approximate. Here the child's everyday and helpless experience of growing, and of being always the wrong size in a world designed by adults, is meshed with new mathematical speculations.

Regularizing time and defining ever smaller units were contemporary practices that chime with the age-old as well as up-to-date time-anxieties in *Alice*: "Oh! The Duchess, the Duchess! Oh! Wo'n't she be savage if I've kept her waiting!" (W, 17). But industrial, scientific, and technological changes are not the only markers of temporality in these books: sundials, solar time, dreams, and tenses each add their diverse processes.

The wayward noncausal sequences experienced in dream nudge the episodes onward in both *Alice* books. Our daytime timekeeping is not the only possible way of experiencing the *chronic*: time in its extension.

Dream shares with narrative the property of presenting experience as at once past and yet in process now. A book in Lewis Carroll's library, by the physician George Moore, dwells on just that quality of dream experience:

During the interval between the evening and morning, what intricate visions of activity and interest, all according to some law important to our being, crowd upon the busy soul, not indeed in the distinctness of a measured and material succession, but as if at once past and yet present.<sup>12</sup>

The temporal becomes spatial, with perspectives dissolved between past and present, all in the foreground and yet receding, too. Moore goes on:

There is no consciousness of common time in our dreams; for a sense of time, in its ordinary acceptance, arises from a comparison of the relative duration of material changes, and therefore belongs only to the outward use of the mind.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps he means that it is impossible to recollect the length of time a dream takes to dream. It may seem endless and capable of unrolling eons and yet flash past in a dreaming moment. It is certainly *not* the case in the *Alice* books that consciousness of time is obliterated: on the contrary, the anxiety of both books is propelled by a sense of haste and crowding.

G. H. Lewes, a writer whom Carroll much admired, described the effect more poetically, and more in terms of propulsion and arrest, in *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859–60), a book we know Carroll to have read:

And because in Dreams, as in Reverie, we do not pause on certain suggestions, do not recur to them, and reflect on them, but let one rapidly succeed another, like shadows chasing each other over a cornfield, we take little or no heed of any incongruities. It is constantly said that in dreams nothing surprises us. I think this is a mistake. Nothing *arrests* us: but every incongruity surprises us.<sup>14</sup>

But though dream is one kind of time-order in the *Alice* books, both books also explore the expansion and intricacy that games discover in time, whether the game be croquet or chess. Games complicate process and much of their enjoyment lies in that, but they also have a goal and therefore a control: in the Looking-Glass world Alice does eventually become a Queen when as a pawn she reaches the end of the board. But that purposeful drive is subverted by the backwards order of things behind the looking-glass, where people are imprisoned before they commit a crime, the Queen screams before she pricks herself—to approach things you must walk away and to stay in one place you must run fast:

“Well, in *our* country,” said Alice, still panting a little, “you’d generally get to somewhere else—if you ran very fast for a long time as we’ve been doing.”

“A slow sort of country!” said the Queen. “Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running *you* can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!” (LG, 143)

Carroll seems first to have conceived *Looking-Glass* on the plane of a chess-board, later adding the optical reversing effects of the mirror: together they give rise to a conundrum that we recognize from his friend J. J. Sylvester’s presidential address to the Mathematical and Physical Section of the 1869 British Association for the Advancement of Science:

the laws of motion . . . prove in a general way that the space we live in is a flat or level space (a “homaloid”), our existence therein being assimilable to the life of the bookworm in an *unrumpled page*: but what if the page should be undergoing a process of gradual bending into a curved form? Mr. W. K. Clifford has indulged in some remarkable speculations as to the possibility of our being able to infer, from certain unexplained phenomena of light and electricity, the fact of our level space of three dimensions being in the act of undergoing in space of four dimensions (space as inconceivable to us as our space to the suppositious book-worm) a distortion analogous to the rumpling of the page to which that creature’s powers of direct perception have been supposed to be limited.<sup>15</sup>

Describing our existence as like that of a bookworm on a flat page, Sylvester suggests that, if the page were becoming curved, our existence could be seen as undergoing a distortion in the fourth dimension “analogous to the rumpling of the page.”<sup>16</sup>

Sylvester published an extended version of this presidential pamphlet in his *The Laws of Verse or the Principles of Versification: Exemplified in Metrical Translations*. Sylvester has fun in his footnotes; of the “infinitely attenuated bookworms” he remarks:

I have read or been told that eye of observer has never lighted on these depredators, living or dead. Nature has gifted me with eyes of exceptional microscopic power, and I can speak with some assurance of having repeatedly seen the creature wriggling on the learned page. On approaching it with breath or finger-nail it stiffens out into the semblance of a streak of dirt, and so eludes detection.<sup>17</sup>

Placing the flat chessboard and the optics of the curved looking-glass together suggests a newly equivocal understanding of how time and space may be rumpled. Alice, like the bookworm, can both move across the two-dimensional chessboard and bulge into a different dimension through the mirror. In *Looking-Glass* particularly, Alice becomes aware that our mode of living in time is peculiar, and not necessarily the only pattern available: a thicker arrangement can be conceived. The White Queen recalls—

“we had *such* a thunderstorm last Tuesday—I mean one of the last set of Tuesdays, you know.”

Alice was puzzled. “In *our* country,” she 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 winter we take as many as five nights together—for warmth, you know.” (LG, 224)

Instead of the diurnal rhythm of our time, a slab of nights is conjured. This merging and crossing between different modalities of time helps to

explain the attraction of *Alice* for the Surrealists: Dali's brilliant illustrations pithily express the dream-time of Alice. They show the child leaping and dancing, with her shifting shadow always at just the wrong angle to the sun.

In *Wonderland* Alice unwarily shows off her knowledge of the earth's circling round the sun:

"If everybody minded their own business," the Duchess said, in a hoarse growl, "the world would go round a deal faster than it does."

"Which would *not* be an advantage," said Alice, who felt very glad to get an opportunity of showing off a little of her knowledge. "Just think what work it would make with the day and night! You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis—"

"Talking of axes," said the Duchess, "chop off her head!" (W, 54)

The oral trumps the written. Indeed, throughout the two books tension is maintained between the oral, which is voiced *now* in the present, in a particular place, and the written, which always includes retrospect and may be carried anywhere. Dialogue is the primary medium of discourse in both books, dialogue that foregrounds the oral, springing back out of the written into the present of encounter.<sup>18</sup> And Carroll also notates the commentary as if it were a speaking voice, with italics to indicate the weight to be given to particular words, as in the arch emphasis on *very* at the appearance of the White Rabbit, quoted earlier: "nothing so *very* remarkable in that; nor did Alice think it so *very* much out of the way to hear the rabbit say to itself . . ." The tone is of a story being told or a conversation taking place *now*, between writer and reader, though it is describing events that have already taken place—but in the magic of narrative they are taking place here, again.

Some of the more remarkable effects in *Alice* are quite customary to us now. The elision and flow from one scene into the next (queen into sheep, shop into river) correspond quite as much to the editing processes of cinema as to the motions of dream. Also, our familiarity with slow-motion photography may make Alice's leisurely fall into the underworld less astonishing, though the alternatives suggested by the narrator offer the deep absurdity of the choice that is no choice:

Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly, for she had plenty of time as she went down to look about her. (W, 10)

A body falling down a well, however deep, is rarely leisurely. The events of her fall mingle disappointment and good management: she hopes for some tasty marmalade to eat; she is concerned for the imagined person on whom the solid jar might drop:

She took down a jar from one of the shelves as she passed: it was labelled "ORANGE MARMALADE," but to her great disappointment it was empty: she did not like to drop the jar, for fear of killing someone underneath, so managed to put it in one of the cupboards as she fell past it. (W, 10)

Things retain their lethal weight in motion even while Alice floats: gravity here is erratic in its action.

Perhaps there is a gleam of Mill's discussion of how preconceived opinions preclude direct observation. Mill cites Whewell on what Mill calls "imaginary laws of nature [that] have continued to be received as real, merely because no person had steadily looked at facts which almost everyone had the opportunity of observing."<sup>19</sup> Mill quotes Whewell:

A vague and loose mode of looking at facts very easily observable, left men for a long time under the belief that a body ten times as heavy as another falls ten times as fast.<sup>20</sup>

Alice must be ten times as heavy as an empty jar of jam but in this instance she dawdles through the air while the jar threatens to plummet, reversing the usual error.

Carroll, who read Mill's *System of Logic* assiduously, may well have enjoyed Mill's comic account in the previous paragraph of the arguments around Copernicus's view that the earth turned around the sun; Copernicus's supporters fell into parallel argumentative traps alongside their opponents. Mill writes:

The opponents of Copernicus argued that the earth did not move, because if it did, a stone let fall from the top of a high tower would not

reach the ground at the foot of the tower, but at a little distance from it, in a contrary direction to the earth's course; in the same manner (said they) as, if a ball is let drop from the mast-head while the ship is in full sail, it does not fall exactly at the foot of the mast, but nearer to the stern of the vessel. The Copernicans would have silenced these objectors at once if they had *tried* dropping a ball from the mast-head, since they would have found that it does fall exactly at the foot, as the theory requires: but no, they admitted the spurious fact, and struggled vainly to make out a difference between the two cases.<sup>21</sup>

As Mill points out with some glee the Copernicans were obliged to invoke the *natural*, that most slippery of categories, because they had failed to try out what does happen when you drop a ball from a masthead. Instead (quoting Playfair's *Dissertation*, vol. 11):

The ball was no *part* of the ship—and the motion forward was not *natural*, either to the ship or to the ball. The stone, on the other hand, let fall from the top of the tower, was a *part* of the earth; and therefore, the diurnal and annular revolutions which were *natural* to the earth, were also *natural* to the stone: the stone would, therefore, retain the same motion with the tower, and strike the ground precisely at the bottom of it.<sup>22</sup>

These contorted explanations suggest how close abutting is nonsense and reason when observation is lacking. (One must wonder, however, whether the empiricist Mill had ever himself thrown a stone from a masthead to see where it would fall: belief outgoes evidence everywhere.) The explanations chime with the wonderful literalism of Carroll's characters.

Laws of motion had, for the Victorians, become one of the most controversial aspects of time. Time personified, it turns out, may be an active participant in the narrative as well as a condition of being alive. The great set-piece discussion of time and all its wrinkles is the tea party, or capital-T party. The Hatter's tea party combines the two. The argument there jumps up a notch from lowercase to uppercase "T" as the Hatter claims Time as an ally.<sup>23</sup> This move occurs when Alice is exasperated by the riddle without an answer: "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?" (W, 60). The lack of an answer infringes all the rules of game time, so



dear to Victorian middle-class culture: riddles rely on the pleasurable disappointment when the ingenious (but usually inadequate) answer is reached among the universe of possibilities. Here, nullity is all that occurs: no implosion or explosion of senses. Such a riddle also lacks closure, ebbing discomfitingly outward through time without stop. The question is launched. No answer responds. Boundaries vanish. Time is stayed but trickles pointlessly. Samuel Beckett knows all about this peculiar time effect in his stage dialogue.

Susan Stewart in *Nonsense* makes a related observation, about puns: "Puns are 'terrible' or 'awful' because they split the flow of events in time."<sup>24</sup> But puns, unlike answerless riddles, proliferate, according to her account, though they may lead to dead ends:

Conversations [in *Alice* and most of *Sylvie and Bruno*, she says] are continually halted by puns, by a splitting of the discourse into two simultaneous and disparate paths, each followed by a respective member of the conversation.<sup>25</sup>

This sounds more like a hiccup than a halt since it leads into "two simultaneous and disparate paths." The puns in *Alice* lead also into *Finnegans Wake*:

Though Wonderlawn's lost to us for ever. Alis, alas, she broke the glass! Liddell lokker through the leafery, ours is mystery of pain.<sup>26</sup>

But the riddles without an answer lead into pure frustration for Alice.

Alice sighed wearily, "I think you might do something better with the time," she said, "than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers."

"If you knew Time as well as I do," said the Hatter, "you wouldn't talk about wasting *it*. It's *him*."

"I don't know what you mean," said Alice.

"Of course you don't!" the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously. "I dare say you never even spoke to Time!"

"Perhaps not," Alice cautiously replied, "but I know I have to beat time when I learn music."

“Ah! That accounts for it,” said the Hatter. “He wo’n’t stand beating.”  
(W, 62–63)

Personification scoops victory in the argument. Time, the Hatter claims, will work with you if you appreciate him: he will leap from nine in the morning to dinner time.

For instance, suppose it were nine o’clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons: you’d only have to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling! Half-past one, time for dinner! (W, 63)

But it turns out that the Hatter has quarreled with Time and now they are stuck:

“It’s always six o’clock now!” . . . “it’s always tea-time, and we’ve no time to wash the things between whiles.”

“Then you keep moving round, I suppose?” said Alice. (W, 64)

Instead of time moving, they must move round the table, as if on a clock face — and Alice very soon ends up with the March Hare’s dirty tea-things in front of her (W, 66). The scene is tolerable because tea-time is not an instant but a period, so that the participants at the tea party can continue their own lives and conversations within the arrested time. Six o’clock is understood here as tea-time, not as the moment of six p.m. Indeed, the Hatter’s watch “tells the day of the month, and doesn’t tell what o’clock it is” (and in any case, it’s two days out because it’s been polluted by butter — though “the *best* butter,” and some crumbs).

A certain hauteur about watches and their implication of busyness is frequent in Victorian fiction, and here the Hatter’s monthly watch seems to be grandstanding. In Bulwer Lytton’s *Pelham* (1828), Pelham goes further: he shudders at the idea of owning even a very expensive watch:

“Watch!” said I: “do you think I could ever wear a watch? I know nothing so plebeian; what can any one, but a man of business, who has nine hours for his counting-house and one for his dinner, ever possibly want to know the time for?”<sup>27</sup>

The question of the continuity of motion through time, famously a conundrum for mathematicians from Zeno's paradox of the arrow in flight onward, was during the 1860s and 1870s being approached by George Cantor's theory of infinite sets. To move, an object must go to another place. At each instant the arrow is motionless. Can motion be continuous? That depends on space being infinitely divisible, an issue Lewis Carroll was to pursue in his late essay for *Mind*, "Achilles and the Tortoise" (1895).

There is again a local as well as mathematical link within Carroll's treatment of time, as with Great Tom, the clock at his college, Christ Church:

The model for the Mad Hatter was almost certainly a furniture dealer called Theophilus Carter, who lived near Oxford and was well known to Carroll, a lecturer in mathematics at Christ Church. Carter was actually known in the locality as the mad hatter because of his eccentric ideas and because he was in the habit always of wearing a top hat. He was also something of an inventor and one of his more bizarre creations, an alarm clock which woke the sleeper by tipping him out of bed, was exhibited at the Crystal Palace in 1851. This may explain why the Mad Hatter in *Alice* was so obsessed with time; he certainly was not poisoned with mercury.<sup>28</sup>

Only a few years after the *Alice* books, in 1874, Cantor argued in his theory of sets that there are degrees of infinity, even infinite infinities; for mathematicians, that eased the paradox of the continuity or discontinuity of motion.

The teasing question of infinity and its infinities is recognized by Alice:

"Then you keep moving round, I suppose?" said Alice.

"Exactly so," said the Hatter: "as the things get used up."

"But what happens when you get to the beginning again?" Alice ventured to ask.

"Suppose we change the subject," the March Hare interrupted, yawning. "I'm getting tired of this." (W, 64)

I am not a mathematician so that for me, as for many readers, the key image of the Hatter's tea party is of the endless tea-time and the dirty cups. But Alice can walk away; she is not imprisoned in their eternal loop (and, it turns out, neither are they, since the Hatter becomes a witness in the trial scene and in *Through the Looking-Glass* reappears as the Anglo-Saxon messenger Hatta). This is not a systematic fiction. It is a field of play. Time here, as in a mathematical manifold, makes Euclidean sense only locally; the whole resists resolution. The various forms of time in the work will not lie still together; they are rumpled and energetic, endlessly alluring Alice.

The dream tea-time of the Hatter's tea party is answered at the end of the book by Alice's older sister who tells the newly woken Alice, "It was a curious dream, dear, certainly; but now run in to your tea: it's getting late" (W, 109). The domestic round, time as diurnal family meal-times, prevails reassuringly at the close of *Wonderland*. *Looking-Glass* is less reassuring about which actuality takes predominance over dream: did the Red King dream it or did Alice? Which of them was the dreamer and which the dream?

In several ways, though, *Looking-Glass* is less disruptive than *Wonderland*: as I have already noted, the game of chess leads Alice through time and place from being a pawn to a Queen when she reaches the other end of the board. Carroll in this book combines prolepsis with drift so that Alice is given some authority by the preknowledge she shares with her child reader. Humpty Dumpty, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and the Lion and the Unicorn are helpless in the grip of the nursery rhymes that tell their fates. Though the words of nursery rhymes may mutate in Alice's memory, the stories they tell are inexorable. Above all, though Alice may for a little while lose her name and then her species-identity in the wood where she encounters the fawn and can for a while wander in the eirenic space beyond identity, her body in *Looking-Glass* remains constant. Even when the live flowers redescribe her as a wilting plant ("You're beginning to fade, you know—and then one can't help one's petals getting a little untidy" [LG, 138]), Alice is adamant in her bodily stability and simply changes the subject.

This is in contrast to *Wonderland*. A more intimate, elongated time is persistently disrupted in the first book: that is, the time the body takes

to grow. This is the most profound disturbance of the books. In *Alice in Wonderland* Carroll makes visible the hidden and unruly processes of growth all bodies undergo and forget. Alice grows small, then large and then small again: parts of her body are immensely elongated, as when her neck rustles up into the canopy of the trees and encounters the pigeon anxious to preserve her eggs, or when she bids farewell to her feet, realizing that she will only be able to reach them by post. Regaining her own scale means the end of the dream of wonderland.

Children are often offended by the adult remark “How you’ve grown!” Is it because the remark is condescending, or threatening? Growth happens uncontrollably, and outside consciousness, upwards and outwards, through time. In *Wonderland* Alice learns, after various mishaps and near-death experiences, to control and reverse her own growth—to put herself into an ideal functional relation with the physical world around her and make her way into the longed-for garden. This is contrary to the experience of children, who are always in a world scaled for adults: chairs loom, tables bang heads, windows are out of reach. The child is the wrong size. Here the child heroine learns to manipulate her own growth upward and—impossibly—downward.

It’s this limber ease with the body—instantaneity instead of secret creeping expansion—that plays with our fundamental and universal experience of somatic time. The effect is exhilarating as well as threatening. It mimics the child’s experience of being *out of scale* in the power-relations of occupying space. But it also releases the child from the inexorable and sometimes painful temporal sequence that leads toward adult full growth.

Unmentioned, waiting, pushed away, beneath the books, is the prospect of puberty. Alice is seven in *Wonderland*, seven and a half “exactly” seven years later in *Looking-Glass*. She is securely in the midst of childhood. Indeed, since the oncoming of the menarche is the end of a long process of preparation for puberty she is toward the end of the phase of childhood that is still untroubled by such irreversible change. In *Looking-Glass* her relation to her dream experience is already shifting: now this is less helpless immersion, more the willed trigger of “let’s pretend,” her favorite invitation.

“That foolish time that seemed as if it would last forever” was the

time of the young Charles Dodgson's infatuation with childhood as a form of eternity, as well as with particular children. Particular children grow up and cease to be children: it's happened to us all. Photographs seize lived moments and *still* them; the *Alice* books in contrast release childhood from single time, allowing it to play anew. Lewis Carroll eased many time boundaries in the *Alice* books, sometimes to troubling effect. The eternities he uncovered in *Alice* were not eventless extensions. Instead, he explored the giddy vacillations that time performs within us and the theatrical encounters of the individual with the bruising solid material world, so deep steeped in time congealed and evanescent. And beyond both those, presses the question of "what happens next."

The introductory poem of *Wonderland* remembers the work's genesis as tales invented and told on a river outing that agreeably passes time. The present gobbles up the future, backwards, in a trice. Or, more darkly, within the work:

First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further: she felt a little nervous about this; "for it might end, you know," said Alice to herself, "in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?" And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle looks like after the candle is blown out, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing. (W, 14)

These books figure that flame, a flame that survives the dowsing of candle after candle, breath after breath, reader after reader: aflame still in the twenty-first century. Or as Heraclitus long ago put it in the *Fragment*s (94): "Time is a child, moving counters in a game; the royal power is a child's."



## 2

### “THE FACULTY OF INVENTION”: GAMES, PLAY, AND MATHS

Many of Carroll’s scientific and mathematical contemporaries particularly favored wit, fancy, and play as engines of the scientific imagination. Possible worlds, probability, and ideas of space curved or flat were all eagerly under debate among mathematicians, logicians, and philosophers. These preoccupations were closely linked to games and play and Carroll was, as his life, his poems, and his *Alice* books demonstrate, an inveterate inventor and participant in all kinds of play as well as a professional logician.

From his boyhood on he delighted in making and managing anthologies of family poems and nonsense verses, creating puppet theaters, sorting dressing-up boxes, photographing people at odd angles, making scrapbooks, cutting out intricate forms, telling stories, and inventing spontaneous rhymes. Throughout his adult life as mathematician and logician he continued to enjoy riddles, puns, acrostics, and ciphers, those systems that harbor secret meanings and can never quite control the excess possibilities of their own signifying systems. Nor can their solutions ever quite satisfy the zeal they have provoked: disappointment always leaves a vestige of desire. Carroll was fascinated by games and their systems of rules—and how to evade them. The *Alice* books call on playing cards and chess for some of their structures but they do not remain within the domain of those systems.



For example, in contrast to the usual scrutiny of multiple future possibilities in chess, Alice is not seeking, she is only finding. Everything is unexpected yet taken for granted in her adventures. She desires to be a Queen but she has no strategy except to keep going. Although she is a pawn, the least powerful of figures in a chess game, the game itself yields and warps to make way for Alice. The complaint that this is not an orthodox chess game is beside the point—or is the point. Alice matters more than the rules of the game: as the preliminary game plan declares: “*White pawn (Alice) to play, and win in eleven moves*” (LG, 113).

Carroll’s friend J. J. Sylvester emphasized the importance of invention and play in his article, “A Plea for the Mathematician,” based on his presidential address to the Mathematical Section of the 1869 British Association for the Advancement of Science:

As the prerogative of natural Science is to cultivate a taste for observation, so that of Mathematics is, almost from the starting point, to stimulate the faculty of invention.<sup>1</sup>

In his “Address” Sylvester emphasizes the need to “quicken” the mind of the student of mathematics by familiarizing him “with the doctrine of the imaginary and the inconceivable.” Sylvester published in a single volume his work on prosody, *The Laws of Verse or Principles of Versification Exemplified in Metrical Translations* (1870), alongside an annotated reprint of his inaugural presidential address to the Mathematical and Physical Section of the British Association at Exeter. Poetry, play, and mathematics were recognized as closely allied at this period.

Lewis Carroll in the *Alice* books not only puzzled over modern geometry but also explored within their closed space some of the implications of mathematics post Gauss and Peacock: the eternal tea-time of the Mad Hatter, the reversed time-space of Looking-Glass Land in which the scream comes before the prick; mirroring and rotating, and Alice’s “sharpened faculties,” like those of Maxwell’s sorting demon, that can cope with the exceptions and significant fluctuations of the systems she finds herself inhabiting. Indeed, one recent critic argues that “Lewis Carroll was the first to take a character out of the containing walls of Eu-

clidean space and put her into the non-Euclidean world of a landscape of shifting fields."<sup>2</sup>

Some critics, such as Melanie Bayley, have described Carroll as deliberately, even "fiercely," satirizing non-Euclidean geometries in the *Alice* books, though, later, in *Euclid and his Modern Rivals* (1879) Carroll concentrates his fire not on major mathematical figures but on inadequate pedagogic texts that flout the expository power of Euclid. Bayley, in her very interesting *New Scientist* article on mathematical allusion in *Wonderland*, offers a number of salient interpretations of particular scenes but tends to see Carroll as jibing at symbolic algebras.<sup>3</sup> In his professional life, Dodgson relied wholly on Euclid; as Lewis Carroll, exploring possible worlds in fantasy, however, he could play freely with all the non-Euclidean elements newly available for thought. Rather than just making fun of them, he is engaged in a dance of ideas that takes him far from land: turning a somersault in the sea, as in the Lobster-Quadrille. I shall return to these materials later in this chapter.

In her important article some years ago the historian of mathematics Helena Pycior emphasized the significance for Carroll's enterprise of Augustus De Morgan, professor of mathematics at University College London and first president of the London Mathematical Society.<sup>4</sup> De Morgan was prominent in these debates concerning probability and was well known both in writing and person to Dodgson. Indeed, Francine Abeles in her edition of the mathematical pamphlets remarks that "when Augustus De Morgan died in 1871, Dodgson took over the unenviable position of referee for the amateur mathematicians who thought they had indeed squared the circle."<sup>5</sup>

It is striking, therefore, to find in the *Athenaeum* of March 12, 1859, an anonymous critical review of Michael Faraday's *Experimental Researches in Chemistry and Physics* that now turns out to be by De Morgan.<sup>6</sup> In it De Morgan responds both to Faraday's crucial essay "On the Conservation of Force" and to that "On Mental Training." Demurring at the term "physicist" (and preferring "physician," reclaimed from medical men who have had, he announces, "long, but unlawful, possession" of it) he sets out to debate with Faraday Faraday's argument that before setting out to consider "any question involving physical principles, we should set out with

clear ideas of the naturally possible and impossible” (349; his italics). De Morgan argues that:

The words *possible* and *impossible*, in their strict sense, have no existence in application, except by laws of thought and to results tested by use of them. Pure logic and pure mathematics are the only fields of the possible and impossible. All that is thinkable is possible; all that is impossible is unthinkable: that is, so far as our knowledge can go. We cannot *know* the impossibility of anything that we can conceive without contradiction. (349)

Anything we can conceive lies within the realm of possibility. The possible is, at its furthest extreme, both unthinkable and thinkable. The sense of the monstrous that haunts the *Alice* books derives from the doubling of the thinkable and the unthinkable.

The emphasis that “all that is thinkable is possible” leads into relativism, of course, but also potentially into a reliance on authority. Sylvester, in a footnote to the article based on the presidential address, quoted above, parallels questions of belief in religion and mathematics:

If an Aristotle, or Descartes, or Kant assures me that he recognises God in the conscience, I accuse my own blindness if I fail to see with him. If Gauss, Cayley, Riemann, Schlafli, Salmon, Clifford, Krönecker, have an inner assurance of the reality of transcendental space [four-dimensional geometry], I strive to bring my faculties of mental vision into accordance with theirs. . . . I acknowledge two separate sources of authority—the collective sense of mankind, and the illumination of privileged intellects.<sup>7</sup>

In the following dialogue we can perhaps hear Carroll’s dry response to the demand that he believe in what Sylvester called “the illumination of privileged intellects.”

“I ca’n’t believe *that!*” said Alice.

“Ca’n’t you?” the Queen said in a pitying tone. “Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes.”

Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said: "one *can't* believe impossible things."

"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast." (LG, 174)

The Queen encourages Alice to undertake an orderly mental training (deep breathing, half an hour's daily practice) in order to believe the impossible. Carroll himself later teasingly advised one of his child friends not to be too quick in believing and the books oscillate on the cusp of belief and disbelief, mediated from within the text by Alice, always skeptical and uninhibited in her questions — only some of which (being a nice-mannered little girl) she ventures to speak aloud.

Carroll delighted in games, but he delighted in fraying their assumptions and rules, too. In *Wonderland* a Duchess is added to the court cards. In her first encounter with Alice she is a minor tyrant mimicking the Red Queen: "Talking of axes," said the Duchess, "chop off her head!" (W, 54). Later, she insinuates herself as an old friend: "You *ca'n't* think how glad I am to see you again, you dear old thing!" (W, 78). Alice is mortified by the Duchess's intrusive chin on her shoulder. As a child I found this the most disturbing moment in either of the books: the way adults insist and ingratiate and *grate* on a child. The duchess is implicitly part of the deck of cards but she is a wandering soul, unable to find a secure position for herself, not quite part of the set form of the game.

That scene leads straight out of the sinuous version of croquet, with flamingoes and hedgehogs as the instruments of a game that is now completely unstable because everything is alive. Instead of hoops there are "doubled-up soldiers . . . always getting up and walking off to other parts of the ground" (W, 74); instead of mallets there are flamingoes; and the flamingo disconcerts Alice by a curiosity equal to her own: "it *would* twist itself round and look up in her face, with such a puzzled expression that she could not help bursting out laughing" (73). The hedgehogs have their own will, too, not waiting around to be struck like well-mannered croquet balls: "the hedgehog had unrolled itself, and was in the act of crawling away" (73).

This animate world completely undermines the instrumental use of

animals and others. And without in the least pointing “the moral of that,” as the Duchess would, Carroll makes the reader and Alice uneasy. Carroll seems to have become increasingly averse to violence, certainly as a form of humor, though the *Alice* books are uninhibited in their pantomime threats and real violence does occur, if only within the recessed poems. Much later in his career, on February 24, 1885, he wrote to A. B. Frost who had sent him his volume of comic drawings and verse, *Stuff and Nonsense*:

I think I would rather not criticise *Stuff and Nonsense*. The fun turns too exclusively on depicting brutal violence, terror, and physical pain, and even death, none of which are funny to me.<sup>8</sup>

It is not merely a coincidence that Carroll was active in the antivivisection movement. In his 1875 *Fortnightly* essay “Some Popular Fallacies about Vivisection,” he treads a careful path: the emphasis is on avoiding pain, not on the question of whether human beings have the right to kill animals. Indeed, at one point in the essay his delight in what he sees as absurdity takes over (and perhaps a slight frisson about the behavior of his stand-ins, the Walrus and the Carpenter?):

The only question worth consideration is whether the killing of an animal is a real infringement of right. Once grant this, and a *reductio ad absurdum* is imminent, unless we are illogical enough to assign rights to animals in proportion to their size. Never may we destroy, for our convenience, some of a litter of puppies—or open a score of oysters when nineteen would have sufficed—or light a candle in a summer evening for mere pleasure, lest some hapless moth should rush to an untimely end! Nay, we must not even take a walk, with the certainty of crushing many an insect in our path, unless for really important business! Surely all this is childish.<sup>9</sup>

Childish such concerns may be, or Jainian rather, but proper too as he recognizes with vehemence elsewhere in the essay. The treatment of life forms in the *Alice* books is not polemical, as is the essay’s argument, but

it is more radical in its way. In these worlds *anything* may turn out to have a mind and will of its own: puddings, unicorns, mice, bottles, mutton, gnats, candles, shawls.

As to the bottles, they each took a pair of plates, which they hastily fitted on as wings, and so, with forks for legs, went fluttering about in all directions: "and very like birds they look," Alice thought to herself. (LG, 232)

Human beings cannot rely on their assumptions of a secure hierarchy in which everything serves us. This is not simply a world upside down, but a sideways world in which most things are equal. It is therefore a world too inclusive to be marshalled according to the habits of a single game and too enigmatic to secure answers to a riddle: "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?" Who knows? There may be a whole array of ingenious possible answers, and indeed Carroll himself came up with several. Games rely upon hierarchies of meaning and on rules, but play is more egalitarian. Both games and play are essential to the *Alice* books.

In his notes to Carroll's diaries Edward Wakeling remarks that Carroll did not learn to play cards until January 1858, and invented a very complicated game, "Court Circular," nine days later: "The invention is remarkable for the fact that Dodgson learnt to play cards for the first time nine days previously."<sup>10</sup> Carroll's rapid invention is certainly remarkable but more remarkable yet is the fact that he learned so late to play cards: not in the large rectory family, not at Rugby, not as a student at Oxford, but at the age of almost twenty-six. His birthday fell on January 27 and the entry for January 16 runs:

Finished for the Longleys the "Legend" which has been promised them ever since the 12th of August last year. Bought Hoyle's *Games*. I have taken to learning cards in the last few days, for the first time in my life.<sup>11</sup>

The late start may speak to suspicion among Victorian religious people about the dangers from cards, with their temptations to betting, time-wasting, and quarreling. For Carroll, when he came to write *Wonderland* cards were still a fresh, adult occupation, one perhaps indulged in still

with self-distrust. Learning to play cards coincided, too, with the growing friendship with the Liddell children whom he had first met the previous year. Card games parallel Carroll's fascination with intellectual maneuver and rule-making. He was discovering the array of worlds they activate: the tightly bound but barely controllable sequences of futures invented anew by each card game, the different sets of the impossible and the possible generated by each game.

Moreover, the court cards (king, queen, and knave) gave an opportunity for human satire, which he seized in the later scenes of *Wonderland*. He was far less interested by the tribal possibilities of the four suits. His imagination seized instead on the domineering hierarchies implicit in the numbering of the suits from one up to king and on the domestic struggles of male and female: the enervated Red King, the domineering Red Queen, the helpless White Queen, with a quiescent mate. He adds a Duchess, to stir things around, but the Joker nowhere appears in his work. This might be because the shapeshifting Joker lies too close to the Devil, or is it, rather, because the Joker is too free of the bounds of system? The Joker might usurp the privilege of the Writer, who can reinvent the rules, jostle the characters, and change role at will. The Joker, in these books, is in the shape of Writer.

In the next month after he learned to play cards, Carroll invented a system of cipher, the first for which there is a record, though he mentions in 1856 that he is "thinking of writing an article on 'Cipher' for the *Train*, but must first consult Mr. Yates as to whether the subject will be admissible."<sup>12</sup> These new forms of secrecy and of secret sharing—ciphers and card games—are fascinating Carroll just before he starts to tell the Alice stories. They prepare for the narrative twists of *Alice*, but the *Alice* books also flout the conventions of translate-ability and rule-bound rigor that are essential to ciphers and card games.

A question Carroll shared with his professional contemporaries was how much intelligibility is needed for explanation. The new algebras of the time, like those developed by W. K. Clifford, like the new physics, included phenomena that were highly improbable or seemingly impossible. And indeed, though now so familiar to us as to seem a foundational argument, so seemed the evolutionary theory of descent by means of natural selection. Clifford's geometric algebras lay latent for some generations,

so advanced were his ideas and apparently improbable, and have only now fully come into their own. The years of composing the *Alice* books (around 1862 to 1871) covered the period when, after Gauss, and through the work particularly in that post-1850s generation of Hamilton, Clerk Maxwell, and Clifford in England, new non-Euclidean geometries and algebras were being vigorously explored.

Clifford, in particular, delighted in exploring how the body mirrors non-Euclidean insights: curves and corkscrews were part of his repertoire. He was an extraordinary gymnast and acrobat. Writing from Cambridge in 1869, where he emerged like William Whewell, Clerk Maxwell and William Thomson as distinguished Second Wrangler among the mathematicians, he describes what he considers to be his greatest triumph:

I am at present in the very heaven of joy because my corkscrew was encored last night at the assault of arms: it consists in running at a fixed upright pole which you seize with both hands and spin round and round descending in a corkscrew fashion.<sup>13</sup>

Clifford's fascination with curved relations in space here takes an exhilarating bodily form. And he performs not once but twice, to applause!

That zeal for activity marks all Clifford's thinking, as in his early praise of William Whewell:

Thought is powerless except it make something outside of itself; the thought which conquers the world is not contemplative but active.<sup>14</sup>

Clifford delighted also in the region of nonsense and child's play, with their reach beyond the confines of the taken-for-granted and rationalized. He contributed somewhat combative stories to a collection of new fairytales called *The Little People*.<sup>15</sup> He was also an enthusiast for the movement to plain English, based on Anglo-Saxon: so, in his writing, "co-operation" becomes "band-work," and "mind-stuff" is a description of proto-consciousness, present, in his view, even in the molecules of inorganic matter. Clifford algebras were so named in his honor. During his short life Clifford extended the power of mathematics and of free-



spirited imagining. At the same time he also insisted on the dangers, indeed the unethical nature, of believing anything without full evidence. His essay on this theme, “The Ethics of Belief” (1877), was famously challenged by William James in his lecture “The Will to Believe” (1896).<sup>16</sup>

Strikingly, as an article on Clifford’s work remarks, “The operations of geometric algebra have the effect of mirroring, rotating, translating, and mapping the geometric objects that are being modelled to new positions.”<sup>17</sup> The controversies beyond and abutting *Looking-Glass* come into fresh focus, and one episode in particular runs close to Clifford’s linguistic and mathematical concerns, Humpty Dumpty’s interpretation of “Jabberwocky”:

“I see it now,” Alice remarked thoughtfully: “and what are ‘toves?’”

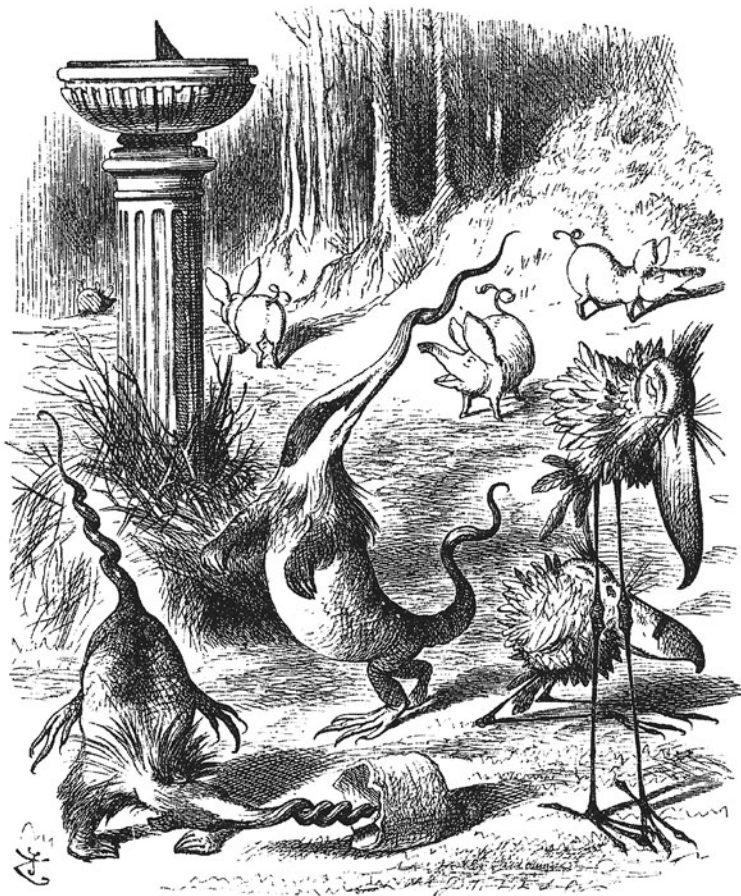
“Well, ‘toves’ are something like badgers — they’re something like lizards — and they’re something like corkscrews.” (LG, 187)<sup>18</sup>

Clifford’s fascination with an earthy invented vocabulary, as well as his delight in corkscrews, flicker across this scene, even if independently of him.

Corkscrews are particularly apt to Looking-Glass Land: they have the property of chirality or “handedness.” Chiral objects, such as hands, feet, gloves, scissors, corkscrews, cannot be made to look identical to their reflection. Tweedledum and Tweedledee follow this principle: they are enantiomorphs: they face each other rather than mapping on to each other. No rotation or motion can resolve this difference. The same joke is active in the whirling conclusion to the White Knight’s song, whose last verse begins:

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. (LG, 217)

The mirror-writing of the first verse of “Jabberwocky” further compounds the arcane poem: not only is it in some form of Anglo-Saxon but it can only be read in the mirror. Reflection in a mirror causes a change in chirality, here from right-handed to left-handed, and it is striking that in his



3. Creatures gyre and gimble in *Through the Looking-Glass*.

illustration for this scene Tenniel shows the corkscrew noses and tails of the “toves” with left-handed chirality, appropriate to their being denizens of Looking-Glass Land. This suggests some discussion between illustrator and author behind the scenes. The scene also indicates that Carroll was alluding playfully to current discussions among his scientific peers.

The great James Clerk Maxwell introduced the “corkscrew rule” in physics. The *Dictionary of Theories* states:

It was suggested by physicist James Clerk Maxwell, for remembering the relation between the direction of the current flow in a linear conductor and the direction of the associated magnetic field. For a corkscrew that

is being driven in the direction of the current, the direction of the magnetic field is that in which the corkscrew is being turned.<sup>19</sup>

Maxwell wrote, “A common corkscrew may be used as a material symbol of the same relation.”<sup>20</sup> Although there is no evidence of personal acquaintance between Carroll and Maxwell, they certainly knew of each other. For example, aside from his fame among scientists, Maxwell’s two-volume *Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism* was published by the Clarendon Press at Oxford in 1873 and was under discussion for several years previously. The mathematician Bartholomew Price, Carroll’s mentor, was at that time Secretary to the Delegates.

James Clerk Maxwell, himself an excellent playful poet and satirist of science, in one poem looked back on our assumptions in the voice of an inhabitant of four-dimensional space and in another recognized the epistemological importance of nonsense. The “Red Lions” of the extract below, from the poem “Molecular Evolution,” were members of a club at the British Association for the Advancement of Science who met to sing, smoke, relax and make verses after a day of concentrated scientific papers.

Hail, Nonsense! dry nurse of Red Lions,  
 From thee the wise their wisdom learn,  
 From thee they cull those truths of science,  
 Which into thee again they turn.

What combinations of ideas,  
 Nonsense alone can wisely form!  
 What sage has half the power that she has,  
 To take the towers of Truth by storm?

Yield, then, ye rules of rigid reason!  
 Dissolve, thou too, too solid sense!  
 Melt into nonsense for a season,  
 Then in some nobler form condense.

Soon, ah! too soon, the chilly morning  
 This flow of soul will crystallize,

Then those who nonsense now are scorning,  
 May learn, too late, where wisdom lies.<sup>21</sup>

Maxwell and Carroll were co-aevals, just a year between them. Each of them penetrated new ways of thinking. Each was fascinated by nonsense, and by thought straining to meet conditions that from moment to moment shift and slide. Maxwell’s comic, and often brilliantly parodic, poems on scientific problems almost always include sex; Carroll’s never do.

I come from empyrean fires —  
 From microscopic spaces,  
 Where molecules with fierce desires,  
 Shiver in hot embraces.<sup>22</sup>

Maxwell justifies his sly sexual references with precise mock-scholarly scientific reference, sliding between the two discursive zones across single terms, as in the poem from which the following quotation comes. It is spoken in the voice of a woman student scornful of the sexual presence of her teacher the “Prim Doctor of Philosophy / From academic Heidelberg.”

Your sum of vital energy  
 Is not the millionth of an erg.<sup>23</sup>

A footnote transforms the suggestive onomatopoeia of “erg” (or “urge”) into a specific measurement:

Erg—the energy communicated by a dyne, acting through a centimetre.  
 See p. 60, note 2.<sup>24</sup>

The female speaker berates “Professor Chrschtschonovitsch” vigorously for pedantically failing to appreciate her singing.

The poem winds up in a rush of sexual-scientific double entendre that sides with the woman but has an aggressive charge toward her, too. In imagination at least the tutor twists her wrist, pulls her hair, sets her “twisting round a screw” (each licentious indication is bridled by a spe-

cific reference, for example, to Sedley Taylor on Sound and Music, to Poinot on the rotation of bodies).

You gabbled on, but every phrase  
 Was stiff with scientific shoddy,  
 The only song you deigned to praise  
 Was “Gin a body meet a body,”  
 “And even there,” you said, “collision  
 Was not described with due precision.”

“In the invariable plane,”  
 You told me, “lay the impulsive couple.”  
 You seized my hand—you gave me pain,  
 By torsion of a wrist so supple;  
 You told me what that wrench would do,-  
 “’Twould set me twisting round a screw.”

Were every hair of every tress  
 (Which you, no doubt, imagine mine),  
 Drawn towards you with its breaking stress—  
 A stress, say, of a megadyne,  
 That tension I would sooner suffer  
 Than meet again with such a duffer!<sup>25</sup>

This is verse that inclines to an audience of men, not of women, even while it voices women’s scorn. It bears the marks of its audience, the select group of scientists confident enough to mock their own procedures and to become alert to the tendency of their terms, such as “screw,” “impulsive,” and “stress” here. Maxwell’s sly ribaldry perhaps reassures his fellow workers that what they do is not mere etiolated thought, isolated from the drives of life. It contrasts with Carroll’s primary readership of children, and adults reading to children. Some of the freedom of Carroll’s work comes from excluding the erotic. But in both men’s writing we can hear the acceptance of aggression, the tension around interpretation.

We know that Maxwell had read *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*

and that he waited eagerly for *Through the Looking-Glass*. Joining in the joke about looking-glass reversal, he sends a postcard to his friend Peter Guthrie Tait on March 5, 1873, in mirror-writing. It reads (when reversed back) "Why have you forgotten to send Alice. We remain in Wonderland till she appears." Later, he sends another note (in Greek), "Thanks for Alice."<sup>26</sup> There is already in Carroll's fiction some of the same activity of mind as in Maxwell's Demon. Both are mathematicians mingling mathematics and poetry, sorting, categorizing, destabilizing, and running counter to theory. Maxwell works through thought-experiment and Carroll through dream-work. Daniel Brown has written revealingly about the importance of nonsense in Clerk Maxwell's thought, as well as about the poetry of other Victorian scientists in his outstanding study, *The Poetry of Victorian Scientists: Style, Science and Nonsense*.

Both Clerk Maxwell and Carroll were religious men, committed to a view of the world as under the ordinance of God and organized by Him. Each, nevertheless, pursued ways past determinism, Carroll into dream-space and Maxwell into a universe in which statistical probability rather than substantial models provides the means of interpretation: as Maxwell wrote to Tait in 1874: "we are once more on a pathless sea, starless, windless, and poleless": a night landscape of the mind.<sup>27</sup> To more conservative scientists, the work of explorers like Cayley and Clifford was also a crazy "Dream Space"—the title of Richard Proctor's essay attacking Cayley's work on the idea of four-dimensional space.

At that same time mathematicians were preoccupied with new questions of space and magnitude, and with wave theory and surfaces: Daniel Brown comments that "Maxwell's poem, 'Reflex Musings: Reflections from Various Surfaces,' poses the question of knowledge in modern terms of the relation between subjective mind and its objects."<sup>28</sup> The *Quarterly Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics* was edited by J. J. Sylvester and included frequent papers by the most advanced mathematicians of the time, including Cayley and Clifford. Curves, waves, and surfaces, magnitudes, mirroring and rotating, preoccupy their contributors. Arthur Cayley writes "On a New Analytical Representation of Curves in Space" in 1860, and in 1866 W. K. Clifford opens his essay on "Analytical Metrics" by remarking that "any one must have observed that there are two kinds of theorems in Geometry; one kind having reference to *position* only, the

other kind having reference to *magnitude*.”<sup>29</sup> In *Wonderland* recklessly varying magnitudes trouble Alice; in *Looking-Glass* propulsion taxes her:

“Now! Now!” cried the Queen. “Faster! Faster!” And they went so fast that at last they seemed to skim through the air, hardly touching the ground with their feet, till suddenly, just as Alice was getting quite exhausted, they stopped, and she found herself sitting on the ground, breathless and giddy. (LG, 142)

As the Queen announces: “*here*, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!” (LG, 143). Or as Clifford remarked in “The Philosophy of the Pure Sciences”: “it seems to me . . . to be more correct to say that we measure time by putting together space and motion, than that we imagine motion by putting together space and time.”<sup>30</sup>

Among all these discussions, “Maxwell’s Demon” emerges as a thought-experiment, first in an undated letter to Tait and then made public in 1871 in his *Theory of Heat*: the demon, or valve, is the “finite intelligent being” with sorting properties whose function mitigates determinism and demonstrates that it is possible to conceive limits to the operation of the second law of thermodynamics (that of entropy). It was Thomson (Lord Kelvin), not Maxwell himself, who named this thought-experiment-being a demon. Maxwell urged his friend Tait to “call him no more a demon but a valve,” but the zingier title has prevailed.<sup>31</sup>

The demon sorts the molecules within a vessel divided into two sections, *A* (hotter) and *B* (cooler), alternately allowing *A* and *B* molecules to pass through the diaphragm and selecting the faster molecules from *B* into *A* and the slower molecules from *A* into *B*. So, Maxwell writes to Tait on December 11, 1867, “the energy in *A* is increased and that in *B* is diminished that is the hot system has got hotter and the cold colder & yet no work has been done, only the intelligence of a very observant and neat fingered being has been employed.”<sup>32</sup> (The second law of thermodynamics, in contrast, states that “heat could not pass from a colder to a warmer body without the performance of external work on the system.”)<sup>33</sup> If Alice is not quite that “very observant and neat fingered being”

of Maxwell’s story (how to pass heat from a colder to a hotter body without work) it seems her figure could conceivably be part of its characterization.

Maxwell, brilliantly parodying Shelley, broods on the need to introduce further dimensions of space to make explanatory sense of identity, religious belief, and the new symbolic algebras at once. He questions, too, the slippery all-purpose discourse “whose statements baffle all attacks/ Safe by evasion.” In this, he and Carroll are in agreement.

My soul is an entangled knot,  
 Upon a liquid vortex wrought  
 By Intellect, in the Unseen residing,  
 And thine doth like a convict sit,  
 With marlinspike untwisting it,  
 Only to find its knottiness abiding;  
 Since all the tools for its untying  
 In four-dimensioned space are lying,  
 Wherein thy fancy intersperses  
 Long avenues of universes,  
 While Klein and Clifford fill the void  
 With one finite, unbounded homaloid,  
 And think the Infinite is now at last destroyed.<sup>34</sup>

Dodgson held to the Euclidean order in the face of a number of new developments, such as the realization in algebra that spaces of dimension larger than three could be used to solve problems. But by the mid-1850s, ten years before the publication of *Wonderland*, he was puzzling over the question that had already been posed by Gauss: “Is there such a thing as an *imaginary* plane?”

That question in his diary for March 13, 1855, is answered by a turn to the authority of his professor, Bartholomew Price:

Mr. Price says it represents nothing but the origin. Since we have exhausted the three dimensions and therefore have no means left of imaginary symbolisation.<sup>35</sup>



A week later he was concentrating on Watts's *Philosophical Essays*:

I spent most of the time however over Watts' *Philosophical Essays*: the part on "Space" is very interesting, I do not think conclusive.<sup>36</sup>

And on November 21, 1859—almost to the day coinciding with the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*—he writes a paper, now in the Parish Manuscript Collection at Princeton, "On the Introduction of a 4th co-ordinate into Algebraic Geometry," a paper concerned, as Wakeling notes, "with methods for symbolizing points in the fourth dimension" with "diagrams attempting to show how such points could be represented visually."<sup>37</sup> Lewis Carroll was not unaware of the new ideas fermenting all around him, in maths as in evolutionary theory and language theory, too.

William James comments on the epistemic shift after 1850, its multiplication of theories suggesting that "even the truest formula may be a human device not a literal transcript" (see introduction above). Charles Dodgson could not accept that relativism. To him, Euclidean mathematics stated the girding truths of organized existence. Perhaps his position as a cleric held him back from the new forms of belief that many of his contemporary mathematicians welcomed.

Lewis Carroll's close friend, the writer George MacDonald, shared Carroll's fascination with mathematics and with games. But whereas Carroll's mathematics never wander into metaphysics but cling to logic or tease us with nonsense, MacDonald takes Euclid with him into the realms of fantasy to authenticate these outer reaches of experience. In his poem "A Hidden Life" where a ploughboy becomes a scholar he has an arresting description of Euclid's power:

Here mathematics wiled him to their heights;  
And strange consent of lines to form and law  
Made Euclid like a great romance of truth.<sup>38</sup>

"A great romance of truth": Euclid is understood by MacDonald as answering to the baffling yet undeniable truths that ground mathematics in the order of the universe: "the strange consent of lines to form and law."

Euclid is an act of the imagination or narrative “romance” that accords with, and uncovers, truth. Moreover, Euclid is understood as implicitly grounded in—and grounding—Christian ethics: in *The Marquis of Lossie* the Christian guide asserts: “A bit of bread and cheese before I go to bed is all I need to sustain nature, and fit me for understanding my proposition in Euclid. I have been in the habit, for the past few years, of reading one every night before I go to bed.”<sup>39</sup> Carroll shared MacDonald’s almost religious admiration for Euclid.

Euclid’s central presence in nineteenth-century education in itself gave his axioms authority—quite apart from the satisfaction that his propositions gave to intellectually alert young men like Darwin and Dodgson. Strikingly Darwin declared himself delighted as a student equally by Euclid and by Paley. Both might seem to promise a designed universe, and in the case of Euclid the absoluteness of his method affirms a single designer. But the authority and centrality of Euclid in education and in the shaping of the mathematical imagination of students was coming under pressure already in the 1860s. Reviewing T. M. Wilson’s *Elementary Geometry*, in the *Athenaeum* in 1868 Augustus De Morgan hyperbolizes the attack:

The Schools’ Inquiry Commission has raised the question whether Euclid be, as many suppose, the best elementary treatise on geometry, or whether it be a mockery, delusion, snare, hindrance, pitfall, shoal, shallow, and snake in the grass.<sup>40</sup>

The Association for the Improvement of Geometrical Teaching, founded 1871, advocated displacement of Euclid; Dodgson satirized the idea in a drama in four acts *Euclid and His Modern Rivals* (published 1879 but begun in the same period as the composition of *Looking-Glass*). Carroll valued Euclid above all for his logical procedures but the *Alice* books act out the attrition of conditions fundamental to logic: that terms retain their meaning and relations their stability. The demise of this stability in both language and mathematics is figured in his fictions.

It is striking that many of the spatial relations in the *Alice* books that Gilles Deleuze interprets psychoanalytically in his *Logic of Sense*, one of the most influential modern readings of the books, would for Carroll and

his colleagues have been loaded with specific mathematical controversies. Deleuze emphasizes what he calls a “strange evolution” that “takes place throughout all Alice’s adventures.” This movement in *Wonderland* is, he argues, from depths, to lateral movements, to surfaces:

It is not therefore a question of the adventures of Alice, but of Alice’s adventure: her climb to the surface, her disavowal of false depth and her discovery that everything happens at the border.<sup>41</sup>

In *Through the Looking-Glass* Deleuze observes an intensification of this process:

Events, in their radical difference from things, are no longer sought in the depths, but at the surface: a mirror that reflects them, a chess board that “flattens” them to a two-dimensional plane. By running along the surface, along the edge, one passes to the other side: from bodies to incorporeal events.<sup>42</sup>

Deleuze passes so quickly across these diverse phenomena (mirror, board, surface, edge) that he does not pause sufficiently on his own observation of “a two-dimensional plane.” The arguments about dimensionality were key concerns for Carroll and his contemporaries, both as mathematicians and as poets, and they add a further dimension to Deleuze’s analysis of the *Alice* books in his first chapter.

Deleuze argues that “the organisation of language is not separable from the poetic discovery of surface.” For Carroll the prospect of an “imaginary plane” was a problem of mathematics as well as the invention of a particular possible world; and for Gauss, Peacock, Riemann, Clerk Maxwell and Clifford the concept of the homaloid—one dimensionality—and four-dimensional space greatly increased the possibilities of algebraic insight. What Deleuze is observing unawares is not only “unconscious structuration” (as his counterpoising of Carroll to Artaud implies) but also satirical debate and play of mind among mathematicians.

Hermann von Helmholtz, among the most creative of all nineteenth-century mathematical scientists, wrote in the Oxford-based intellectual

journal the *Academy* in 1870 a review article on the axioms of geometry. In a description intriguingly reminiscent of Alice's chessboard, Helmholtz points out that

there is no logical impossibility, in conceiving the existence of intelligent beings, living and moving along the surface of any solid body, who are able to perceive nothing but what exists on this surface, and insensible to all beyond it.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, he then demonstrates that we also are circumscribed intellectually by the particular dimensionality of space we live in:

results regarding surfaces or spaces extended in two dimensions only can be illustrated . . . because we live in a space of three dimensions and can represent in our ideas, or model in reality, other surfaces than the plane (on which alone the geometry of Euclid holds good). When, however, we try to extend these researches to space of three dimensions, the difficulty increases, because we know in reality only space as it exists, and cannot represent even in our ideas any other kind of space. This part of the investigation, therefore, can be carried on only in the abstract way of mathematical analysis.<sup>44</sup>

Or, one might argue, not only in "the abstract way of mathematical analysis" but also in the worlds of Alice.

Helmholtz imagines beings living on the surface of a sphere, on an ellipsoid, on "surfaces flexible without change of dimensions," on pseudo-spherical surfaces, in "what Riemann calls a plane space, that is a space which is related to spaces of more dimensions as a plane is to our space of three dimensions." The pressure of meaning that clustered professionally for Carroll on the idea of the surface becomes clear. Helmholtz reduces Euclid to a parenthesis in his argument: "the plane (on which alone the geometry of Euclid holds good)."<sup>45</sup>

The plane of the chessboard may be a form of intellectual comfort for Carroll. The chessboard rationalizes even while it complicates Alice's journey through the looking-glass. But it is challenged, too, by the optics of the looking-glass world. This double design comes after the world of

Wonderland, which itself plays with a further mathematical perception current at the time and formulated here by Helmholtz:

Our axioms are, indeed, the scientific expression of a most general fact of experience, the fact, namely, that in our space bodies can move freely without altering their form.<sup>46</sup>

In the underground space of Wonderland Alice's body must constantly alter its form in order to move freely and find congruence with the system she is now inhabiting.

Could it be, perhaps Carroll speculates, that we, apparently robustly three-dimensional, are, like the gardeners, the knave, the king and queen whom Alice encounters, all flat, just like a pack of cards? In the new dream-space of mathematics at that time this was a salient question. Some years later "A. Square" explored that identity in *Flatland* where social status depends on dimensionality.<sup>47</sup>

Such debate does not rule out unconscious drives and inhibitions, as Evelyn Fox Keller well observed in her article on the relation between Carroll's mathematical work and his erotic "displacement upwards" of fetishistic impulses. Solving mathematical problems can yoke and allay anxieties more widespread and profound.<sup>48</sup> But, as Keller notes, Carroll also relished the withholding of information crucial to the solution of problems, or of riddles. He refused straight oppositions and reconciliations; he embroiled abundance with miserliness:

"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!" cried 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!"

Alice sighed and gave it up. "It's exactly like a riddle with no answer!" she thought. (LG, 224)

Established contrasts twist abruptly to run parallel, as the captious Queen requires them. Rules bend and warp under authority ("five times as rich as you are, *and* five times as clever!").

This power-display toys with sadism and with despair. It also acknowledges the exasperation of the mathematician whose contemporaries are pursuing abstractions and sequences meaningless to him: “Did you ever see one of those conjurers bring a globe of live fish out of a pocket-handkerchief? That’s the kind of thing we have in Modern Geometry.”<sup>49</sup>

Chess provides an equally complex but more stable system than the “Modern Geometry” that Carroll suspected of trickery. The chess game has proved a rich metaphor for writers from Chaucer to Shakespeare and on. Among the Victorians it was put to social uses. In “A Liberal Education, and Where to Find It” (1868) Thomas Henry Huxley first imagines engaging in it as a compelling possible world:

Suppose it were perfectly certain that the life and fortune of every one of us would, one day or other, depend upon his winning or losing a game at chess.<sup>50</sup>

Of course, the outcome would be that everyone “would have a notion of a gambit, and a keen eye for all the means of giving and getting out of check.” No father, and no state, would allow its members “to grow up without knowing a pawn from a knight.” Yet, Huxley goes on, in a not very surprising move:

Yet it is a very plain and elementary truth, that the life, the fortune, and the happiness of every one of us, and, more or less, of those who are connected with us, do depend upon our knowing something of the rules of a game infinitely more difficult and complicated than chess. It is a game which has been played for untold ages, every man and woman of us being one of two players in a game of his or her own. The chess-board is the world, the pieces are the phenomena of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of Nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us.<sup>51</sup>

But that player, it seems, is not God; rather it is the inevitable circumstances of Nature.

Huxley obfuscates his opposing figure, probably deliberately to avoid

religious offense, but it is hard to know to whom or what can be attributed the qualities Huxley imagines:

We know that his play is always fair, just, and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance.<sup>52</sup>

This grindingly obdurate opponent, who is both just and remorseless, seems here to figure not only natural but social law. The gloom of this cosmic game, and its punitiveness, is far removed from Carroll's quirky rearrangement of the rules to explore the life of the pieces. Instead of the "phenomena of the universe" this chess game is peopled by harum-scarum creatures who make us aware that we do not know all the phenomena of the universe: why and if effect follows cause, why plum cakes fall into slices, why flowers have or do not have language. And it brings home the degree of our credulity in taking the apparent laws of nature for granted.

Carroll, as we know, was acquainted with Huxley but we do not need to suppose any direct riposte in their very different views of the law-bound nature of chess, or the universe. Nevertheless, the currency of the chess metaphor among Victorian writers allowed Carroll to give it new twists by combining it with an exploration of the looking-glass world of optical effects.

In choosing a chess game to control Alice's movements and encounters in *Through the Looking-Glass* Carroll created a complex space that could include both rule and multiple possibility. Different possibilities are realized by the diverse motions of the pieces—each programmed to shift only in specific but erratic ways. Together they create multiple spatial and temporal narratives. Within the drives of the chess game are skirmishes and stories that cluster locally within the schema. These stories reach down into the depths of the game and the unwary player may become so fascinated by their power that he or she slackens attention to the longer narratives of play. Lewis Carroll chose to improve further on the dilemmas of chess by granting consciousness to the pieces as well as the (unseen) players. For who plays this game? Alice after a while finds

herself within it, a pawn who might become a Queen. The game is thus performed from a pawn's point of view.

There are no controlling agonists above the board. In the first scene through the looking-glass Alice, trying to be helpful, hastily picks up the King and Queen but that is because their non-chess piece baby, Lily, is crying. They are off the board, outside the game. Everything happens to, and through, the pieces and their hinterland populations. It is as if Carroll is realizing, and correcting, the epigraph that George Eliot writes into *Felix Holt The Radical*. That novel was published in 1867 as Carroll began work on *Looking-Glass*:

Fancy what a game at chess would be if all the chessmen had passions and intellects, more or less small and cunning: if you were not only uncertain about your adversary's men, but a little uncertain also about your own; if your knight could shuffle himself on to a new square by the sly; if your bishop, in disgust at your castling, could wheedle your pawns out of their places; and if your pawns, hating you because they are pawns, could make away from their appointed posts that you might get checkmated on a sudden. You might be the longest-headed of deductive reasoners, and yet you might be beaten by your own pawns. You would be especially likely to be beaten, if you depended arrogantly on your mathematical imagination, and regarded your passionate pieces with contempt.<sup>53</sup>

In this passage George Eliot addresses the reader as chess player, "you," who is seeking to play at being God. She elides the question of the novelist playing God and sets her fantasy of power thwarted at the level of her characters' deceit and maneuvering. To do so she imagines an animistic world of broken rules, pieces choosing their own moves outside the conventions of the game in order to baffle the player who plays them. Carroll, in contrast, uses the rules and works alongside the passionate pieces. Here there is no overseeing player. Instead there is the predicament of dream: who dreams who?

The dynamic interdependence of the creatures and pieces either assumes or annihilates the playing hand. *Through the Looking-Glass* is an agnostic work that sets aside the question of God. While in his mathe-



matics Dodgson clung fast to the absolute order of number as figuring God's natural ordering of the universe, in his works of fiction God is nowhere to be found. Both *Alice* books are extraordinarily secular. Good manners can take you some way toward virtue and Alice, particularly in *Looking-Glass Land*, is a well-mannered child. The chess game extends straight and crooked choices into a maze of futurity, thus performing the multiple hypotheses that are one of the chief pleasures for the reader of fiction. But the game exacts determinations. Checkmate is reached. Or the Red King slumbers.

*Looking-Glass* includes a number of fights and battles and competitive encounters following the lines of chess, though only Jabberwocky describes a mortal conflict. The battles are nursery-absurd, as in the fight between Tweedledum and Tweedledee over possession of the "nice new rattle." Late in the story comes the medieval joust between Red and White Knight in which they each claim possession of Alice. Their grandiose, pointless meeting transgresses the refined world of chess through its lumbering bodily inefficiency:

"The great art of riding," the Knight suddenly began in a loud voice, waving his right arm as he spoke, "is to keep—" Here the sentence ended as suddenly as it had begun, as the Knight fell heavily on the top of his head exactly in the path where Alice was walking. (LG, 210)

The performances of chess prove to be too lateral and devious and the ambition of Alice too straightforward to be reconciled: "I don't want to be anybody's prisoner, I want to be a Queen" (LG, 207).

None of the literary or social or visual realizations of the medieval world that were popular in Victorian times are allowed their pretensions here. Not one of them quite fits the scene. Neither Malory's *Morte D'Arthur* (written 1469; printed 1485) nor Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* (1859), nor indeed the elaborate Eglinton Tournament of 1839 with its chaotic scenes: enormous crowds drenched by thunderstorms, discomfited by delays, and discontented with the medieval displays of arms. But they are all evoked and undermined by Alice's domestication of what purports to be chivalric pageantry.

Alice, viewing the battle between the two knights, fails to see gran-



4. Sir John Everett Millais (1829–96), *The Knight Errant* (1870). Photograph: © Tate, London (2015).

deur, comparing them instead to Punch and Judy and to household matters:

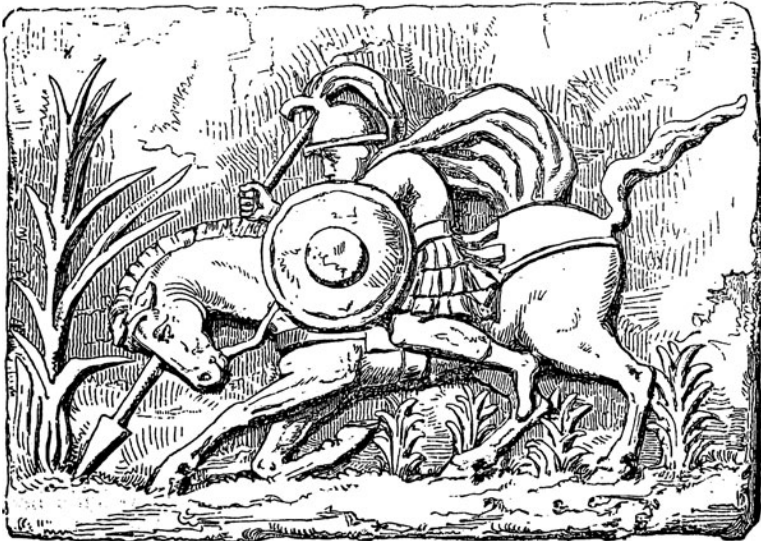
“What a noise they make when they tumble! Just like a whole set of fire-irons falling into the fender! And how quiet the horses are! They let them get on and off them just as if they were tables!” (LG, 207)

Instead of victory for one of the knights, the third Rule of Battle “seemed to be that they always fell on their heads; and the battle ended with their both falling off in this way, side by side. . . . Then the Red Knight mounted and galloped off” (LG, 207).

No wonder Alice is unsure whether this is “a famous victory,” as the White Knight claims. The solemn “Rules of Battle,” like so many of the



5. Alice rescues the upended White Knight from the ditch. *Through the Looking-Glass*, 1871.



6. The heroic M. Curtius, in Henry J. Liddell's *A History of Rome from the Earliest Times to the Establishment of the Empire*, prepares to leap into the gulf.

rules that Alice encounters — and sometimes longs for — seem detached from actual performance. Alice does not need to be rescued by a knight errant; the scene here is at the opposite end of the compass from John Everett Millais’s erotic image *The Knight Errant*, with its bound and drooping lady and armored male rescuer. Here, Alice is the rescuer, tugging the upended White Knight out of the ditch. (See figs. 4 and 5.)

The absence of the erotic gives Lewis Carroll and his heroine freedom. Stalwart Alice picks up the pieces and deflates the pretensions. Carroll shows scant respect for the heraldic and the hierarchical. The enjoyment is in seeing hierarchies upended, and bravura giving way to bewilderment. Paradoxically, in his fiction he enacts many of the impulses that drove the movement among mathematicians toward non-Euclidean insights, even while professionally he holds to a Euclidean order.



### 3

#### PUNS, PUNCH, AND PARODY

Puns and parodies (those constant linguistic features of the *Alice* books) both emphasize doubleness, a doubleness that runs under the pellucid surface of the text. Puns have a forked presence, a single word leading in at least two semantic directions; parodies live most fully alongside their original and need that original to reach their power of contradiction. Puns are a form of riddle, and to that degree they are conscious, since the double or several senses must vibrate against each other. People often apologize if they make a pun unawares and they are self-consciously held as the lowest form of humor, in which groans are traditionally expected from the listener. That at least is the reaction of socially trained adults. But for children the pristine multiples of meaning hiding within the single word release a rush of energy. They laugh at such fundamental clashes as “the twinkling of the tea” and the initial letter T:

“The twinkling of *what?*” said the King.

“It *began* with the tea,” the Hatter replied.

“Of course twinkling *begins* with a T!” said the King sharply. “Do you take me for a dunce?” (W, 98–99)

Children can relish the King’s discomfiture, so close to their own in learning to read, with its constant risk of error and humiliation. The de-

scription of tea as “twinkling” is certainly individual, but *T* as the initial letter of the word “tea” is general. There’s the initial pun. But behind this simple joke lies, as so often with Carroll, further reaches of technical symbol, both mathematical and logical. *T* is the symbol for “True” in logic; it is also the top or universal type and, probably most relevant here, it refers to a specific time, whereas lowercase *t* among mathematical symbols refers to time in general. Understanding all this instantaneously would be possible only for a small audience, but the “universal” *T* of the joke about initial letters and the drink “tea” speaks to all, child and adult and mathematician alike. Lewis Carroll is enjoying himself. Sheer pleasure in language fuels the flow of invention in the *Alice* books from page to page. Sometimes the jokes work like polyphony, with different layers and melodies glimpsed through the surface, sometimes like the jokes in crackers, so basic as to be funny.

In his discussion of Clerk Maxwell’s poem “Recollections of Dreamland” (1856) Daniel Brown remarks: “The pun’s subversive surfeit of meaning, the irreducible ambiguity that gives it kinship to the condensed imagery of dreams, exercises and enlarges Maxwell’s sense of hermeneutic possibility.”<sup>1</sup> The *T*/tea joke and its hinterland encapsulates “subversive surfeit.” The condensation of dreams and waking language enlarges the reach of possibility for Lewis Carroll, too. Yet Eleanor Cook pinpoints the necessary converse of “reach”: Carroll’s shrewd sense of limits. In her discussion of Humpty Dumpty and the Sphinx in *Enigmas and Riddles in Literature* she observes:

What interests me in the Humpty-Dumpty resonance and many another is Carroll’s sure sense of limits. Carroll is not alluding to the Grecian Sphinx and her famous riddle. Even the word “echoing” is too strong. A resonance, a reverberation, a reminder that comes and then vanishes: again and again the genius of the *Alice* books is to set these delicately in motion. They are not merely fanciful but neither are they firm. They live on a scale from certain (the *jam* pun and the Gryphon scheme-trope) through probable to just possible. This is not a scale in relation to Carroll’s intentions, but a rhetorical scale measuring reasonable limits to our inferences from a trope.<sup>2</sup>

This packed and subtle passage indicates that the “reach” in Carroll’s work is a collaboration between him and the individual reader drawing on a common figure. He knows how to keep the surface clear even when the currents beneath are complex. The tea/T joke can rest on its laurels as a simple pun. It can also be pursued further. Carroll’s multiple jokes are often first layered in this way, and then folded in. The fugitive, expressed as resonance, reverberation, “reminder that comes and vanishes,” well expresses Lewis Carroll’s glances at the different forms of knowledge that ripple through his texts, and that I explore in this study.

Surfeit is essential to parody as well as to puns. There is the original poem with all its own multiple contexts and there is the parodic poem. Between original and riposte there is doubling, reversing, and more than doubling. Ideally, the reader can hear how the two poems chime together as well as how they strain apart. Both puns and parody evoke control and the rumble of chaos simultaneously: control, in that the listener must keep the side-by-side meanings in play together, and chaos, in that this playing threatens to implode, nullifying both initial and revisionary poem. So both pun and parody speak particularly to a child who has only recently learned to read and has several parallel possibilities in mind as she gazes at the unfamiliar letters on the page. And, if she is a Victorian child, she will have been taught to remember and recite information and poetry “by heart” (or “by rote”).

The *Alice* books do not simply *address* a child reader but share that moment of learning to read, in which words still have insecure edges and a nimbus of nonsense blurs the sharp focus of terms. You can’t be sure that the word lodged near the center will turn out to be the one your elders approve. Words are not yet secure containers but rather a riot of letters and phonemes that may, if you are lucky, fall into an acceptable order. Words heard bear little relation to their representation on the page.

The puzzlement of Alice, and the triumph of Alice, are attached to her newly acquired skills as a reader. Words spring to life, jostling, unruly, looming, then brilliantly sealed and skeined into ordered sentences. That primary constituency of child readers for the *Alice* books does not imply simplicity—rather, struggle, loneliness, pleasure, and sometimes



success, the flair of meaning pinned down or released. Carroll allows the child to relish triumph over the incapacity of adults, too. The White King reaches for his memorandum book: “Do you spell ‘creature’ with a double ‘e’?” he asks. The child reader is happily sure of the answer; it is printed on the page (LG, 200).

Carroll is able to enact both the adult narrating the story and the child performing the story. Many of the episodes and jokes in *Wonderland* play across this double role, particularly in Alice’s helpless misremembering of dutiful poems. None of us, child or adult, can now share quite the full raucous delight of Victorian children hearing the proprieties topple and the morals give way in these sanguine parodies.<sup>3</sup> But fortunately the parodies are in themselves arresting even without their dialogic originals. Isaac Watts’s poem “Against Idleness and Mischief” in his *Divine Songs for Children* (1715) opens:

How doth the little busy Bee  
 Improve each shining Hour,  
 And gather Honey all the Day  
 From ev’ry op’ning Flow’r!<sup>4</sup>

Its third verse is still famous:

In works of labour or of skill,  
 I would be busy too;  
 For Satan finds some mischief still  
 For idle hands to do.<sup>5</sup>

Alice gropes for these verses when she first finds her memory for her lessons skewed, just before she weeps her pool of tears. The benign images of fertilization, industry, and architectonics associated with bee culture might comfort her if she could recall them, but she can’t. She is terrified of lapsing into ignorance. She composes her body to produce the expected rote lesson:

“I’ll try and say “*How doth the little—*” and she crossed her hands on her lap, as if she were saying lessons, and began to repeat it, but her voice

sounded hoarse and strange, and the words did not come out the same as they used to do. (W, 19)

The poem she recites, producing it like a medium (her voice sounds “hoarse and strange”) out of an unconscious she didn’t know she had, is scintillating, cheerful, and violent:

How doth the little crocodile  
 Improve his shining tail,  
 And pour the waters of the Nile  
 On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,  
 How neatly spreads his claws,  
 And welcomes little fishes in,  
 With gently smiling jaws! (W, 19)

Alice here draws on the universal practice in Victorian education of learning by heart or by rote. By heart suggests internalizing; by rote suggests ignorance. But as Eneas [sic] Sweetland Dallas commented in his discussion of unconsciousness and memory in *The Gay Science* (1866):

That understanding is not essential to memory we see in children who learn by heart what has no meaning to them. The meaning comes long years afterwards. But it would seem as if the process we have all observed on such a small scale goes on continually on a much larger scale. Absolute as a photograph, the mind refuses nought.<sup>6</sup>

Dallas is arguing for the promiscuous all-devouring, all-retaining power of unconscious memory, what he elsewhere in this then-famous work terms “the hidden soul”:

the memory grips and appropriates what it does not understand—appropriates it mechanically, like a magpie stealing a silver spoon, without knowing what it is, or what to do with it. The memory cannot help itself. It is a kleptomaniac and lets nothing go by.<sup>7</sup>

Alice while in Wonderland is mortified by her distorted memories of moral poems she has learned by heart.

Dallas writes in a register that is far more metaphoric than anything in Carroll, and Carroll may or may not have read Dallas's very widely discussed work. What is clear is that the idea of the imagination as "loose memory" or "hidden thought" was attracting much discussion in the years between the publication of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*.<sup>8</sup> Carroll is relying on the accurate remembering of his first readers for the punch of his parodies. He is also, by means of Alice's skewed remembrance, bringing to the surface much that is hidden in the original poems. For example, the seemingly innocuous urgings to moderation in David Bates's "Speak Gently! It is better far / To rule by love than fear!" begin to pall by the time we get to:

Speak gently to the little child!  
 Its love be sure to gain;  
 Teach it in accents soft and mild;  
 It may not long remain.<sup>9</sup>

The child's death will, it is implied, make rebuke unnecessary. Far better, to do as Alice does: "If I don't take this child away with me," thought Alice "they're sure to kill it in a day or two" (W, 55). The baby becomes instead rather a handsome pig (56).

In *Looking-Glass*, Alice, knowing the nursery rhymes, has narrative reach. She watches for the moment of Humpty Dumpty's fall or foresees the need for "the white bread and the brown" after the Lion and the Unicorn have fought. "'It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards,' the Queen remarked" (LG, 172). Carroll gives to the child reader the delight of memory that works forward, too. By choosing nursery rhymes as the base of narrative allusion in *Looking-Glass* he endows Alice and the child reader with prescience, a prescience that is gratifyingly fulfilled. Offstage, the mighty are falling.

Humpty Dumpty's chapter ends with this paragraph, which has as its climax a kind of narrative riddle: a moment of suspense before interpretation:

Alice waited a minute to see if he would speak again, but, as he never opened his eyes or took any further notice of her, she said “Good-bye!” once more, and, getting no answer to this, she quietly walked away: but she couldn’t help saying to herself as she went, “Of all the unsatisfactory—” (she repeated this aloud, as it was a great comfort to have such a long word to say) “of all the unsatisfactory people I ever met—” She never finished the sentence, for at this moment a heavy crash shook the forest from end to end. (LG, 193)

Alice’s command of spoken utterance is still somewhat exercised, not taken for granted, as the commentary makes clear. She first thinks, then pronounces aloud, “unsatisfactory” as the satisfactory crash occurs. Absolved from blame, she walks out of the frame of Humpty Dumpty’s story just before the catastrophe.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall—

Another shattered identity hits the ground. And Alice gets her tongue around another long word. The insistence on her success with “unsatisfactory” may in itself seem a little puzzling. After all, she has negotiated a good many words of more than one syllable by that point in the story. But Carroll’s own relation to words uttered was never easy. He has the stammerer’s canny eye for the awkward letters cropping up in the middle as much as at the start of a word. These rogue letters turn words into stiles to be mounted, rugs that trip him up, streams to be skirted. Ss are notorious stumbling blocks: “unsatisfactory” has two. To that degree, like a child learning to read, language remains for him a set of puzzles and performances. That identification is crucial to the particular forms of language play in the *Alice* books: spruce, apt, and puzzled.

Carroll’s endoubled presence in the story allows space to the adult reader, too, to be both adult and child. The books allow us to reach past the amnesia that for most people blots out the experience of learning to read. Alice is not infantile. She has just entered the zone of literacy. She shares space now with the adult world of categories and concepts.

That threshold status poises her skeptically just beyond our grasp. She will not buckle to our best assumptions. She is always curious, alert to anomaly and to breaches of convention, conventions so recently learned and at such cost in the making of identity. Knowledge has not yet settled: it is still in play. Within play it is possible to be both wholehearted and guarded at once, to “half-believe” and yet to be immersed in “let’s pretend.” Play does not demand empathy; it may even breed callousness.

Nabokov translated *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* into Russian soon after his return from Cambridge in 1922, at the start of his own career as a writer and, as Thomas Karshan points out in his brilliant analysis in *Vladimir Nabokov and the Art of Play*, that experience was a formative moment in Nabokov’s work. Karshan emphasizes the trajectory toward deception and cruelty within Nabokov’s conception of play.

Play is often thought of as something nice, partly because it is customarily thought of in contrast to woe, and partly because of its association with childhood, itself sentimentalised as the natural foil to work and war. . . . Nabokov’s novels . . . though they often allude to the utopian view of play, are mostly about the potential danger and cruelty inherent in play. They celebrate the imagination, only to show how rapaciously it seizes its toys from the outside world, trapping them in games of deception and exploitation.<sup>10</sup>

Essentially, Karshan argues, “Nabokov’s novels show all the ways that play goes wrong, and all the things there are in play apart from innocence and goodness.”<sup>11</sup>

This is a salutary reminder of the fierce tease-culture that prevails in Carroll’s writing, particularly in *Wonderland*, where Alice is constantly worsted by logic-chopping and sneers:

“How am I to get in?” asked Alice again, in a louder tone.

“Are you to get in at all?” said the footman. “That’s the first question, you know.”

It was, no doubt: only Alice did not like to be told so. “It’s really dreadful,” she muttered to herself, “the way all the creatures argue. It’s enough to drive one crazy!” (W, 52)

But Alice keeps her resilience and, in contrast to Nabokov, Carroll does not imply that play is inevitably competitive—though Alice does know that play requires two figures, even if that means dividing oneself in two. We are told near the start of her adventures that in the upper world Alice monitored her own behavior and tried to punish herself for rule-breaking, even if she did not succeed because of the wisdom of the body that won't let you box your own ears:

She generally gave herself very good advice (though she very seldom followed it), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes; and once she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself, for this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people. (W, 14)

The key to Alice's poise is in that parentheses "*(though she very seldom followed it)*."

Play as limber freedom is contrary to Nabokov's insistence on deceit and entanglement. In Carroll's work endoublement need not always imply entrapment. And, as we will see in my discussion of the dialogues of Alice, Alice retains a hope for conversation as companionship not competition. So doubleness is not necessarily contrary to intactness for Alice; she looks for interchange and reciprocity with the creatures she encounters, and occasionally she finds it.

The Cheshire-Cat, the haunting familiar of Dinah, her domestic companion at home, leaves his grin for her comfort as he comes and goes: Alice "said to herself 'It's the Cheshire-Cat: now I shall have somebody to talk to'" (W, 74). And she tells the King that "it's a friend of mine—a Cheshire-Cat" (75). Mood survives body: the cat's body ("somebody to talk to") may be absent but his presence persists and he accommodates Alice's requests, unlike most of the other beings in the book:

"I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy!"

"All right," said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone. (W, 59)

The Cat's leisurely fading, so orderly in its procedures, undermines all the laws of sight and substance but not those of courtesy.

Like Jane Austen, Carroll started by mimicking the forms as well as the substance of fashionable writing. His boyhood magazines are full of comic takeoffs of popular songs, border ballads, medieval tales, and poets ranging from Sydney Dobell to Tennyson and Longfellow. In the fifties he contributed to several magazines such as the short-lived *Comic Times* and began to submit material to *Punch*, mostly unsuccessfully. Parody itself was a fashionable form: it is one of the most diversified of Victorian styles and to be found everywhere in the period. The printed subjects range from popular songs to Gothic and medieval verses, Oriental love songs, Spasmodic poems, and well-known poets, particularly those with a pronounced manner: Byron, Wordsworth, Robert Browning, Swinburne, for example. Tennyson's poeticisms generated a great number of poems, ranging from Cuthbert Bede's (Edward Bradley's) "In Immemorial" to Charles Calverley's "Wanderers" to Lewis Carroll's "The Three Voices," Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "MacCracken" and "The Brothers," and Tom Taylor's "The Laureate's Bust at Trinity," to name but a few.<sup>12</sup> Parody is to be found not only in the pages of *Punch* and other humorous journals but among scientists, members of the British Association for the Advancement of Science and its Red Lion Club or in the brilliant, and often sharply satiric, parodies by James Clerk Maxwell that call on Tennyson and John Tyndall at once.<sup>13</sup> One topic of Victorian parody, as in the eighteenth century also, is the commercialization of poetry and the poor performance of poets. Horace Twiss neatly turns Prospero's great speech in *The Tempest* in this melancholy direction:

Our parodies are ended. These our authors,  
 As we foretold you, were all Spirits, and  
 Are melted into air, into thin air.  
 And, like the baseless fabric of these verses,  
 The Critic's puff, the Trade's advertisement,  
 The Patron's promise, and the World's applause, —  
 Yea, all the hopes of poets, — shall dissolve,  
 And, like this unsubstantial fable fated,  
 Leave not a groat behind!<sup>14</sup>

It is indeed a problem for parody that its base poems have so often vanished from memory (though Twiss plays safe using Shakespeare here). Parody requires the distorted echoes of the usurped text to make themselves heard if it is to reach its full power. Parody is always purposive, though its purpose may be play rather than accusation or instruction. In that, it differs from nonsense, which calls on the latent springs of association and may be close to echolalia and alliteration. Linda Hutcheon has drawn attention to the double nature of parody in postmodern writing, both installing and destabilizing the past, and merging it into a dissonant present. She has emphasized how “through a double process of installing and ironizing, parody signals how present representations come from past ones and what ideological consequences derive from both continuity and difference.”<sup>15</sup> But parody is, of course, not peculiar to twentieth-century writing, nor are its earlier manifestations sharply to be distinguished from its postmodern guises.

The insistence on Carroll as a singular talent has disguised the extent to which in the *Alice* books he used materials very much like those to be found in the *Punch* of the day. This is not to deny the uniqueness of the books; rather, it may allow us to observe more exactly just what it is that makes them unique. One simple difference from most printed parodies is that nursery rhymes and moral rhymes are the main focus of *Wonderland*, in keeping with truant child life. Later, in *Looking-Glass*, further sources, beyond nursery rhymes and popular songs, are brought into play: notably Wordsworth’s “Resolution and Independence” and Anglo-Saxon verse, to which I will return. Playgrounds must have been rife with wicked rhymes that have not survived, though some were gathered by the Opies much later in the twentieth century, similarly pub lore. Music Hall became a great center of parodic wit. Carroll’s work draws on the full range of printed materials, popular song, and traditional rhymes.

We have some further evidence, from the compilations he made, of what Carroll found engaging and funny in *Punch*, and in other journals and newspapers. Now available on line through the Library of Congress is a scrapbook in which Carroll gathered his favorite news items, jokes, and cartoons, compiled from 1855 to 1872, though drawing on some earlier material.<sup>16</sup> The cuttings are from a variety of sources but *Punch* is prominent among them. Carroll’s choice includes a great many theater



reviews, comic poems, cartoons, church and Oxford debates, and critiques of Tennyson: for example, a hostile review that remarks of *Maud*: “It is written in a series of 26 fits—we do not mean the fits or cantos of old ballads, but veritable ague-fits.” *The Hunting of the Snark* will use that “fits” joke again. Carroll’s compilation also includes two severe poems by Christina Rossetti and several cartoons that enjoy the sayings of small girls: one of them entitled “Wonderful Intelligent Child” shows a mother and little girl with the following dialogue:

“Rose, will you have some Dinner?”  
 Rose: “Have had my Dinner”;  
 —“What have you had for Dinner?”  
 Rose: “Something that begins with an S.”  
 —“And what begins with an S?”  
 Rose: “Cold Beef.”

Another, called “Taking a Hint,” shows a small girl, Sylvie, being read to, with the commentary:

Aunt Flora (concluding the story of the naughty little girl) “—and soaked all her nice new Sunday clothes from Head to Foot.” (Moral) “But Sylvie’s a *good* little girl—*She* never got into her Bath with all her Sunday clothes on.”  
 Sylvie (thoughtfully) “No-o, I never did—but I will now!”

In both cartoons the child nicely baulks adult expectations: she won’t be forced in their chosen direction: “Cold beef “and “S” can be coupled in her world, and the moral story of the naughty little girl sparks new possibilities for Sylvie (the name, intriguingly, that Carroll gives to the heroine of his late novels *Sylvie and Bruno* [1889] and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* [1893]).

Carroll’s life-long friend and Christ Church colleague J. Vere Bayne also assembled two scrapbook volumes of cuttings from *Punch* and other places, now held in Christ Church Library.<sup>17</sup> These volumes suggest close involvement from Carroll. The selections stretch all the way in date from the early 1850s to a poem by Professor York Powell “At a Certain Auc-

tion in 1897” (corrected to 1898) that laments the indiscriminate sale of Lewis Carroll’s belongings after his death. Bayne’s volumes begin on February 8, 1858, and the first of them includes an array of material ranging from Newman’s *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (1851) and an obituary for Henry Liddell’s predecessor as Dean of Christ Church to satire on Gladstone and on Liddell himself (as does Carroll’s); there is a poem called “A Dream” full of mathematical jokes, a sepia photograph of a very large skeletal fish (photographed by Dodgson), and a good many *Punch* cartoons, including a cartoon called “An idea for a wet day: Hang up the crinolines, and have a game at croquet in the dining-room.” Four girls crowd into an overstuffed room: crinoline hoops laid aside as music books serve as croquet hoops: it’s another improvised croquet pitch, somewhat like that in *Wonderland*.<sup>18</sup>

Bayne also includes Lewis Carroll’s poem “A is for Acland, who’d physic the masses” and his later spoof against the large demands for space and laboratories being made by physics in Oxford in the 1860s.<sup>19</sup> The pith of this piece by Carroll is that maths does not require space. It is phrased paradoxically, in terms of the rooms and open ground required for the proper performance of maths: for example, “A piece of open ground for keeping Roots and practising their extraction” and a “large room darkened and fitted up with a magic lantern, for the purpose of exhibiting Circulating Decimals, in the act of circulation.”

Some of Bayne’s cuttings run amusingly close to Carroll’s jokes in *Wonderland*: for example, the list of Trinity House Academy Prizes suggests a school determined that everyone shall win and all have prizes, as in the Caucus Race: after a couple of academic awards the list continues:

Master William Thomas Richles, for personal neatness, Master John Wm. Boddy, for suavity of manners and general good behavior, Master James Keighley Bray, for improvement in manners and personal carriage.

Certificates of honour were also given to Masters Hamilton and Walton, for uniform propriety of demeanour at meals and public worship. — Halifax, Dec. 19, 1850

These scrapbooks with their easy commingling of serious and absurd entries follow the lines established also by *Punch*, which included satire,

cartoons, parodies, political squibs and quite brutal sneers, a good many jokes about female dress, as well as some few heartfelt memorial poems and mordant observations. The title *Punch* even conceals within itself a “pun” about puns.

If one turns to *Punch* for 1859 and 1860, years when Carroll had already met the Liddell children, had developed his career as a photographer, and was in the habit of making up stories that would eventually be gathered as *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, one encounters much to stimulate Carroll in pictures, cartoons, and articles. Tenniel, of course, is prominent but other cartoonists such as John Leech and more anonymous contributors of written text give the journal its striking variety.<sup>20</sup>

One odd feature of the *Punch* of the day is that illustrations often appear to have no bearing whatsoever on the accompanying story. Take “An Unattached Couple.”<sup>21</sup> An Alice-like creature perches precariously in a tree alongside an item about the birth of a child: “On the 16th inst. at LL—the wife of Lieut-Col L—(unattached), of a daughter.” The officer is not “attached” to a regiment. *Punch* readers are presumably expected to know that technical military sense. The joke seems to be snobbish in its innuendo—such officers were of lower status—while nudging at a joke about unmarried birth. (See fig. 7.)

There are in *Punch*, as in Carroll, many revisions of Tennyson’s poems. There are a good many excellent pictures of strange animals, birds, and insects, often flouting scale, as in *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*. Tenniel, the masterly illustrator who controls so much of our visual knowledge in the two books, was also *Punch*’s chief political cartoonist. The volumes of *Punch* also include a great number of railway jokes dwelling on bad timekeeping and lost luggage,<sup>22</sup> jokes that make the railway scene in *Looking-Glass* seem both more orderly and more threatening with its bureaucratic decorum:

“Tickets, please,” said the Guard, putting his head in at the window. In a moment everybody was holding out a ticket: they were about the same size as the people, and quite seemed to fill the carriage. (LG, 146)

Then the people in the carriage begin “*thinking in chorus*” in an oppressive accusatory sing-song that disturbs Alice: “(I hope you understand what *thinking in chorus* means—for I must confess that I don’t)” (146), re-



7. "An Unattached Couple," *Punch*, October 29, 1859.

marks the narrator, shrugging off responsibility for his invention in a disconcertingly cavalier fashion. The whispered confusion by which Alice is surrounded in the carriage, and her anxiety, move into a vein of psychological insight, "*thinking in chorus*," which is then vigorously tugged back into the matter-of-fact by the rare intervention of the narrator here.

Unlike isolated Alice, whose kin cannot enter the dream, in *Punch* family group jokes are common. Where little boys and little girls are involved the boy is usually the spokesman, the girl the butt, though the boy in this cartoon suggests comic pretensions of maturity from someone relatively recently moved from baby clothes to shorts: headed "Experienced Young Fellow" the strap line runs: "Ah Clara, you should have seen the *Pantomimes* that I've seen; these modern affairs ain't half so good." His young sister, Alice-like, though plumper, appears unimpressed. (See fig. 8.)

One cartoon in particular, on May 5, 1860, does have a close affinity with Carroll. The scene is a nursery where a somewhat grim governess keeps watch over a little girl who is reading, perched decorously on a



8. "Experienced Young Fellow," *Punch*, February 25, 1860.

chair, and a smaller boy looking at a picture book with a little dog beside him. The girl, Minnie, says: "I am reading such a pretty Tale." The governess replies: "You must say Narrative, Minnie, not Tale." Minnie: "Yes, ma'am, and do just look at Muff, how he is wagging his narrative." (See fig. 9.)

The girl's innocent plain speaking trumps adult pretension. This is of course also the same joke about *tale* and *tail* that Carroll develops when Alice grows confused between the mouse's story and his body:



9. "Late from the School-room," *Punch*, May 5, 1860.

"Mine is a long and a sad tale!" said the mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing.

"It is a long tail, certainly," said Alice, looking down with wonder at the mouse's tail: "but why do you call it sad?" (W, 27-28)

There are some fine nonsense verses in *Punch* at this period, to rival Carroll's own. In a satirical piece on the absurdity of song lyrics, "Ballads for Bedlamites," the writer offers three of his poems. The borderline between parody and nonsense was nicely set by this 1859 article.<sup>23</sup> The writer claims that his aim is "to put some check upon the sale of the stuff and nonsense sellers who supply such rampant rubbish" and that he has made his songs as silly as possible to match their "Bedlamitish Bosh." But the writer gets it both ways: mocking and celebrating, sneering at sentimental popular lyrics while writing nonsense versions of them that achieve a farcical beauty of their own: for example, "See the Swallows Gaily Swimming!" whose first verse runs:

See the swallows gaily swimming,  
 Hop upon the rainbow's back!  
 See, the milky way is skimming,

And the comet's got the sack!  
 Sweetly purrs the cheeky chicken,  
 Softly sings the rampant gnu;  
 While the moon's alive and kicking,  
 Fond one, ah! I love but you!<sup>24</sup>

The grudging tone of the writer's prose critique sits oddly with the pleasure that he clearly finds in nonsense poetry: he provides three songs and reaches a happy ecstasy of absurdity in all of them: the second verse of "The Clouds Are Shining Clear and Bright!" is particularly free and wayward, letting rhyme guide the rivulet of sense:

The tiger hops from spray to spray,  
 And clears his tuneful throat,  
 I catch a fragment of his lay,  
 He warbles, "*I'm afloat!*"  
 The diving-bell soars high above,  
 'Tis steered by MR. GREEN;  
 So, come, my bride, and be my love,  
 For, yes! 'tis all serene.<sup>25</sup>

An article by John Hollingsworth that appeared in many books and journals in the 1860s and 1870s clarifies the "Mr. Green" reference and pins the poem's oddities back into contemporary life, without any particularly parodic reference.

The Whitstable divers may be from thirty to fifty in number, strong stout healthy temperate men who look like able bodied sailors. Though not incorporated as a joint stock company and protected by a charter like their friends and neighbours the Free Dredgers, they form themselves by a kind of Whitstable instinct into a working brotherhood under the presidency and guidance of a captain, Mr Green. Mr Green is not a diver himself and has never been under water either in the helmet or the bell, but he directs the labour of those within his command, purchases their chances for a certain fixed payment before they dive and acts generally like that very useful but often times much abused capitalist without whom so few trades can be successfully carried on.<sup>26</sup>

There are many appealing moments in the *Punch* of the 1850s and 1860s, but time spent with the magazine distinguishes the freedom and the insouciance of Carroll. His triumph is not always the invention of completely new material. But reading 1860s issues of *Punch* brings out how inoffensive to our current sensibilities is Carroll compared with the run of material there. A bit of snobbery, a single caricature of Irishness, but nothing to compare with the grinding classism, sexism, racism, and condescension of *Punch* in this heyday of its influence. The small squibs at the foot of the page in *Punch* often present all this in concentrated form: take this example, entitled “The Indian Chess Board”:

This long match is over. BLACK loses—WHITE wins. It will be a long time before BLACK, after the magnificent check it has just received from WHITE, will feel inclined to renew the game.<sup>27</sup>

One series of comic articles, “*Punch’s* Book of British Costumes,” in particular connects with Carroll’s amused interest in Anglo-Saxon dress, language, and customs.<sup>28</sup> The March 3 article shows “Anglo-Saxon Gents Taking a Hairing.” (See fig. 10.) The last paragraph shows a wonderfully windswept pair with long hair blown out across their faces after a straight-faced discussion of why civilians did not wear caps:

It is probable, however, that being proud of their long hair, they did not like to hide it, and so declined to wear the hide caps of the period, with which as we have shown, the soldiers were disfigured. Although not ornamental, these caps were certainly a cap-ital protection to the head, and shielded it from blows as well of weapons as of wind. It is on this account we wonder the civilians did not use them, for as they wore their hair so long the slightest breath must surely have blown it in their eyes. . . . For instance, when they marched out on a windy day in March, we can fancy how the wind would “play in the ringlets” of their hair, until it made them look as mad as a March hare or a hatter.<sup>29</sup>

Intriguingly, the discussion ends with puzzlement about the status of “a March hare or a hatter: though why these creatures should be singled out as samples of insanity, no creature in his senses could undertake to say.”

These *Punch* articles seem precursors to the Hatter’s tea party and





10. "Anglo-Saxon Gents Taking a Hairing," *Punch*, March 3, 1860.

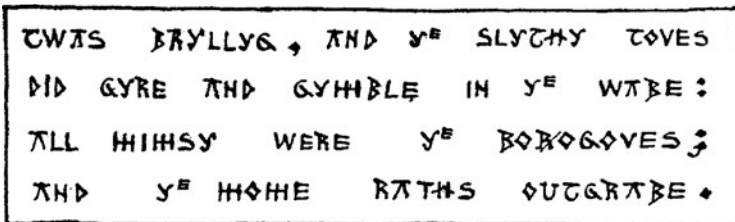
the later transformation of the *Wonderland* Hare and Hatter to *Looking-Glass* Haigha and Hatta—though Carroll's first "Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry" was written a little earlier than "*Punch's* Book of British Costumes." James Williams suggests that "in transforming his March Hare and Mad Hatter into Haigha and Hatta, Carroll allows the world of philology to seep into *Looking-Glass* world."<sup>30</sup> That is certainly true, but the tangles are even more intricate: *Punch* and philology alike contribute to the revival of Anglo-Saxonism in *Looking-Glass*. Again, Carroll is joining in the melee of joking and investigation among his peers rather than simply inventing from scratch.

Carroll has the striking ability to take one of his earlier poems and en-

mesh it, usually in an extended form, into the text of the *Alice* stories. In doing so, he expands the implications of the poem as well as its length. The most famous poem in the two *Alice* books is surely “Jabberwocky.” The first verse was written in the mid-1850s as “Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry” at about the same time as his “Upon the Lonely Moor” (which lies behind the White Knight’s song and is an earlier shorter parody of Wordsworth’s poem “Resolution and Independence”).<sup>31</sup> Both poems turn up, transformed, in *Looking-Glass*.

The 1850s four-line version of “Jabberwocky” takes its zest from its pseudo-runic script and its long pseudo-learned commentary, which differs in places from Humpty Dumpty’s later explanations. For example, in the earlier version we have: “Gyre, verb (derived from Gyaour or Giaour, a dog). To scratch like a dog” (LG, 59–60). Later, Humpty Dumpty claims that “To gyre is to go round and round like a gyroscope” (188). The early version appears in *Mischmasch*, Carroll’s last collection of materials from his earlier family collections and from other magazines where he had published poems, such as *College Rhymes*, the Oxford and Cambridge magazine he also edited for a while. Many of the poems in *Mischmasch* were then gathered in his collection *Phantasmagoria* (1869), but not “Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry.” (See fig. 11.) Perhaps he had already expanded it for *Looking-Glass* by 1869, although *Looking-Glass* was not published until December 1871.

The first version of the poem is the more obviously parodic. It looks back, for instance, to Joseph Bosworth’s 1838 *A Dictionary of the Anglo-Saxon Language*, which Lewis Carroll owned. (In 1858 Bosworth became Rawlinsonian Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford.) John Mitchell Kemble, brother of the famous actress Fanny Kemble, brought out the



11. Pseudo-runic lettering, “Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry” (*Mischmasch*, c. 1855).

first English edition of *Beowulf* in 1833, a relationship that may well have additionally intrigued the later theater enthusiast Carroll. Carroll delighted in dictionaries and owned a great number, including for German, Gaelic, Greek, Hebrew and Chaldean, Italian, Latin, Scottish, Spanish, and Welsh, aside from around fifteen English dictionaries and James Halliwell's *A Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words*. Halliwell was also one of the first to study nursery rhymes and published two collections of them, also in Carroll's library.<sup>32</sup> Under the aegis of the Philological Society the *Oxford English Dictionary* was conceived in the 1850s, particularly prompted by Chevenix Trench's article "On Some Deficiencies in Our English Dictionaries" (1857). So Carroll's first Anglo-Saxon squib appeared in the midst of widespread fascination with older linguistic forms and at a time when British scholars were fully taking account of Germanic learning.<sup>33</sup>

The *Transactions of the Philological Society* in the late 1850s are full of etymological puzzles that draw on Anglo-Saxon language, for example, in 1859 Ernest Adams on "On the Names of Spiders," who apologetically groups "Spiders, Slugs, Snails, and Worms under the general name of Insects" since, he says, "I have consciously adopted the popular, though erroneous, classification of our old English writers and of the uninitiated public of the present day." Moreover, he writes, "It must be notorious to the reader of old English literature that every conceivable wriggling monster, from the Arch-fiend down to a tadpole, is denominated a *worm*."<sup>34</sup> The Jabberwock at least escapes that designation, though its name suggests it is a kind of Anglo-Saxon monster.

"Jabberwocky," despite Humpty Dumpty's glossary, has moved rather away from the earlier academic parody and further toward nonsense. Nonsense may radically dissolve reference in a way that discounts any reasonable allusion to founding texts. Yet there is a paradox in the relationship of the first stanza to the extended poem. The nouns of that first verse are entirely composed of neologisms, so to that degree the verse is nearer to the evocative but unreferential world of nonsense than to parody:

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:

All mimsy were the borogoves,  
 And the mome raths outgrabe. (LG, 187)

Anglo-Saxon attitudes, verbal gestures, convince us that we are listening to a well-known story, though the vocabulary is, as Humpty Dumpty might say, “impenetrable.” However, its syntax holds firm. After that first verse we are given more narrative to hold onto and the neologisms are adjectives, not nouns, so that we have a thread to lead us: “vorpall sword,” “manxome foe,” “uffish thought,” “tulgey wood.” The one-syllabled “sword,” “foe,” “thought,” and “wood” are familiar, and although the adjectives are assertively, bafflingly, Gothic, their emphasis on the first syllables drives utterance energetically forward (“vorpall,” “tulgey”). Later in the poem, on the other hand, “galumphing,” “frabjous,” and “chortled” are strongly onomatopoeic (or do they only seem so now that the words have become familiar denizens of the English language?).

Perhaps the residue of Anglo-Saxonism is most evident in the poem’s alliteration, so crucial to poems like *Beowulf*. But, even without that historical reference, Carroll knew that alliteration and repetition go deep into human pleasure. In a joking letter to Charlotte (Lottie) Rix about the initial letters of names and their determining associations Carroll remarks, not altogether jokingly: “one of the deepest motives (as you are aware) in the human breast (so deep that many have failed to detect it) is Alliteration.”<sup>35</sup> Lottie, Carroll writes, is

Lucky . . . to be so initialled: so that everyone must send Love. If, like me, you had “D” for an initial, things would be Different, and I should send you “Dislike” as soon as Look at you! Your destiny, of course, has other things in store: e.g. to be Long, and Lank, and in disposition Lugubrious. However Love outweighs all that.<sup>36</sup>

Alliteration is the least reasoned or semantic, the most lingual and auditory, of all the poet’s arts. Whereas rhyme expresses the tension between sound and sense, never fully matching yet seeking affinity, alliteration is free non-sense. “Jabberwocky” combines a traditionally violent heroic story with gibberish to produce something sinuous and exhilarating, something full of names but not quite nameable.



12. John Tenniel, “Marmion Dying,” in *The Poets of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Robert Aris Willmott (London: Routledge, 1857), 159.

Tenniel’s illustration for the poem was sufficiently alarming to lead Carroll to consult some mothers about its suitability as a frontispiece and as a result he decided to place it less dauntingly within the text. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst points out in his discussion of Tenniel’s contribution to *Wonderland* that a reader of the first edition “might have experienced the sensation of being introduced to an old friend.”

The little girl we now recognize as Alice . . . had made an early appearance in the frontispiece to a volume of *Punch* published in 1864, where Tenniel had depicted her placing a garland around the neck of the British lion.<sup>37</sup>



13. John Tenniel, The White Knight falling off his horse. *Through the Looking-Glass*.

This, with other examples, suggests “that Tenniel was expecting his Alice to be seen as a social type rather than an individual.”<sup>38</sup>

Douglas-Fairhurst argues that Tenniel started out surveying the social landscape from an assured position within that culture and that he could take for granted his own authority. But, intriguingly, by the time Tenniel comes to illustrate *Looking-Glass* seven years later, there is a strong vein of self-parody in his illustrations, as if he has discovered the strangeness in what had earlier been taken for granted in his work. This is prominent in his treatment of the White Knight, which draws on many of his own earlier solemn images of knightly valour and sacrifice. (See figs. 12 and 13.) It is there also in the illustration for “Jabberwocky” that pits a tiny

child knight, androgynous in aspect, against the ferocious grandeur of the enormous Jabberwock.

For Carroll, strangeness gleamed out from everyday life and dreaming equally. Beyond books and cartoons, the vestiges of the past and the natural world intrigued him. He enjoyed the new Museum of Natural History at Oxford when it finally opened to the public in 1861 after long controversy and he used its resources for photographs. He almost certainly saw Jan Savery's painting of a dodo there. In 1860 he attended the meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science with its encounter between Bishop Wilberforce and Thomas Henry Huxley, which was held in the museum before its formal opening (discussed in chapter 5). Lewis Carroll must surely also have had some fellow feeling for the stonemasons of the family O'Shea in their quarrel with the university. The museum interior is ornamented with their wonderful free-hand carvings of a cavalcade of animals, and plants, which they carved from life in the late 1850s. Ruskin, whose influence is everywhere in the museum and this project, later said that "when the first sculptures appeared on the windows of this museum, offence was taken at the unnecessary introduction of cats."<sup>39</sup> The figure of Alice's cat, Dinah, comes strongly to mind here.

In one version of the story that gathered around the carvings the cat was itself a substitute for a monkey, deemed to be too close to Darwin. The money ran out before the project was completed and the O'Sheas were dismissed. Outraged, O'Shea set to work carving parrots and owls on the front porch of the museum as a parody of the members of Convocation, instead of the commissioned pineapples. Henry Acland, who was the great progenitor of the museum, describes this event in the second appendix to the 1893 edition of *The Oxford Museum* thus:

"Parrhots and Owls! Parrhots and Owls! Members of Convocation!" There they were, blocked out alternately. What could I do? "Well," I said, meditatively, "Shea, you must knock their heads off." "Never," says he. "Directly," said I. The heads went. Their bodies, not yet evolved, remain to testify to the humour, the force, the woes, the troubles, in the character and art of our Irish brethren.<sup>40</sup>

The defaced carvings are still there, unrestored, a kind of memorial to the O'Sheas, over the main portal of the museum.

Carroll was surrounded by every kind of pun and parody, from the literary to the cartoon, to song and to the visual environment. He responded to them all and transformed them within the palimpsests of the *Alice* books and their many-layered dream landscapes. His mathematical eye saw also that parody relies on chirality, a cack-handedness or inversion that prevents it ever merging with its mirrored source-text.





## 4

### THE DIALOGUES OF ALICE: PRETENDING TO BE TWO PEOPLE

The crucial means by which the *Alice* books encompass child and adult, sense and nonsense, and all the discriminations in between, is dialogue. When no one else is around, Alice talks to herself and takes herself to task: “She generally gave herself very good advice (though she very seldom followed it)” (W, 14). When she shrinks in Wonderland, part of her desolation is that “‘it’s no use now,’ thought poor Alice, ‘to pretend to be two people! Why, there’s hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!’” (14). But she persists in arguing her way through impossible situations: trapped, disastrously large, in the White Rabbit’s house, she considers her dilemma, even imagining the book she will write with herself in it, a receding set of mental boxes that mimics her physical situation:

“But then,” thought Alice, “shall I *never* get any older than I am now? That’ll be a comfort, one way—never to be an old woman—but then—always to have lessons to learn! Oh, I shouldn’t like *that!*”

“Oh, you foolish Alice!” she answered herself. “How can you learn lessons in here? Why there’s hardly room for *you*, and no room at all for any lesson-books!”

And so she went on, taking first one side and then the other, and making quite a conversation of it altogether. (W, 33)

These self-dialogues are a comfort to Alice, and to the reader. Alice can reliably quiz herself, answer her own preoccupations, listen to her own complaints. It's just as well she has herself for company as none of those she meets shows the same readiness to listen and collaborate in the making of steady discussion—except the reader, who, listening and performing, can be Alice's ally and the author's agent. And because multiplied dialogue is fundamental to these books there is always a further position available to the reader, not quite as Alice or her interlocutors, but from a position that can accommodate skepticism, resistance, and disparity, as well as identification and empathy.

And who is this reader?—the child who has recently learned to read? the adult reading aloud to the child? the silent reader gliding into the writing practice of the writer? the recalcitrant presence of those lost living children to whom the first oral version of the tale was addressed and who drifted away? or a figure to be called only “the reader of Alice,” invented for the occasion, stretching our ordinary capacities in directions we had not foreseen? These multiple, simultaneous implied readers together produce curious sonorities and harmonics in the text. They intervene in, or are assimilated into, a secret conversation with the author, a sense of privileged extra space for thinking that makes for much of the fun in the works.

The jokes tend to have several layers, accommodating the learned and less learned reader in a way that allows us to feel chosen by the writer as his special confidant if we get the extra ripple. For instance, the mouse's tale, set out like a tail that curls down the page in diminishing print size, is also a rhyme that uses tail-rhymes, a form where a couplet is followed by a shorter line that does not rhyme. And when the talking flowers in *Looking-Glass* claim that the tree can protect them because it says, “Bow-wow,” it's not only an infantile pun about the boughs of a tree and a dog's bark, but an allusion to a then-current controversy in which Carroll's friend, the philologist and mythographer Max Müller, had mockingly named the theory that language emerged from animal cries, the “bow-wow theory.”<sup>1</sup>

Equally, for the child reader, Alice is presented as having the entire confidence of the author and much of the text occurs directly through her consciousness. Despite all the vicissitudes she encounters, and the

awkward quasi-adults who attempt to bully her, Alice remains resilient. She is never made to look a fool, though she sometimes loses the argument. As a result, the child, in the process of reading, can be confident that she or he is in a sustained relationship and can rely on what the writer tells him or her, unlikely as it may be. The cranky figures in the book may be unreliable. The written interpreter is not, and neither is the person of Alice, despite the extraordinary shifts her body undergoes. So there is a mixture of anxiety and lightheartedness that speaks close to the child's experience within and beyond the fiction.

There is, of course, always something fictive in our imagining that, while reading, we are in conversation with the writer, or the writing. The text is quiescent until read, certainly, and then springs to life in each reader's present time and place. To that degree the reader remakes the writing on each occasion and may be said to be in dialogue with the text. Moreover, the written text seems to make the writer free of time so that we can perfectly well say, "Kafka says," using the present tense, rather than only "Kafka said," in the past. But the conversation of writer and reader is not mutual. The writer cannot hear us. What has been written cannot be *emended* by the reader, though it may be reinterpreted. Indeed, the reader is shaped anew by the writing, and thinks with the materials and forms made by this particular work. And yet the further gift given is that the reader can also resist them, and can do so using the resources of that same text.

As Vernon Lee observed in "On Style," it is too easy to imagine that the reader is ready-made in the writer's terms. Instead, she uses the image of reader as a stringed instrument:

But the instrument played upon by the Writer, namely, the mind of the Reader, has not been arranged for the purpose of thus being played upon, and its strings do not wait to vibrate in obedience to the Writer's touch, but are always on the point of sounding and jangling uninvited.<sup>2</sup>

So it may be that the dialogue provoked is a dialogue of the reader with herself, the harmonics multiplied and prompted by the writer. The dialogue could not take place without the writer having written, and the text enduring, but there is no direct two-way response between text and

reader. If this seems obvious, consider how much of the labor of authorship is focused on disguising the lack of direct two-way communication. The reader is inveigled into believing that we have *entered* the text. We can certainly roam in it at will but it will not listen to our voices.<sup>3</sup>

Carroll described Wonderland as emphatically not a place with fairies but a place where all creatures are “endowed with language.”<sup>4</sup> With language they wrestle, tug, rejoice, and claim authority. They hardly ever use language to agree—as if agreement would mean the end of talk and with it the end of storytelling. *Alice in Wonderland* started as stories invented spontaneously and told to a little group of intervening child listeners. It started, that is, as spoken dialogue. One can hear the attempt to keep the speaking voice alive in speech tags, indications of mood, and expanded sentences that Carroll added when he made changes to *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground*. The emphasis is on the unknown reader as listener and conversationalist.

Many of the jokes in *Alice* depend on the uncertain relations of written and oral, and here Carroll draws on the experience of his immediate audience: children who have recently learned to read and who still doubt the contours of words or the baffling constellations of letters insisted on by adult monitors and interpreters. The blobs on the page may speak unlicensed alternative truth, and phonemes may challenge the organization of written words as they are presented, with rests between them.

In this chapter I shall touch on some of the shadow pressures on Alice’s attempts at conversation, drawing on quite different kinds of dialogue: philosophical dialogues such as Plato’s *Phaedo* and David Hume’s *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* (1779), Horne Tooke’s *Diversions of Purley* (1786, 1798), pedagogic dialogues for children such as Jeremiah Joyce’s *Scientific Dialogues* (1807), the work of nineteenth-century logicians such as George Boole and John Stuart Mill, and parody, that dialogic form fundamental to Carroll’s art. Moreover, Carroll was an addicted theater-goer, intimate with all the skills of the actor that can animate implication and undersong in apparently trivial exchanges.

As a professional logician Carroll was fascinated by argument and its faultures, explored in philosophical dialogues. The tradition of philosophical dialogues highlights the difficult match of the written and the oral. *Conversation* is carried by voices speaking, and is confined to the

occasion; *writing* takes place in silence, is received in silence or as voices in the head, and may spring into life again at any future time when the text is read. In conversation everyone present *may* participate. In reading, the reader has access to a conversation that seems to include him or her, yet we cannot be heard by the writer or interrupt the text. But written *dialogue* does allow a limber presence to the reader, a rhythm of intervention that makes space for the participant from outside the page.

David Hume at the start of *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* observes that dialogues impede “accurate and regular argument” . . . “the methodical and didactic manner” where a man proceeds without preparation and without interruption to deduce the proofs on which his argument is founded.

It has been remarked, my *Hermippus*, that, though the ancient philosophers conveyed most of their instruction in the form of dialogue, this method of composition has been little practiced in later ages, and has seldom succeeded in the hands of those, who have attempted it. Accurate and regular argument, indeed, such as is now expected of philosophical inquirers, naturally throws a man into the methodical and didactic manner; where he can immediately, without preparation, explain the point, at which he aims; and thence proceed, without interruption, to deduce the proofs, on which it is established. To deliver a SYSTEM in conversation scarcely appears natural; and while the dialogue-writer desires, by departing from the direct style of composition, to give a freer air to his performance, and avoid the appearance of *author* and *reader*, he is apt to run into a worse inconvenience, and convey the image of *pedagogue* and *pupil*. Or if he carries on the dispute in the natural spirit of good company, by throwing in a variety of topics, and preserving a proper balance among the speakers; he often loses so much time in preparations and transitions, that the reader will scarcely think himself compensated, by all the graces of dialogue, for the order, brevity, and precision, which are sacrificed to them.

There are some subjects, however, to which dialogue-writing is peculiarly adapted, and where it is still preferable to the direct and simple method of composition.

Any point of doctrine, which is so *obvious*, that it scarcely admits of

dispute, but at the same time so *important* that it cannot be too often inculcated, seems to require some such method of handling it; where the novelty of the manner may compensate the triteness of the subject; where the vivacity of conversation may enforce the precept; and where the variety of lights, presented by various personages and characters, may appear neither tedious nor redundant.<sup>5</sup>

That was certainly the shape that Victorian child readers encountered in written dialogues bent on instruction. The pairing of *pedagogue* and *pupil*, with its uneven balance of power, was taken for granted in many of the school texts of Carroll's time and earlier. And John Ruskin was mortified by the response to his *Ethics of the Dust: Ten Lectures to Little Housewives on the Elements of Crystallisation*, first published a year after *Wonderland* in 1866, where he inadvertently reveals what went wrong with his use of dialogue: his was dialogue with a set pedagogic purpose. In the preface to the second edition he writes:

I have seldom been more disappointed by the result of my best pains given to any of my books, than by the earnest request of my publisher, after the opinion of the public had been taken on the "Ethics of the Dust," that I would "write no more in dialogue!" However, I bowed to public judgment in this matter at once, (knowing also my inventive powers to be of the feeblest,); but in reprinting the book, (at the prevailing request of my kind friend, Mr. Henry Willett,) I would pray the readers whom it may at first offend by its disconnected method, to examine, nevertheless, with care, the passages in which the principal speaker sums the conclusions of any dialogue: for these summaries were written as introductions, for young people, to all that I have said on the same matters in my larger books; and, on re-reading them, they satisfy me better, and seem to me calculated to be more generally useful, than anything else I have done of the kind.<sup>6</sup>

Summaries and set purposes debilitate dialogue.

Hume names two exceptions to the disadvantages of dialogue, exceptions so wide in content and so unlike each other as to make a good deal of room for dialogue as an instrument of philosophy: dialogue is,

he asserts, peculiarly fitted for a discussion of the *obvious*, since it animates the trite and offers different approaches to what is usually taken for granted. Equally:

Any question of philosophy, on the other hand, which is so *obscure* and *uncertain*, that human reason can reach no fixed determination with regard to it; if it should be treated at all; seems to lead us naturally into the style of dialogue and conversation. Reasonable men may be allowed to differ, where no one can reasonably be positive: Opposite sentiments, even without any decision, afford an agreeable amusement: And if the subject be curious and interesting, the book carries us, in a manner, into company, and unites the two greatest and purest pleasures of human life, study and society.<sup>7</sup>

For Hume, dialogue offers congenial company, and what is lost in severity of argument is gained as variety and difference of understanding. Strikingly, Hume's dialogues have provoked riposte and continuation, as in Robert Morehead's *Philosophical Dialogues* (1845), which presents the speakers now older and wiser and reconciled to the powers and presence of God: "If reading a book is conversation with its author — to read the vast book of nature is to converse with the Infinite Mind from which it proceeds."<sup>8</sup>

Alice herself seeks mutuality through dialogue. Almost all those she meets seek conquest. Alice wants to know — and sometimes she wants to teach. The Queens and Kings, and other creatures like the Caterpillar or Humpty Dumpty, want to win. Arguing is more ardent than agreeing. In the *Alice* books it is a form of control as well as a means of contact. Alice finds herself repudiated by most of those she meets even while she is grappled into conversation. What James Joyce in *Finnegans Wake* (a book much indebted to Carroll) calls "the concordant wiseheads" rebuff Alice.<sup>9</sup> The *Alice* books themselves are generated out of resistances: premises do not match, terms vibrate with alternate significations, medleys and parodies at once unlace and combat their originals, people don't listen. Or they listen past what's said. But they talk. And that talk is the life of the books, so that Alice and the reader swim and swerve to keep abreast of the constantly collapsing and reconstituted medium of language-game



and debate. Alice herself holds steady these dream dialogues but out of Alice's sleep Finnegans wake.

André Breton, the Surrealist, one of the most observant of Carroll's admirers, placed him prominently in the surrealist genealogy. In the first *Manifesto of Surrealism* (1924) Breton argued that:

The forms of Surrealist language adapt themselves best to dialogue. Here, two thoughts confront each other; while one is being delivered, the other is busy with it; but how is it busy with it? To assume that it incorporates it within itself would be tantamount to admitting that there is a time during which it is possible for it to live completely off that other thought, which is highly unlikely. And, in fact, the attention it pays is completely exterior; it has only time enough to approve or reject—generally reject.<sup>10</sup>

In Breton's combative interpretation of dialogue, it "treats the opposing thought as an enemy; in ordinary conversation, it 'takes it up' almost always on the words, the figure of speech, it employs; it puts me in a position to turn it to good advantage in my reply by distorting them."<sup>11</sup>

This is certainly an apt description of the behavior of many of those quasi-adults Alice encounters: the Hatter, the Red Queen, and Humpty Dumpty notable among them. It describes much of the life of the books, though the reader, with Alice, is placed in resistance to the performance of these characters. Some of the books Carroll most enjoyed were in dialogue form. One of these was Horne Tooke's *The Diversions of Purley*, which he started to read in 1855, ten years before the publication of *Wonderland*.

*Winged Words* (in Greek) or *the Diversions of Purley* was a work much appreciated by Carroll and more than once mentioned in his diary.<sup>12</sup> Tooke's dialogue allows dissidence its full verve. This is a striking work for Carroll to choose, full of teasing detail about parts of speech and bringing to bear a number of different languages, ancient and modern, while yet also preoccupied with the rights of man and the politics of grammar. The whole tone is oppositional, ranging Tooke's views against a phalanx of orthodox linguists and philologists. The interlocutor in the dialogue, "B," though more cautious than Tooke, "H," is a staunch friend whose re-

sistance reinforces the persuasions of the main speaker. The first chapter opens with a teasing move into Tooke's fundamental paradox:

H. — The purpose of Language is to communicate our thoughts —

B. — You do not mention this, I hope, as something new, or where you differ from others?

H. — You are too hasty with me. No. But I mention it as that principle, which, being kept *singly* in contemplation, has misled all those who have reasoned on this subject.

B. — Is it not true, then?

H. — I think it is. And that on which the whole matter rests.

B. — And yet the confining themselves to this principle on which the whole matter rests, has misled them?

H. — Indeed, I think so.

B. — This is curious!

H. — Yet I hope to convince you of it. For thus they reasoned — Words are the *signs of things*. —<sup>13</sup>

And Horne Tooke is away into his argument, into the relative, conditioned, and unreliable relations between words and things.

Later, he seeks to dissipate the power of abstraction by means of etymology. His project has a political force. The false authority of words such as Fate, Destiny, Luck, Lot, Chance, Accident, and Heaven and Hell fall under his inquiry. He suggests that in the course of history “participles and adjectives not understood as such, have caused a metaphysical jargon and a false morality, which can only be dissipated by etymology.” The list of terms endowed with spurious authority is wide-ranging and includes “Providence, Prudence, Innocence, Substance, Fiend, Angel, Apostle, Saint, Spirit, True, False, Desert, Merit, and Fault.”

Just, Right and Wrong, are all merely Participles poetically embodied, and substantiated by those who use them.<sup>14</sup>

Tooke's final example of illicit abstract terms is “Church.”

Although Dodgson was usually on the conservative side in university politics and always avoided any impious double meanings, as Lewis

Carroll he delighted in the obverse, the slantwise, as well as the down-to-earth radicalism of questioning. He refers again to Tooke a couple of months later in a list of his ideal future “miscellaneous” reading plan:

I should like to go on with *Etymology*, and read White, and all Trench’s books, and Horne Tooke. Second *Logic*, finish Mill and dip into Dugald Stewart.<sup>15</sup>

In 1855 Carroll praised Sir Arthur Helps’s book of dialogues on intellectual issues, *Friends in Council* (1847–49) of which a new series was issued in 1859. He noted, however, the difficulty of distinguishing characters:

If the conversation has a fault, it is the too great similarity of style in the different speakers. This is always a danger in fictitious conversation; it is hardly possible to give each speaker real individuality without caricature (as in Dickens).<sup>16</sup>

His solution at the time was a cumbersome one: “If two or three authors would join in writing such conversations, each taking one of the characters, it might be completely successful, and would be much more like a reported actual conversation.”<sup>17</sup> In the *Alice* books he solved it at a stroke by giving Alice a constant voice and all the other characters such odd caparisons, whether animal or human, that they can easily be recognized. The illustrations helped too. As Alice thinks at the start, “what is the use of a book . . . without . . . conversations?” (W, 9).

In his preface to *Philosophical Dialogues* Timothy Smiley remarks that the dialogue form “can be a fine tool of persuasion, as the author’s view is followed to victory through successive trials by combat. At the other extreme, What the Tortoise Said to Achilles was surely the ideal way for Lewis Carroll to publish a puzzle to which he did not have an answer.”<sup>18</sup> The combative nature of dialogue in the *Alice* books often proves to be an obstacle to understanding rather than tending to resolution. The unstable relations between gesture and statement (denying something “with both hands”), between meaning and negation, is, for example, maddeningly imposed on Alice by the Red Queen’s interruptions:

“I’m sure I didn’t mean—” Alice was beginning, but the Red Queen interrupted her impatiently.

“That’s just what I complain of! You *should* have meant! What do you suppose is the use of a child without any meaning? Even a joke should have some meaning—and a child’s more important than a joke, I hope. You couldn’t deny that, even if you tried with both hands.”

“I don’t deny things with my *hands*,” Alice objected.

“Nobody said you did,” said the Red Queen. “I said you couldn’t if you tried.”

“She’s in that state of mind,” said the White Queen, “that she wants to deny *something*—only she doesn’t know what to deny!”

“A nasty, vicious temper,” the Red Queen remarked; and then there was silence for a minute or two. (LG, 221)

An infinite regress lies behind many of the negatives in these dialogues (a not uncommon linguistic effect). What is less usual is how much regression lies behind the positives, too.

“I was wondering what the mouse-trap was for,” said Alice. “It isn’t very likely there would be any mice on the horse’s back.”

“Not very likely, perhaps,” said the Knight; “but, if they *do* come, I don’t choose to have them running all about.”

“You see,” he went on after a pause, “it’s as well to be provided for *everything*. That’s the reason the horse has all those anklets round his feet.”

“But what are they for?” Alice asked in a tone of great curiosity.

“To guard against the bites of sharks,” the Knight replied. (LG, 208)

Language can improbably juxtapose objects without penalty. Here, though, such yoking of the unlike is given a provocatively substantial form, conjuring mousetraps and anklets, objects that ward off dangers set beyond risk. The absent or miniscule risk of mice on horseback, sharks in the wood, insists on linguistic lack—lack of any feasible connection other than that so materially produced by the White Knight himself and his accoutrements. Everything proves to be a form of negative:

it cannot be encompassed. Meaning is sharpened and vitiated. Syntax cannot provide meaningful relations for everything.

The risk-laden, agglomerative universe generated by the White Knight is replete with possible objects. Like the philosopher David Lewis, the White Knight considers other possible worlds as no less real than the actual world.

“What’s that dish for?”

“It’s meant for plum-cake,” said Alice.

“We’d better take it with us,” the Knight said. “It’ll come in handy if we find any plum-cake.” (LG, 208)

Receptacle precedes principal.

At the start of *Alice in Wonderland* Alice’s older sister is engrossed in a book. Alice feels shut out. She cannot enter her sister’s mind-world, the more so because this is a book whose paragraphs are dense on the page. There are no illustrations; no dialogues — no conversation.

Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, “and what is the use of a book,” thought Alice, “without pictures or conversations?” (W, 9)

So at the end of this first long sentence Alice starts up a silent conversation with herself (“thought Alice”) and draws the reader alongside by asking a question: “what is the use of a book . . . ?” The question is about books in general and nimbly contrasts the book we are beginning to read, so notably full of pictures and conversation. She continues to raise questions, silently and aloud, throughout her adventures: and questions are fundamental to dialogue.

Carroll captures the arid exclusion of being beside a reader but not that reader, the boredom of just sitting on the bank. Conversation is impossible; Alice’s sister is away, far away on the tides of reading. And even the book she reads lacks the merciful lightness of a page scored for con-

versation. The book in which Alice figures, in contrast to her sister's, is organized as conversation, or, rather, as awkward dissident dialogues where the participants rarely share a common goal. The spoken confuses the written and violence lurks between mouth and ear:

“You see the earth takes twenty-four hours to turn round on its axis—”  
 “Talking of axes,” said the Duchess, “chop off her head!” (W, 54)

At the start of *Wonderland* Alice can read but Alice is not reading. Nor is her sister reading to her. Two cannot well read silently together. The page is not commodious enough. And they get out of sync, not quite turning the page in harmony. Alice is the reader outside the book, barred from entry by the absorption of another. The baffling withdrawal of her sister into a book without pictures or conversation plunges Alice down into her own mind zone, which is distinguished by its oral culture. Alice wants conversation: inventive, interactive, or just friendly chitchat. What she tends to get is interrogation. Over and over again she is asked who she is. “Who *are* you?,” even “What are you?” till it shifts from phatic utterance to ontological anxiety. Categories of identity shift.<sup>19</sup>

Alice seems the polar opposite of the feral child who was found without the capacity for human speech. For her, language is the natural element. But she is surrounded by budded-off creatures whose veneer of civilization is flimsy (like the treacherous Walrus and Carpenter)—or who satirize the pretenses of those who consider themselves civilized. She sheds such figments all around her. They are like traces, husks and shells of violent other beings. She both resists and generates them. Yet they are insouciant, casually going about their own business, without any dependence on her presence. She is the interloper in their landscapes. “No room! No room!” cry the Hatter, the Hare, and the Dormouse as she approaches their ample tea-table (W, 60). And like Alice, the other creatures of her books claim possession of language:

“Would it be of any use, now,” thought Alice, “to speak to this mouse? Everything is so out-of-the-way down here, that I should think very likely it can talk: at any rate, there's no harm in trying.” (W, 21)

So first she tries the vocative “O Mouse!,” learned from “her brother’s Latin Grammar”; then she tries “the first sentence in her French lesson-book: “Où est ma chatte?,” learned, it seems, by rote without much attention to its meaning. The mouse understands French instantly and is terrified. Alice is the liberal colonialist here, respecting the forms of speech but not the experiences of the indigenous—here motley—characters. She has not yet learned that just because animals speak, they have not ceased to be animals.

All adults have been children. They are in dialogue with their past, which is also lost to them. Much of Alice’s conversation is conducted within this nimbus of the irrecoverable. The different categories and thought-sequences of the young child are evoked, though not always through the person of Alice. Sometimes she plays the adult against the wayward arguments of those she encounters.

“They lived on treacle,” said the Dormouse, after thinking a minute or two.

“They couldn’t have done that, you know,” Alice gently remarked. “They’d have been ill.”

“So they were,” said the Dormouse; “very ill.” (W, 65)

The two readers—child and adult—sometimes collaborate, sometimes laugh at odds with each other. But often they are *one endoubled* reader, responding with all the capacities they still share, or having shed, still half-recollect.

Yet the dialogues of Alice, scatty, cross-species, investigative, are also tightly argued. Indeed, Carroll’s dialogues sometimes mimic the latent absurdity of Socratic dialogue in which the dominant speaker cows the respondent who always agrees, even with slabs of argument hard to take in for the listening ear. Plato’s *Phaedo*, for example, records a dialogue about odd and even numbers, in which the numbers are given anxieties and desires in a curious series of personifications: first Socrates:

“Shall we not allow that the number three would first perish, and suffer any thing whatever, rather than endure, while it is still three, to become even?”

“Most certainly,” said Cebes.

“And yet,” said he, “the number two is not contrary to three.”

“Surely not.”

“For you know surely, that whatever things the idea of three occupies must of necessity not only be three, but also odd?”

“Certainly.”

“To such a thing, then, we assert, that the idea contrary to that form which constitutes this can never come.”

“It cannot.”

“But did the odd make it so?”

“Yes.”

“And is the contrary to this the idea of the even?”

“Yes.”

“The idea of the even, then, will never come to the three?”

“No surely.”

“Three, then, has no part in the even?”

“None whatever.”

“The number three is uneven?”

“Yes.”<sup>20</sup>

And so Cebes' sycophantic responses go on, and on, until we reach a climax in Socrates' exposition that runs uninterrupted for eighteen lines:

“What therefore I said should be defined, namely, what things they are which, though not contrary to some particular thing, yet do not admit of the contrary itself, as in the present instance, the number three though not contrary to the even, does not any the more admit it, for it always brings the contrary with it, just as the number two does to odd, fire to cold, and many other particulars, consider then, whether you would thus define, not only that a contrary does not admit a contrary, but also that that which brings with it a contrary to that which it approaches, will never admit the contrary of that which it brings with it. But call it to mind again, for it will not be useless to hear it often repeated. Five will not admit the idea of the even, nor ten, its double, that of the odd. This double then, though it is itself contrary to something else, yet will not



admit the idea of the odd; nor will half as much again, nor other things of the kind, such as the half and the third part admit the idea of the whole, if you follow me and agree with me that it is so.”

“I entirely agree with you,” he said, “and follow you.”<sup>21</sup>

This is dialogue as imposition, with mere bleats from the disciple. Fortunately Alice is not so compliant. She also brings out the difficulty of moving from reading philosophy on the page at your own pace to listening when philosophy (or possibly nonsense) is uttered by another person:

The moral of that is [said the Duchess]—“Be what you would seem to be”—or, if you’d like it put more simply—“Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.”

“I think I should understand that better,” Alice said very politely, “if I had it written down: but I ca’n’t quite follow it as you say it.” (W, 80)

In *Looking-Glass* Alice grows bolder:

“When you say ‘hill,’” the Queen interrupted, “I could show you hills, in comparison with which you’d call that a valley.”

“No, I shouldn’t” said Alice, surprised into contradicting her at last: “a hill ca’n’t be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense—”

The Red Queen shook her head. “You may call it ‘nonsense’ if you like,” she said, “but I’ve heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!” (LG, 140)

Alice, the debater, is seven years old in the story. She is of an age with John Stuart Mill when he read the first six dialogues of Plato “in the common arrangement” in the original Greek. Alice does not read (or need) Greek but she does draw on Plato, as does Carroll in droll parody to produce a system of nonsense that is tight not loose, testing not indeterminate.

In his *Autobiography* (1873) Mill characterizes the system thus:

The Socratic method, of which the Platonic dialogues are the chief example, is unsurpassed as a discipline for correcting the errors, and clearing up the confusions incident to the *intellectus sibi permissus* [the mind going its own way], the understanding which has made up all its bundles of associations under the guidance of popular phraseology.<sup>22</sup>

The ease and flourish of “the mind going its own way” propels the narrative of *Alice in Wonderland* while the arguments between creatures seek to discipline this freedom. Wayward association (and the attempted discipline of inversion, apt to Looking-Glass Land) is embodied in *Through the Looking-Glass* in the White Knight, with his lists and his multifunctional objects that seem to have come straight out of an “Innovations” catalogue and his possible worlds, all infused with anxiety.

“I see you’re admiring my little box,” the Knight said in a friendly tone. “It’s my own invention—to keep clothes and sandwiches in. You see I carry it upside-down, so that the rain ca’n’t get in.” (LG, 207)

But, equally, the rigorous inspection of what Mill calls “bundles of association” is one of the key pleasures of Alice.

Rather than expanding into excess and indeterminacy the dialogues are exactly precise:

“I hope you’ve got your hair well fastened on?” he continued, as they set off.

“Only in the usual way,” Alice said, smiling.

“That’s hardly enough,” he said, anxiously. “You see the wind is so very strong here. It’s as strong as soup.” (LG, 208)

What the dialogues uncover is that signification will not sit still, that words work too hard to settle their own status, that question and answer need not match if premises are not shared, that “unlike relations” be-  
devil explanation. André Breton in the *Manifesto of Surrealism* discriminates two kinds of pathological dialogue: in one echolalia predominates (“How old are you?” “You”); in the other, what he calls Ganser syndrome or beside-the-point replies (“What’s your name?” “Forty-five houses”).<sup>23</sup>

Neither of these forms is typical of Alician dialogue or question and answer. Instead, a different curve through language is performed: a strained attempt to find connection or equivalence. Soup's flavor equals the wind's blast in intensity, but won't do as a description of another kind of strength, the force of the wind.

As Wittgenstein writes in *Remarks on Colour*:

Explaining colour words by pointing to coloured pieces of paper does not touch the concept of transparency. It is this concept that stands in unlike relations to the various colour concepts.<sup>24</sup>

The *Alice* books are never obscure, always transparent, and so, unexpectedly, refuse to yield to any familiar conceptual relations or share pragmatic goals. Throughout the two books Alice is always seeking rules: rules for shutting up like a telescope, for having jam for tea. Or, as the White Queen hopes, for being glad:

"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!"

"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. (LG, 173)

Rules expand categories. Alice is lonely, as she repeatedly complains. She fears her nonce-status and seeks categories more inclusive than herself. That way, both flexibility and order lie—neither of them easy to come by in this hectoring zone. Rules for Alice promise companionship and order, but for most of those she encounters they mean triumph or domination. The relaxed rules of conversation are tightened into riddle, catechism, combative game.

Alice is lonely not only because she is one of a kind—a girl-child amidst odd adults and fabulous beasts—but because almost no one she meets shares her sense of how a conversation can be conducted to bring people *closer*. Alice seeks mutuality through dialogue, whether the ex-

changes run in agreement or disagreement, or simply passing the time of day. Most of those she meets play by rules that exaggerate and satirize the various strategies of alienation in adult debate. The Red Queen, for instance, understands conversation as the answering of “useful questions” (LG, 223). And here Carroll is satirizing the tradition of pedagogic dialogues, then domineering over the Victorian educational system and combining inexorably with rote learning.

Richmal Mangnall’s *Historical and Miscellaneous Questions for the Use of Young People* is a compelling example of a formula for learning that doused any real dialogue or conversation and that Carroll seems to have in mind here. Indeed, it is likely to have been familiar to him from childhood, perhaps in the 1837 edition. A typical passage runs:

Name the English lines of kings. Saxon, Danish, Norman, Plantagenet, Tudor, Stuart, Orange or Nassau, and that of Hanover or Brunswick. How many princes were there of each line? Seventeen Saxons, three Danes, four Normans, fourteen Plantagenets, five Tudors, six Stuarts, one Orange or Nassau, and five of the line of Brunswick.<sup>25</sup>

Or, more expansively:

Who were the Druids? Priests of Britain, whose principal residence was in the Isle of Anglesey, where they performed their idolatrous worship, and were held in great veneration by the people. How were the Druids clothed when they sacrificed? In long white garments; they wore on their heads the tiara or sacred crown, their temples were encircled with a wreath of oak leaves, they waved in their hands a magic wand, and also placed upon their heads a serpent’s egg, as an ensign of their order. What plant did the Druids hold in high estimation, and what traces have we of their places of worship?<sup>26</sup>

And so the assertive disquisition/inquisition continues, leaving no space for any deviant response by the pupil. Rote learning and repetition of all these discrete facts is the desired outcome.<sup>27</sup>

Alice has a more difficult time. Each time she seeks “eagerly” to

answer, the key word shifts into a new context introduced by the Queens' interruptions. Two conflicting mind-landscapes are produced, wedged between the heard and the seen. So:

"How is bread made?"

"I know *that!*" Alice cried eagerly. "You take some flour —"

"Where do you pick the flower?" the White Queen asked. "In a garden or in the hedges?"

"Well, it isn't *picked* at all," Alice explained: "it's *ground* —"

"How many acres of ground?" said the White Queen. "You mustn't leave out so many things." (LG, 223)

The recursiveness of information threatens to unreel backwards into infinity: "You mustn't leave out so many things." And when Alice threatens to wrest control of the discussion by insisting on the question of translation the Red Queen produces the coup de grace.

"If you'll tell me what language 'fiddle-de-dee' is, I'll tell you the French for it!" [Alice] exclaimed triumphantly.

But the Red Queen drew herself up rather stiffly, and said "Queens never make bargains." (LG, 223)

The implicit bargain in conversation is to keep signification steady so that it may be securely exchanged between the participants — or to play across a register drawing on concerns held in common. The Queens' hauteur — and triviality — makes for a series of dead-ends. Part of the comedy comes from how close the conflicting mental landscapes lie. "Flour" and "flower" not only sound alike but are aspects of a shared organic process that itself relies on "ground." Carroll rubs the written and the spoken against each other at every turn.

These exasperating deadlocks foreground linguistic collisions at the expense of communication. They are jousts; they undermine the close relation of question and answer and they seek to deny Alice any form of power. When Alice exclaims "triumphantly" the Queen pulls rank. Productive conversation requires at least temporary equality between the

participants. Like the riddle without an answer, “Why is a raven like a writing-desk?” (W, 60, 61) an unbridgeable gap suddenly opens up where there has been an apparent proffer of association.

The question and answer form, taken to a *mise-en-abyme* extreme by the Queens, is based on the pedagogical dialogues beloved of Victorian and earlier educationists.<sup>28</sup> A famous example is Jane Marcet’s *Conversations on Chemistry* (1806), which first fired Faraday’s interest in chemistry. Another, oft-repeated, is Maria Edgeworth, *Harry and Lucy, Collected into One Volume from the Early Lessons* (1856), based on early nineteenth-century volumes. A favorite topic of the pedagogic books was transformation, a fascination they shared with Carroll. In Edgeworth’s *Harry and Lucy*, Lucy particularly liked the following description of the metamorphosis, or change, of the bee into an elephant:

Now the lithe trunk, that sipp’d the woodland rose,  
With strange increase, a huge proboscis grows;  
Its downy legs, its feather-cintured thighs,  
Swell to the elephant’s enormous size.<sup>29</sup>

Questions of unstable scale, and unstable species, haunt these Edgeworth volumes. So does delight in the emergence of beauty.

Lucy: “How wonderful it is” continued she — looking first at the sand and ashes, and then at a glass which she held in her hand — how wonderful it is, that such a beautiful, clean, clear, transparent thing as glass should be made from such different looking things as sand and ashes!”<sup>30</sup>

Question and answer underpin arithmetical books of the time and some of them use comedy to encourage their pupils too. One of Lewis Carroll’s favorite comic artists, Alfred Crowquill, published *The Tutor’s Assistant or Comic Figures of Arithmetic* in 1843. This is a book that seriously seeks to instruct, but does so with the aid of puns and cartoons, often poking fun at Victorian family and social life. The exercises in Crowquill’s *Comic Arithmetic* might test a present-day school student quite severely. For example:

If you had a bag with a million marbles in it, and you were to lose one hundred and eighty-three thousand and thirteen; how many would be left?

If a baker has made for sale 17843 ship biscuits, and has sold 4906; how many are left?

If there are 784651 letters in a book, and 50099 of these in the first 20 pages; how many in the rest of the book?<sup>31</sup>

The homely examples (bags of marbles, biscuits, books) grow monstrous with sheer scale, and no schoolchildren were using calculators then. Carroll achieves the same baffling effect with slighter means:

“Can you do Addition?” the White Queen asked. “What’s one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one?”

“I don’t know,” said Alice. “I lost count.” (LG, 221)

Another, easier, Crowquill example uses the popular mathematical term, the “remainder”: “What will remain after taking 641 from 6966?” What “remains” becomes subtly altered in *Looking-Glass*.

“Try another Subtraction sum. Take a bone from a dog: what remains?”

Alice considered. “The bone wouldn’t remain, of course, if I took it — and the dog wouldn’t remain: it would come and bite me — and I’m sure I wouldn’t remain!”

“Then you think nothing would remain?” said the Red Queen.

“I think that’s the answer.”

“Wrong, as usual,” said the Red Queen: “the dog’s temper would remain.” (LG, 222)

The Queen and Alice agree in diverting the terms of subtraction into aggression and flight, but even then Alice can’t win.

In Crowquill, an illustration of “Ordinary multiplication” shows a harassed father with a small boy, and a female baby over his shoulder; “Extraordinary multiplication” shows a large housewife with her hands in the air gazing at a cat with 13 kittens. “Gross weight” shows a paunchy man and “Neat weight” (or net weight) a decorously clothed female.<sup>32</sup>

Crowquill shares with Carroll a delight in out-of-the-way terms and their special poetry. The lists of packages of a certain weight offer prodigies of language: for example:

A firkin of soap 64lbs  
 . . .  
 A quintal of fish 100lbs  
 A faggot of steel 120lbs  
 A seam of glass 120lbs  
 . . .  
 A puncheon of prunes 1120lbs  
 A chest of tea 84lbs  
 A gallon of train oil, 7lbs 6oz.<sup>33</sup>

One chapter, on “The Rule of Three,” discusses its formulation with an explanatory note as baffling as any attempted definitions in *Alice*:

The greatest difficulty in the Rule of Three, is stating the question; in performing which, observe that three terms are always given, and one required. Two of these are supposed to agree with each other in some manner, they are therefore called terms of supposition; the other term requires a fourth to be found which agrees with it in the same way; it is therefore called the term of demand, and must always be placed as the third term, while the second term is always of the same kind as that wanted.

The third term is commonly known by words that ask a question, such as—what cost, what will, what is, what did, how much, how many, I demand, I desire to know, &c.<sup>34</sup>

“The Rule of Three” (a technique of cross-multiplication) was notoriously difficult to explain and was often taught by rote. This explanation makes it easy to see why.

Textbooks to persuade children into mathematics, such as *The Tutor’s Assistant*, have small success in the face of teachers like the Red and White Queens:



“She can’t do sums a bit!” the Queens said together, with great emphasis.

“Can you do sums?” Alice said, turning suddenly on the White Queen, for she didn’t like being found fault with so much.

The Queen gasped and shut her eyes. “I can do Addition,” she said, “if you give me time — but I ca’n’t do Subtraction under *any* circumstances!” (LG, 223)

Carroll demonstrates how close allied are the worlds of useful knowledge and of nonsense, however hard educationists of his time and earlier sought to exile them from each other. Priscilla Wakefield wrote in the preface to her *Introduction to the Natural History and Classification of Insects* (1816):

Nonsense has given way to reason; and useful knowledge, under an agreeable form, has usurped the place of the Histories of Tom Thumb and Woglog the Giant.<sup>35</sup>

*Looking-Glass*, even more than *Wonderland*, is fascinated by risk. Risk and logic are apparent opposites since logic proceeds by cautious discriminations that secure sequence and consequence and that eliminate false associations. But in conversation logic will not suffice. It cannot accommodate all the possible worlds of the participants. Conversation is always full of risk, burgeoning with unforeseen outcomes, despite its implicit codes of performance. In conversation logic itself is always at risk since not one but many preoccupations lance off new possibilities. In the *Alice* worlds the characters all insist on the secure procedures of their own argumentation, yet fray any connection between what Mill in his *Autobiography* calls:

the perpetual testing of all general statements by particular instances; the siege in form which is laid to the meaning of large abstract terms, by fixing upon some still larger class-name which includes that and more, and dividing down to the thing sought — marking out its limits and definition by a series of accurately drawn distinctions between it and each of the cognate objects which are successively parted off from it.<sup>36</sup>

Carroll uses the pincer methods of logic to produce the largesse of the *Alice* world. The bedrock of his composition is the intelligence of the child reader, assumed to have suffered and survived under the regime of unrelated facts. That child reader is constantly in dialogue with the adult in Lewis Carroll's works; the two may argue, or laugh in separate places, but they are not separate, they speak—and they listen—not always in harmony, but always in chords. That nimble inclusiveness gives zest and depth to each reader's encounter with Alice and her motley acquaintance. The books themselves are heady dialogues between Charles Dodgson, logician, and his droll counterpart the imagined—and performing—writer Lewis Carroll.

Some earlier writers were more in key with Carroll's canny playfulness and with his respect for the child's curiosity. One of the most successful and frequently reprinted series of pedagogic dialogues was that of the dissenting scholar the Reverend Jeremiah Joyce. This is a different world from the rote instruction of Mangnall. His *Dialogues in Chemistry Intended for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young People* was first published in 1807 and went through many editions, along with his *Dialogues on the Microscope* (1812), *Catechism of Nature* (1813), and *Scientific Dialogues*.<sup>37</sup> In 1855 the *Scientific Dialogues* was volume 38 of Bohn's Scientific Library, having gone in the course of time through "very considerable revision, both in regard to the language and the subject" by other hands.

These are remarkable volumes in which poised children ask difficult questions that are fully answered by (in early editions) a Tutor and (in later editions) a Father. In *Dialogues in Chemistry* two boys, Charles and James, ask the questions, such as:

CHARLES: Are there no substances, which may be called elements?

JAMES: Is the term element used as synonymous with undecomposed body?<sup>38</sup>

Very occasionally, the Tutor shows a frisson of alarm or seeks to set limits to their curiosity:

JAMES: I should like to surprise Emma with a sight of some phosphoric writing.

TUTOR: Let me urge it upon you never to alarm any one in the night, by such exhibitions, because frights of this kind may be attended with fatal consequences.<sup>39</sup>

*Scientific Dialogues* opens with a discussion of natural philosophy, led by Emma.

EMMA. But can philosophy be comprehended by children so young as we are? I thought that it was the study and pursuit of men,-of old men too.

FATHER. Philosophy is a word which, in its original sense, merely signifies a love or desire of wisdom; and you will not allow that you and your brother are so young as to have no desire for wisdom or knowledge.

EMMA. Far from it; I am convinced that the more knowledge I get, the better I like it.<sup>40</sup>

Charles joins in with enthusiasm as his father declares that natural philosophy “explains how we see ourselves in the looking-glass; and how objects are magnified and brought nearer; and elucidates the force of fire and water, and the principles of animal and vegetable life.”

CHARLES. What a delightful! what an admirable study! How I long to be a philosopher.<sup>41</sup>

This sanguine and unthreatened view of knowledge-acquisition is put under strain in the *Alice* books as scale shifts, species slide, the properties of “undecomposed bodies” metamorphose.

An extraordinary density of information is conveyed in these Jeremiah Joycean conversations, aerated by the form of the dialogue in which the piquant courtesy between pupil and master, or father and child, does suggest a heartening equality of inquiry. In *Scientific Dialogues*, astronomy, optics, pneumatics, mechanics, and other branches of science are discussed, larded with passages of poetry and eased with anecdotes of famous thinkers like Archimedes. Charles, James, and Emma are equals. She is not backward in posing awkward questions:

EMMA. You said just now, Papa, that all the mechanical powers were reducible either to the lever or to the inclined plane. How can the screw be referred to either? <sup>42</sup>

That takes her father fourteen lines to answer. In the conversations on Optics, questions of the looking-glass are addressed that may have given the Victorian child reader the grounding to pick up the jokes in *Through the Looking-Glass* about walking away to reach your objective and running twice as fast to stay on the spot.

FATHER. If you walk towards a looking-glass, your image will approach with double velocity; because the two motions are equal and contrary: but if, while you stand before a looking-glass, your brother walk up to you from behind, his image will appear to you to move at the same rate as he walks; although to him the velocity of the image will appear to be double; for, with regard to you, there will be but one motion, but, with regard to him, there will be two equal and contrary ones. <sup>43</sup>

Indeed, the works of the Reverend Jeremiah Joyce had been current long enough to have informed the child Charles Dodgson's curiosity about looking-glass phenomena. It may lie close behind Alice's encounter with the Red Queen and their propulsive flight through looking-glass country:

"Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!" (LG, 143)

In the *Autobiography* Mill describes his experience of Socratic argument at the age of twelve:

The close, searching *elenchus* by which the man of vague generalities is constrained either to express his meaning to himself in definite terms, or to confess that he does not know what he is talking about; . . . —all this, as an education for precise thinking, is inestimable, and all this, even at that age, [around twelve] took such hold of me that it became part of my own mind. <sup>44</sup>

Alice never fully experiences the satisfaction of such nice control on thought. She is deflected, tweaked, thrown into confusion by the logic-chopping of her assorted companions who all, however odd, take themselves (as do we all) as normative. Pragmatics in Wonderland is shorn of shared background assumptions. Carroll's droll exchanges demonstrate how much of knowledge depends on acquiescing in group norms and, mistakenly, assuming them to be universal.

"Well, I should like to be a *little* larger, Sir, if you wouldn't mind," said Alice: "three inches is such a wretched height to be."

"It is a very good height indeed!" said the Caterpillar angrily, rearing itself upright as it spoke (it was exactly three inches high).

"But I'm not used to it!" pleaded poor Alice in a piteous tone. (W, 46)

Transformation is the common condition in the worlds Alice visits, as it is in our own. Here, in contrast to many earlier pedagogic texts, delight in transformation does not follow the organic sequences to which we are accustomed: the Cheshire-Cat is present as a head only. "My dear!" [said the King,] "I wish you would have this cat removed!"

The Queen had only one way of settling difficulties, great or small. "Off with his head!" she said without even looking round. (W, 75)

Can the Queen's command be carried out?

The executioner's argument was, that you couldn't cut off a head unless there was a body to cut it off from: that he had never had to do such a thing before, and he wasn't going to begin at *his* time of life.

The King's argument was that anything that had a head could be beheaded, and that you weren't to talk nonsense.

The Queen's argument was that, if something wasn't done about it in less than no time, she'd have everybody executed, all round. (W, 76)

The presentation of the debate like a set of minutes (third-person summaries of stated positions) here absurdly formalizes the unruly mismatch

of assertions. Can we even call this conversation, dialogue, or argument? Yet it is certainly that subset of dialogic interchange, a shouting-match.

Knowledge and death are the extreme poles. Dialogues play much upon them and between them. The poignancy of *Alice*, the often-noted death jokes that haunt the books, link them back to the most humanly agonized of Plato's discussions: that on the immortality of the soul in the *Phaedo*. What sustains life? How long can things last? — and for Carroll how long childhood can be made to stretch is a troubling question as he sets his heroine's age safely at seven, unlike the child for whom the book was written, already a grumpy thirteen-year-old by the time *Wonderland* was complete, and a young woman before *Looking-Glass*, remote from the sunlit river picnic that sparked the tales. Can writing make a new sort of immortality? And what use is that?

Let me remind you of the predicament in the *Phaedo*. The boat has set out for Delos; when it returns Socrates will drink poison and die. Meanwhile, he and his friends talk; they are discussing whether the soul can be, is, immortal. The cycle of the boat's voyage encloses their conversation while they debate to and fro. The systole and diastole of dialogue, the determining passage and expected return of the boat, lace time and tenses together. What place is there in such circumstances for eternity? Socrates will not survive. Will his soul persist? The tone of the debate that Plato composes is sometimes earnest, then playful, always rigorous and forthright. The diverse dramatis personae develop different argumentative positions, positions that are charged with the weight of the oncoming tragedy.

Just at the moment that Socrates first declares his full willingness to die, in confidence of continuing to know gods and men, and Simmias and Cebes beg him to expound his reasoning and share his conviction with them, an interruption occurs. The elderly Crito who had earlier in the scene arranged for Socrates' wife and son to be taken home now tries to speak. He does not contribute directly to the debate on immortality, but the message he brings is a stark reminder of the conditions in which the group has gathered together: in a prison cell, Socrates newly released from his chains, with the certainty of execution, its enactment

dependent on the winds and tides encountered by a boat crowned with the garland of Apollo.

Socrates makes a space for Crito in the conversation. The message Crito brings is from the man who will administer the poison. The poisoner asks Socrates not to talk so much. Eager conversation, it seems, will reduce the efficacy of the poison. He may have to administer two or even three doses:

“For he says that men become too heated by speaking, and that nothing of this kind ought to interfere with the poison, and that otherwise, those who did so were sometimes compelled to drink two or three times.”

To which Socrates replied, “Let him alone, and let him attend to his own business, and prepare to give it me twice, or, if occasion requires, even thrice.”

“I was almost certain what you would say,” answered Crito, “but he has been pestering me.”

“Never mind him,” he rejoined.<sup>45</sup>

So, talk prolongs life, is life’s heat. It reduces death’s power and delays the onset of its mortal cold. Socrates banter: let the man mind his own business and look to his task; Socrates will fill up the interim as he pleases. His pleasure is to justify his confidence in another, after-world of good. As in a Shakespeare tragedy this little interruption from the workaday world of tradesmen and their mysteries summons up both the comedy and the ferocity of the situation. It has a touch, too, of Alician mismatch: don’t talk, it’s inconvenient for your executioner.

Alice also is presented with a bottle and the demand, in bold, “beautifully printed on it in large letters” “DRINK ME.” The bottle does not declare itself as poison:

It was all very well to say “Drink me,” but the wise little Alice was not going to do *that* in a hurry. “No, I’ll look first,” she said, “and see whether it’s marked ‘poison’ or not” . . . she had never forgotten that, if you drink much from a bottle marked “poison,” it is almost certain to disagree with you, sooner or later. . . .

However, this bottle was *not* marked “poison,” so Alice ventured to

taste it, and, finding it very nice (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffy, and hot buttered toast), she very soon finished it off. (W, 13)

Alice believes what she reads—or, rather, what she does not read. She trusts the absence of a warning, very unwisely one may say. Alice has no one to consult. Her dialogue here is with the bottle. The performative, “drink me,” is the bottle’s speech. Instead of offering a more usual label style “Drink twice a day” or “Drink diluted,” the bottle asserts its own presence. Its agreeable flavor is its reassurance—though the mixed ingredients are just this pleasurable side of sickening for Alice and the child reader. But as soon as she has drunk, the text turns into stars, nine of them, arranged in two rows, blinking at the reader. And it turns out that, though not fatal poison, the drink has insidious properties. Language is resumed thus:

“What a curious feeling!” said Alice. “I must be shutting up like a telescope!”

And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high, and her face brightened up at the thought that she was now the right size for going through the little door into that lovely garden. First, however, she waited for a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further: she felt a little nervous about this; “for it might end, you know,” said Alice to herself, “in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?” And she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle looks like after the candle is blown out, for she could not remember ever having seen such a thing. (W, 14)

The relation of flame and candle is reminiscent of the argument in the *Phaedo* concerning the relation between harmony and instrument. Can the entuned resonance persist in the absence of the instrument—and for how long? Can the soul survive its instrument the body? What does it feel like to be the flame after the candle has been blown out? That last example puts the issue of survival at a strange extreme. In what sense can a snuffed flame be?

As so often, Carroll formulates the question in both an empathetic



and empirical manner: Alice imagines herself as the flame after the candle is blown out but struggles to remember ever having seen such a thing. She is both observer and enacter: the whole discussion about poison must be conducted between the outside-inside of the bottle (its command “Drink Me,” its “very nice” flavor) and the scaled-down yet endoubled Alice (“said Alice to herself”). A smile, in Alice’s wonderland, can certainly survive past the presence of a cat, an Alice past all the puzzling changes she experiences: “I’m never sure what I’m going to be, from one minute to another!” (W, 48) But she is always Alice, still able to say “I” and able to maintain a dialogue even when alone. Alice (and the *Alice* books) are concerned with immortality, or perhaps rather with how things last: can a candle flame survive after it is blown out?—the things in a dream after the dreamer wakes?

“Well, it’s no use *your* talking about waking him,” said Tweedledum, “when you’re only one of the things in his dream. (LG, 165)

Dreams within dreams can sometimes control the mechanism of dreaming, despite the Berkeleyean scorn of Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

“If that there King was to wake,” added Tweedledum, “you’d go out—bang!—just like a candle!”

“I shouldn’t!” Alice exclaimed indignantly. (LG, 165)

Does the wetness of tears prove the presence of Alice? The reader can weep, not Alice on the page; the reader conjures her anew but Alice outlasts her. The reader dreams in dialogue with the book, but which of them lasts longer? Is longevity a test of the real and if so, which is more real? The childhood of the first Alice, Alice Liddell, was soon over, as was Charles Dodgson’s friendship once she reached the further brink of childhood. Alice in the book is the flame after the candle was blown out.

## 5

### ARE YOU ANIMAL — VEGETABLE — OR MINERAL?: ALICE'S IDENTITY

Let me set my argument in motion by quoting a passage from *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*. It's a passage that will weave through this chapter. The Lion and the Unicorn have been fighting for the crown. The Unicorn has triumphed on this round. Sauntering by, "his eye happened to fall upon Alice: he turned round instantly, and stood for some time looking at her with an air of the deepest disgust."

"What — is — this?" he said at last.

"This is a child!" Haigha replied eagerly, coming in front of Alice to introduce her, and spreading out both his hands towards her in an Anglo-Saxon attitude. "We only found it today. It's as large as life, and twice as natural."

"I always thought they were fabulous monsters!" said the Unicorn. "Is it alive?"

"It can talk," said Haigha solemnly.

The Unicorn looked dreamily at Alice, and said "Talk, child."

Alice could not help her lips curling up into a smile as she began: "Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters, too? I never saw one alive before!"

"Well, now that we *have* seen each other," said the Unicorn, "if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?"

"Yes, if you like," said Alice.

...

The Lion had joined them while this was going on: he looked very tired and sleepy, and his eyes were half shut. "What's this!" he said, blinking lazily at Alice, and speaking in a deep hollow tone that sounded like the tolling of a great bell.

"Ah, what is it now?" the Unicorn cried eagerly. "You'll never guess! I couldn't."

The Lion looked at Alice wearily. "Are you animal—or vegetable—or mineral?" he said, yawning at every other word.

"It's a fabulous monster!" the Unicorn cried out, before Alice could reply. (LG, 200–202)

Classifying is one of the great human pleasures and resources. Clustering and sorting, arraying and discriminating, the process of classification allows us to compare, and to reach for relationships that aren't immediately obvious. From parlor games like Twenty Questions to epidemiology, from tribes to taxonomies, much labor is expended in seeking to stabilize the groupings perceived. There's always politics involved. Hierarchies spring up. Classification brings together, certainly, but it also sets apart. Harriet Ritvo and Rebecca Stott have each explored in fascinating ways the variety of systems that human ingenuity has developed, long before the nineteenth century, to accommodate and control the welter of difference in the natural world.<sup>1</sup> But that ingenuity was especially taxed in the mid-nineteenth century.

What were traditionally called the "Three Great Kingdoms" of animal, vegetable, and mineral underlay the organization of the Great Exhibition in 1851, for instance, and out of that exhibition and industrial needs came also an interest in an emerging fourth category, that of "Waste," in which remnants transform, merge, degrade, and are resynthesized as quite different objects.<sup>2</sup> Are animal, vegetable, and mineral stable categories? Is the human another category altogether? Certainly much earlier nineteenth-century writing insisted on the immense gap between the human and all other kinds. But lurking there in the idea of the three great kingdoms is the knowledge that even kingdoms end, categories can collapse, into chaos or into compost. Can the human be

absolved from taking part in this taxonomy? Is “Man” in every way a special case? Dickens worked with these thoughts as he wrote *Our Mutual Friend* in 1864–65, with its river corpses, dust heaps, and the specious clutter of the Veneerings. Lewis Carroll was expanding *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* at that same time, too. It was published late in 1865.

One of the major disquiets that moves through nineteenth-century thinking and social practice is realizing that development theory, and, more, Darwinian theory, requires that we acknowledge change and divergence as the ordering principle of life. Linnaeus in his great book *Systema Naturae*, first published in 1735, described plants and animals by their means of reproduction and their appearance. He ordered them by genus and species in a binomial system that has proved durable to this day. But he believed himself to be describing a natural order produced direct and unwavering by the Creator and therefore already perfected. Making things stable may mean fixing them in their places (“the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gates”).

Evolutionary theory upended this assumption. It asserted a dynamic process of diversification. No stasis, but no vacillation either: change can’t simply be repealed. Only certain strains will survive. Kinds die out, though in *Wonderland* the extinct Dodo is revived, active as a magisterial chairman among the current creatures, ending the Caucus race with “Everybody has won, and all must have prizes” (W, 26), a cheering riposte to the idea of natural selection in which by no means everybody has won, certainly not dodos.

The evolutionary way of thinking about the world seemed to emphasize an outward flow of more and more distinct but passing forms. It put the idea, and the ideal, of the norm under pressure. Darwin was always distrustful of the “standard type” as an ideal since it was through small divergences that evolution was set in motion. Indeed, early in the *Origin* he pointed out the difficulty of knowing what is a new variety and what a sport or monster: “monstrosities cannot be separated by any clear line of distinction from mere variations.”<sup>3</sup> Being a monster may mean only that you are one of a kind and so cannot reproduce. If you are *sui generis* that fate is inevitable within a sexed system. The Victorians, as has been much explored, were fascinated by individual specimens and people that

they considered monsters. (I wrote about this topic myself in *Forging the Missing Link* some years ago.<sup>4</sup>) Indeed, the term “teratology” is first recorded in the 1840s.

In the first edition (and condensed and revised in the second edition to “almost like a whale”) Darwin advanced a speculation that caused much ridicule:

In North America the black bear was seen by Hearne swimming for hours with widely open mouth, thus catching, like a whale, insects in the water. Even in so extreme a case as this, if the supply of insects were constant, and if better adapted competitors did not already exist in the country, I can see no difficulty in a race of bears being rendered, by natural selection, more and more aquatic in their structure and habits, with larger and larger mouths, till a creature was produced as monstrous as a whale.<sup>5</sup>

Not a whale, you notice, but as monstrous: Darwin’s use of the word “monstrous” here is not technical but hyperbolic. The creatures remain within the scope of what we at present call “bears” but they become bears of a kind never seen before, creatures that tug at the boundaries of the known: inordinate, with monstrous mouths. So by implication, evolutionary theory suggested that taxonomies themselves could not be either permanent or stable if they were to offer a truthful ordering of information. Relations change; ecological systems are always in a process of adjustment. Description must shift, too.

This was a troubling thought. One way in which nineteenth-century thinkers responded to it was to emphasize transformation; another was to insist on common origins. T. H. Huxley asks a rhetorical question which implies an answering objection:

What, truly, can seem to be more obviously different from one another in faculty, in form, and in substance, than the various kinds of living beings? What community of faculty can there be between the bright-coloured lichen, which so nearly resembles a mere mineral incrustation of the bare rock on which it grows, and the painter, to whom it is instinct with beauty, or the botanist, whom it feeds with knowledge?<sup>6</sup>

Yet, he will argue, those differences are the outcome of a common pattern and one originating form, stretching to include the human with all other forms of life.

There was also an ongoing struggle around naming: nomenclature became a hot topic among scientists, as Jim Endersby has shown, particularly because colonial field workers were naturally eager to name the fresh specimens they discovered (specimens that might be fresh to them but known elsewhere) while figures like Joseph Hooker at Kew were insistent on a standard authorized description (that is, authorized by himself from the imperial center).<sup>7</sup> So the question of how much a term can encompass and remain precise was being aired in a variety of contexts, not least of course, by Humpty Dumpty:

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master — that’s all.” (LG, 186)

Humpty Dumpty seems to be claiming his authority from the logician George Boole, who much influenced Dodgson, and who argued in *An Investigation of The Laws of Thought, on which are Founded the Mathematical Theories of Logic and Probabilities*:

There exist, indeed, certain general principles founded in the very nature of language, by which the use of symbols, which are but the elements of scientific language, is determined. To a certain extent these elements are arbitrary. Their interpretation is purely conventional: we are permitted to employ them in whatever sense we please.<sup>8</sup>

Boole, however, adds the proviso that once a sense is established it must remain constant:

But this permission is limited by two indispensable conditions, — first, that from the sense once conventionally established we never, in the

same process of reasoning, depart; secondly, that the laws by which the process is conducted be founded exclusively upon the above fixed sense or meaning of the symbols employed.<sup>9</sup>

These are the conditions that are persistently infringed in the *Alice* books. Humpty Dumpty's imperious idiolect can vary meaning as he, and he alone, chooses. Lewis Carroll continued to be exercised and amused by the problem of semantic authority and the ways that words may come to assert a personified individuated presence. In *Symbolic Logic* he warns teachers against taking "a more humble position than is at all necessary."

They speak of the Copula of a Proposition "with bated breath," almost as if it were a living, conscious Entity, capable of declaring for itself what it chose to mean, and that we, poor human creatures, had nothing to do but to ascertain *what* was its sovereign will and pleasure, and submit to it.<sup>10</sup>

Like Boole (and Humpty Dumpty) he asserts the right of the author to attach "any meaning he likes to any word or phrase he intends to use." So "black" can mean "white" if the author so chooses and declares. But he insists (like Boole but not Humpty Dumpty) that once chosen, the meaning must be consistent and consistently adhered to.<sup>11</sup> All these arguments around naming and nomenclature, classification and classes, enter and shape the *Alice* books.

In June 1860 the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS) held its annual meeting in Oxford and at that meeting a confrontation took place between T. H. Huxley and Samuel Wilberforce, the bishop of Oxford.<sup>12</sup> Wilberforce asked Huxley about his forebears and seems to have inquired whether it was through his grandmother or his grandfather that he was linked back to the apes. The sexual sneer was ungentlemanly but powerful. This was the same bishop who so strongly disapproved of clergy attending the theater that his views went to discourage the theater-addicted Charles Dodgson from proceeding to full orders. Dodgson may well have been present at the British Association debate, and at a number of the papers that contributed to the discussion,

from those by Hooker and Draper to Henslow. On June 25 he quite certainly took the opportunity to make studio photographs of both Wilberforce and Huxley and over the following days he photographed a considerable number of the participants in the meeting.<sup>13</sup>

So he was alerted to the arguments under debate and he was in conversation with the participants. And he was skilled in the risky chemistry required for producing photographs at that period. He was to that degree a co-worker among the scientists gathered at the meeting. Unfortunately the diaries for the years 1859–62 are lost but it is clear that the young Charles Dodgson—he was twenty-eight at the time of the BAAS meeting—was eagerly aware of the conversations around him in Oxford, conversations that included the recent publication of the *Origin* in 1859 and Max Müller’s essays, based on his lectures at the Royal Institution in 1861 and gathered in *Lectures on the Science of Language*. Dodgson photographed Max Müller and was a friend of his family. Among his many arguments concerning the origin of languages, Müller later asserted that language itself is the Rubicon set between man and the beasts.<sup>14</sup>

Perhaps in thinking about Dodgson and Lewis Carroll it is also worth recalling that some years after the publication of the *Alice* books he became a strong antivivisectionist who published a passionate and trenchant article, “Some Popular Fallacies about Vivisection” in the *Fortnightly* in 1875.<sup>15</sup> There he suggests that animal experimentation will inexorably lead to experimentation on humans and that training scientists to ignore feelings will put us all at risk, since the outcome will be a powerful being without moral responsibility. He uses the language of evolution to emphasize these risks:

O my brother-man, you who claim for yourself and for me so proud an ancestry—tracing our pedigree through the anthropomorphoid ape up to the primeval zoophyte—what potent spell have *you* in store to win exemption from the common doom? Will you represent to that grim spectre [the future scientist], as he gloats over you, scalpel in hand, the inalienable rights of man? He will tell you that this is merely a question of relative expediency,—that, with so feeble a physique as yours, you



have only to be thankful that natural selection has spared you so long. Will you reproach him with the needless torture he proposes to inflict upon you?<sup>16</sup>

I set forward these examples to make it clear that Dodgson was thoroughly aware of the tussles going on, within Oxford and beyond, surrounding the issues of species, speciation, and classification. Problems of classifying are also grist to the mill of the logician. As Lewis Carroll, he worked askance all such debates, inverting, playing, alluding to and dropping, ideas caught up from current arguments. He took systems and destabilized them. Like Alice, he looked for rules, but, unlike her, he flouted them when found. As André Breton commented in the *First Surrealist Manifesto* (1924):

All those who have preserved a sense of rebellion recognise in Lewis Carroll the first teacher in the art of playing truant.<sup>17</sup>

Breton's comment beautifully juxtaposes rebellion and art, teaching and truancy: all apt to Lewis Carroll's play of mind.

The *Alice* books were imagined and written through the 1860s, while Lewis Carroll was still in his thirties. The ten years in which they occupied his imagination saw also the publication of T. H. Huxley's *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863), and the call by the Philological Society of London in 1857 for a complete reappraisal of the language from Anglo-Saxon times on.<sup>18</sup> This followed on from Richard Chevenix Trench's *On the Study of Words*, first published in 1851, with its central claim:

Language then is fossil poetry; in other words, we are not to look for the poetry which a people may possess only in its poems, or its poetical customs, traditions, and beliefs. Many a single word also is itself a concentrated poem.<sup>19</sup>

Centrally important to Carroll's imagination was logic. Here the work of John Stuart Mill was crucial to him, and that of George Boole who mathematicized logic extended his thinking.

Both *Alice* books take up the logical puzzles lodged in the pragmatics of language — the ambiguous status of a word like “nobody,” for example, shifted according to the intonation given:

“I see nobody on the road,” said Alice.

“I only wish *I* had such eyes,” the King remarked in a fretful tone. “To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too!” (LG, 194)

Nobody for the King is a personage with a capital letter, *embodied* through perspective: (“at that distance too”) that teasing addition to the joke gives it its special zest. The King is fretful because his regal capacities are inadequate. “Nobody” becomes a measure of short sight rather than of presence or absence.

But the identity central to both books is Alice’s, and it is persistently questioned from outside and from within: “I wonder if I’ve been changed in the night? . . . But if I’m not the same, the next question is ‘Who in the world am I?’ Ah, *that’s* the great puzzle!” (W, 17–18) When Alice shrinks:

this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people. “But it’s no use now,” thought poor Alice, “to pretend to be two people! Why, there’s hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!” (14)

The odd slippage between measures of size and of selfhood is the source of the uneasy joke here.

The creatures in *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* are quite as puzzled by Alice as she is by them. In these worlds she is a taxonomic anomaly. The phatic phrase “Who are you?” becomes threateningly intrusive, or maddeningly condescending, “Who are *you*?” And repeatedly she is asked not just *who* she is but *what* she is: she is taken to be a serpent, a servant, a fading flower, a dream figment, a monster. Names and naming exercise power and provoke all sorts of anxiety, both in Alice and her interlocutors. Naming also expresses survival anxiety. In the first of Alice’s encounters with creatures who cannot decide what she is, she is seen as predator. Alice’s neck extends until it rises “like a stalk out of a sea of green leaves that lay far below her”; she is abruptly challenged by a

large pigeon that “had flown into her face, and was beating her violently with her wings.”

“Serpent!” screamed the Pigeon.

...

“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. I suppose you’ll be telling me next that you never tasted an egg!”

“I *have* tasted eggs, certainly,” said Alice, who was a very truthful child; “but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know.”

“I don’t believe it,” said the Pigeon; “but if they do, why, then they’re a kind of serpent: that’s all I can say.” (W, 47–48)

The pigeon’s system of classification is entirely based on the need to protect her eggs: those who eat eggs are of one kind whether they call themselves serpents or little girls.<sup>20</sup> That one feature is enough to order her world. This is a very simple taxonomy, functional for the pigeon, though threatening to Alice. It might be argued that the pigeon has mistaken an accidental property (egg-eating) for a substantial property, following Aristotle’s categories, but to the pigeon egg-eating is substantial. Moreover, Darwin was demonstrating that slight divergences that appeared insubstantial to those seeking the ‘standard type’ might in fact be evolutionary triggers. It’s Alice’s first taste of the subjectivity of taxonomic systems. She is used to ones that place humans at the apex and make of little girls a favored category, but in the worlds she has entered that hierarchy does not hold sway.

In Looking-Glass Land creatures cannot readily imagine figures as occupying another category. The flowers do not know they come from a poem, nor do they command a taxonomy that can include small girls (nor would they wish to).

“There’s one other flower in the garden that can move about like you,” said the Rose. “I wonder how you do it—” . . . “but she’s more bushy than you are.”

“Is she like me?” Alice asked eagerly, for the thought crossed her mind, “There’s another little girl in the garden, somewhere!”

“Well, she has the same awkward shape as you,” the Rose said: “but she’s redder—and her petals are shorter, I think.” (LG, 138)

Momentarily a shadow-twin is evoked for Alice (the only moment in the entire two books where the possibility of another child is mooted). The flowers’ own names evoke girls’ names but here they are also common nouns: “the rose,” “a violet,” “the Tiger-lily.”

The flowers are also entirely confident that flowers provide the only sound criteria for definition. Near the start of his *Lectures on the Science of Language* (first series), Max Müller argues that the science of language, like the other physical sciences to which he is conjoining it, passes first through an empirical stage to the classificatory stage. The model he uses to make this point is the science of botany.

The real science of plants, like every other science, begins with the work of classification. An empirical acquaintance with facts rises to a scientific knowledge of facts as soon as the mind discovers beneath the multiplicity of single productions the unity of an organic system. This discovery is made by means of comparison and classification. We cease to study each flower for its own sake; and by continually enlarging the sphere of our observation, we try to discover what is common to many and offers those essential points on which groups or natural classes may be established.<sup>21</sup>

The flowers, being of a high intellectual temper, make a determined attempt to fix Alice as a member of their own classificatory system, a system that is confined to one class: that of flowers. Is there a hint of mockery of Müller’s insistence on setting the human apart in Carroll’s scene? Müller, Dodgson’s neighbor five minutes up the road from Christ Church at All Souls and the subject of more than one of his photographs, argued that “however much the frontiers of the animal kingdom have

been pushed forward . . . there is *one* barrier which no one has yet ventured to touch—the barrier of language” (13). Now Alice discovers that plants as well as animals can talk when they’ve a mind to, and not only the language of flowers. Rather, these flowers are busy with “comparison and classification” (15).

Carroll suggests that flowers, like people, make themselves both the universal and the special case. Müller imagines that only man has language. The flowers imagine that flowers occupy the entire taxonomic system, and if Alice doesn’t quite fit it’s because she is fading:

“Well, she has the same awkward shape as you,” the Rose said: “but she’s redder—and her petals are shorter, I think.”

“They’re done up close, like a dahlia,” said the Tiger-lily: “not tumbled about, like yours.”

“But that’s not *your* fault,” the Rose added kindly. “You’re beginning to fade, you know—and then one ca’n’t help one’s petals getting a little untidy.” (LG, 138)

The flowers, used to organic continuity between stalk and petals, make no distinction between clothes and body. And in the case of Alice, neither does the reader. The images of Alice all show her always in the same dress, only her hair from time to time a little ruffled. Alice undressed is not to be imagined.

Rose, Daisy, Tiger-lily, Violet, and Larkspur are, for the reader in the know, also vestiges of Tennyson’s *Maud* (1855), alluding to the approach of the beloved—who here in bathos turns out to be undesired and undesirable, neither flower nor other child:

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.”<sup>22</sup>

“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. (LG, 138)

Tennyson is not the sole source for parody in the episode of the live flowers. The “language of flowers” was a fashionable system of emblems still in the Victorian period, and a particularly silly if ingenious one. (Indeed, it has not entirely died away: one sometimes sees advertisements for something like an astrology of flowers, defining the nature and predicting the fortunes of people.) The language of flowers is also a code for lovers.

How oft doth an emblem-bud silently tell  
What language could never speak half so well!

Robert Tyas sets this couplet as epigraph to his book *The Language of Flowers: or, Floral Emblems of Thoughts, Feelings and Sentiments*. Tyas encodes an extraordinary array of flowers and plants in the system; some examples are: Ivy — Friendship; Indian Jasmine — Separation; Jonquil — Desire; Juniper — Asylum, Succour; Lantana — Sharpness; Larch — Boldness; Larkspur — Swiftiness; Laurel — Glory; Laurestinus — I die if neglected; Lavender — Distrust; Lettuce — Coldness; Lilac — First Emotion of Love; Lily — Majesty; Lime-Tree — Conjugal Love; Marigold — Pain, Chagrin; Primrose — Early Youth; Snapdragon — Presumption; Sunflower — False Riches.<sup>23</sup>

Only very occasionally is there a manifest appropriateness to the relation between flower and meaning. More often the system, despite its emphasis on rules, starts from a captious series of associations. Indeed, signifier and signified have a strained collaboration which yet claims to be authoritative, as so often in such verbal systems. The frontispiece of *The Language of Flowers* shows large robust pink and red roses, plump-hearted, and captioned “The Rose — The Myrtle — The Ivy.” Roses dominate, signifying “Beauty, Friendship and Love.” The Rose is the most hard-worked emblem in the system that Tyas is describing (and perhaps regulating). Among the variants are “A Rose in a tuft of Grass — there is

every thing to be gained by good company”; “A Rose Leaf—I am never importunate”; “the Moss Rose—Love. Voluptuousness.”<sup>24</sup>

The “language of flowers” provides an intricate set of *rules* for expression and indeed for feeling. In his preface Tyas gives a definition exactly appropriate for subversion in Looking-Glass Land with its inversions and reversals:

The first rule in the Language of Flowers is, that a flower, presented in an upright position, expresses a thought; and to express the opposite of that thought, it suffices to let the flower hang down reversed. Thus, for example, a Rose-bud, with its thorns and leaves, says, “I fear, but I hope.” If we present this same Rose-bud, reversed, it means “You must neither fear nor hope.” (x)

This seems a vapid as well as a puzzling message, and Carroll’s flowers have no truck with any such innuendo. They are anything but mealy-mouthed and very ready to criticize:

“I don’t care about the colour,” the Tiger-lily remarked. “If only her petals curled a little more, she’d be all right.” (LG, 137)

According to Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, the bad-tempered Tiger-lily was originally, as in Tennyson, to be a passion-flower but when it was pointed out to Dodgson that the name alluded to the Passion of Christ rather than to anger, “in a passion,” he immediately changed it to a tiger lily. Intriguingly, the tiger lily is one of the few flowers *not* included in Tyas’s list. In Tyas the lily is a white lily:

the lily, notwithstanding her charms, needs a court in order to appear in her full lustre. Alone, she is cold and as one forsaken; surrounded by so many other flowers she throws them all into the shade. She is a sovereign; her charm is the charm of Majesty. (127–28)

Carroll, whether deliberately or not, throws a spanner in the works of the floral system with his tiger lily.

*Punch’s Pocket-Book for 1851* makes it clear in an item titled “The Lan-

guage of Vegetables” that the “language of flowers” was long established as ripe for mockery:

We have long had a language of flowers, in which no lips are more eloquent than Tu-lips, and for which every garden serves as a library, where we might sit turning over the leaves by the hour; but we have never yet required the vegetable or the fruit as a medium of colloquial discourse. Why should not the cabbage or the onion appeal as powerfully to our comprehension as the violet or the marigold? (155)

And the writer then has fun with the “heart” of the cabbage, and the onion that “brought tears to our eyes.” This idea of “speaking” or “eloquent” flowers, with their sentimental messages, “for which every garden serves as a library,” is nicely turned by Carroll into a garden where meaning is entirely occupied by one species, who interpret everything in their own terms. As so often, Alice is the anomaly who makes clear the absurdity of this behavior — partly by replicating it in her own assumptions:

“And can *all* the flowers talk?”

“As well as you can,” said the Tiger-lily. ‘And a great deal louder.’ (LG, 136)

The period when Carroll was writing the *Alice* books was a period when the practices of naming flowers and fruit were multiplying and there was a good deal of confusion and tension over nomenclature. It was a time also when the need to establish standard plants was closely linked to developing markets. People were becoming aware that apparently slight differences might have great significance for the survival and popularity of particular strains. It was no longer certain which characteristics were of real importance and which were contingent. Indeed, with the emphasis shifted from types created by God to reproduction and survival, different qualities emerged as significant. Darwin had pointed out, for example, that:

In plants the down on the fruit and the colour of the flesh are considered by botanists as characters of the most trifling importance: yet we hear



from an excellent horticulturalist, Downing, that in the United States smooth-skinned fruits suffer far more from a beetle, a curculio, than those with down. . . . If, with all the aids of art, these slight differences make a great difference in cultivating the several varieties, assuredly, in a state of nature, where the trees would have to struggle with other trees and with a host of enemies, such differences would eventually settle which variety, whether a smooth or a downy, a yellow or purple fleshed fruit, would succeed.<sup>25</sup>

The garden of live flowers is a garden where flowers assert themselves, not as symbolic codes for human uses, nor for artificial selection, but as standard examples of authoritatively named species. Carroll had a considerable interest in botany and read, and in many cases owned, a number of contemporary books on wild flowers, trees, and plants, ranging from the thirty-six-volume James Sowerby, *English Botany*, to the works of Anne Pratt, such as *Wild Flowers* (1852–53), *The Ferns of Great Britain, and their Allies the Club Mosses, Pepperworts and Horsetails* (1855) and *The British Grasses and Sedges* (1859).<sup>26</sup>

Frances Hodgson Burnett, born in November 1849, two and a half years before Alice Liddell, remembers the flower book she had when she was a small girl with its whole set of moralized flowers.

In the days when the Small Person was a child, morals were never lost sight of; no well-regulated person ever mentioned the Poppy, in writing for youth, without calling it “flaunting” or “gaudy”; the Violet, without laying stress on its “modesty”; the Rose, without calling attention to its “sweetness,” and daring indeed would have been the individual who would have referred to the bee without calling him “busy.” Somehow one had the feeling that the poppy was deliberately scarlet from impudence, that the violet stayed up all night, as it were, to be modest, that the rose had invented her own sweetness, and that the bee would rather perish than be an “idle butterfly” and not spend every moment “improving each shining hour.” But we stood it very well. Nobody repined, but I think one rather had the feeling of having been born an innately vicious little person who needed labouring with constantly that one might be made merely endurable.<sup>27</sup>

Lewis Carroll relieved children of a weight of guilt in his cheerful traducing of didactic verses and moralized botany. *Alice* encourages confident inquiries and resistance and though Alice herself sometimes feels guilt early on in Wonderland she shows no sign of thinking herself “an innately vicious little person.” Carroll persistently relaxes the codes that have gathered and hardened around the material world. Anything may be the case. So no signification is fixed. But neither is symbolic value added. This is a literalistic world. It’s a subgenre of objectivity and, divested of the accretions of moralism, *things* are more vividly present.

Parody, language theory, the hauteur of insider communities, the difficulty of imagining ways of being other than our own: all these are in play in the scene of the live flowers. And they are *at* play, too: Lewis Carroll has an extraordinary ear for the free intricacy of conversation. These pages sound like talking, both within the dialogue and the speech-tags. That intimacy grounds us even as the multiple-level jokes destabilize our taken-for-granted interaction with the world and with description.

Alice is persistently challenged by those she meets, and the physical structures of the dream-worlds she inhabits produce challenges of their own. Domestic architecture is misshapen, humans and animals are sometimes barely distinguishable. In Wonderland she approaches a great house, its portico guarded by footmen in livery (or are they fish and frog) who insolently refuse Alice entry. But, with her usual enterprise, she “opened the door and went in.” Instead of a grand entrance-hall beyond a grand front door with a grand staircase leading up from the middle of it: “The door led right into a large kitchen, which was full of smoke from one end to the other” (W, 52). The taxonomic hierarchies of Victorian domestic architecture give way to dream space: the kitchen is the essential heart of the house, unmasked. But here it is an unsalubrious center: there is soup, as usual, but peppered soup, followed by a volley of aggression as the cook throws everything she can lay her hands on at the Duchess and the baby.

Dodgson, third in a family of eleven children, knew about babies and didn’t think much of them. (And who the father of this particular baby might be we are not even invited to wonder about, even in a book so fueled by curiosity.) The baby, more or less thrown into Alice’s arms by

its uncaring mother, is “a queer-shaped little creature,” which “held out its arms and legs in all directions, ‘just like a star-fish,’ thought Alice” (W, 55). A baby like a star-fish? Are species stable? Indeed, must a human baby become an adult human or may it deviate: “‘If you’re going to turn into a pig, my dear,’ said Alice, seriously, ‘I’ll have nothing more to do with you. Mind now!’” Eventually she puts the rescued “little creature” down and “felt quite relieved to see it trot away quietly into the wood” (55).

“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—” (55-56)

The child reader squirms, with illicit delight or alarm. But the sentence ends with the reappearance of the Cheshire-Cat: a typical swerve away from the intolerable in this text.

Carroll is here working across that ripple of alarm felt by many of his contemporaries at the closeness of diverse species and the transformations that occur within the life cycle of many individuals within species. In “A Lobster; or The Study of Zoology” first given as a lecture at South Kensington Museum in 1861 T. H. Huxley remarks:

Our lobster has not always been what we see it; it was once an egg, a semifluid mass of yolk, not so big as a pin’s head, contained in a transparent membrane, and exhibiting not the least trace of any one of those organs, whose multiplicity and complexity, in the adult, are so surprising.<sup>28</sup>

Huxley’s 1863 work *Evidence as to Man’s Place in Nature* confronted the issue elided in the *Origin*: where is the human in the natural order?

The hierarchical sequence of animal, vegetable, and mineral habitually placed mineral at the bottom, and humankind at a great distance above: For example, Augustus Addison Gould in *A System of Natural History* (1834) writes:

between the lowest form of vegetable or animal life, and the most symmetrically disposed crystal in the mineral kingdom—between a living body and inert matter—there is an immeasurable distance; and between the highest of the lower animals and Man, of all beings, alone endowed with the power of reason and the faculty of speech, a distance more incalculable.<sup>29</sup>

In the *Alice* books, in contrast, as Carroll remarks, all animals are endowed with speech. (“Is it alive?”; “It can talk”). The result is a leveling of kinds in Carroll’s work: earnestness and folly are shared across all forms of life here from kings and queens to bread-and-butterflies. Authority is tenuous, and the games from which such authority is derived are disheveled in these worlds.

As John Tyndall was making clear, there is no fixed hierarchy among the three great kingdoms of animal, vegetable, and mineral. Indeed, life in all its manifestations was generated initially from the *inorganic*:

Were not man’s origin implicated, we should accept without a murmur the derivation of animal and vegetable life from what we call inorganic nature. The conclusion of pure intellect points this way, and no other.<sup>30</sup>

W. H. Mallock in *The New Paul and Virginia* in the early 1870s makes fun of Tyndall’s notion that everything is descended ultimately from the sun, and even more fun of his high-minded certitude. But he does include, between ridicule and evenhandedness, a great many notes from the works of Tyndall, Harrison, Huxley, and Clifford. The second of these brings up a persistent motif in biological writing of the time:

Is this egg (*from which the human being springs*) matter? I hold it to be so, as much as the seed of a fern or of an oak.<sup>31</sup>

In his 1863 essay *Evidence as to Man’s Place in Nature* Huxley mocked the human resistance to understanding that everything started as an egg:

The dog, like all animals, . . . commences its existence as an egg: as a body which is, in every sense, as much an egg as that of a hen, but is de-

void of that accumulation of nutritive matter which confers upon the bird's egg its exceptional size and domestic utility. . . . Is [a man] bound to howl and grovel on all fours because of the wholly unquestionable fact, that he was once an egg, which no ordinary power of discrimination could distinguish from that of a Dog?<sup>32</sup>

So, here we have another possible reason that Humpty Dumpty is so big for his boots: the egg is *fons et origo* in nature, contemporary scientists were insisting.

Specialization and common origins both generate jokes in the *Alice* books but one chapter in particular, "Looking-Glass Insects," takes the extremes in the matter of speciation and nomenclature. First Alice encounters a series of hyperbolic insects that can talk, which reassures her: most of them live in harmony with their immediate environment, like the Rocking-horse-fly "made entirely of wood, [that] gets about by swinging itself from branch to branch."

"What does it live on?" Alice asked, with great curiosity.

"Sap and sawdust," said the Gnat. (LG, 149)

The last example however is a tragic example of overspecialization:

"Crawling at your feet," said the Gnat (Alice drew her feet back in some alarm), "you may observe a Bread-and-butter-fly. Its wings are thin slices of bread-and-butter, its body is a crust, and its head is a lump of sugar."

"And what does it live on?"

"Weak tea with cream in 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. (LG, 151)

The logical joke is the confusion between species and individual (phylogeny and ontogeny). Individuals always die but species do not neces-

sarily do so. Species, though, are threatened with extinction, especially if they have a very confined habitat and habits.

The fear was topical when Carroll wrote, in the wake of Darwinian evolutionary theory with its emphasis on the inevitability of extinction over time for all presently known species. Indeed, extinction itself was a relatively novel concept, formulated by Georges Cuvier half a century earlier, and troubling for those who saw creation as a settled state.<sup>33</sup> Darwin emphasized:

Judging from the past, we may safely infer that not one living species will transmit its unaltered likeness to a distant futurity. And of the species now living very few will transmit progeny of any kind to a far distant futurity; for the manner in which all organic beings are grouped, shows that the greater number of species of each genus, and all the species of many genera, have left no descendants, but have become utterly extinct.<sup>34</sup>



## 6

### “MUST A NAME MEAN SOMETHING?” ALICE ASKED DOUBTFULLY

As so often in the *Alice* books the child politely puts a radical and unwelcome question. It's a question perhaps particularly heretical in the setting of onomastics and literature, where the expected answer is that given scornfully by Humpty Dumpty: “Of course it must,’ Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh” (LG, 182). But Humpty Dumpty’s explanation of his name’s meaning plunges us straight into confusion about mimicry between name and person, name and thing, a confusion that calls on onomatopoeia as well as on literary reference. Humpty Dumpty is an egg, though a remarkably imposing and grandiloquent one. He continues, to put Alice in her place:

*my name means the shape I am—and a good handsome shape it is, too.  
With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.*

Does the name Humpty Dumpty signify egg-shaped? For English children it certainly does, less because of his “hump” than because they all know the nursery rhyme riddle:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall  
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.  
All the King’s horses and all the King’s men  
Couldn’t put Humpty together again.<sup>1</sup>



And that secret knowledge, shared between Alice and the reader, undermines Humpty's grandiose self-presentation. *We* know that he will fall off the wall and be shattered. *He* does not. So the name here performs a narrative prolepsis: it means the fate that will befall Humpty Dumpty. Alice survives this foretelling: she is no Cassandra. Her name does not perform her shape, prophecy her fate, or give us many clues about her appearance. It does, though, suggest that she is an English-language female, probably human.<sup>2</sup>

The example of Humpty Dumpty's name (and even Alice's name) suggests that a proper name must indeed mean something, but not necessarily what its possessor imagines. The name, as here for Humpty Dumpty, may be pre-plotted, driving the story toward a particular conclusion along the path of known fictions. The name is a clue for the listener. A name helps a listener to interpret the speaker. It is not so much in the sole possession of the speaker as Humpty Dumpty here imagines. That is to say, names give others a handle in any power struggle. In fiction, a name may act as fate. It foretells what must inevitably come about for that person. That, fortunately, is not the case in ordinary life, though names in ordinary social intercourse certainly lead us to make interpretations about a person's family background, generation, and their parents' aspirations. And retrospectively, as a result of the *Alice* books, the name "Alice" may evoke a certain inquisitive and upright child, even when the context is quite different.

Lewis Carroll was well aware of the power of names, and for a number of different reasons. The name "Lewis Carroll" is his own invention. His family and given names were Charles, Lutwidge, Dodgson. Carroll is derived from the Latin for Charles, Carolus, and Lewis, less obviously, from Lutwidge. By happy chance, but probably alas nothing more, the letters of the name "Alice" are scattered through his full adopted name "Lewis Carroll" as the letters of other girls' names are deliberately hidden in his poems.<sup>3</sup> *Adopting* a name gives you power over it and its significations, at least at the outset. It allows you, too, to insert secrets into it. Charles Dodgson trained particularly as a logician and taught logic throughout his working life. He sometimes refused to receive mail from strangers addressed to him as Lewis Carroll and he kept up a de-

terminated barrier between the world of his fanciful self and his professional life.<sup>4</sup>

The world of the *Alice* books reverses the world of Dodgson's daily life: instead of things being pinned down, they float; instead of logic we have the vagrancy of conversation; instead of reasoned sequence we have time-warps. In life Dodgson was an ardent support of Euclid against newfangled views of the fourth dimension; in Carroll's *Alice* books space-time follows non-Euclidian pathways, as at the Mad Hatter's endless tea party. But Dodgson and Carroll come together in their fascination with logical problems. The apocryphal tale is that Queen Victoria was so enchanted by the *Alice* books that she asked to receive a copy of Carroll's next book and was mortified to receive a copy of *Symbolic Logic*, a textbook, which was his next publication. Had it happened, she should really not have been surprised.

In Book 1, chapter 4, of *Symbolic Logic* Dodgson has a section on names, a section that firmly refuses to hint at the jokes that would be foregrounded in *Alice*. However, the material for possible jokes is there:

(1) Members of a Class, regarded as separate Things; (2) a whole Class, regarded as one single Thing.

...

The first sense is . . . "This soldier of the Tenth Regiment is tall," "That soldier of the Tenth Regiment is tall," and so on But, when I say, "The soldiers of the Tenth Regiment are formed in square," I am using the phrase in the *second* sense; and it is just the same as if I were to say "The *Tenth Regiment* is formed in square."<sup>5</sup>

In the *Alice* books those squared soldiers would be emphatically and individually square in shape as well as in square formation.

Charles Dodgson was also a cleric, though he did not take full orders. He knew, therefore, intimately, the catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer*, which opens with a question about names:

Catechism

*Question.* What is your Name?

Answer. N. or M.

Question. Who gave you this Name?

Answer. My Godfathers and Godmothers in my Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.<sup>6</sup>

The largesse of what comes spiritually through the act of naming (“I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven”) contrasts with the lean “N. or M.”—non-names that serve simply to mark the possibility of alternatives (either N or M). The mystery of those un-names has fascinated many a child: why N or M, not A or B, or Y or Z? It is as if the names of the letters have a life of their own that begins to incline toward personification. Perhaps N or M are simply the consonants of the word “Name” or “Nomen” in Latin, and so carry least separate signification. Thus they may give greatest freedom for the individual instances that will occupy that vacant signifying space: Ada, or Mabel, for example (two of the alternates who, in *Wonderland*, Alice fears she may have become).

As a mathematical logician by training and practice, Charles Dodgson knew and had in his library John Stuart Mill’s great work *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Deductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, with its severe view that names have no inherent capacity to signify:

since names and their signification are entirely arbitrary, such propositions are not, strictly speaking, susceptible of truth or falsity, but only of conformity or disconformity to usage or convention.<sup>7</sup>

All these elements in Dodgson’s life would awaken him to the power of names and naming, but none more perhaps than the name “Alice.” That name is shared by the young Alice Liddell (to whom, with her sisters, he first told the originating stories that became *Alice in Wonderland*) with the narrative Alice who is our guide and companion through the strange worlds of *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. This is where poignancy enters. Little Alice Liddell, the beloved child, was given the first version, *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground*, in late November 1864

when she was nine years old. She is seven years old in *Wonderland* (1865) and seven and a half in *Looking-Glass* (1872). But the actual Alice Liddell went on inexorably growing toward, and past, puberty, and the loving friendship between her and the author had long faded by the time the books were written and published.

The unchanging immortality of the fictional Alice contrasts painfully with the shadowy shifts of ordinary growth and death, the world as dreamed by the Red King:

“He’s dreaming now,” said Tweedledee: “and what do you think he’s dreaming about?”

Alice said “Nobody can guess that.”

“Why, about you!” Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. “And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you’d be?”

“Where I am now, of course,” said Alice.

“Not you!” Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. “You’d be nowhere. Why, you’re only a sort of thing in his dream!”

“If that there King was to wake,” added Tweedledum, “You’d go out—bang!—just like a candle!”

“I shouldn’t!” Alice exclaimed indignantly. “Besides, if I’m only a sort of thing in his dream, what are *you*, I should like to know?”

“Ditto,” said Tweedledum.

“Ditto, ditto,” cried Tweedledee.

He shouted this so loud that Alice couldn’t help saying, “Hush! You’ll be waking him, I’m afraid, if you make so much noise.”

“Well, it’s no use *your* talking about waking him,” said Tweedledum, “when you’re only one of the things in his dream. You know very well you’re not real.”

“I *am* real!” said Alice and began to cry.

“You wo’n’t make yourself a bit realler by crying,” Tweedledee remarked: “there’s nothing to cry about.”

“If I wasn’t real,” Alice said—half-laughing through her tears, it all seemed so ridiculous—“I shouldn’t be able to cry.”

“I hope you don’t suppose those are *real* tears?” Tweedledum interrupted in a tone of great contempt. (LG, 164–65)

The tears are paper tears but the Alice in this fiction is real, if real means enduring, realer than any of us who share the mortality of Alice Liddell. She will still be there, now embedded in the name “Alice” — being Alice, Alice in Wonderland and through the Looking-Glass, through other generations long after us. And the made-up name of Lewis Carroll is enduring, his authorship here held within the narrative loop and disguised in the figure of the dreaming Red King. Charles Dodgson has passed away and is persistently at secret play.

These extra- and paratextual pressures on naming are playfully rendered in the text. There is the hypernaming of the insects who Alice encounters. The usefulness of names to those who are not the entity is joked about. Insects don’t answer to their names. They do not know that they have names.

“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?”

“No use to *them*,” said Alice; “but it’s useful to the people that name them, I suppose. If not, why do things have names at all?” (LG, 149)

Alice, always eager for contact with those she meets, assumes that names imply reciprocity, but that is laconically denied with the downbeat good sense in which so many of the forbidding creatures she encounters seem to specialize. We have seen it at work already in the Garden of Live Flowers: “‘We *can* talk,’ said the Tiger-lily, ‘when there’s anybody worth talking to’” (LG, 136). In contrast to the sentimental “language of flowers” which ascribed a symbolic meaning to each plant, these flowers are truculent and utilitarian.

Alice didn't like being criticized, so she began asking questions.

"Aren't you sometimes frightened at being planted out here, with nobody to take care of you?"

"There's the tree in the middle," said the Rose. "What else is it good for?"

"But what could it do, if any danger came?" Alice asked.

"It could bark," said the Rose.

"It says 'Bough-wough!'" cried a Daisy. "That's why its branches are called boughs!"

"Didn't you know *that*?" cried another Daisy. And here they all began shouting together, till the air seemed quite full of little shrill voices. (LG, 137)

Alice is pleased, like a good pupil, that she knows the names of some insects: horsefly, dragonfly, butterfly. But here those creatures have hypernames, ones in which the names become material.

The most logic-chopping encounter about names that Alice experiences is the conversation with the White Knight concerning the song he proposes to sing her. She isn't keen to hear it and becomes more and more tangled into a conversation in which the sleight-of-hand movement from *naming* to *calling* to *being* gathers all the philosophical problems together. John Stuart Mill haunts the dialogue here: names do not carry information about things, Mill proposes. A verbal proposition

asserts of a thing under a particular name, only what is asserted of it in the fact of calling it by that name; and which, therefore, either gives no information, or gives it respecting the name, not the thing.<sup>8</sup>

The White Knight first remarks that "the name of the song is called '*Haddocks' Eyes*'" (LG, 213). That name itself, with its awkward sibilants, seems improbable enough for a song but in the ensuing dialogue things get more complicated:

"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.” (LG, 214)

Do names inhere, not only in persons, or creatures, but in books or songs? Why are people so offended if their name is forgotten? — is a song similarly put out? Who owns a name? Do we call things by names that are simply wrong? Can an entity resist naming? Can a song simply *be*? Must it be named to be sung? Is it a thing, and does it only exist when it is words *and* music? (“The song really is, ‘*A-sitting On A Gate*’; and the tune’s my own invention.”) At this stage it seems that the White Knight is at last offering the plenitude of information that is held in song and words together, and only together.

After a page of struggle Alice in reverie watches the White Knight as he sings: “listening, in a half-dream, to the melancholy music of the song.” And then, with a further turn on the questions of ownership, authority and naming, she realizes: “‘But the tune *isn’t* his own invention,’ she said to herself: ‘it’s ‘*I give thee all, I can no more*’” (LG, 214). And flooding in for the first readers, if not for us, comes a different song, evoked by this line, with words more impassioned than the White Knight’s and sending a subterranean coded message of yearning love into the inner ear of the reader as listener. Nowadays we do not straightway hear that hidden words and music evoked by the name of the song but Carroll and his first readers did.

### **My Heart and Lute**

I give thee all — I can give no more —  
 Though poor the offering be;

My heart and lute are all the store  
 That I can bring to thee.  
 A lute whose gentle song reveals  
 The soul of love full well;  
 And, better far, a heart that feels  
 Much more than lute could tell.

Though love and song may fail, alas!  
 To keep life's clouds away,  
 At least 'twill make them lighter pass  
 Or gild them if they stay.  
 And ev'n if Care at moments, flings  
 A discord o'er life's happy strain,  
 Let love but gently touch the strings,  
 'Twill all be sweet again! (Houghton, 349–50)

Alice's naming of the first line from Thomas Moore's verses "My Heart and Lute," evoked here in the musical setting by Henry Rowley Bishop, releases somatic experience and memory, summoned into the text from beyond, and generated by and for those first readers.<sup>9</sup> It is now a lost effect because the song is no longer familiar. The endoubled mirror-reflection of song and alternative song is absent for us. That doubleness was also a secret vehicle for feelings that went beyond the name of Lewis Carroll into the person of Charles Dodgson.

Names release, or names imprison. We see both effects at work in *Looking-Glass*. The most profound episode in the book is that in which names vanish. At the end of the encounter with the looking-glass insects, the Gnat nonchalantly inquires of Alice: "'I suppose you don't want to lose your name?' 'No, indeed,' Alice said, a little anxiously" (LG, 151). The Gnat points out the advantage: without a name her governess couldn't summon her for lessons. But Alice sees through that. If the governess couldn't think of the individual name she would simply use the status term: "If she couldn't remember my name, she'd call me 'Miss,' as the servants do" (152). All higher-class young women fall into that category.

The scene darkens. Alice enters the wood "where things have no



names” (152). And straightway she begins to lose her self. She imagines trying to find her lost name, now assigned, she supposes, to a different creature:

That’s just like the advertisements, you know, when people lose dogs—*“answers to the name of ‘Dash’: had on a brass collar”*—just fancy calling everything you met “Alice,” till one of them answered! Only they wouldn’t answer at all, if they were wise. (152)

Names at this moment appear to be portable property, lost with—or without—their owners. But the amnesia grows thicker, as, much later, in Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967). Nominal aphasia is only the start. Not only persons but objects begin to lose their names. She puts her hand on the trunk of a tree: “What *does* it call itself, I wonder? I do believe it’s got no name—why, to be sure it hasn’t” (153). The tree is imagined as able to refer to itself (“what *does* it call itself”) and then as losing its name, then as *having* no name. Finally the dilemma hits fully home: the personal name signifies personal identity; without a name can Alice even *be*?

“And now, who am I? I *will* remember, if I can! I’m determined to do it!”  
But being determined didn’t help her much, and all she could say, after a great deal of puzzling, was “L, I *know* it begins with L!” (153)

Is this forgotten name “Alice,” following the well-known phenomenon that we remember the first consonant, not the opening letter, in a lost word? Is it Liddell, her nonfictional family name? Or might it be Lewis, the self-chosen name of her author, her generator, claiming the fundamental intimacy of literal *identity*?

But all these concerns vanish. A fawn wanders by and in this happy nameless place neither Alice nor the fawn remembers that they occupy separate categories and may not be intimates. A momentary paradise prevails, the moment of paradise *before* Adam named the animals and kinds. Tenniel’s illustration shows them wandering on together with Alice’s arm round the fawn’s neck. Alice feels melancholy without her name, a kind of nothing, but she is assuaged by this company.

“What do you call yourself?” the Fawn said at last. Such a soft sweet voice it had!

“I wish I knew!” thought poor Alice. She answered, rather sadly, “Nothing, just now.”

“Think again,” it said: “that wo’n’t do.”

Alice thought, but nothing came of it. “Please would you tell me what you call yourself?” she said timidly. “I think that might help a little.”

“I’ll tell you, if you’ll come a little further on,” the Fawn said. “I ca’n’t remember *here*.”

So they walked on together though the wood, Alice with her arms clasped lovingly round the neck of the Fawn, till they came out into another open field, and here the Fawn gave a sudden bound into the air, and shook itself free from Alice’s arm. “I’m a Fawn!” it cried out in a voice of delight. “And, dear me! you’re a human child!” A sudden look of alarm came into its beautiful brown eyes, and in another moment it had darted away at full speed. (154)

Once names return, each reverts to its kind; intimacy is impossible and the animal darts away. The boundaries of species reassert themselves. Names collect themselves again.

Moments later the episode is forgotten as Alice encounters the enantiomorphic twins, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, face to face beings, reflections of each other, identical and nonidentical at once, as their names indicate and control. The only difference in their appearance is that “Dum” and “Dee” is written on their collars, as Tenniel’s picture shows. They rely on these tags for others to see any difference between them, but they experience themselves as individuals and are capable of opposition, quarrelling furiously over ownership of the new rattle.

The human, fictional figure of Alice has gone through the looking-glass to the zone where self and reflection are no longer separate. Margaret Atwood in *Negotiating with the Dead* comments on this moment:

The act of writing takes place at the moment when Alice passes through the mirror. At this one instant, the glass barrier between the doubles dissolves, and Alice is neither here nor there, neither art nor life, neither one thing nor the other, though at the same time she is all of these at

once. At that moment time itself stops, and also stretches out, and both writer and reader have all the time not in the world.<sup>10</sup>

No longer face to face with herself in the mirror she signifies a kind of wholeness, by being beyond the possibility of narcissism. When she looks in the looking-glass at the start it is not herself she seeks, but what lies in the room beyond, in the hidden corners that the eye cannot reach and the mirror never replicates. That selfless curiosity is Alice's distinction.

As she wanders on, she encounters strange beings who test symbolic logic as they go but she never encounters her own twin, or even another little girl. She is lonely. She is the singleton. The loneliness of Alice is fundamentally the loneliness of the only child, the child alone, indeed, the *only* child. She is the single occupant of her category in the worlds she visits. She is surrounded there by people and creatures who cross categories: the people may be playing-cards and the creatures eloquent. None of them are girls. No wonder Alice feels at home with the unicorn, that other nonce figure.

Moreover, as Frankie Morris points out in *Artist of Wonderland*:

Carroll's heroine might have no parents at all for all we learn of them in the *Alice* books. She has an old nurse . . . and a governess. . . . In her real world, as in her dreamworld, she is surrounded by cooks, workmen, gardeners, footmen. Thus, in her dreams the queens are like governesses, and even the creatures "order one about, and make one repeat lessons."<sup>11</sup>

Alice is beset by the service world by which, within and outside Wonderland, she is also sustained. She more than once finds herself categorized as a servant: by the White Rabbit and by the White Queen.

"Why, Mary Ann, what *are* you doing out here? Run home this moment, and fetch me a pair of gloves and a fan! Quick, now!" And Alice was so much frightened that she ran off at once in the direction it pointed to, without trying to explain the mistake that it had made.

"He took me for his housemaid," she said to herself as she ran.

"How surprised he'll be when he finds out who I am!" (W, 31)

But “who she is” is entirely inconsequential in this new setting.

Alice is discovering that social class counts for little in her identity. Earlier, she had feared that she was sinking down a more subtle social scale: she is not as grand as the ringletted Ada, but not as poor as the meager and uninformed Mabel:

“I’m sure I’m not Ada,” she said, “for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn’t go in ringlets at all; and I’m sure I can’t be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh, she knows such a very little! Besides, *she’s* she, and *I’m* I, and — oh dear, how puzzling it all is!” (W, 18)

Her hope is that her *education* assures her identity but she soon discovers that all the information she brought with her, and within her, has now been alienated: “the words did not come the same as they used to do” (19). Resilient as ever, Alice asserts the possibility of choosing identity from among other known people: she cannot imagine self in the abstract. Instead, she imagines a procession of persons.

“It’ll be no use their putting their heads down and saying ‘Come up again, dear!’ I shall only look up and say ‘Who am I then? Tell me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I’ll come up: if not, I’ll stay down here till I’m somebody else’ — but, oh dear!” cried Alice, with a sudden burst of tears, “I do wish they *would* put their heads down! I am so *very* tired of being all alone here!” (19)

The outburst of desolation soon passes but repeatedly, when it occurs, it is centered on the empty space where identity should be. Identity here is nurtured by encounter and curiosity, always Alice’s salvation. What she becomes is (for a while) a monster, occupying the entire volume of the Rabbit’s house, shattering glass and kicking Bill the lizard up the chimney.

Alice is never content with the taken-for-granted. She looks for definitions, as in her questions to Humpty Dumpty about the meaning of the Jabberwocky nonsense poem. She recognizes that all words are porous and that it is only by custom that we grant them fixed edges. Names de-

mand to be kept intact. But from time to time in this work puns perform corkscrews and phonemes cascade across the borders of individual words to produce new sense:

“Well, ‘*slithy*’ means ‘lithe and slimy.’ ‘Lithe’ is the same as ‘active.’ You see it’s like a portmanteau — there are two meanings packed up into one word.”

“I see it now,” Alice remarked thoughtfully: “and what are ‘*toves*’?”

“Well, ‘*toves*’ are something like badgers — they’re something like lizards — and they’re something like corkscrews.”

“They must be very curious-looking creatures.”

“They are that,” said Humpty Dumpty: “also they make their nests under sun-dials — also they live on cheese.”

“And what’s to ‘*gyre*’ and to ‘*gimble*’?”

“To ‘*gyre*’ is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To ‘*gimble*’ is to make holes like a gimblet.”

“And ‘*the wabe*’ is the grass-plot round a sun-dial, I suppose?” said Alice, surprised at her own ingenuity.

“Of course it is. It’s called ‘*wabe*,’ you know, because it goes a long way before it, and a long way behind it —”

“And a long way beyond it on each side,” Alice added.

“Exactly so.” (LG, 187–89)

Such passages suggest a whole series of problems and insights about names. Phonemes may cluster to make new words (“*wabe*” is soldered across the boundaries between “*way*” and “*before*,” “*way*” and “*behind*,” “*way*” and “*beyond*”). The boundaries between written words turn out not to be secure when words are spoken. Moreover, words themselves, according to the White Knight, have names. The difference between person and personification is hard to maintain. Without a name, identity may wither. But names are not reciprocal; they do not give us insight into the experience of the other.

So, must a name mean something? In fiction, it’s hard to avoid signification. Alice, though, is a particularly odd case: living child and lost adult; speaking voice surviving through fiction; an anomaly and a type. Her name has entered the language: it means herself as Lewis Carroll

imagined her: Alice in Wonderland—a composite, more than a dream and other than a mortal. In the “universe of discourse” that Carroll inhabited (a phrase he took from Boole), this tenacious child asks all the necessary questions. She also confounds the distinction that Carroll himself advanced, following Boole, at the start of the section on “Names” in his *Symbolic Logic*:

Just as a Class is said to be *Real*, or *Unreal*, according as there is, or is not, an existing Thing in it, so also a Name is said to be *Real*, or *Unreal*, according as there is, or is not, an existing Thing represented by it.<sup>12</sup>

Alice herself moves freely across such categories. Her name is doubly Real, referring to the initial girl outside the fiction and the Alice within it. She occupies the classes of Real and Unreal at once, and she vouches for Reality since she is certainly “an existing Thing”—now forever, whichever class of reality she occupies at any moment.

Alice is in a dream world, or rather, in two dream worlds with rather different properties in the two books. In each of them a game holds some sway as a means of ordering events: in *Wonderland* it is a pack of cards, in *Looking-Glass* a game of chess. These are ordering arrangements, but *Looking-Glass* is also about reflections, and reflections can continue into infinity, in a *mise-en-abyme*. Carroll does not allow either Alice or the reader quite to escape from that unsettling recession. Who dreamed it? wonders Alice in the final paragraph: “He [the Red King] was part of my dream, of course—but then I was part of his dream too!” Who is the author? The last sentence stands alone, and draws the reader, both child and adult, back into that incessantly reflected world: “Which do you think it was?” (LG, 240).



# 7

## DREAMING AND JUSTICE

### Alice Dreams

Lewis Carroll was exact in his unfurling of dream space. The *Alice* books are rapid, light-footed, sagacious. Most of the people, animals, flora, and fauna that Alice meets are incurious, preoccupied with their own anxieties. It is her curiosity that creates both urgency and order in these relativistic universes. Alice's endless search for "rules" in both the *Alice* books may seek to harness the incongruities of dream space to a more logical order and to cope with her anxieties. It may also catch the workings of Carroll's own mathematical imagination troubled by the new non-Euclidean geometries and symbolical algebras of his contemporaries (see chapter 2 on games and maths). Francine Abeles, editor of his *Mathematical Pamphlets*, comments on his mathematical preferences in a way that casts light on the organization of the *Alice* books.

He was a powerful manipulator of probabilities in finite sample spaces, but when he tried problems that touched on deep issues in the foundations of probability, issues that were in the process of being resolved in the mathematical community, he had difficulty.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Alice* books he not only worked as a powerful manipulator of probabilities in finite sample spaces. He was bolder than in his mathematics. Formal rigor cannot prevent questions of reasonableness. He did



not shirk “deep issues in the foundations of probability.” But neither did he brood on them.

Alice’s rule-seeking not only highlights “issues in the foundations of probability” but also encompasses the ways in which vanishingly small probabilities can become not just possible, but actual, in dream. The extremes of what’s possible raise questions, too, about how rule-making relates to justice, to which I will turn in the second part of this chapter.

Alice in these books devoted to her adventures is both the dreamer and the dreamt. She and we are entering that other form of dream that is *reading*, in which the reader-dreamer reaches for the material worlds described, always yearning as well as engrossed. The reach and the falling short of the imagination as, reading, we seek to inhabit (or seek to evade) the worlds evoked makes for a peculiar form of dream experience each time we enter the book. Yet *Wonderland* in particular relies on a paradox. Alice’s sister reads, and Alice is shut out. She cannot enter her sister’s reading mind, so she feels obliterated by the book without pictures or conversation that absorbs her unnamed sister. Instead she rushes away and the sentence is dominated by physical and mental speed: “started to her feet,” “flashed across her mind,” “burning with curiosity,” “ran across the field.” Her ardent pursuit of the rabbit is active, in contrast to her sister’s passive engrossment in a book. We never do know what is so absorbing the older sister; we dismiss it, with Alice. So from the start the reader seems released from readerliness. Instead, we travel and explore and share Alice’s physical and mental vicissitudes as her body stretches and swells and contracts, and her identity dangerously shilly-shallies.

The state of dreaming is denied, at least at first. Still, Alice does come to understand herself as lodged in a story, though a story that goes against the codes of the reading she is used to: “When I used to read fairy tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one!” She even fantasizes about her own future prospects as an author: “There ought to be a book written about me, that there ought! And when I grow up, I’ll write one —” (W, 32–33). Reading, writing, action, and dreaming are not easily separated. Uneasily, the surface of the book ripples in the course of this knowing passage that hints, through denial, at the presence of another author than Alice at work. Such passages half-rouse the dreaming reader.

The hypnagogic and hypnopompic states — experienced at the brink of falling asleep and of waking up — are thresholds where confusion between waking and sleeping, actuality and dream, occur. In an early diary entry Lewis Carroll wonders whether this is also a description of madness:

Question: when we are dreaming and, as often happens, have a dim consciousness of the fact and try to wake, do we not say and do things which in waking life would be insane? May we not then sometimes define insanity as an inability to distinguish which is the waking and which the sleeping life?<sup>2</sup>

His next sentence takes thought in a different direction: the autonomy of the dream:

We often dream without the least suspicion of unreality: “sleep hath its own world,” and it is often as lifelike as the other.<sup>3</sup>

That sentence is closer to the experience of the *Alice* books, whose dream world is entirely lifelike and corporeal: “we’re all mad here.” So, Alice falls down the rabbit hole at the start in an impossibly leisurely way, with absurd alternative explanations. Nevertheless she ends the fall with an onomatopoeic bodily impact: “suddenly, thump! thump! down she came upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over” (W, 11). The different textures evoked, of sticks and dry leaves, assure the reader of the pressure of her impact. Alice is there in her body (“thump! thump!”) not as a dream figment. Indeed, her ability at this stage of the story to “wonder what was going to happen next” is also not typical of the immersive moment-by-moment experience of dream.

Dream has its own sensory literalness and its own commanding sequences of experience. Here, the passivity of Alice’s fall produces somatic dream sensations, seeming to vouch (backwards) for the actuality of the episode itself. In her immense leisurely drop Alice experiences “falling” asleep: she is “rather sleepy” and begins her reversible sing-song incantation:

saying to herself, in a dreamy sort of way, “Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?” and sometimes “Do bats eat cats?” for, you see, as she couldn’t answer either question, it didn’t much matter which way she put it. She felt that she was dozing off, and had just begun to dream that she was walking hand in hand with Dinah [the cat], and was saying to her, very earnestly, “Now, Dinah, tell me the truth: did you ever eat a bat?” when suddenly, thump! thump! . . .

Alice was not a bit hurt, and she jumped up onto her feet in a moment. (W, 11)

Two features of this passage are particularly striking: Alice thinks in questions; Alice begins a prelude-dream of walking with Dinah. The impact of her arrival appears to awaken her: “she jumped up onto her feet in a moment.” So the long dream she is falling into turns, like a glove, into an outside world. Alice is awake and in Wonderland. She is not weightless or fairy. At the start Carroll establishes these experiences as “not dream”: that is to say, not dream as we look back on dream from waking state and are puzzled by its elisions and inconsequential thrusts, but dream *as it is lived*, peremptory, persuasive, absolute. During dream, the outside world cannot confront the authority of dream process by means of material objects. They are all absent, their materiality skewed and softened by this quite other dream order of sequencing.<sup>4</sup>

G. H. Lewes in *The Physiology of Common Life* (1859–60) argued that “in the state of cerebral isolation named Dreaming, this confrontation is *Impossible*”: that is:

In dream no perception is confronted with actual objects; no ideas are confronted with present existences.<sup>5</sup>

He also makes an observation that chimes with the picaresque or paratactic organization of the *Alice* books.

If when I dream that I am in a certain place, conversing with a certain person, I am also aware that the place suddenly becomes another place, and the person has a very different appearance, a slight surprise is felt as the difference is noted, but my dream is not arrested; I accept the new

facts, and go on quite content with them, just as in reverie my mind passes instantaneously from London to India, and the persons vanish to give place to very different persons, without once interrupting the imaginary story.<sup>6</sup>

That is, the formal organization of *Wonderland* respects the immediacy, easy shifts and flow of dream-order. That order is consonant also with the powers of the imagination, when waking, to transport us without pause.

So the reader enters the dream-state with Alice and experiences it alongside her with the same indefatigable willingness. But that is not quite all that happens. Alice herself tugs back from time to time toward the lost place from which she has come, her homeland of domestic middle-class-child life; she is teased by the almost-lost knowledge warped in this new environment and present to us only as parody or forlorn remnants. The reader does from time to time live the confrontation between dream and waking, the more so as the book may be closed, the outside world prevail, but the scenes of *Alice* persist in the mind. Reading does not stop when we lay down the volume. It leaves “a weight upon our waking thoughts.”

In the 1856 diary passage quoted above, Carroll cites the opening of the first stanza of Byron’s poem “The Dream”: “We often dream without the least suspicion of unreality: ‘sleep hath its own world,’ and it is often as lifelike as the other.” The poem is so apposite to Carroll’s creativity that I quote the first stanza entire:

Our life is two-fold: Sleep hath its own world,  
 A boundary between the things misnamed  
 Death and existence: Sleep hath its own world,  
 And a wide realm of wild reality.  
 And dreams in their development have breath,  
 And tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy;  
 They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,  
 They take a weight from off our waking toils,  
 They do divide our being; they become  
 A portion of ourselves as of our time,  
 And look like heralds of eternity;

They pass like spirits of the past, — they speak  
 Like Sibyls of the future: they have power —  
 The tyranny of pleasure and of pain;  
 They make us what we were not — what they will,  
 And shake us with the vision that's gone by,  
 The dread of vanish'd shadows — Are they so?  
 Is not the past all shadow? — What are they?  
 Creations of the mind? — The mind can make  
 Substance, and people planets of its own  
 With beings brighter than have been, and give  
 A breath to forms which can outlive all flesh.  
 I would recall a vision which I dream'd  
 Perchance in sleep — for in itself a thought,  
 A slumbering thought, is capable of years,  
 And curdles a long life into one hour.<sup>7</sup>

Byron's powerful sense of dream's authority as well as its divisive presence in waking life is realized in Carroll's work. The mind's capacity to give a "breath to forms which can outlive all flesh" is realized in the survival of the *Alice* books and of Alice within and beyond them. This passage is certainly written in a loftier register than Carroll would ever use, yet it tells forward uncannily into the achievement of his books and also speaks to their elegiac cast.

Another work that Carroll owned and read in his youth may also shed light on the varying moods of *Alice*. This volume is Charles Lamb's *Essays of Elia* in an edition published in 1853, the year that Carroll was twenty-one. "Dream Children: A Revery" (first published in 1820) figures a speaker who tells two children, Alice and John, the story of their great-grandmother Field, housekeeper in a great house (as was Lamb's own grandmother). The essay's four-page reverie runs without the interruption of paragraphs from a comfortable opening (that yet envelops death) to the passionate melancholy of the conclusion. It begins:

Children love to listen to stories about their elders, when *they* were children; to stretch their imagination to the conception of a traditionary great-uncle, or grandame, whom they never saw.<sup>8</sup>

It ends:

Then I told them how for seven long years, in hope sometimes, sometimes in despair, yet persisting ever, I courted the fair Alice W—n; and, as much as children could understand, I explained to them what coyness, and difficulty, and denial meant in maidens—when suddenly, turning to Alice, the soul of the first Alice looked out at her eyes with such a reality of re-presentment, that I became in doubt which of them stood there before me, or whose that bright hair was; and while I stood gazing, both the children gradually grew fainter to my view, receding, and still receding till nothing at last but two mournful features were seen in the uttermost distance, which, without speech, strangely impressed upon me the effects of speech: “We are not of Alice, nor of thee, nor are we children at all. The children of Alice call Bartrum father. We are nothing; less than nothing, and dreams. We are only what might have been, and must wait upon the tedious shores of Lethe millions of ages before we have existence, and a name”—and immediately awaking, I found myself quietly seated in my bachelor armchair, where I had fallen asleep, with the faithful Bridget unchanged by my side—but John L. (or James Elia) was gone forever.<sup>9</sup>

Long ruminative sentences of recollection coil through the essay, and through the generations. The listening children seem to be at the center of reality while the story is told, their gestures leavening the telling (“Here little Alice spread her hands”; “Here John expanded all his eyebrows and tried to look courageous”). The speaker is bringing to them the reality of the past, of dead long-ago relatives. Yet despite their evoked and robust presence they prove to be the ghost children who the speaker, remembering his own childhood, believed he had never seen:

Then I told how she was used to sleep by herself in a lone chamber of the great lone house; and how she believed that an apparition of two infants was to be seen at midnight gliding up and down the great staircase near where she slept, but she said “those innocents would do her no harm”; and how frightened I used to be, though in those days I had my maid to sleep with me, because I was never half so good or religious as she—and yet I never saw the infants.<sup>10</sup>

Lamb's hair-raising essay (who can read the whole without the bodily shiver set off by unusable sympathy?) may have spoken even more strongly over the ensuing years to the bachelor Lewis Carroll, childless and yet fascinated by childhood, a fellow stutterer with Lamb. The child listener in Lamb's essay is Alice and her "dead pretty mother" is "Alice W—n." Neither of them exists: the first Alice is dead and the second Alice never came into life because her mother married quite another man. Both are present as we read: ghost story becomes the story of flesh and blood. The essay speaks particularly poignantly to the writer of fiction, fiction that draws on the remembered physical presence of particular children who have listened to the story told, as Alice Liddell and her sisters had done.

Lamb's elegy, "gone forever," ripples with humor as well as devastating sadness. Carroll rarely treads the threshold of that profound sense of loss, though Alice's encounter with the White Knight gives a hidden presence to adult yearning:

"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. (LG, 214)

I give thee all—I can no more—  
 Tho' poor the offering be;  
 My heart and lute are all the store  
 That I can bring to thee.  
 A lute whose gentle song reveals  
 The soul of love full well;  
 And, better far, a heart that feels  
 Much more than lute could tell. (349–50)

Thomas Moore's words and Henry Rowley Bishop's melody mingle desuetude and reassurance. (See further discussion of this in chapter 6, on Naming.) Alice's alertness to imposed emotion leaves her tearless. The dissonance between words and music allows her to leave the Knight behind, though "she waved her handkerchief to him, and waited till he

was out of sight” (218) before bounding across the brook that will make her a Queen. Yet the ending of the scene with the White Knight evokes loss and old age and frailty as well as affection and absurdity; it marks a particular boundary for *Looking-Glass*. It is as if we can look at it within a mirror and see a darker version haunting its interior:

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. (214)

Alice falls into a watching and listening “half-dream” within the long dream of *Looking-Glass*: “the black shadows of the forest behind.” Music releases unspent emotion, iambic pentameters accord with the unspoken: “the melancholy music of the song.” Momentarily Carroll evokes a world closer to that of MacDonald who in the preface to *Phantastes* quotes Novalis from his “Fragments” comparing fairy story to the ensemble of dream and to a musical fantasy: “Ein Märchen ist wie ein Traumbild ohne Zusammenhang. Ein Ensemble wunderbarer Dinge und Begebenheiten, z. B. eine Musikalische Phantasie, die harmonischen Folgen einer Aeolsharfe, die Natur selbst.”<sup>11</sup> In English this reads: “A fairytale is like a dream picture without context [or coherence]. An ensemble of wonderful things and events, e.g., a musical fantasia, the harmonious sequences of an Aeolian harp, nature itself.” Novalis suggests that it is like a musical “Phantasie” in the technical sense that it is generated by improvisation; it follows the whim of the Aeolian harp, blown through by the breezes of the natural world. Alice’s passivity as she takes in the scene is rare; it allows her, and the reader, to share a pause of reverie without boundaries.

This moment does not last but it does express an aspect of dream that rarely surfaces elsewhere in the *Alice* books, except in the sister’s reverie at the end of *Wonderland*. As Stephanie Schatz observes, there was strong disapproval among Victorian psychiatrists of the child’s propensity to daydream or what was then familiarly called “building castles in



the air.” Schatz cites James Crichton-Browne’s 1860 essay “Psychical Diseases in Early Life” where he asserts that “much mental derangement in mature life, we believe, is attributable to these reveries indulged in during childhood.”<sup>12</sup> Schatz is plainly right in arguing that Lewis Carroll had no sympathy with such embargoes, but it is nevertheless striking that Alice rarely, if ever, has time to pause or reflect before another adventure breaks in on her. “Wonder” in Carroll’s work is not an unfocussed state but an active response. It demands an exploration of challenging phenomena; it is never passive. Alice does not daydream, though she exists in a dream throughout the length of the two books apart from the framing sections that enclose the dream-state.

So when at the end of *Wonderland* the courtroom scene grows intolerable and threatens to topple into nightmare, Alice acts:

“Who cares for you?” said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). You’re nothing but a pack of cards!”

At this the whole pack rose up into the air, and came flying down upon her; she gave a little scream, half of fright and half of anger, and tried to beat them off, and found herself lying on the bank, with her head in the lap of her sister, who was gently brushing away some dead leaves that had fluttered down from the trees upon her face. (W, 108–9)

Within this single long sentence the arc from dream crisis to waking passivity is completed. The “pack” or crowd, of harpies, of playing cards, of practical jokers (“I’ll be revenged on the whole pack of you”) collapses. The relief of Alice and reader is indistinguishable from disappointment. What remains is left over, mere residue: dead leaves. The maternal elder sister, who set off the whole adventure by burying herself in a book and leaving Alice outside it, now finishes Alice’s adventure by failing to accommodate it:

“It was a curious dream, dear, certainly; but now run in to your tea: it’s getting late.” (109)

This sister gets the satisfyingly unsatisfactory last word. It proves that she has heard more than she allowed but she will not share it with Alice.

Once Alice has gone the sister intensifies the natural world into the sounds of Alice's dream: not seen, but heard, knowingly inhabiting the dream in a way that gives presence also to the external world. An intermediate state, of repetition, recourse, and resolution between dream-state and landscape is evoked:

So she sat on, with closed eyes, and half believed herself in Wonderland, though she knew she had but to open them again, and all would change to dull reality — the grass would be only rustling in the wind, and the pool rippling to the waving of the reeds — the rattling teacups would change to tinkling sheep-bells, and the Queen's shrill cries to the voice of the shepherd-boy — and the sneeze of the baby, the shriek of the Gryphon, and all the other queer noises, would change (she knew) to the confused clamour of the busy farm-yard — while the lowing of the cattle in the distance would take the place of the Mock Turtle's heavy sobs. (110)

The sister only "half-believes" and twice we are told "she knew" that if she opened her eyes the busy dream world would vanish. The will is still active in this half-conscious reverie.

The older sister's daydream evokes another form of dreaming, too, as Empson noted, that of pastoral. We seem at first here to be in a Victorian landscape painting. But whereas the half-grown sister, almost across the bridge into adulthood, accepts the adjacency of internal and external, Alice has lived rapaciously, without exit, within the authenticity of the uninterpreted. Moreover the sister's reverie does not quite lay the ghosts: the swaying motion of this long alternating list suggests as under-song that the cattle also sob, the shepherd-boy shrieks, the busy farmyard is full of "confused clamour." Perhaps this pastoral world itself, with its clandestine slaughters and miseries, has no secure boundaries against dream.

The work's last paragraph evokes an older younger-sister who will renew the round,

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. (110)

This (unnamed) future Alice will feel with children through “remembering her own child-life, and the happy summer days” (110). That poignant last comma separates off “the happy summer days” from Alice’s self-remembrance and evokes a ghostly other, the writer who was also there. Renewal here functions as elegy. The Wonderland “of long ago” becomes dream, becomes the river scene that lies outside and behind the written Wonderland. That is the place and time in which the story was first told aloud, and the voice that told it, in the form we as readers do not, and never will, know it.

This last framing scene includes avoidance and betrayal. It makes some readers queasy, with its lyrical melancholy, its prolonged farewells, as does the poem that precedes the whole and invokes the “dream-child” (perhaps a direct recollection of Lamb’s “dream-children”). The fourth verse reads:

Anon, to sudden silence won,  
     In fancy they pursue  
 The dream-child moving through a land  
     Of wonders wild and new,  
 In friendly chat with bird or beast—  
     And half believe it true. (W, 5)

The final verse of that poem insists on the irrecoverable distance between the present and what’s past:

Alice! A childish story take,  
     And, with a gentle hand,  
 Lay it where Childhood’s dreams are twined  
     In memory’s mystic band,  
 Like pilgrim’s wither’d wreath of flowers  
     Pluck’d in a far-off land. (6)

Fallen leaves and a withered wreath frame Carroll’s first story, but within both dream books Alice’s energy is unstoppable. She is a very long way from the insipid child praised in earlier Conduct Books; neither is she the savage child of Romanticism who must, with great loss of sen-

sibility, be brought into accord with adult *mores*. Ann Wierda Rowland, discussing the image of the child as savage in Romantic literature, quotes Thomas Reid who “embodies the obscurities of origins and the mysteries of the human mind in two figures: the primitive ‘savage’—a ‘two-legged animal’ who nevertheless has within him ‘the seeds of the logician, the man of taste and breeding, the orator, the statesman, the man of virtue, and the saint’—and the child.”<sup>13</sup> Child and savage both have the capacity to develop into civilized adults, if they work at it and have the right opportunities, such arguments suggest. As Sally Shuttleworth observes, in mid-nineteenth-century anthropology and beyond, “women, children, and savages were repeatedly linked together as figures who stood outside the unstated norms of white middle-class masculinity.”<sup>14</sup>

But Alice is both self-sustaining and civilized. Her civilization is another zone from that of adults: it includes free speech, insistent questioning, and the acceptance of creatures utterly unlike herself, and yet her close companions. In her dream she generates many unruly beings. In her manners she is wild only with curiosity. That teasing insistence at once on her decorum and her radicalism distinguishes her. Alice at the end of *Wonderland* goes indoors for her tea (a nice domestication of the Hatter’s tea party). She enters a family house we cannot share, screened by her sister—a sister who only just keeps the troubled writer disguised.

Carroll in a letter said that the reader was not to know until the end that *Wonderland* was a dream. But of course the reader inevitably experiences it as dream order, since the book performs its dream maneuvers inside each reader’s head. The liminal and the adjacent slide into each other with the peculiar freedom that is familiar from night experience but seldom so fully evoked by day. Words chime at a different pitch. Unfamiliar faces are intimately known. Compelling consequences emerge without preparation. People are there and not there: split and doubled; seen from impossible angles. Negatives browse the grass. And those figures central to psychic life must play a great number of parts, so few actors are there who really count.

Alice wants to discover, and so does the reader. But just what she wants to find out remains obscure. Certainly, it is not the way back home. One answer to the riddle of what Alice must discover might be that this is all a dream. The closing discovery that it has all been a dream is often

a narrative cheat favored by inept storytellers who can't decide how to release their characters at the book's conclusion. Here, instead, in both books the dream method is sustained right through into the moment of rupture when dream-life becomes unendurable. Escape must take place before the threatened answer is given, the dream decoded, the curse of Balshazar's feast enacted. The economy of nightmare demands waking.

The early hostile review of *Wonderland* in the *Athenaeum*, December 16, 1865, is astute about the narrative complications of dream though grimly unamused:

This is a dream-story; but who can, in cold blood, manufacture a dream, with all its loops and ties, and loose threads, and entanglements, and inconsistencies, and passages which lead to nothing, at the end of which Sleep's most diligent pilgrim never arrives? Mr. Carroll has laboured hard to heap together strange adventures, and heterogeneous combinations; and we acknowledge the hard labour. Mr. Tenniel, again, is square, and grim, and uncouth in his illustrations, howbeit clever, even to the verge of grandeur, as is the artist's habit. We fancy that any real child might be more puzzled than enchanted by this stiff, over-wrought story.<sup>15</sup>

The reviewer as resistant reader does not participate in the sinuous reading experience of the story: he remains stiff and overwrought on the verge. At this date, 1865, *Looking-Glass* does not yet exist. What would the reviewer have made of that more conscious world?

A principal difference between *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* is that the question of dreaming becomes manifest in *Looking-Glass* in the debates around the Red King's dream, though we never do know the content of his dream despite Tweedledum's insistence that he is dreaming about Alice among other things. Dream in *Wonderland* is held within the body. Like those thrusts of fall that waken the sleeper in a convulsive movement on the brink of sleep it seems that Alice may awaken forthwith at the start of the story. And in *Wonderland* it is only the Dormouse who dozes off:

"The Dormouse is asleep again," said the Hatter, and he poured a little hot tea upon its nose.

The Dormouse shook his head impatiently, and said, without opening its eyes, "Of course, of course: just what I was going to remark myself." (W, 62)

Within *Looking-Glass*, however, the sleep of others becomes significant and there are episodes where waking is a threat. Tweedledee's shouts of "Ditto" are so loud that Alice fears he will wake the Red King. Tweedledee's riposte is that as Alice is "only one of the things in his dream" it's no use her even talking about waking him. Her voice could not be heard; she is submerged deep in dream. Even louder and more peremptory is Humpty Dumpty's recited poem about recalcitrant little fishes who, it seems, avoid being cooked in his kettle by retiring to bed:

*"Then some one came to me and said  
The little fishes are in bed."*

*I said to him, I said it plain,  
'Then you must wake them up again.'*

*I said it very loud and clear:  
I went and shouted in his ear."*

Humpty Dumpty raised his voice almost to a scream as he repeated this verse . . . :

*"And he was very proud and stiff:  
He said 'I'd go and wake them, if—'*

*I took a corkscrew from the shelf:  
I went to wake them up myself.*

*And when I found the door was locked,  
I pulled and pushed and kicked and knocked.*

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

There was a long pause.

“Is that all?” Alice timidly asked.

“That’s all,” said Humpty Dumpty. “Good-bye.” (LG, 191–92)

The climax is never reached. No fell deed is accomplished within the poem. No one wakes. The last sentence rhymes “shut” with “but.” The rhyme is perfect, slamming shut, but the sense is maddeningly unfulfilled, incomplete, or as Alice says, “unsatisfactory”: a passage that leads to nothing, as the *Athenaeum* noted.

Humpty Dumpty and the fishes poem is one of the most frustrating episodes in the two books, designedly so. Humpty is displaying his power by chopping off language and shutting his eyes. It turns out to be his hubristic last moment before he topples unmarked into Alice and the reader’s fatally authoritative world of nursery rhyme: “She never finished the sentence, for at this moment a heavy crash shook the forest from end to end” (LG, 193). We are never told that Humpty has “had a great fall.” We know his ending anyhow. Like much of the best tragedy the violence takes place offstage: so “they couldn’t put Humpty together again” is never uttered, just rehearsed in our memory, and our attention is focused instead on the King and his need for a ham sandwich to ward off faintness.

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, the question of dreaming becomes layered with questions of foreknown narrative, of possession and identity, to say nothing of intractable material objects, like “great dishes,” and (absent) plum-cake:

There was no one to be seen, and her first thought was that she must have been dreaming about the Lion and the Unicorn and those queer Anglo-Saxon Messengers. However, there was the great dish still lying at her feet, on which she had tried to cut the plum-cake, “So I wasn’t dreaming, after all,” she said to herself, “unless—unless we’re all part of the same dream. Only I do hope it’s *my* dream, and not the Red King’s! I don’t like belonging to another person’s dream,” she went on in a rather complaining tone: “I’ve a great mind to go and wake him, and see what happens!” (LG, 205)

But she doesn't take the nuclear option: the sleeping king remains asleep throughout the rest of the book, dreaming—we may suppose—about Alice and other things, or no thing at all.

The *Alice* books are much concerned with kings and queens, but kings and queens observed askance or from below. They are cardboard playing-cards, or “let's pretend,” or they are pieces in a chess game, their authority absurdly asserted and equally absurdly reduced. Moreover, it's the queens that count in the narrative, with the kings alongside as demurring or fudging figures. Carroll, of course, was writing in a period when it was indeed the Queen who counted: Victoria, widowed in 1861, and beginning her long mourning withdrawal from public gaze. He was writing, too, for a readership that could encompass people of the same age as his heroine, seven and a half years of age, and so at the height of childhood addiction to dressing-up, as royalty, as pirates, as animals, thus offsetting the growing challenge to infantile omnipotence. It was a pleasure that as a photographer Carroll gave to children with his dressing-up box always available.

In chapter 9 of *Through the Looking-Glass* Alice at last becomes a Queen, too, though one beset by the bullying of the Red Queen and the White Queen, who then fall asleep, hemming her in with their weight on each of her shoulders as they snore:

“I don't think it *ever* happened before, that any one had to take care of two Queens asleep at once! No, not in all the History of England—it couldn't, you know, because there never was more than one Queen at a time. Do wake up, you heavy things!” (LG, 226)

In the *Looking-Glass* world things go in pairs, even Queens. Alice is weighed down by the Queens as well as by “something very heavy, that fitted tight all round her head” (218), a disagreeable sensation before she discovers that it is “a golden crown” (219).

Her golden crown causes Alice anxiety and she is refused entry to the feast for a frustrating time, not helped by the old Frog gardener. She is even—so he asserts—rebuffed by the door itself, irritated by her knocking. The extreme literalism and physical obduracy of these exotic lands



of Wonderland and Looking-Glass refuse any high-flown interpretation: Alice is impatient for a servant to answer the door:

The Frog looked at the door with his large dull eyes for a minute: then he went nearer and rubbed it with his thumb, as if he were trying whether the paint would come off: then he looked at Alice.

“To answer the door?” he said. “What’s it been asking of?” . . .

“Nothing!” said Alice impatiently. “I’ve been knocking at it!”

“Shouldn’t do that—shouldn’t do that—” the frog muttered. “Wexes it, you know.” Then he went up and gave the door a kick with one of his great feet. “You let *it* alone,” he panted out, as he hobbled back to his tree, “and it’ll let *you* alone, you know.” (LG, 228)

Doors may ask questions in this country, like Alice and all those she meets—but this is no liberal fairyland. Doors answer to kicks, not knocks. Things are material: there is no question in either text or picture but that this door is solid, actual, authoritative with its Norman arches, and not to be confused with a dream door that will give way to desire. The gardener understands the door; the reader feels the impact of his boot. The reader is put off guard by this new impasse in Alice’s path. But as so often in the *Alice* books the dilemma is swept aside: “At this moment the door was flung open” (LG, 228).

None of this functions particularly as social satire; indeed, Carroll demurred when Tenniel proposed in an early sketch that Alice wear a fashionable crinoline (which, as Michael Hancher points out, would in fact have been in accord with her guise as a chess piece).<sup>16</sup> Rather, the sequence is recognizable as dream disappointment and estrangement, rather like the experience we remember from her entry into the longed-for garden in *Wonderland*. But it is ballasted by an unusual physical weightiness, a heaviness that shares and inhabits the child’s experience of coping with a world apt for the quite different capacities of adults, not children.

Dream in the *Alice* books has emotional capacity as well as allowing for the play of thought and improvisation. But in Carroll’s work, in contrast to that of MacDonald, there is no transcendental level to dream. Instead there are interactive agreements to believe in each other’s exist-



14. John Tenniel, Frog Gardener and Norman Door. *Through the Looking-Glass*.

tence (the Unicorn and Alice), or persistent disquiet as to which is the dreamer (Alice and the Red King).

This is not ennobled and purposeful dreaming of the sort that Clerk Maxwell describes in his 1856 poem “Recollections of Dreamland,” in which vast realms open up and the distant past is retrieved as a prelude to new thinking and reason:

All the dreary day you labour, groping after common sense,  
And your eyes ye will not open on the night’s magnificence.

Ye would scoff were I to tell you how a guiding radiance gleams  
 On the outer world of action from my inner world of dreams.  
 When, with mind released from study, late I lay me down to sleep,  
 From the midst of facts and figures, into boundless space I leap;  
 For the inner world grows wider as the outer disappears,  
 And the soul, retiring inward, finds itself beyond the spheres.  
 Then, to this unbroken sameness, some fantastic dream succeeds,  
 Vague emotions rise and ripen into thoughts and words and deeds.  
 Old impressions, long forgotten, range themselves in Time and Space,  
 Till I recollect the features of some once familiar place.<sup>17</sup>

Alice's dreaming is its own place, unperturbed by ambition or achievement. It is clear-eyed, unconstrained, and humorous, with none of the afflatus associated with the dream-state among his contemporaries elsewhere. But at each book's conclusion nightmare forces Alice's awakening.

Later, in *Sylvie and Bruno*, the dreams are declared by Carroll not to be dreams at all. Writing to Joan Severn, Ruskin's friend during Ruskin's last illness in 1890, he remembers Ruskin's criticism that the *Alice* books lack a plot:

I should like him to be reminded that he expressed a hope, a few years ago, that my next book would not be a mere unconnected *dream*, but would contain a *plot*; and to be told that I have tried to do this in *Sylvie and Bruno*—and that the book contains no *dreams*, this time: what look like dreams are meant for *trances*—after the fashion of Esoteric Buddhists—in which the spirit of the entranced person passes away into an actual Fairyland.<sup>18</sup>

Paradoxically, the Byzantine *Sylvie and Bruno* is far more difficult to follow than are the lucid dreams of the *Alice* books.

**“I don't think they play at all fairly”:  
 Fairness and Justice in *Alice***

At the croquet game in *Wonderland*: “I don't think they play at all fairly,” Alice began, in rather a complaining tone, “and they all quarrel so dread-

fully one ca'n't hear oneself speak—and they don't seem to have any rules in particular: at least, if there are, nobody attends to them" (W, 75). Throughout the two books Alice is exercised about fair shares and fair behavior, as well as rules, and so it seems is the narrator. The Caucus race appears to be competitive but in the end: "Everybody has won, and all must have prizes" (26). Here, unlike caucuses in the ordinary world, are no secret agreements, or favors returned, or plots hatched. A perfectly equitable outcome is achieved. Alice distributes the prizes and the Mouse, despite her earlier contretemps with Alice's affection for cats, is the one who ensures that full justice is done: "'But she must have a prize herself, you know,' said the Mouse" (26).

Such a happy outcome is by no means the norm in the two books. *Wonderland* has more episodes concerned with justice but it is not absent in *Looking-Glass*. The trusting little oysters, who share Alice's eagerness and curiosity, are betrayed by Walrus and Carpenter:

"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. (LG, 163)

Alice is outraged. The reader is guiltily amused by the neatness of this turn. A little later we hear that the king's messenger, Hatta, has been in prison for some unknown and probably nonexistent crime: "he hadn't finished his tea when he was sent in," Haigha whispered to Alice: "and they only give them oyster-shells in there" (199). Why oyster shells? Perhaps they are left over from the Walrus and Carpenter's feast. They come in handy and they are dry.

That is the captious nature of nonsense, making sense according to its own terms and hidden rules, hinting at relevance and refusing it. It would be a peculiarly tender-hearted reader who was much afflicted by Hatta's plight, soon put right by "a cup of tea in one hand and a piece of bread-and-butter in the other" (199). In *Wonderland*, however, more troubling questions of justice and representation arise. Those questions persist in Carroll's life past the *Alice* books.

In the 1870s Dodgson (Carroll) wrote extensively about the mathematical problems of achieving a fair voting system and contributed to axiomatic theory; out of that, he developed his own system, which is still the subject of lively interest among mathematicians and lawyers and which has contributed practically to twentieth-century voting procedures for proportional representation.<sup>19</sup> Among his works on the subject are *A Discussion of the Various Methods of Procedure in Conducting Elections* (1873), *Suggestions as to the Best Method of taking Votes, Where More than Two Issues are to be Voted on* (1874), *A Method of Taking Votes on More than Two Issues* (1876), and *The Principles of Parliamentary Representation* (1884). All this is subsequent to the *Alice* books, of course, but the principled concerns with fair representation tell back intriguingly into the episodes of *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*. Figures who claim authority are properly suspect in the two books and are persistently resisted through Alice's questioning of their claims, whether they be Hatters or Queens, enormous caterpillars or grandiose eggs.

The Mouse in *Wonderland* has "a long and sad tale" to tell and as Alice construes it, the tale follows the shape of the mouse's tail, wriggling and attenuating as the type gets smaller, to end in the catastrophe of the law court where the cur, Fury, acts as both judge and jury: "I'll try the whole cause, and condemn you to death" (W, 28). (See fig. 15.) The tale begins casually; written out in even type size it reveals itself as a menacingly Kafka-esque exchange:

"Fury said to a mouse, That he met in the house, 'Let us both go to law: I will prosecute you. — Come, I'll take no denial: We must have a trial; For really this morning I've nothing to do.' Said the mouse to the cur, 'Such a trial, dear sir, With no jury or judge, would be wasting our breath.' 'I'll be judge, I'll be jury,' said cunning old Fury: 'I'll try the whole cause, and condemn you to death.'" (28)

The rhyming slams shut: Fury and jury, breath and death.

The minute type mitigates the reality of the threat (it's a miniscule possibility) but the threat also emerges insidiously as part of that struggle to read the final tiny words. Alice thinks the tale unfinished; the reader has no such sanguine hope as there is nowhere to go at the end of the

“It is a long tail, certainly,”<sup>5</sup> said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse’s tail: “but why do you call it sad?” And she kept on puzzling about it while the Mouse was speaking, so that her idea of the tale was something like this:—

“Fury said to  
a mouse,<sup>6</sup> That  
he met in the  
house, ‘Let  
us both go  
to law: *I*  
will prose-  
cute *you*.—  
Come, I’ll  
take no de-  
nial: We  
must have  
the trial;  
For really  
this morn-  
ing I’ve  
nothing  
to do.’  
Said the  
mouse to  
the cur,  
‘Such a  
trial, dear  
sir, With  
no jury  
or judge,  
would  
be wast-  
ing our  
breath.’  
‘I’ll be  
judge,  
I’ll be  
jury,’  
said  
cun-  
ning  
old  
Fury:  
‘I’ll  
try  
the  
whole  
cause,  
and  
con-  
demn  
you to  
death.’”

15. The Mouse’s Tale. *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

tail. The episode looks ahead to the comic savagery of the courtroom at the end of *Wonderland*.

The mouse's other tale in the earlier *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* also tells of disaster for mice society, but the law is not involved, it was all a mistake ("they say"), and despite natural predation the tale rounds itself comfortably with the words "warm and snug and fat." Written out in even size type, it reads:

We lived beneath the mat Warm and snug and fat But one woe, & that  
Was the cat! To our joys a clog In our eyes a fog, On our hearts a log Was  
the dog! When the cat's away Then the mice will play, But alas! One day,  
(So they say) Came the dog and cat, Hunting for a rat, Crushed the mice  
all flat, Each one as he sat Underneath the mat, Warm, & snug, & fat—  
Think of that! (UG, 262)

The effect is positively cozy compared with the *Wonderland* poem with its menacing and captious dialogue and the crushing together of what should be independent legal functions: plaintiff, prosecutor, judge, and jury. The steely edge to these playful coils of print and story can take the breath away.

Edward Wakeling, in his *Lewis Carroll: The Man and His Circle* (2015), notes that Dodgson/Carroll was interested in the system of trial by jury:

He was fascinated by legal procedures and in particular the language and logic used by barristers. There are many instances of him spending half a day or more in court at the Oxford Assizes, listening to cases being tried—anything from the theft of a few vegetables from an employer to a deranged mother murdering her children.<sup>20</sup>

Wakeling comments on Dodgson's "detachment from the emotional experience. His interest was clearly centred on the ceremony and delivery of evidence upon which judgment was made."<sup>21</sup> Wakeling quotes Dodgson's diary for March 3, 1865, the year that *Wonderland* was published, after he had spent a day in court listening to a case of indecent assault and one of damage to property, which involved an accusation of riot:

I admired the simple, straight forward way in which the case was dealt with, which, like the plain Saxon English of the lessons read in church, robbed it of all that could suggest evil to the listeners.<sup>22</sup>

Language here becomes a blank shield against any lived participation in evil. Much later, in 1876, in a letter in Wakeling's collection, there is an indication that Carroll was not always as immune to anxiety about the human meaning of law court judgments as that diary entry by itself might suggest. William Wilcox records:

[C.D.] had a long and most interesting letter from Denman, the Judge, yesterday about a case which the latter has lately tried in which the Judge and Jury made it manslaughter, and Charles Dodgson made it (from newspaper reports) insanity, and immediately wrote to the Judge on the subject.<sup>23</sup>

Often in the experiences of Charles Dodgson and Lewis Carroll, responses that are outlawed in waking life surface in dream and in fiction—and fiction, once read, may inform future waking and sleeping life.

A striking example, from an earlier period in his life, is his response to reading Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847). He first read *Wuthering Heights* in May 1856 when he was twenty-four. He recorded his reactions to it in an unusually full diary entry:

Finished reading that extraordinary book *Wuthering Heights*; it is of all the novels I ever read the one I should least like to be a character in myself. All the "dramatis personae" are so unusual and unpleasant. The only failure in the book is the writing it in the person of a gentleman. Heathcliff and Catherine are original and most powerfully drawn idealities: one cannot believe that such human beings ever existed: they have far more of the fiend in them. The vision at the beginning is I think the finest piece of writing in the book.<sup>24</sup>

He has clearly been shaken by the power of the work, even as he resists the thought that such human beings could have existed.



The “vision at the beginning” consists in the two terrible dreams that Lockwood endures. The first of them records an appalling religious service at which “the famous Jabes Branderham” preaches from the text —

“Seventy Times Seven;” and either Joseph, the preacher, or I had committed the “First of the Seventy-First,” and were to be publicly exposed and excommunicated.<sup>25</sup>

After enduring a remorseless and endless sermon the dreamer seeks to denounce the preacher “as the sinner of the sin that no Christian need pardon.” But he is himself denounced:

“*Thou art the Man!*” cried Jabes, after a solemn pause, leaning over his cushion. “Seventy times seven times didst thou gapingly contort thy visage — seventy times seven did I take counsel with my soul — Lo, this is human weakness; this also may be absolved! The First of the Seventy-First is come. Brethren, execute upon him the judgment written! Such honour have all His saints!”

With that concluding word, the whole assembly, exalting their pilgrim’s staves, rushed round me in a body, and I, having no weapon to raise in self-defence, commenced grappling with Joseph, my nearest and most ferocious assailant, for his. In the confluence of the multitude, several clubs crossed; blows, aimed at me, fell on other sconces. Presently the whole chapel resounded with rappings and counter-rappings. Every man’s hand was against his neighbour; and Branderham, unwilling to remain idle, poured forth his zeal in a shower of loud taps on the boards of the pulpit, which responded so smartly that, at last, to my unspeakable relief, they woke me.

And what was it that had suggested the tremendous tumult, what had played Jabes’ part in the row? Merely, the branch of a fir-tree that touched my lattice, as the blast wailed by, and rattled its dry cones against the panes!<sup>26</sup>

Alice, like Lockwood’s dreaming self, denounces authority in the courtroom scene. She is briefly overwhelmed like him: “the whole pack

rose up into the air, and came flying down upon her”; “the whole assembly, exalting their pilgrim’s staves, rushed round me in a body.”

But the tone and the outcome are very different:

At this the whole pack rose up into the air, and came flying down upon her; she gave a little scream, half of fright and half of anger, and tried to beat them off, and found herself lying on the bank, with her head in the lap of her sister, who was gently brushing away some dead leaves that had fluttered down from the trees upon her face. (W, 108–9)

Lockwood is not so fortunate: “I listened doubtingly an instant; detected the disturber, then turned and dozed, and dreamt again; if possible, still more disagreeably than before.”<sup>27</sup> That second terrible dream enacts the insight that Carroll had recorded in his diary earlier in the same year that he read *Wuthering Heights*: “May we not then sometimes define insanity as an inability to distinguish which is the waking and which the sleeping life?”<sup>28</sup> In Lockwood’s second dream his hand is seized through the broken window pane:

The intense horror of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed,

“Let me in—let me in!”

“Who are you?” I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself.

“Catherine Linton,” it replied shiveringly (why did I think of *Linton*? I had read *Earnshaw* twenty times for Linton), “I’ve come home: I’d lost my way on the moor!”

As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child’s face looking through the window—terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bedclothes: still it wailed, “Let me in!” and maintained its tenacious gripe, almost maddening me with fear.<sup>29</sup>

The blood soaking the bedclothes hideously shifts the boundaries of actuality. It is impossible here to keep dream within the limits of sleep or to distinguish “which is the waking and which the sleeping life.”

The double dream sequence, first of religious ceremony and personal denunciation, and then of desolate child molested by the dreamer, gripped the young Charles Dodgson: “The vision at the beginning is I think the finest piece of writing in the book.” When he became Lewis Carroll the lineaments of that experience were still within him but in *Wonderland* he absolved and restored the dreamer. Indeed Alice becomes the heroic, as well as the comedic, human rights campaigner in the court scene.

The court scene (with its double sense of courtroom and royal court) never reaches its conclusion because that conclusion would be punishment for a preordained crime. The nursery rhyme knows that the Knave of Hearts stole the tarts and, in a thoroughly Jansenist way, so—helplessly—do we as readers. Yet despite that prior knowledge, in the *mêlée* of actuality, the Knave of Hearts is manifestly the victim of injustice and Alice is correct in her resistance to the approaching verdict. That gap between orthodox foreknown creed (that which must be believed because it is written in holy scrip or soldered in the traditions of the church) and the terrifying quiddity of the individual case is indeed intolerable. Most readers find this the most intractable episode of *Wonderland*. It is, beforehand, Kafka-esque. We can give thanks for Alice, who reads and interprets against the grain of the court proceedings.

Narrative thrives on anxiety as well as desire. We turn the next page, we finish the sentence, because we need to know what happened next, where the argument will find its poise, the tale its twist. In the *Alice* books there is great play with riddles that yield no answer, and events that have no future. Indeed, the future may already be past, as the White Queen demonstrates in *Looking-Glass*:

“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?” (LG, 173)

Despite this teleological twist, a joke perhaps about the nature of written narrative with its helpless previousness, the works outflank teleology: Alice gradually escapes from guilt. She responds only to whatever comes next. The future is unknowable and unknown. She is a free spirit.

She does not know and yet (through the person of the reader) knows she is dreaming.

The incalculable incidents in *Wonderland* often produce a release from anxiety. What's round the next corner, or in the next hour, is not entailed in the present. The word "suddenly" persistently occurs, liberating Alice from the moment, triggering new narrative possibilities. She remains in charge of herself. Perhaps that effect of inevitable escape comes also from the original oral mode of the stories where the listening—and commenting—children could divert or ward off unwanted incidents. Though she is sometimes alarmed, Alice does not suffer mounting fear in *Wonderland*. In *Looking-Glass*, with its chess map of the landscape, futures are implicit in the chess moves. Alice's trajectory is more closely supervised, despite the florid inventions of her adventures. She will become a Queen, though not for long.

At the start of *Wonderland* Alice is perplexed by her inability to remember the "proper" words to the dutiful poems she has transported with her in her memory. Later, however, this seems not to concern her. Indeed whereas *Wonderland* has a zany zig-zag motion in which, as in romance, elements and people reappear having been forgotten by the reader, or are transmogrified (the Cheshire-Cat, the Duchess), *Looking-Glass* allows the child reader more assurance, even glee, through its use of nursery rhymes that ruthlessly fulfill themselves—as in Humpty Dumpty's fall or the fight between the Lion and the Unicorn—without the need for Alice to take a hand in the outcome. Only in the *Wonderland* courtroom scene does Alice resist the authority of the nursery rhyme.

At the start of the trial a nursery rhyme appears for the first time as intact text and accusation. Nursery rhymes control the future by means of their repeated narrative past.

The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts,  
 All on a summer's day;  
 The Knave of Hearts, he stole those tarts,  
 And took them clean away!

That's inarguable: the authority of rhyme or of creed cannot be gainsaid. Yet, Alice holds to the principle of innocent until proved guilty, despite

the nursery rhyme story that already pronounces the Knave's guilt. She is alone in this insistence among the characters in the courtroom, save for the White Rabbit who tries to keep the ceremonies correct. Mischief and summer lose their lightheartedness as the scene proceeds.

As always, issues of justice strike a chillier note in Carroll's work and suggest troubled engagement in the undream world. Carroll seems here to be drawing obliquely on controversies surrounding then recent or current legal procedures. Fragments and figments of such procedures, rather than any wholesale representation, are of course the way the nightmare atmosphere of Carroll's courtroom scene is built up, an atmosphere not much mitigated by the comic absurdity of the whole.

When Carroll was writing, the accused in a criminal trial was kept unaware of the specific evidence against him or her until he arrived in court, on the interesting grounds that he had an interest in the outcome (a nicely Alician set of reasoning). The website of the Old Bailey describes the procedures thus:

The trial process placed defendants at a disadvantage. Typically without the benefit of legal assistance, they had to organize their cases on their own, normally while in prison awaiting trial. Until the actual trial, they were unaware of the specific evidence that would be presented against them, and therefore had to respond spontaneously to what the witnesses said. This was thought to be the best way of ascertaining the truth. Even after the Prisoners' Counsel Act of 1836 allowed defence lawyers to address the jury, and gave prisoners the right to see copies of the depositions sworn against them, defendants were still unable to see copies of their indictments and were allowed very little time to prepare a defence. In felony cases the accused appeared at the session immediately following his or her committal. This might be only a day before the actual trial and, even at the end of the period defendants in these circumstances had no right to demand extra time to prepare their case.<sup>30</sup>

Until the passing of the Prisoners' Counsel Act (1836), defendants in a felony trial had no right to a defense lawyer and were expected to make their own case. This was understood as a chance for the innocent

to exonerate themselves, to speak in their own voice, but the effect on poor, illiterate, or otherwise disabled speakers was that they were often reduced to confusion or silence.

The miserable Hatter dropped his teacup and bread-and-butter, and went down on one knee. "I'm a poor man, your Majesty," he began.

"You're a *very poor speaker*," said the King. (W, 99)

John M. Beattie comments: "Judges were only occasionally moved to engage in vigorous cross-examinations. . . . For the most part they took the evidence as they found it. . . . They certainly did not prepare in detail for examination and cross-examination; they were not briefed."<sup>31</sup>

In the 1860s these exclusions were a topic of legal debate. Carroll shows the absurdities produced by bringing in witnesses ignorant of the circumstances and able to give evidence only of the act of cutting bread and butter:

"After that," continued the Hatter, "I cut some more bread-and-butter—"

"But what did the Dormouse say?" one of the jury asked.

"That I ca'n't remember," said the Hatter.

"You *must* remember," remarked the King, "or I'll have you executed."

(W, 99)

First, the poor Hatter, then the recalcitrant Cook, then Alice: the witness who has no interest and no knowledge is forced to speak as the only creditable source of information:

"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. (W, 103)

Advised by the White Rabbit he corrects himself to "*Unimportant*," but semantic difference and evidential significance dissolve into incantation:

“Unimportant, 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. (103)

The process reaches its climax with the finding of a late-appearing random document: “this paper has just been picked up” (104). It is not in the Prisoner’s hand but attributed to him, as a letter written “to — to somebody.”

“It must have been that,” said the King, “unless it was written to nobody, which isn’t usual, you know.” (104)

Such last-minute documents or witnesses in fiction, as in Walter Scott’s *The Heart of Midlothian* (1818), traditionally result in the release or exculpation of the accused. But not in this courtroom.

There is no address on the envelope, no direction to the words, and inside is not a letter but a set of verses. Can a poem be evidence? Clearly the nursery rhyme from which the whole trial emerged is a preordained *verdict*, before any evidence is heard. But the poem in the blank envelope is obscure, not just as evidence but as signifying structure. Agreements between persons and events are baffled:

If I or she should chance to be  
 Involved in this affair,  
 He trusts to you to set them free,  
 Exactly as we were. (105)

In this courtroom there are rules but no order, voices but no listening, and assertions but no evidence. Carroll’s worlds are disorderly but they are peopled with figures who are extremely anxious about order. Both aspects are crushed together in the manic violence at the end of each work, as here, the Queen of Hearts with her mantra of “Off with their heads” at the slightest show of resistance or misunderstanding. She is the tyrant of disorder — tyranny and disorder without material consequences.

Carroll allows the Prisoner his voice. His speech is composed of negatives:

“Please your Majesty,” said the Knave, “I didn’t write it, and they ca’n’t prove that I did: there’s no name signed at the end.” (104)

But that, of course, is only taken as further evidence of his deceit in not having signed his name “like an honest man”:

“That *proves* his guilt, of course,” said the Queen: “so, off with—”

“It doesn’t prove anything of the sort!” said Alice. “Why you don’t even know what they’re about!” (105)

Alice, cogent and sturdy—as well as growing toward her own full outside size *inside* the dream world—refuses to take part in the hermeneutic debate that ensues. In this eerie poem pronouns have become substantive. No field of reference remains mapped. The limit of abstraction is reached and surpassed. The poem is, for once, not full-blown parody, rather, it flees the poem it initially drew upon.

The poem as it appears in the *Wonderland* trial scene has a measure even of self-parody since it is based on an eight-stanza poem of Carroll’s own composition that appeared in the *Comic Times* in 1855 (the year before he met his first particular Alice), then entitled “She’s all my fancy painted him.” There and in his collection *Mischmasch* the poem is set parodically in the context of sentimental fiction, with a prefatory sentence:

This affecting fragment was found in MS., among the papers of the well-known author of “Was it You or I?” a tragedy, and the two popular novels “Sister and Son,” and “The Niece’s Legacy, or the Grateful Grandfather.” (51)

That earlier poem’s first line takes up a sentimental song entitled “Alice Gray” by William Mee, which Carroll worked with more than once.<sup>32</sup> Mee’s first two verses run:

She’s all my fancy painted her,  
 She’s lovely, she’s divine,  
 But her heart it is another’s,  
 She never can be mine.



Yet loved I as man never loved,  
 A love without decay,  
 O, my heart, my heart is breaking  
 For the love of Alice Gray.<sup>33</sup>

In the meantime since 1855 that unvoiced song had accrued more meaning for Carroll: “She never can be mine,” “Yet loved I as man never loved.” Alice hears no meaning at all in the poem:

“If any one of them can explain it,” said Alice, (she had grown so large in the last few minutes that she wasn’t a bit afraid of interrupting him,) “I’ll give him sixpence. *I don’t believe there’s an atom of meaning in it.*” (W, 106)

Relations between people within the verse have tipped and veered, clouding social space, confusing the relations between speakers and subjects. The poems uncoil beneath each other. The comedy has been stripped away.

He sent them word I had not gone  
 (We know it to be true);  
 If she should push the matter on,  
 What would become of you?

I gave her one, they gave him two,  
 You gave us three or more;  
 They all returned from him to you,  
 Though they were mine before.

If I or she should chance to be  
 Involved in this affair,  
 He trusts to you to set them free,  
 Exactly as we were.

My notion was that you had been  
 (Before she had this fit)

An obstacle that came between  
Him, and ourselves, and it. (W, 105–6)

Hugger-mugger suggestions of plots and persecution and intrigue wash through this impossible swamp of relations, all of which seem to funnel inward but find no culmination or *point de repère*. Court scandal and court secrets vibrate as innuendo. The final stanza offers the occult satisfaction of a secret shared and never to be broken, between—at last—you and me:

Don't let him know she liked them best,  
For this must ever be  
A secret, kept from all the rest,  
Between yourself and me.

The King fears that he *can* interpret the poem and that it may concern his wife, the Queen of Hearts: he hopes to disprove it: “‘before she had this fit—you never had fits, my dear, I think?’ he said to the Queen” (107). More testy than macabre, this poem is nevertheless a desolate place in which plain speaking is balked and persons shift haplessly among unstable relations. It does not provoke laughter. The insouciance of so many of the parodies elsewhere in the books is here replaced by a threshold sense of madness: paranoia as in the French phrase *délire de référence*, in which everything signifies and everything is subject to hyperinterpretation. All such interpretation refers towards the center, here the accused, but finds no point of rest. There is no rapport, no answering. Deixis is unstable. Rhyme must do all the work of holding things together while the persons and pronouns stray unmatched, undialogued. This is also the point in the text when Alice is reaching the verge of waking.

The climax of alarm occurs because this is the present moment of injustice and unmasking:

“No, no!” said the Queen. “Sentence first—verdict afterwards.”

“Stuff and nonsense!” said Alice loudly. “The idea of having the sentence first!” (107)

When Nabokov translated *Wonderland* into Russian in 1922, he rendered the Queen's demand—with grim aptness—as “Execution first—verdict afterwards.”<sup>34</sup>

The Queen's authority abruptly vanishes even as she reaches the climax of “ungovernable passion—a blind and aimless Fury,” as Carroll later described her (AS, 296). Alice can resist the injustice of this court only by wreaking total destruction on the Wonderland that she has explored and inhabited, and by accepting—even asserting—her own alien state; overgrown, she must blunder out of this world lest, as Lockwood experienced, “The intense horror of nightmare came over me.”<sup>35</sup>

## 8

### GROWING AND EATING

Everyone knows what Alice looks like, whether or not they have read the books: straight blonde hair, caught back in an Alice-band, a short bunched-out skirt and long socks, an implacably direct gaze. (See fig. 16.)

That Alice, conjured by Tenniel as well as Carroll, looks like a lot of other little Victorian girls as they are represented, for instance, in *Punch*: this one a more robust and more passive Alician figure (see fig. 8, “Experienced Young Fellow,” above). Carroll’s own illustrations for *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground* (1864) set the mode that Tenniel follows. So Charles Dodgson’s photographs of Alice Liddell, the child for whom that first version was written, come as a surprise. Here we have the physically opposite type from our well-known Alice: dark, short-haired, with a piquant face caught between secret amusement and tremulousness. It is as though the fair and the dark adult heroines beloved as antitypes in Victorian fiction (Rebecca and Rowena, Maggie and Lucy, Becky and Amelia) co-exist just above and below the public water-line of the book, conjoined in this girl child.

Seven-year-old Alice, like other children, may fear or long for the adult world that beckons far off. Probably both. Inexorably, physical growing propels the healthy child toward the world of adulthood. It cannot be stopped, reversed, or curtailed. It drives the child remorselessly. Alice in *Wonderland*, on the other hand, can grow larger or smaller; but she cannot always control how much. Part of the pleasure of the two



16. John Tenniel, Alice and the Red Queen. *Through the Looking-Glass*.

books is their toying with the irremediable: the approach of puberty, the onset of age.

The alarms associated with growth in Alice involve not only the flat dread the child feels at entering the boredom of adult life but the possibility that growing is not a straight pathway to human adulthood. It may involve a series of transformations so profound that you may swerve off into being anything at all: a bread-and-butter-fly, a queen, a pig, an elongated neck estranged from feet. That is the threat to the child reader who undergoes those possibilities by the act of reading, subjugated to the enigmatic rules of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. It is also an alarm conjured for her elders by Darwin's insistence on the common ancestor and Huxley's work on man's place in nature, as we have seen.

The dissolving boundaries between species in both books call on the then-current controversies surrounding Darwin's insistence on the common ancestry of animal and human. Indeed, not only animal and human. As "Philaethes" argued in an essay on "The Distinction between Man and Animals" in the *Anthropological Review* in 1864, all differences are of degree not kind. He will not admit thought, reasoning, language, or immortality to be secure discriminators. He concludes by pushing kinship further yet beyond men and animals:

But “no difference in degree can constitute a difference in kind;” and if it be asked “What is the generic point of distinction between men and animals?” the answer must still be, *Natura non agit saltatim* [Nature does not make jumps]; there is *no* such point of distinction; man does not form an order apart from the rest of the animal world; he is linked to that world by humiliating, but indissoluble ties of resemblance and connection; and even the matter which constitutes both *his* body and that of animals is but the same as that which goes to the composition of the inorganic world.<sup>1</sup>

This bold commentator bundles up together the objections of theologians (like the Bishop of Oxford) and language theorists (like Max Müller). Neither language nor immortality can be shown to belong to man alone. Moreover, everything that exists, organic and inorganic alike, shares the same matter.

Alice is fighting for survival (and her reader’s survival, too) as she insists, often against the evidence, that she is Alice — no mere pronoun “she,” no generalized young female child, but Alice herself, irreplaceable. She needs to assert this because it is only doubtfully true. She has changed so much and so abruptly during her sojourn in Wonderland and in Looking-Glass Land. Moreover, in the ordinary course of things, she will soon no longer be a young female child but an adult woman, capable of bearing children herself: that is the threat and promise. In the last paragraph of *Wonderland* the older sister muses on future Alice: “she pictured to herself how this same little sister of hers would, in the after-time, be herself a grown woman . . . and would gather about her other little children” (W, 110). Will she still be Alice? Her body will have changed entirely beyond the book, but Tenniel’s and Carroll’s images compose her as she is now: not seized and stilled as in a photograph but rushed through by narrative: adamant eager Alice. Both works get behind two major amnesias undergone by the individual: growing, and — in literate societies — learning to read. Who can remember either? *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* release experiences usually shuttered from adult eyes by intervening memory loss.

Anxiety is a powerful motor in the stories and, for Alice, in *Wonderland* at least, keeping herself together is a difficult task. The phrase itself

registers the peculiar difficulties it implies: together needs more than a singleton. Yet Alice must stay single if she is to weather this strange country of *Wonderland*. In the upper world she delighted in imagining herself as two people; here it is as much as she can do to find enough of herself for one. But that may be because her singleness has been sapped by so many fantastic creatures emerging from it, animal, vegetable, and mineral. In *Looking-Glass* the game of Twenty Questions with its first sorting inquiry “animal, vegetable, or mineral?” is more than once introduced but cannot give trustworthy answers. Its categories are surpassed.

Alice must keep in scale, too, if she is not to find herself (or lose herself) choked by chin against foot or elongated like a serpent into the smothering branches of a tree. Susan Stewart in *On Longing* distinguishes the miniature and the gigantic in relation to movement:

The miniature allows us only visual access to surface and texture; it does not allow movement through space. Inversely, the gigantic envelops us, but is inaccessible to lived experience.<sup>2</sup>

But Alice’s state is worse than either condition, and not only because she oscillates between them. The miniature and the gigantic are not mixed; Alice is. For her, keeping in scale is not a matter simply of chiming with the scale of others. It is experiencing the appalling restlessness of her body parts ignoring adult organic relations: “how funny it’ll seem, sending presents to one’s own feet” (W, 17); “she felt a violent blow underneath her chin: it had struck her foot!” (46); “all she could see, when she looked down, was an immense length of neck, which seemed to rise like a stalk out of a sea of green leaves that lay far below her” (47).

Perversely, all this is a description of growing: that experience of intransigent change lost beneath consciousness in each of us, because absolutely beyond the control of consciousness. Alice’s vacillations awaken memories. Why do children so dislike that adult exclamation: “How you’ve grown!” Because of loss, because of swelling, because they are no longer who they were. Children endure growth. They also endure growing up. The two processes do not coincide comfortably in time. Alice is perhaps closer to the Caterpillar in *Wonderland* than she likes to

acknowledge. She pleads that “being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.”

“It isn’t,” said the Caterpillar.

“Well, perhaps you haven’t found it so yet,” said Alice; “but when you have to turn into a chrysalis—you will some day, you know—and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you’ll feel it a little queer, wo’n’t you?”

“Not a bit,” said the Caterpillar.

“Well, perhaps *your* feelings may be different,” said Alice: “all I know is, it would feel very queer to *me*.”

“You!” said the Caterpillar contemptuously. “Who are you?” (W, 41)

Alice seeks to gain advantage over the Caterpillar by her schoolgirl knowledge of his necessary transformations within the life cycle (which he ignores and may be ignorant of) but the transformations, both physical and mental, that all humans undergo as they grow through the life cycle match his in strangeness.

“I never ask advice about growing,” Alice said indignantly.

“Too proud?” the other [Humpty Dumpty] enquired.

Alice felt even more indignant at this suggestion. “I mean,” she said, “that one ca’n’t help growing older.” (LG, 184)

Humpty Dumpty treats growing as a skill to be managed and Alice as a novice too proud to admit her need of advice. Indeed, Doctor Death creeps into the majestic malice of his retort to her remark, “one ca’n’t help growing older”:

“*One* ca’n’t, perhaps,” said Humpty Dumpty; “but *two* can.” (184)

All human people have experienced the absurdity of growth, the baby become the child, become the adult, become old, all so unlike each other as photograph albums illustrate. Indeed, perhaps the coming of the photograph brought home more fully than had ever been the case before



the implausible relations between the various manifestations of the individual fixed in time. For Victorian people, the coming of photography meant that these seized instants out of time became a kind of eternity, as well as a kind of death. For Lewis Carroll, preoccupied with childhood and its vanishing, the simultaneity and distance of child and adult was troublesome. So much so, that later in his life he records a compelling dream.

This is a dream he had during the night of May 14–15, 1879. It seems to raise and perhaps resolve, during that time, the dilemma of identity as it passes from child to adult state. His account slips into the dream with no markers between dream and wake, though he presents it in an almost scientific guise as a curiosity containing “a feature entirely unique . . . in the literature of dreams.” The prosaic sentence in which he remarks that he was staying with his sisters and heard that the Terrys were staying nearby is, in fact, the start of the dream though it appears to be part of its circumstantial setting.

Last night I had a dream which I record as a curiosity, as containing *the same person at two different periods of life*, a feature entirely unique, so far as I know in the literature of dreams. I was staying, with my sisters, in some suburb of London, and had heard that the Terrys were staying near us, so went to call, and found Mrs. Terry at home, who told me that Marion and Florence were at the theatre, “the Walter House,” where they had a good engagement. “In that case,” I said, “I’ll go on there at once, and see the performance. May I take Polly with me?” “Certainly,” said Mrs. Terry. And there was Polly, the child, seated in the room, and looking about 9 or 10 years old; and I was distinctly conscious of the fact, yet without any feeling of surprise at its incongruity, that I was going to take the *child* Polly with me to the theatre, to see the *grown-up* Polly act! Both figures, Polly as a child and Polly as a woman, are I suppose equally clear in my ordinary waking memory: and it seems that in sleep I contrived to give to the two pictures separate individualities.<sup>3</sup>

“Polly” was Marion Terry, younger sister of Ellen Terry, and the whole theatrical family were long-lasting and important friends of Carroll’s

who had indeed known them first as children and then through their emergence as adult actresses.

Perhaps his practice as a photographer also made Carroll particularly sensitive to the seized states of the individual in a photograph that may be quite inappropriate, indeed unrecognizable, to that person at a different time of life. Here, the dream resolves that incongruity. He is able to be both aware of the disparity of age and yet untroubled by the double aspect of the person. The photographer fixes the phantasmal and fleeting appearance of the individual through time as material presence in the photograph as object.

Photography was so new a form that it was subject to a whole variety of uncertainties among the general public. Mirrors and cameras might even become confused. Andrew Wynter in a long article in the *British Journal of Photography* (March 12, 1869) tells an anecdote that bears on this:

on one occasion, two ladies entered the sitting-room of a studio, and, placing themselves before a mirror, after some time wished to know if the portraits were not finished, evidently thinking the looking-glass was the operating agent.<sup>4</sup>

The looking-glass has no memory. The camera cannot forget. Photographs have in them something of the immediate moment and of the elegy. The *written* voice speaks through time always in current accents because it is silent on the page; text is renewed as present moment in the reader's interior voice. The visual, on the contrary, takes on the contours of frozen fashion (as does now the recorded voice from a past age). *Punch* on April 26, 1862, includes a wry poem addressed "To Charlotte with Her Photograph," contrasting the powers of the looking-glass and the photograph.

Depicted by the solar rays,  
What loveliness this face displays!  
The figure, what surpassing grace!  
What radiant harmony the face!

Who such a likeness could have done?  
 No meaner artist than the Sun.

You see yourself within this frame,  
 And, in a looking glass, the same.  
 The glass, though, must reflect your eyes,  
 Or straight the charming image flies;  
 But fixed you have your shadow here,  
 So that it cannot disappear.

This portrait as it is will last  
 And when some twice-ten years have passed,  
 Will show you what you were;  
 How elegant, how fresh and fair.  
 I wonder what the mirror will,  
 Compared with it, exhibit still.<sup>5</sup>

The *Punch* poem brings out Alice's particularity. In the looking-glass she does not pause to survey herself. Her eyes are all engaged with the room beyond the glass, and with the corner she has never quite been able to see from her own sitting-room: "the bit just behind the fireplace" (LG, 126) and the rest of the passage of which she can see "just a little *peep* . . . if you leave the door of our drawing-room wide open" (127). She evades the cold narcissistic surface of the mirror and passes through into a place where the fire is no mere reflection, but a living warmth: "blazing away as brightly as the one she had left behind" (127). First she imagines a way through with her "let's pretend" and then that way becomes actual, at least in Alice's performative declaration:

"Let's pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare!" (127)

At the same time the frame of the mirror reminds us of the eyes surveying Alice, those of the artist or photographer. But they are left behind as Alice leaves the outer domestic world to enter the regions of her own mind, which are also regions of exploration.



17. John Tenniel, Alice enters the Looking-glass. *Through the Looking-Glass*.

Tenniel's two illustrations, printed overleaf from each other, brilliantly evoke the stable reverses of Alice passing through the mirror but also bring out the ludic differences: as she enters the looking-glass room the grandiose mantelpiece ornamented clock of the previous page acquires a smiling face and the dried flowers are suddenly in full bloom. Grotesque faces support both clock and vase. (See figs. 17 and 18.)

The contrast with expected narcissism becomes more marked still



18. John Tenniel, Alice comes through the Looking-glass.

if one contrasts Alice's entry into the looking-glass with pictures from photographic visit-cards or *cartes de visite* of the mid-1860s to 1870s.<sup>6</sup> In one of the most striking of them, a young woman, facing away from us with hair tumbling down her back, is engrossed in her own image in the mirror. We view her mirror-image face gazing away from us back into the hidden twin face of the living (or now photographic) girl. The viewer

therefore only ever sees what the young woman sees: the reversed image of a looking-glass girl.

The mirror itself in this card has a frame like a throne, piled high, with a reference to imperial India in its decoration, while the sumptuous fabric that flows over the dressing-table is embossed with peacock feathers and produces a factitious second body beneath the face in the mirror. The unabashed and exclusive self-worship seems quite unparodied, though there is a tremor of riddle here. Before the eye resolves the question there is a moment's uncertainty about that second full-length presence: what is phantasmal, what corporeal?

What was it like to receive a visit from this young woman? Would anything but her mirror sufficiently match her? Perhaps this is an example of the *carte de visite* merging into the postcard and feeding erotic impulses beyond those of the subject herself. Alice, in contrast, climbs unperturbed through her own image, looking always past herself and giving no purchase to erotic pursuit. Instead she finds herself immediately in the homely atmosphere of grumbling adult couples, now grown small, as chess pieces. She is their passing fatality, a force too great—or at least too large—to be seen, and capable of sweeping them up and putting them down wherever she fancies.

Because of the part played in our reading by the illustrations of Tenniel and Carroll, Alice's face and body are strikingly familiar, now formulaic. But, within the story, Alice never looks at herself. The strange objects and beings she encounters engross her entirely. Most people in our culture make the surface of the body visible to themselves with mirrors. Not Alice. Alice's impervious pictured face is well known to the reader. It is delightfully absent for her. She is not beset by her appearance, save as a matter of survival. She enters Looking-Glass Land, but not in search of her own face.

This is Alice *through* the looking-glass, not in it. For her, mirrors are doorways into other lives and conditions of being: contrariwise, not repetition or reversal only, is the condition she must learn to live. William Empson long ago distinguished *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* by arguing that “*Wonderland* is a dream, but the *Looking-Glass* is self-consciousness.”<sup>7</sup> Certainly, as in *Wonderland*, Alice is troubled about her

own identity and about the act of naming. Transformation in *Looking-Glass* occurs not in her body but in her surroundings and in other beings: Queens become sheep, shops boats, gnats nothing.

For Alice in *Wonderland* particularly, the inverse of growing is also realized: growth can imply spacelessness, the claustrophobia of being conscious in the womb. If this were Poe, it would be neither room nor womb but the grave. If this were Kafka, direction would have only one end, as in his seven-and-a-half-line "A Little Fable":

"Alas," said the mouse, "the world is growing smaller every day. At the beginning it was so big that I was afraid, I kept running and running, and I was glad when at last I saw walls far away to the right and left, but these long walls have narrowed so quickly that I am in the last chamber already, and there in the corner stands the trap that I must run into." "You only need to change your direction," said the cat, and ate it up.<sup>8</sup>

Something more like the Kafka fable does happen to the Mouse in his sad tale whose final twitch, writ so small as to be almost unreadable, has Fury the dog as judge and jury: "I'll try the whole cause and condemn you to death" (28). But Alice herself is resilient. Traps turn into doorways for her quite as often as rooms turn her into a parcel. Carroll's own illustration for this scene shows an exquisite child lying on her side, strangely recomposed with large head and tiny arms, cramped by the frame or box, and gazing out at the reader with a serene but challenging expression. Tenniel's illustration, perhaps more probably in the circumstances, shows her scowling.

Twice Alice drinks from a bottle that happens to be around, with opposite results. The second time, she enters "a tidy little room" and sees "a little bottle that stood near the looking-glass." This bottle has no label, no inducement with the words "DRINK ME" as previously, but she drinks:

before she had drunk half the bottle, she found her head pressing against the ceiling, and had to stoop to save her neck from being broken. (W, 32)

The first time she shrank; this time she swells (fig. 19):



19. John Tenniel, Big Alice. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Still she went on growing, and, as a last resource, she put one arm out of the window, and one foot up the chimney, and said to herself “Now I can do no more, whatever happens. What *will* become of me?” (32)

The menacing echo of some Arabian Nights punishment is forthwith averted in a matter-of-fact way: “Luckily for Alice, the little magic bottle had now had its full effect, and she grew no larger” (32). But she is still trapped, as if she is indeed to experience some outcome like a story in Heinrich Hoffmann’s *Struwwelpeter*, as in those “several nice little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they *would* not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them” (13). Rules such as not to drink from bottles whose contents are unknown: Alice does so, not just once, but twice. And she gets away with it, with her own energetic actions (“she gave one sharp kick”) and a little bit of help from food nonchalantly transformed from inorganic matter (“the pebbles were all turning into little cakes” [35–36]). Alice is a survivor, since this is her own dream, not a moral tale imposed.



But this is a very physical dream, as an intelligent early review in the *Contemporary Review* (May 1869) well noted. Like Freud at the end of the century describing the “uncanny,” the reviewer remarks on the mingling of the familiar and the strange in Alice’s adventures, the estranging of the familiar: “the most familiar things jostle and rub shoulders with the oddest, queerest and most fantastic.”<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Lewis Carroll, though he certainly does not possess anything like Mr. MacDonald’s commanding phantasy, has yet a peculiar power in slipping away unseen from the every-day world into a world of strange wonders. But his *spécialité* is that he carries the breath of the real world with him wherever he goes, so that a whiff of it ever and anon passes over what is strangest. Under his disguises of kings and queens, rabbits and eagles, fish-footmen, and the rest, the child must constantly feel himself thrown back, as on a sudden rebound, upon the characters and scenes of every day. The real and the grotesque, suddenly paired, rub cheeks together and scuttle off to perform the same serio-farcical play in various ways and with other company. Mr. Carroll’s world is not a distant and misty one.<sup>10</sup>

The reviewer’s words, “breath” and “whiff,” “scuttle” and “rub cheeks,” also bring out how all the senses are put in play in Carroll’s “universe of discourse.” Slightly disagreeable smells, with their whiff of the unwashed body, haunt the adult world of *Wonderland* with its intrusive Duchess and madly belligerent Queen sweating her way through the garden. And Carroll has one peculiarly strong, persistent, and straightforward insight into childhood experience, perhaps unavoidable from growing up in crowded family life: how close lie appetite and disgust.

Carroll spent many of the university vacations throughout his life with his sisters at their shared house in Guildford, and he died there, too. So, not only his childhood but much of his adult life away from Christ Church was spent surrounded in a domestic setting by women, women whom he had known all his life long. Still, neither Dodgson nor Carroll was a little girl or even a grown woman. The strong sense in the *Alice* books of thresholds as alluring and forbidding may draw on that experi-

ence of living intimately alongside siblings who always remain finally other in their sex. His delight in the company of young girls acknowledges mysteries that can never be broached, lightly enacted in the acrostics, riddles, and ciphers with which his poems entertained them, where momentarily small mysteries, standing in for large ones, *can* be resolved and shared.

The poems he wrote in his childhood and teens are full of the pleasures and dangers of food and drink, and of sibling rivalries: for example, “Brother and Sister”, with its threat of incestuous gourmandizing stemmed by adult moralizing, ends:

“What meat is in that stew to go?”  
 “My sister’ll be the contents.” “Oh!”  
 “Will you lend the pan, Cook?” “NO!”  
*Moral:* “Never stew your sister.”<sup>11</sup>

Or as in the dire tale of “The Two Brothers,” which pastiches the nonchalant violence of border ballads. One brother makes the other into fishing bait and the language puns on “perch” and “properly dressed” and “bite” as boy becomes food for fishes:

The fish hurried up by the dozens  
 All ready and eager to bite,  
 For the lad that he flung was so tender and young,  
 It quite gave them an appetite.<sup>12</sup>

Or the anarchic “Rules and Regulations” with its mix of cautions and incitements, among them:

Drink tea not coffee;  
 Never eat toffy.  
 Eat bread with butter.  
 Once more, don’t stutter.  
 Don’t waste your money,  
 Abstain from honey.

Shut doors behind you,  
 (Don't slam them, mind you.)  
 Drink beer, not porter.  
 Don't enter the water,  
 Till to swim you are able.  
 Sit close to the table.  
 Take care of a candle.  
 Shut a door by the handle,  
 Don't push with your shoulder  
 Until you are older.  
 Lose not a button.  
 Refuse cold mutton,  
 Starve your canaries,  
 Believe in fairies.<sup>13</sup>

Rhyming is master here, and sense must buckle to its demands, just as the intelligent child must conform to the absurd patterns of adult rules, it seems.

There is much eating and drinking in the *Alice* books (sometimes with remarkable results)—and a great many words describing food, drink, snacks, and mealtimes. Alice's first disappointment is the jar she takes from a shelf as she floats down towards Wonderland:

It was labeled "ORANGE MARMALADE," but to her great disappointment it was empty. (W, 10)

You can't rely on what labels declare to be the case, or containers either: here, "jar" does not guarantee "marmalade." As the descent continues she thinks nostalgically about her pet cat Dinah and wonders whether they'll "remember her saucer of milk at tea-time" (11). Then in her usual matter-of-fact style she wonders what Dinah could eat if she were alongside:

"There are no mice in the air, I'm afraid, but you might catch a bat, and that's very like a mouse, you know. But do cats eat bats, I wonder?" (11)

Then the question twists and reverses itself into dream-like incantation:

“Do cats eat bats? Do cats eat bats?” and sometimes “Do bats eat cats?”  
(11)

The ghost of the reading-primer, such as Favell Lee Mortimer’s *Reading without Tears* (1857), haunts her here, grown ghoulish: “The cat sat on the mat” become “The bat ate the cat.”

Is there a proper hierarchy of eating? Who eats? Who is food? That question will re-emerge right at the end of *Through the Looking-Glass* at the chaotic feast. Alice at this initial point in her fall is in a kind of limbo between sleep and wake, and between the habits of her own society and those of her new territory. She has not yet entered Wonderland where all creatures are individuals with their own rights and their own absolute points of view. Her encounter with the Mouse will teach her manners in this new situation. Talk of Dinah is here taboo:

“We wo’n’t talk about her any more, if you’d rather not.”

“We, indeed!” cried the Mouse, who was trembling down to the end of its tail. “As if I would talk on such a subject! Our family always *hated* cats: nasty, low, vulgar things! Don’t let me hear the name again!” (W, 22)

Already the usual household hierarchies are upended: cats, not mice, are here nasty, low, and vulgar.

There is throughout the *Alice* books a fascination with the categorical slippages between persons and food, a linguistic habit that the mathematician Augustus De Morgan had humorously noted in his attempt to distinguish between the functions of analogy and of definition when discussing direction:

we say that one man is a pigeon-pie, and another is a shoulder of lamb, when we describe their contributions to a pic-nic. But *non est geometria!* Metaphor and paronomasia can draw the car of poetry; but they tumble the waggon of geometry into the ditch.<sup>14</sup>

That linguistic bent to compression (“a man is a pigeon-pie”) is one of the comic methods of the *Alice* books, but consumption has other meanings there, too.

Alice has a somewhat conflicted relationship to food and drink but she is a willing and adventurous consumer, no anorexic:” I know *something* interesting is sure to happen,” she said to herself, “whenever I eat or drink anything” (W, 32). Alice is no fairy but what used to be called a “great girl,” solid and springy. In *Wonderland* she takes risks through obedience as well as through appetite. When in the first chapter she encounters a bottle saying “Drink Me” she does so, after a demurring paragraph in which Carroll half entices half warns his reader against the dangers of such conduct (13). (Performatives like this are outlawed in children’s fiction now.) The bottle claims a personal presence and voice: “Drink Me.” She believes what she reads as if she were on equal terms of acquaintance with the bottle. The bottle is not marked “poison.” She trusts language, or perhaps, more, she trusts the absence of language. The bottle instructs her to drink, as if it were a trusted acquaintance. She does so and enjoys a gallimaufry of flavors just this delicious side of disgusting:

finding it very nice (it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffy, and hot buttered toast), she very soon finished it off. (13–14)

—a list designed to conjure up both saliva and the child’s delighted “yuk.”

Alice is soon content with her relativistic new world in which not only life-forms but inorganic objects have presence, voice, and authority. When she eats the cake that commands “EAT ME” and stays the same size she is disappointed:

she was quite surprised to find that she remained the same size. To be sure, that is what generally happens when one eats cake; but Alice had got so much into the way of expecting nothing but out-of-the-way things to happen, that it seemed quite dull and stupid for life to go on in the common way. (15)

But of course it doesn’t go on “in the common way.” Her jaded response is immediately followed by her growing to nine feet tall.

Alice is willing to risk drugs, as well as food and drink. The hookah-

smoking drowsy caterpillar is a very clear signal that his mushroom is likely to be hallucinogenic. In fact, under Alice's careful management, it proves—after several alarming tries—to be an instrument to bring her into kilter with her surroundings. But first she contracts so far that her chin strikes her foot; then her neck is so elongated that she finds her head swaying, serpentlike, in the branches of the trees and subject to attack from the alarmed mother-pigeon. Both experiences threaten breathing itself.

Alice's experiences with her distorted body have some features in common with the onset of migraine where body image is so disturbed that it may produce an image of the self with, for example, enormous head, vast hands, and nothing below the waist. And "Alice in Wonderland Syndrome" is now a recognized illness in major depression disorder. It involves macrosopia (perceiving things as larger) and microsopia (smaller) as well as "self-experienced body image disturbances which may co-occur with depersonalization, derealization, metamorphosis, and distortion of time perception."<sup>15</sup> In 1882, seventeen years after *Wonderland*, Cotard's syndrome was described by Jules Cotard: it involves delusions ranging from believing one has lost an organ to believing one is dead. Shrinking and ballooning of body parts are also part of the syndrome.

Did Carroll suffer migraine?—he certainly had at least one episode of petit mal and in his diary in 1880 includes an account of an attack of migraine with its aura, but, strikingly, his diary includes no earlier episode. Alice's contractions and extensions may possibly be an intimate account of something known somatically, clinically, to the writer. But of course they may rather be an intimate account of something much more generally experienced, in dream. The contractions and extensions in Alice are also very different from the psychiatric illnesses described since Alice can so readily free herself from the dilemmas they cause. The word "suddenly" is wonderfully resourceful here.

Moreover, fashionable Victorian fairy painting particularly explored instability of scale. In Richard Dadd's masterpiece *The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke* (painted from 1855 to 1864, in the same decade as the imagining and publication of *Wonderland*) a little King and Queen process through



20. Sir Joseph Noel Paton, *The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania* (1849). Photograph: National Galleries Scotland.

tall grasses alongside insects grown enormous. Bosch-like scenes of license and distortion are crammed into odd corners of the contemporaneous picture by J. A. Fitzgerald *The Marriage of Oberon and Titania*. The riot of phenomena is hardly, queasily, held in place; near and far are confused; large and small are reversed; the visible is evanescent. Carroll saw and admired Paton's *The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania* (fig. 20) and *The Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania*:

There were two wonderful and really beautiful pictures by Noel Paton, *The Quarrel and Reconciliation of Oberon and Titania*. In the first we counted 165 fairies.<sup>16</sup>

Lewis Carroll on more than one occasion referred to Alice as “a fairytale,” though he specified that *Wonderland* includes no fairies, only beings (“birds, beasts, etc.,”) endowed with speech:

To Tom Taylor, June 10, 1864

P.S. I should be very glad if you could help me in fixing on a name for

my fairy-tale, which Mr. Tenniel (in consequence of your kind introduction) is now illustrating for me, and which I hope to get published before Xmas. The heroine spends an hour underground, and meets various birds, beasts, etc. (*no* fairies), endowed with speech.<sup>17</sup>

In *Alice in Wonderland* Alice muses on her predicament as she shoots from being a tiny thing to a swollen Gothic set of limbs, like the helmet that occupies the courtyard in that father of all Gothic stories, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. Her "eye fell upon a little bottle that stood near the looking-glass" and she drinks; after less than half the bottle she finds "her head pressing against the ceiling, and had to stoop to save her neck from being broken" (W, 32). In this condition of magnitude she thinks:

"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 gone down that rabbit-hole — and yet — and yet — it's rather curious, you know, this sort of life! (32–33)

Alice finds herself under the wayward control of ingested substances, her physical body and her perceptions of her body both radically altered. She is at her most aggressive when she is trapped, claustrophobically, in the Rabbit's neat little house, her gigantic limbs swelling to occupy window and chimney as well as the room's volume:

She drew her foot as far down the chimney as she could . . . then, saying to herself "This is Bill," she gave one sharp kick, and waited to see what would happen next. (35)

With her usual initiative she then regains control by resolutely eating unlikely objects, swallowing the pebble that has become cake, "shrinking directly," and fleeing out of the house into the wood. The loosening of the normative allows her to be venturesome: having arrived at her usual height, she nibbles the right side of the mushroom again and so drives herself down to nine inches high. It is just the right height to gain access to what proves to be the Duchess's little house "about four feet high." For



her subsequent encounter, the Mad Hatter's tea party, she rearranges herself to two feet high, and finally, in order to enter the longed-for garden, she nibbles herself down to a foot high again.

These size shifts are sometimes threatening but they are also a wonderful wish fulfilment. Instead of being in the grip of growth and "growing up," the child can manage its own preferred height to get on equal terms with its surroundings. Instead of inhabiting a world sized for adults in which chairs loom and table-corners knock any young child's head, the child can manipulate scale. Indeed, Alice peering down the corridor into the longed-for garden seems momentarily to share the photographer's privilege and inhibition. The photographer, particularly in mid-Victorian times, simultaneously experienced intimacy and distance in relation to the subject.

Although the reader shares Alice's frustration as she persistently discovers herself too large or too small for her circumstances, we share also her triumph as she works away with her mushroom until she is just the right size: working up from two foot high to reach the table and the key and then down till she was about a foot high:

then she walked down the little passage: and *then*- she found herself at last in the beautiful garden, among the bright flowers and the cool fountains. (68)

The chapter ends on this moment of bliss. It will prove short-lived, but in its moment it is absolute.

The question of what food is appropriate keeps cropping up throughout the two books. It starts with a narrative pun on "dry." The soaking creatures emerge from the pool of tears, "all dripping wet, cross, and uncomfortable" (24). The Mouse claims somewhat truculently: "I'll soon make you dry enough!" and proceeds to recite a long passage from Haviland Chepmell, *A Short Course of History*,<sup>18</sup> a work only too familiar to the Liddell children for whom it was a schoolbook.

"This is the driest thing I know. Silence all round, if you please! 'William the Conqueror, whose cause was favoured by the pope, was soon submitted to by the English, who wanted leaders, and had been of late much

accustomed to usurpation and conquest. Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria—”

“Ugh!” said the Lory, with a shiver. (W, 25)

Inexorably the passage continues, with interruptions, leaving Alice as wet as ever. Knowledge can parch the mind if it is of the kind favored by Victorian history primers—and it’s no good as a drying agent either.

Alice then feeds comfits to the birds as their prizes and nearly chokes the small ones. Later, “Have some wine,” offers the March Hare. There is no wine. In the Duchess’s kitchen the soup makes almost everyone sneeze. In *Looking-Glass* the Queen offers Alice dry biscuits to quench her thirst:

Alice thought it would not be civil to say “No” though it wasn’t at all what she wanted. So she took it, and ate it as well as she could: and it was very dry: and she thought she had never been so nearly choked in all her life. (LG, 141)

The White King feels faint:

“You alarm me!” said the King. I feel faint— Give me a ham sandwich!”

...

“Another sandwich!” said the King.

“There’s nothing but hay left now,” the Messenger said, peeping into the bag.

“Hay, then,” the King murmured in a faint whisper.

Alice was glad to see that it revived him a good deal. “There’s nothing like eating hay when you’re faint,” he remarked to her, as he munched away.

“I should think throwing cold water over you would be better,” Alice suggested: “— or some sal-volatile.”

“I didn’t say there was nothing *better*,” the King replied. “I said there was nothing *like* it.” Which Alice did not venture to deny. (196–97)

Dry moralizing and dry rations are as bad as each other and not to be distinguished semantically: in *Looking-Glass*, Hatta, just out of prison,

stands “with a cup of tea in one hand and a piece of bread-and-butter in the other. ‘He’s only just out of prison, and he hadn’t finished his tea when he was sent in,’ Haigha whispered to Alice: “and they only give them oyster-shells in there — so you see he’s very hungry and thirsty” (199).

The “dry” joke is repeated, through all these variations, as if for the delectation of a child who enjoys both repetition and the stretch that comes with discovering new uses for the same idea. When the King declares ten minutes for refreshments, the white and brown bread that Haigha and Hatta carry round at the break in the fight between lion and unicorn is, Alice discovers, “very dry” (200). The unreasoning lilt of nursery rhyme bread turns into real food, and very unsatisfactory it then is.

*The Lion and the Unicorn were fighting for the crown  
The Lion beat the Unicorn all round the town.  
Some gave them white bread, and some gave them brown:  
Some gave them plum-cake and drummed them out of town.*

The plum cake, it turns out, cannot be cut except in reverse looking-glass time:

“You don’t know how to manage Looking-glass cakes,” the Unicorn remarked. “Hand it round first, and cut it afterwards.” (LG, 203)

Alice never does get a piece of it.

The child reader knows from ordinary sense experience what’s hot, what’s cold, what’s wet and what’s dry, and is parched and amused at once. Perhaps also the unsatisfactory and parsimonious food in these stories had a special pleasure of vengeance for the Victorian child reflecting on the contrast between adult indulgence and nursery indigence. Plain stodgy food with lots of bread and butter and milk puddings seems to have been standard fare for children across social classes at that period.<sup>19</sup> Each time Alice penetrates the adult world she finds it disappointing.

But even more the moral problem keeps presenting itself: is food ever entirely dead? In Wonderland all creatures and all new life forms (Bread-

and-butter-flies, and so on) have rights. Alice and (by implication, according to the “Philalethes” argument) we are sharing a world evenly with every kind of other organism. Are we then always eating ourselves?

Oysters, of all food, are notably alive when eaten. The old oyster will not budge from his bed; the young unguardedly “hurried up / All eager for the treat.” Too late, they discover that *they* are the treat. The complacent hypocrisy of the Walrus and the Carpenter is imperturbable:

“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. (LG, 163)

Who eats more of the obedient little oysters?

“I like the Walrus best,” said Alice, “because he was a *little* sorry for the oysters.”

“He ate more than the Carpenter, though,” said Tweedledee. (163)

The little oysters match Alice in their eager curiosity about what is going to happen to them. The reader’s qualms of conscience at the outcome are left for Alice to voice:

“That was mean!” Alice said indignantly. “Then I like the Carpenter best—if he didn’t eat so many as the Walrus.”

“But he ate as many as he could get,” said Tweedledum. (164)

Alice has to settle for “They were both very unpleasant characters —.” The episode leaves a nasty taste, advisedly. It disconcerts by its insouciance about treachery and consumption. It refuses to resolve or absolve. But much later, when Savile Clark’s operetta based on the *Alice* books was being produced in 1887, Carroll added an extra verse and two further songs for vengeful ghost oysters delighting in the Walrus’s and the Carpenter’s severe indigestion:

The Carpenter is sleeping, the butter's on his face,  
 The vinegar and pepper are all about the place!  
 Let oysters rock your cradle and lull you into rest;  
 And if that will not do it, we'll sit upon your chest.  
 And if that will not do it, we'll sit upon your chest.<sup>20</sup>

The moral takes second place to the zest with which the child actors perform: first sitting, then stamping, “on your chest”:

O woeful, weeping Walrus, your tears are all a sham!  
 You're greedier for Oysters than children are for jam.  
 You like to have an Oyster to give the meal a zest—  
 Excuse me, wicked Walrus, for stamping on your chest!  
 Excuse me, wicked Walrus, for stamping on your chest!<sup>21</sup>

As so often in *Alice*, and in dream, deflection is the narrative motor. Now a sudden rumble cuts across; it is the sleeping Red King.

Oysters and soup are recurrent foods in the books. The Queens' riddle rhyme at the final feast in *Looking-Glass* takes a further step toward the resistance of food to being eaten; here an oyster “Holds the lid to the dish, while it lies in the middle”:

“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!” (LG, 231)

Oysters were certainly also a trial to Charles Dodgson who complains in his letters about their indigestibility. Even a glance at the menu for a Gaudy, a college feast, at Christ Church in 1898,<sup>22</sup> with its nine courses followed by dessert, demonstrates that food could become a form of terror.

Christ Church Gaudy  
 Wednesday, June 22, 1898,  
 At seven o'clock.

Menu.

Consommé à la Nevernaise.

Potage à la Montglas.

Blanchailles.

Filets de Sole à la Trouville.

Atalettes à la Moderne.

Poulets à la Brunnow.

Quartier d'Agneau Rôti.

Asperges en Branches au Beurre fondu.

Pommes nouvelles.

Canetons Rôtis.

Petits pois à l'Anglais.

Meringues Siciliennes.

Gelée de Fruits.

Glaces à la Grappe de Muscat.

Nibs à la Chartres.

DESSERT.

It might, though, be the repetitiveness and boredom of institutional food that lies behind the parody. “Soup of the evening, beautiful Soup” seems to sing ironic praises to the set start of college meals; substituting “soup” for “star” (“Star of the evening”) changes the tone of the song from wonder to set meal. But there is something odder going on: the song has a peculiar and self-devouring relation to its singer. As so often in Lewis Carroll, the joke has several layers. Alice is taken to see the Mock Turtle; the question of being—and of being eaten—crops up, as it will do again

in “The Walrus and the Carpenter” and in the final feast. The Queen here asks Alice:

“Have you seen the Mock Turtle yet?”

“No,” said Alice. “I don’t even know what a Mock Turtle is.”

“It’s the thing Mock Turtle Soup is made from,” said the Queen.

“I never saw one, or heard of one,” said Alice.

“Come on, then,” said the Queen, “and he shall tell you his history.”

(W, 81)

The Mock Turtle, though introduced to Alice as a soup ingredient, turns out to be not just a “thing” but a being with a very full and piteous “history,” told over several lachrymose pages as if he dwelt in the leisure of an eighteenth-century novel. The chapter ends with the Mock Turtle singing a protracted song in praise of “Turtle Soup,” precisely the “rich and green” soup of which he is the principal ingredient—or, perhaps, rather, he is the *substitute* and inferior ingredient, replacing real turtle in Mock Turtle soup:

“Beautiful Soup, so rich and green,  
Waiting in a hot tureen!” (W, 93)

In contrast to the last feast in *Looking-Glass* no one turns a hair at this self-devouring image, and it passes by, blithely unnoticed because “The trial’s beginning!” (94)

The Mock Turtle seems like a hybrid creature: existing in Victorian experience only as a soup cheaper than its original, he claims that “Once . . . I was a real Turtle” (83) and at first glance looks like a real turtle in Tenniel’s illustration. But look longer and it becomes clear that the creature shown has a calf’s head. Mock-turtle soup was indeed made with a calf’s head: Charles Elmé Francatelli describes the laborious method for mock-turtle in his *The Cook’s Guide and Housekeeper’s and Butler’s Assistant*:

First bone, and then parboil the calf’s head in plenty of water, and a small handful of salt, for about twenty minutes; and when the calf’s head has

become sufficiently cold, by steeping in cold water, proceed to trim away the rough parts, particularly the cuticle about the mouth. Having done this, next place the head in a large stewpan, with a good-sized knuckle of veal, about a pound of raw ham, two carrots, two onions—one stuck with twelve cloves—a head of celery, a bunch of basil, marjoram, lemon thyme, a sprig of common thyme, some parsley, winter savory, and spring onions, and two blades of mace; add a quart of good stock, set the stewpan over the fire to boil sharply until the liquid is reduced to a glaze—due care being given to this part of the process to prevent the soup becoming burnt. . . . The calf's-head stock must now be strained through a sieve into a clean stewpan; the grease entirely removed from its surface, and then clarified by mixing into it three whites of eggs previously whipped with a pint of cold water; set the stock on the fire, and whisk it until it boils, and then lift it to the side of the stove, there to boil gently until it has become bright: this will take about twenty minutes. The stock must now be strained through a napkin into a soup-pot; the calf's head cut into pieces an inch square, and being placed in the mock-turtle stock, add half a pint of madeira, a pinch of cayenne, and allow the soup to boil gently by the side of the fire until the pieces of meat are thoroughly done. When about to send to table, add some very small forcemeat quenelles, and a little lemon-juice.<sup>23</sup>

All this labor to avoid the expense of real turtle! Although he may seem to be a hybrid, the mock turtle, with the usual devastating matter-of-factness of Alician dream, is exactly himself: a being derived from a name for a substance, mock-turtle soup. His claim once to have been a real turtle is not pursued: the story of his transformation is never told. Instead he gives an intricate account of his schooling in which the humdrum syllabus of reading, writing, and arithmetic is transformed into activities and emotions. History becomes mystery and the “different branches of Arithmetic” become extreme and melodramatic: “Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision” stage the desperation of the child baffled by addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. “Reeling and Writhing, of course, to begin with,” then “Drawling, Stretching, and Fainting in Coils,” and last, a lesson denied to the lachrymose Mock Turtle, “Laughing and Grief” (W, 85). Drawing, sketching, and painting



in oils, and the Classical languages of Latin and Greek, all reach a zenith of *affect* in this strange remembered schoolroom. The relief of this absurd ingenuity must have liberated a good many young readers from the Victorian classroom.

And perhaps the reason why the instructions for the ecstatic dance of the Lobster-Quadrille sound something like a recipe, as well as a choreography, is because they recall the more sober but lavish protocols for Lobster Quenelles:

Take a fresh-boiled hen lobster; break the shell, and remove the meat, pith, and coral and spawn; cut up the tail into neat scollops and place these in reserve in a small stewpan, with a little of the lobster butter.

Next, place all the remainder of the meat and pith of the lobster in a mortar with the flesh of a large whiting, four ounces of butter, and six ounces of panada; add two whole eggs and two yolks, season with nutmeg, cayenne pepper and a teaspoonful of anchovy; pound the forcemeat thoroughly, and when well mixed, remove it into a basin to be used as hereinafter directed.

“—you advance twice—”

“Each with a lobster as a partner!” cried the Gryphon.

“Of course,” the Mock Turtle said: “advance twice, set to partners—”

“—change lobsters, and retire in same order,” continued the Gryphon.

“Then, you know,” the Mock Turtle went on, “you throw the—”

“The lobsters!” shouted the Gryphon, with a bound into the air.

“—as far out to sea as you can—”

“Swim after them!” screamed the Gryphon.

“Turn a somersault in the sea!” cried the Mock Turtle, capering wildly about.

“Change lobsters again!” yelled the Gryphon at the top of its voice.

“Back to land again, and—that’s the first figure,” said the Mock Turtle, suddenly dropping his voice. (W, 87–88)

As Cheryl A. Wilson points out in *Literature and Dance in Nineteenth-Century Britain*:

Carroll mimics the conventions of dance manual speech, combining a conventional description of a quadrille figure such as “En Avant et en Arriere” . . . with a maritime setting to produce a ridiculous visual image.<sup>24</sup>

But Wilson further suggests that Carroll has expressed the true elation of the dance:

Beyond sending up the codified formality of a popular nineteenth-century set dance, this scene also provides Alice and the reader with the experience of participating in a quadrille (lobster or otherwise).<sup>25</sup>

Alice has here nearly fallen into the mistake she made much earlier in *Wonderland* when she praised her cat Dinah for catching mice or acknowledged having eaten eggs. But by now she is a little more circumspect:

“You may not have lived much under the sea—” (“I haven’t,” said Alice)—“and perhaps you were never even introduced to a lobster—” (Alice began to say “I once tasted—” but checked herself hastily, and said “No, never”). (W, 87)

The question of what is food reaches a climax in the chaotic formal feast at the end of *Looking-Glass* where the rules are kept and flouted at once. The ordinary discourse of eating is full of linguistic evasions for us still, in which French is often invoked to veil substance: for example, pork (*porc*) for pig, beef (*boeuf*) for bull; mutton (*mouton*) for sheep (thus concealing a possible connection to the earlier episode of the shopkeeper Sheep, herself an avatar of the White Queen). As Alice there remarks, “Things flow about so here!” (LG, 176): a Queen, a sheep, a leg of mutton.

The decorousness of etiquette covers the gross act of devouring. Each course of the feast is, in the language of etiquette, “introduced.” But here the significance of the term is confused because the Red Queen seems to be acting as hostess to a shy guest and easing her way by introducing her to other guests at the party:

“You look a little shy: let me introduce you to that leg of mutton,” said the Red Queen. “Alice—Mutton: Mutton—Alice.” The leg of mutton got up in the dish and made a little bow to Alice. (LG, 229)

Instead of being used intransitively, the verb becomes transitive; foods and Alice become acquainted, even possibly interchangeable. This leaves Alice hungry, and at risk. Michael Parrish Lee describes it thus: “Alice’s journey through Wonderland thus develops a model of being in which identity is less a fixed essence than a position on a food chain that varies through association and diet.”<sup>26</sup>

The discourses of acquaintance and of consumption are confused. Alice must not “cut”—refuse to recognize one to whom she has been introduced—(think back to the idyll of the fawn and Alice who are temporarily free of all vestiges of such social and species-exclusion).

The Pudding rounds on Alice in another form of contrariwise; because “contrariwise” claims equality and equity:

“What impertinence!” said the Pudding. “I wonder how you’d like it, if I were to cut a slice out of you, you creature!”

It spoke in a thick, suety sort of voice, and Alice hadn’t a word to say in reply: she could only sit and look at it and gasp.

“Make a remark,” said the Red Queen: “it’s ridiculous to leave all the conversation to the pudding!” (LG, 230)

The Queen’s command to “Remove the joint” and then “Remove the pudding” draws on the language of banquets and their settings, but in a notably perverse way: Francatelli has a whole chapter on “Removes in General” where the emphasis is on *bringing things to table* rather than taking them away: “Removes are large dishes placed at the top or bottom end of a dinner-table, or served from the side-table.”

A description from much the same period as the *Alice* books, of a royal dinner given by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, “The Ascot Dinner,” suggests a grandeur well above the heads of the three Queens in *Alice*: at the Ascot dinner the emphasis is on calm, order, and stately abundance: nothing is hurried, nothing lags; food is served properly hot but no guest is hastened:

The table for a hundred, which occupies nearly the whole length of the room, is ornamented with epergnes, vases, and candelabras. One of the latter, called the St. George, is, perhaps, one of the most splendid specimens of modern plate in the world; the upper division contains the combat with the dragon, the lower has four figures in full relief, supporting the shield bearing the arms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the plume of the Prince of Wales. The shield of Achilles, and the gold salt-cellar representing the white tower of the castle, are splendid specimens of art. The wine-coolers are copies of the Warwick and other classical vases. The hall brilliantly illuminated; two military bands occupying the gallery; the beefeaters or "bouffetiers," as they were originally called, and the numerous servants in state liveries, give a grand effect to the whole. The company assemble in the drawing-room by half-past seven. At a quarter before eight, Her Majesty and the Prince Consort enter; and after graciously recognizing their guests, the Queen takes the arm of a person of the highest rank, and followed by her Royal consort and the Duchess of Kent, leads the way to the banqueting hall. During dinner the bands play some popular waltzes, marches, overtures, and quadrilles; the repast is royal, and served on an entire service of gold plate; the attendance is wonderful. The absence of bustle or confusion in so numerous a party is marvelous; to use a homely adage, there seems to be "a place for everything, and everything in its place." The soup, fish, entrées, &c., are handed round in a state of caloric that astonishes you. The sideboards literally groan (as the newspapers term it), under the weight of home and foreign luxuries, game and truffle pies, pasties, boars' heads, Russian tongues, caviare, sardines, &c. The wine, of the highest order, is handed round plentifully during dinner, as the Court do not patronise the old English fashion of *sitting long after dinner*. At nine o'clock grace is said, and the Lord Steward then gives "The Queen." All stand up, except her Majesty, who gracefully bows her acknowledgments. "God save the Queen" is then played by the united bands; the official Toastmaster again rises, and gives "His Royal Highness the Prince Consort," the company standing, and the bands playing the "Coburg March." In about twenty minutes her Majesty rises, and, supported by her august mother and the other ladies, proceeds to the drawing-room. The Prince again takes his seat, and in less than half an hour joins her Majesty.<sup>27</sup>

The wild riot of the looking-glass feast presents a Grand Guignol version of what happens when these rituals are undermined and reversed.

The final scenes of both *Alice* books are scenes of confusion and turmoil where the dominant order is undermined. The crazy law court of the King and Queen of Hearts collapses when Alice grows to her full size and recognizes the playing cards as simply the tokens of the game, not its controllers.

But the last scene of *Looking-Glass* is more disturbing. Here Alice is not exempt, rearing above the confusion as in *Wonderland*, but is caught up in the general riot. At the nightmare banquet that ends *Looking-Glass* animate and inanimate are confused, power-relations are upended, and the Queen disappears into the soup: soup—that food where all distinctions are confounded. Carroll chooses the occasion of the feast, with its complex liturgy of table manners, courses, toasts, special terms, and courtesies, as the climax that overwhelms order and threatens that chaos is come again.

Earlier, in *Wonderland* the exchange of animate for inanimate disturbed the croquet game: “the croquet balls were live hedgehogs, and the mallets live flamingoes” (W, 73). Every thing and every body is sentient and willful. The flamingo mallet

*would* twist itself round and look up in her face, with such a puzzled expression that she could not help bursting out laughing; and, when she had got its head down, and was going to begin again, it was very provoking to find that the hedgehog had unrolled itself, and was in the act of crawling away. (W, 73)

But in the final feast scene in *Looking-Glass* we have moved from game to grand ritual. Meat and people are not usually placed on a single plain but here the food is never entirely dead. Perhaps there is even a proleptic glimpse of Carroll’s increasing concern for animal welfare here. Carroll’s description is akin to Carlyle’s description in *Sartor Resartus* (1836) of the organization of Teufelsdröckh’s great work on the history of clothes.

The Book

too often distresses us like some mad banquet, wherein all courses has been confounded, and fish and flesh, soup and solid, oyster-sauce, let-

tuces, Rhine-wine and French mustard, were hurled into one huge tureen or trough, and the hungry Public invited to help itself.<sup>28</sup>

At Alice's banquet things have gone much further. Revolution is in the air. The meat is alive; the implements are on the march.

At this moment she heard a hoarse laugh at her side, and turned to see what was the matter with the White Queen; but, instead of the Queen, there was the leg of mutton sitting in the chair. "Here I am!" cried a voice from the soup-tureen, and Alice turned again, just in time to see the Queen's broad good-natured face grinning at her for a moment over the edge of the tureen, before she disappeared into the soup.

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. (LG, 232-33)

So Alice pulls out the tablecloth from under the whole fandango and "plates, dishes, guests, and candles came crashing down together in a heap on the floor" (234). Not waste exactly, and certainly not recycling, but a collapse in which the hierarchies and taxonomies of the three great kingdoms, and the exceptionalism of the human, all give way, ending as just "a heap on the floor."

At last all hierarchy is overturned, species are incoherent, live and dead uncertain, as the leg of mutton sits in the chair and the Queen vanishes into the soup tureen. Pandemonium and madness threaten. The dream has become nightmare and Alice escapes by shaking the Red Queen into a kitten. Alice is left with the dilemma: "Which dreamed it?"—not "who" but "which"—"which" being a term that suggests alternatives and that also includes life beyond the human. Alice concludes by transferring appetite from herself to the kitten in an odd, even salacious imagining.

"By the way, Kitty, if only you'd been really with me in my dream, there was one thing you *would* have enjoyed—I had such a quantity of poetry said to me, all about fishes! To-morrow morning you shall have a real treat. All the time you're eating your breakfast, I'll repeat 'The Walrus

and the Carpenter' to you; and then you can make believe it's oysters, dear!" (239)

Language, in the *Alice* books, is all powerful: it provokes appetite and it mingles with flavor. There is no sensory gap between body and poetry: you can taste fish in verse. If the kitten had been "really" with her inside the dream, as kitten, she could have enjoyed poems about fishes and now—in the world outside dream—her breakfast taste will be raised to the level of oysters by Alice's saying aloud of "The Walrus and the Carpenter," remembered from inside the dream (a feat of memory in itself). In the *Alice* books the body is never left behind. In dream as in waking it is present with all its appetite: appetite realized as language.

## EPILOGUE

All the various sorts of knowledge by which Lewis Carroll was surrounded become untethered and confounded as they enter his dream worlds. But they are active in his mind as he writes, and not only in the unknowing style of memory that E. S. Dallas describes: “The memory cannot help itself. It is a kleptomaniac and lets nothing go by.”<sup>1</sup> Rather, they sustain a vertiginous presence; references to maths and logic, language and education theory, are exact though fleeting and often askance, as I have been exploring in this study. Carroll’s joking is always precise and often multilayered, able to encompass deformed knowledge and make a new thing of it. Most of his jokes are at the opposite end of the spectrum from the species of nonsense named early in the nineteenth century as “amphigory,” a rigmarole that appears to make sense but that becomes meaningless as you approach more near. Carroll includes examples of that kind of obfuscation and mocks it: for example, the Duchess’s glossing of “Be what you would seem to be” as “Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise” (W, 80). More often, though, he conceals further references, and sometimes in-jokes, beneath the surface tension of his puns and parodies. Alice’s good sense places in high relief the contortions and contrariwise demeanor of the figures by whom she is surrounded. Her curiosity invites the reader to penetrate the active com-



plexity of the text within which she dwells. She is the key interpreter who lances our inquiries to their furthest reach, sometimes further than she chooses to go. She keeps her feet firmly on the ground and her curiosity is always seeking explanations.

In an early poem, “A Sorcerer Bids Farewell to Seem,” Sylvia Plath re-imagines Prospero giving up his magic in the language of the *Alice* books:

I’m through with this grand looking-glass hotel  
 where adjectives play croquet with flamingo nouns;  
 methinks I shall absent me for a while  
 from rhetoric of these rococo queens.  
 Item: chuck out royal rigmarole of props  
 and auction off each rare white-rabbit verb;  
 send my muse Alice packing with gaudy scraps  
 of mushroom simile and gryphon garb.

My native sleight-of-hand is wearing out:  
 mad hatter’s hat yields no new metaphor,  
 the jabberwock will not translate his songs:  
 it’s time to vanish like the cheshire cat  
 alone to that authentic island where  
 cabbages are cabbages; kings: kings.<sup>2</sup>

Plath begins with a flourish of impatience akin to that of Alice herself as she exits *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*, denouncing the playing cards and pulling down the tablecloth with all its feasting apparatus. The paradox is that the *Alice* books are at once severely literalistic and endlessly breed fresh metaphors, translations, and garbs. They are preoccupied with “seem” and “is”; they inhabit a place where “cabbages are cabbages; kings: kings” but where both terms become unfamiliar when you link them alongside.

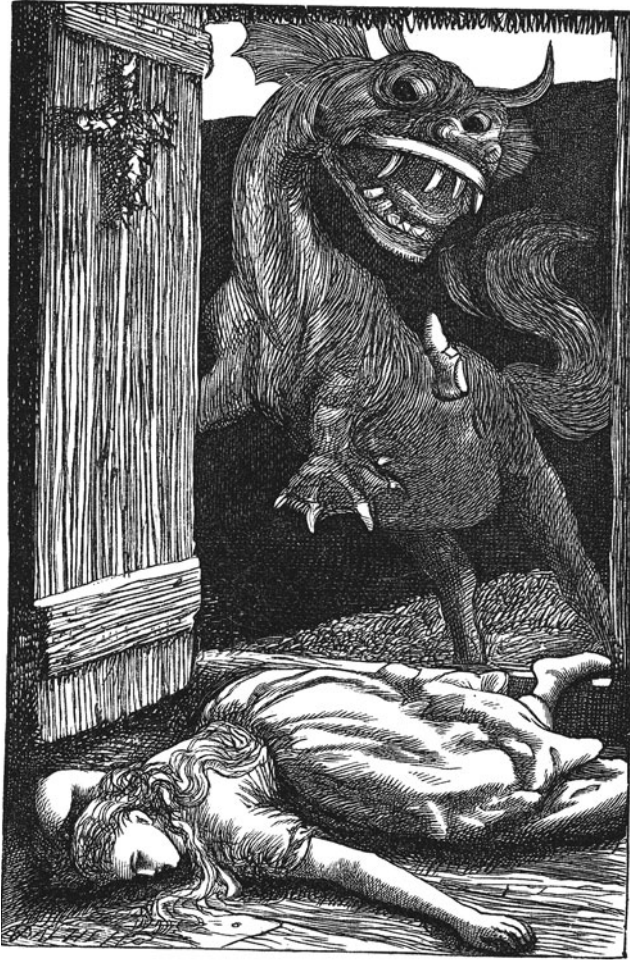
The sense of there always being further space to explore in these two works has generated countless aftertexts and interpretations.<sup>3</sup> These have veered off in many directions, some that Lewis Carroll would have been astonished and probably appalled to pursue. Yet his texts with

their mingling of secrecy and matter-of-factness have propelled all these after-imaginings. In this study I have concentrated on some of the now-submerged connections that link us back to his first readerships. Such reading supplements our pleasure, I hope, and opens out the field of knowledge inhabited by our nineteenth-century contemporaries. The books do not require us to build an entire apparatus of reference; they have enough energy to keep making fresh associations. Indeed, the zest of Martin Gardner's classic *Annotated Alice*, through all its editions, is its mingling of information and personal quirky associations.

Yet the books open up those fresh spaces, occupied in so many different ways by later creativity, by being in some ways circumscribed. In the introduction I discussed the latency of Alice. Despite the two books being remembered by many readers as frightening as well as joyful when read during their childhood, there are some kinds of alarm that are excluded from the text and from the illustrations. I can best show this by one example. Carroll admired the work of the artist and illustrator Arthur Hughes and in 1863 bought one of his pictures, *The Lady with the Lilacs*. In 1868 he considered him as a possible illustrator for *Looking-Glass* but thought that "he has not, so far as I know, any turn for grotesque."<sup>4</sup> He was perhaps mistaken in this view, as a Hughes image contemporaneous with *Looking-Glass* shows.

Arthur Hughes illustrated Carroll's long-standing friend George MacDonald's novel, *Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood*, which appeared a few months before *Looking-Glass* in 1871. MacDonald's book describes a boyhood spent under the care of kind Kirstie, who tells traditional stories of the Scottish world around them—which includes magical beasts like the kelpie who threatens the girl in Kirstie's tale, by implication, sexually. The girl has delayed too late her return home and the sun has gone down as she dallied with a boy. Darkness has fallen. The Kelpie wants to "eat her" and is after her.

In Tenniel's image of the Jabberwock the furious beast looms large and the little knight is upright, striking at him with his sword. Here, in the Hughes image, the very Alice-like maiden is abject, prone. Fleeing the kelpie, she has fallen across the threshold, and lies almost within the door that has the saving rowan branch sign of the cross on it. (See fig. 21.)



21. Arthur Hughes, *The Kelpie thwarted as the shoe flies off* in George MacDonald's *Ranald Bannerman's Boyhood* (1871).

But as she fell, one foot was left outside the threshold, so that the rowan branch could not take care of it. And the beast laid hold of her foot with his great mouth, to drag her out of the Cottage and eat her at his leisure. . . . But her shoe came off in his mouth, and she drew in her foot and was safe.<sup>5</sup>

The monster has snatched one of her shoes, so close was his pursuit. She is just inside. She has reached safety because her shoe has come off. But in Hughes's image her foot is naked and the monstrous kelpie tosses erect the trophy of the pointed shoe in a phallic image that tells us the girl is nubile and on the verge of rape.

Such an image, and such an event, is unthinkable for Alice. She is always bolt upright save for that one scene in the Rabbit's house where she has swelled to occupy more than the available space. And there, at least in Carroll's image, she seems peacefully contained in a womb-like repose, looking out at the reader and into free space. Jabberwocky is arcane, recessed, the subject of analysis and explication by Humpty Dumpty, not a threat to virginity or to life. MacDonald and Hughes together explore anxieties that are excluded from the *Alice* books. These books do not encompass tragedy or sexual passion; they light up life through jokes and curiosity, through eagerness and oddity, and through the hopefulness with which Alice explores all the forms of knowledge by which she is surrounded.

As often occurs as part of the afterlife of major works of literature, the exclusions and voids in the text become thronged with alternative life. So, *Robinson Crusoe* breeds rewritings that focus on Friday or the absent women of the text: Coetzee's *Foe* (1986) or Tournier's *Vendredi* (1967) are examples. The *Alice* books invite "malice" websites and automata and graphic novels and local history as well as erotic tales and physics textbooks.<sup>6</sup> They generate horror movies and pantomimes, interactive spectacles and musicals, as well as philosophy. And though often remote, very few of these extensions and transformations are absolutely excluded from the originating text. Alice crosses daunting thresholds and makes her way past hampering doors. The books dwell in childhood imagination. Puberty is the future that Alice avoids, but its knowledge broods there in the elegiac framing of the stories and is felt within the reader who has crossed the brook to adulthood: "The Eighth Square at last!" — a trajectory that can never be retraced in bodily life. Yet the *Alice* books allow us all the pleasures of being in more than two places at once, wandering like the Cheshire-Cat: to be in adulthood and childhood, and in the present we share and the present that was shared by our Victorian forebears.



## Notes

### INTRODUCTION

1. See Charles Dodgson, *The Oxford Pamphlets, Leaflets and Circulars of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson*, ed. Edward Wakeling (Charlottesville, VA: Lewis Carroll Society of North America, 1993), 1:289–90.

2. Richard Foulkes, *Lewis Carroll and the Victorian Stage: Theatricals in a Quiet Life* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005) brings out the range and extent of Carroll's knowledge of plays and the contemporary theatre.

3. "'Alice' on the Stage," in Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland; and Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, ed. Hugh Haughton (The Centenary Edition, 1998; London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 294. I have cited this edition for these works throughout the text and abbreviated them as W (*Alice in Wonderland*), LG (*Through the Looking-Glass*), AS ("'Alice' on the Stage"), and UG (*Alice's Adventures Under Ground*).

4. Jean Gattégno surveyed Carroll's interests in the style of a gazetteer in *Lewis Carroll: Fragments of a Looking-Glass from Alice to Zeno*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976).

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6. Frédérique Ait-Touati, *Fictions of the Cosmos: Science and Literature in the Seventeenth Century*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), 174–89.

7. Henry James, *What Maisie Knew* (1897), ed. Adrian Poole (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 9.

8. Hilary Schor, “Alice and the Curious Room,” in Schor, *Curious Subjects: Women and the Trials of Realism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 75.

9. Catherine Robson, *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 8.

10. Lewis Carroll, *Jabberwocky and Other Nonsense: Collected Poems of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Gillian Beer (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), 16–20, 35–41.

11. Lewis Carroll, *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Morton N. Cohen, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 1:4 (hereafter Carroll, *Letters*).

12. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst gives a thoroughly documented account of that life in *The Story of Alice: Lewis Carroll and the Secret History of Wonderland* (London: Harvill Secker, 2015).

13. Lewis Carroll, *Lewis Carroll’s Diaries: The Private Journals of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson*, 10 vols., ed. Edward Wakeling, introduction by Roger Lancelyn Green (London: Lewis Carroll Society, 1993–2007), 2:42–43 (hereafter Carroll, *Diaries*).

14. E. S. Dallas, *The Gay Science*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866), 1:196: “imagination is but a name for the unknown, unconscious action of the mind—the whole mind or any of its faculties—for the hidden soul.”

15. George MacDonald, *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1858).

16. *Ibid.*, 12. Subsequent page numbers appear in the text.

17. Henry James, review of *Moods*, *North American Review* 101, no. 208 (July 1865): 276.

18. James, *What Maisie Knew*, 6.

19. Carroll, *Diaries*, 5:74.

20. See Michael Parrish Lee, “Eating Things: Food, Animals, and Other Life Forms in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice Books*,” *Nineteenth Century Literature* 68, no. 4 (March 2014): 484–512, for further discussion of the role of Dinah.
21. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (1974; Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 116.
22. William Edmonstoune Aytoun and Theodore Martin, *Bon Gaultier’s Book of Ballads* (Edinburgh: Blackwoods, 1845), 163.
23. P.B., “Progress,” in *Saint Paul’s: A Monthly Magazine*, ed. Anthony Trollope, vol. 1, *October 1867–March 1868* (London: Virtue and Co., 1868), 716.
24. William James, *The Meaning of Truth* (1909; Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 40.
25. Francine Abeles, introduction to Charles Dodgson, *The Mathematical Pamphlets of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson and Related Pieces*, ed. Abeles (New York: Lewis Carroll Society of North America, 1994), 10. See also her “Lewis Carroll’s Visual Logic,” *History and Philosophy of Logic* 28, no. 1 (2007): 1–17.
26. Abeles, introduction to Dodgson, *Mathematical Pamphlets*, 12.

## CHAPTER 1

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2. Lewis Carroll, *The Rectory Umbrella and Mischmasch* (New York: Dover, 1971), 31.
3. *Ibid.*, 32.
4. See David Landes, *Revolution in Time: Clocks and the Making of the Modern World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).
5. See Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).
6. Dan Falk, *In Search of Time: Journeys along a Curious Dimension* (London: National Maritime Museum, 2009), 72. “Stevenson” time refers to George Stephenson (1781–1848), the railway pioneer.
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9. Hermann von Helmholtz, “On the Methods of Measuring Very Small Portions of Time, and Their Application to Physiological Purposes,” *London, Edinburgh and Dublin Philosophical Magazine and Journal of Science*, 4th ser., 6, 40 (November 1853), 314.



10. Hermann von Helmholtz, “The Axioms of Geometry,” *Academy* 1 (1870): 128–31.

11. *Ibid.*, 131.

12. George Moore, MD, *The Power of the Soul over the Body, Considered in Relation to Health and Morals*, 5th ed. (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), 102. Moore was a member of the Royal College of Physicians. Carroll had the sixth edition of this book in his library. Charlie Lovett, *Lewis Carroll among His Books: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Private Library of Charles L. Dodgson* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005), 215.

13. Moore, *The Power of the Soul over the Body*, 102.

14. George Henry Lewes, *The Physiology of Common Life*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1859–60), ii, 370–71. See Lovett, *Carroll among His Books*, 192.

15. J. J. Sylvester, “Address to the Mathematical and Physical Section of the British Association,” *Reports of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (1869; published 1870), 4n.

16. See Elizabeth Throesch, “Nonsense in the Fourth Dimension of Literature: Hyperspace, the ‘New’ Mathematics and the Alice Books,” in *Alice beyond Wonderland*, ed. Hollingsworth, 37–52, for discussion of *Flatland*.

17. J. J. Sylvester, *The Laws of Verse or the Principles of Versification: Exemplified in Metrical Translations* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870), 4.

18. See chapter 4, “The Dialogues of Alice,” for further discussion.

19. John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive: Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence, and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, ed. J. M. Robson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973–74), 8:777. Lewis Carroll owned the third edition of *A System of Logic* (London: John W. Parker, 1851). See Lovett, *Carroll among His Books*, 1350, 210.

20. Mill, *A System of Logic*.

21. *Ibid.*, 776–77.

22. *Ibid.*, 777.

23. See chapter 3, “Puns, *Punch*, and Parody,” for further discussion of this point.

24. Susan Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 161.

25. *Ibid.*

26. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake* (1939), ed. Robbert-Jan Henkes, Erik Binder-voet, and Finn Fordham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 270.

27. Edward Bulwer Lytton, *Pelham, or the Adventures of a Gentleman*, 3 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1828), 1:62–63.

28. H. A. Waldron, “Did the Mad Hatter Have Mercury Poisoning?” *British Medical Journal*, 287, 24.31 (December 1983): 1961.

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9. Charles Dodgson, “Some Popular Fallacies about Vivisection,” *Fortnightly Review*, n.s. 17, 102 (June 1875), 847–54; 848.

10. Carroll, *Diaries*, 3:154.

11. *Ibid.*, 3:151–52.

12. *Ibid.*, 2:42.

13. William Clifford, *Lectures and Essays by the Late William Kingdon Clifford*, F.R.S., ed. Leslie Stephen and Frederick Pollock, 2 vols. (1879; London: Macmillan, 1901), 1:7.

14. *Ibid.*, 12–13.

15. Lady Pollock, W. K. Clifford, and Walter Herries Pollock, *The Little People: and Other Tales* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1874).

16. Clifford, *Lectures and Essays*, 2:163–205.

17. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William\\_Kingdon\\_Clifford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Kingdon_Clifford).

18. See chapter 6, “Must a Name Mean Something?” for further discussion of this scene.

19. Jennifer Bothamley, *Dictionary of Theories* (Canton, MI: Visible Ink, 2002), 122.

20. James Clerk Maxwell, *Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism*, 1:24n, in *The*

*Scientific Letters and Papers of James Clerk Maxwell*, ed. P. M. Harman, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2:679.

21. Maxwell, "Molecular Evolution," *Nature*, October 2, 1873, 473.

22. Maxwell, "To the Chief Musician upon Nabla: A Tyndallic Ode," in Lewis Campbell and William Garnett, *The Life of James Clerk Maxwell: With a Selection from His Correspondence and Occasional Writings and a Sketch of His Contributions to Science* (1882; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 634. Daniel Brown, *The Poetry of Victorian Scientists: Style, Science and Nonsense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), chap. 5.

23. James Clerk Maxwell, "Lectures to Women on Physical Sciences," in Campbell and Garnett, *Life of James Clerk Maxwell*, 410–11.

24. Campbell and Garnett, *Life of James Clerk Maxwell*, 632.

25. Maxwell, "Lectures to Women on Physical Sciences," 633.

26. Maxwell, *Scientific Letters and Papers*, 2:832.

27. November 11, 1874. Maxwell, *Scientific Letters and Papers*, 3:137.

28. Daniel Brown, *The Poetry of Victorian Scientists: Style, Science and Nonsense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 59.

29. Arthur Cayley, "On a New Analytical Representation of Curves in Space," *Quarterly Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics* 5 (1862): 81–86; W. K. Clifford, "Analytical Metrics," *Quarterly Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics* 7 (1866): 54.

30. Clifford, *Lectures and Essays*, 1:311.

31. Maxwell, undated note to Peter Guthrie Tait, quoted in Maxwell, *Scientific Letters and Papers*, 2:332 n. 12.

32. Maxwell, letter to Tait, December 11, 1867, in *ibid.*, 2:332.

33. Peter Harman, *Energy, Force and Matter: The Conceptual Development of Nineteenth-Century Physics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 139–40.

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35. Carroll, *Diaries*, 1:74–75.

36. *Ibid.*, 1:76.

37. *Ibid.*, 4:24.

38. George MacDonald, "A Hidden Life," in *Poems* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1857), 12.

39. George MacDonald, *The Marquis of Lossie*, 2nd ed. (London: C. Kegan Paul and Co., 1878), 109. David L. Neuhauser, "Mathematics, Science and George MacDonald," <http://www.acmsonline.org/Neuhauser> (accessed September 20, 2009). My examples are taken from Neuhauser's essay though the commentary is my own.

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42. *Ibid.*
43. Hermann Helmholtz, “The Axioms of Geometry,” *Academy* 1 (1870): 128–31.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, 130. See further chap. 1 above.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Mark Blacklock, “Higher Spaces of the Late Nineteenth-Century Novel,” 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 17 (2013): 1–19.
48. Evelyn Fox Keller, “Lewis Carroll: A Study of Mathematical Inhibition,” *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 28, no. 1 (1980): 133–60.
49. Dodgson, *Euclid and His Modern Rivals*, 4.
50. T. H. Huxley, “A Liberal Education, and Where to Find It,” Lecture to the South London Working Men’s College, 1868, in *The Major Prose of Thomas Henry Huxley* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997), 205–23.
51. *Ibid.*
52. *Ibid.*
53. George Eliot, *Felix Holt the Radical* (1867; London: Dent, 1967), chap. 29, 259.

## CHAPTER 3

1. Brown, *Poetry of Victorian Scientists*, 80.
2. Eleanor Cook, *Enigmas and Riddles in Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 167.
3. See introduction and notes to *Jabberwocky* for further discussion of individual parodic poems, including this one.
4. Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland; and Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*, ed. Hugh Haughton, 303.
5. *Ibid.*
6. E. S. Dallas, *The Gay Science*, 2 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866), 1:213.
7. *Ibid.*, 1:216.
8. *Ibid.*: “loose memory,” 1:183; “hidden thought,” 1:209.
9. Carroll, *Jabberwocky*, xxx, 92, 368. The poem, almost certainly by David Bates, first appeared, anonymously, in *Sharpe’s London Magazine* (1847–48), 256.

10. Thomas Karshan, *Vladimir Nabokov and the Art of Play* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.
11. *Ibid.*
12. These, and a number of further examples, are collected in Walter Jerrold and R. M. Leonard, eds., *A Century of Parody and Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913).
13. See in particular chapters 4 and 5, “Red Lions: Edward Forbes and James Clerk Maxwell” and “Popular Science Lectures: A Tyndallic Ode,” in Brown, *Poetry of Victorian Scientists*.
14. Jerrold and Leonard, eds., *Century of Parody and Imitation*, 167.
15. Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989), 93. See also her *A Theory of Parody* (London: Methuen, 1985), *passim*.
16. See: <http://international.loc.gov/intldl/carrollhtml/lchome.html>.
17. I am grateful to the Librarian of Christ Church Library and to the Dean and Fellows of the college for the opportunity to consult Vere Bayne’s scrapbook.
18. “An Idea for a Wet Day,” *Punch*, October 24, 1863, 168.
19. Carroll, *Jabberwocky*, 223; from Carroll’s 1868 joke letter to the Senior Censor, *Pamphlets of Lewis Carroll*, 1:55–56.
20. Michael Hancher in *The Tenniel Illustrations to the “Alice” Books* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985) makes it clear through a cornucopia of examples that many of the visual jokes in *Alice* have forebears in *Punch*.
21. “An Unattached Couple,” *Punch*, October 29, 1859, 174.
22. For example, on September 24, 1859, *Punch* publishes a jokey poem about the Eastern Counties Railway.
23. “Ballads for Bedlamites,” *Punch*, March 3, 1860, 87.
24. “See the Swallows Gaily Swimming!” *Punch*, November 5, 1859, 184.
25. “The Clouds Are Shining Clear and Bright!” *Punch*, November 5, 1859, 184.
26. <http://www.oystertown.net/1850-1874/1860-another-whitstable-trade-the-divers/>.
27. “The Indian Chess Board,” *Punch*, October 22, 1859, 166.
28. “*Punch’s* Book of British Costumes,” *Punch*, March 3, 10, and 17, 1860.
29. *Ibid.*
30. James Williams, “Lewis Carroll and the Private Life of Words,” *Review of English Studies* 64, no. 266 (September 2013): 669.
31. Carroll, *Jabberwocky*, 59, 71.
32. See Lovett, *Lewis Carroll among His Books*, for further detail of all these volumes.
33. Williams, “Lewis Carroll and the Private Life of Words,” 651–71.

34. Ernest Adams, "On the Names of Spiders," *Transactions of the Philological Society* 6, no. 1 (November 1859): 216.
35. September 2, 1885, *Letters*, 1:600–601.
36. *Ibid.*
37. Douglas-Fairhurst, *Story of Alice*, 143.
38. *Ibid.*, 144.
39. John Ruskin, *Aratra Pentelici: Six Lectures on the Elements of Sculpture Given before the University of Oxford in Michaelmas Term, 1870* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1872).
40. Quoted in E. T. Cook, *Life of John Ruskin*, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Company, 1911), 1:451.

## CHAPTER 4

1. Max Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain in April, May and June 1861*, 2nd ed. revised (London: Longman, Green, Longman and Roberts, 1862). See further chap. 5 on identity.
2. Vernon Lee, "On Style," in *The Handling of Words* (London: Bodley Head, 1923; reprint, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 53.
3. Foulkes, *Lewis Carroll and the Victorian Stage*. See Gillian Beer, "The Reader as Author," *Authorship* 3, no. 1 (2014) for a more extensive discussion of this topic.
4. Foulkes, *Lewis Carroll and the Victorian Stage*.
5. Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and Other Writings* (1779), ed. Dorothy Coleman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 3–4.
6. John Ruskin, *Ethics of the Dust: Ten Lectures to Little Housewives on the Elements of Crystallization* (1865), 2nd ed. (Orpington: George Allen, 1877).
7. Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion and Other Writings*, 4.
8. Robert Morehead, *Philosophical Dialogues* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1845).
9. Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, 405.
10. André Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen Lane (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1972), 34.
11. *Ibid.*, 34.
12. "Read some of *Diversions of Purley*." Carroll, *Diaries*, January 5, 1855, 1:52.
13. John Horne Tooke, *Diversions of Purley*, revised and corrected with additional notes by Richard Taylor (London: William Tegg and Co., 1857), 313–14.
14. *Ibid.*
15. Carroll, *Diaries*, March 13, 1855, 1:74.
16. *Ibid.*, March 16, 1855, 1:75.

17. Ibid.

18. Smiley, ed., *Philosophical Dialogues: Plato, Hume, Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 1995), xi.

19. See the discussion of the pigeon who regards Alice as a serpent, in chapter 5 on identity, below.

20. *Dialogues of Plato, containing the Apology of Socrates, Crito, Phaedo, Protagoras*, translated by Henry Cary (London: George Bell, 1888), 112. Cary was a Fellow of Worcester College, Oxford.

21. Ibid., 112–13.

22. J. S. Mill, *Autobiography* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1873), 21–22.

23. Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, 4.

24. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour*, trans. Linda McAlister and Margarete Schättle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 43.

25. Richmal Mangnall, *Historical and Miscellaneous Questions for the Use of Young People; With a Selection of British and General Biography &c. &c.* (London: Thomas Tegg and Son, 1837), 90.

26. Ibid., 91.

27. Among Victorian educationists there was also considerable intelligent opposition to the practice of set question and answer as a form of rote learning, for example, Josiah Fitch, *Lectures on Teaching Delivered in the University of Cambridge during the Lent Term, 1880* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1881), 325–26. Fitch was later one of the founders of Girton College, Cambridge, the first Cambridge college for women.

28. Despite its title, Melanie Keene's *Science in Wonderland: The Scientific Fairy Tales of Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) is not concerned with the Alice books save as founding examples behind the many examples of Victorian and later pedagogy she examines.

29. Maria Edgeworth, *Harry and Lucy, Collected into One Volume from the Early Lessons* (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co., 1856), 97.

30. Ibid., 223.

31. Alfred Crowquill, *The Tutor's Assistant or Comic Figures of Arithmetic* (London: J. and F. Harwood, 1843), 14.

32. Crowquill, *The Tutor's Assistant*, 72, 73, 114.

33. Ibid., 33.

34. Ibid., 96.

35. Priscilla Wakefield, *Introduction to the Natural History and Classification of Insects, in a Series of Familiar Letters* (London: Printed for Darton, Harvey and Darton, 1816), iii.

36. Mill, *Autobiography*, 22.
37. Jeremiah Joyce, *Dialogues in Chemistry Intended for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young People: In Which the First Principles of that Science are Fully Explained*, 6 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1807). Joyce, *Dialogues on the Microscope, Intended for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young Persons, Desirous of Investigating the Wonders of the Minuter Parts of Creation* (London: J. Johnson, 1812); J. R. Martinet, *The Catechism of Nature for the Use of Children*, trans. from the Dutch by John Hall, 9th ed., corrected and enlarged by Rev. J. Joyce (London: J. Johnson, 1813); Joyce, *Scientific Dialogues: Intended for the Instruction and Entertainment of Young People: In which the First Principles of Natural and Experimental Philosophy are Fully Explained* (1807; rev. ed., London: Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1815).
38. Joyce, *Dialogues in Chemistry* 3–4.
39. *Ibid.*, 167.
40. Joyce, *Scientific Dialogues*, 1.
41. *Ibid.*, 2.
42. *Ibid.*, 82.
43. *Ibid.*, 422–23.
44. Mill, *Autobiography*, 22.
45. *Dialogues of Plato*, 61.

## CHAPTER 5

1. Harriet Ritvo, *The Platypus and the Mermaid: And Other Figments of the Classifying Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Rebecca Stott, *Darwin's Ghosts: In Search of the First Evolutionists* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012).
2. See Pierre Désrochers on the Bethnal Green permanent waste exhibition: “‘Nothing of Intrinsic Value’: The Scientific Collections at the Bethnal Green Museum.” *V&A Online Journal*, 3 (Spring 2011). <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/journals/research-journal/issue-03/nothing-of-intrinsic-value-the-scientific-collections-at-the-bethnal-green-museum/>.
3. Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species: A Facsimile of the First Edition*, introduction by Ernst Mayr (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 8.
4. Gillian Beer, *Forging the Missing Link: Interdisciplinary Stories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
5. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 184.
6. T. H. Huxley, “On the Physical Basis of Life,” *Fortnightly Review*, n.s. 5 (February 1869): 129.
7. Jim Endersby, *Imperial Nature: Joseph Hooker and the Practices of Victorian Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).



8. George Boole, *An Investigation of The Laws of Thought, on which are Founded the Mathematical Theories of Logic and Probabilities* (London: Walton and Maberly, 1854).

9. *Ibid.*, 6.

10. Lewis Carroll, *Symbolic Logic*, in Carroll, *Mathematical Recreations of Lewis Carroll: Symbolic Logic (1896), The Game of Logic (1886)* (New York: Dover, 1958), 165–66.

11. *Ibid.*, 166.

12. Jonathan Smith, “The Huxley-Wilberforce ‘Debate’ on Evolution, 30 June 1860,” *BRANCH: Britain, Representation and Nineteenth-Century History*, ed. Dino Franco Felluga. Extension of *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*. [http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps\\_articles=jonathan-smith-the-huxley-wilberforce-debate-on-evolution-30-june-1860](http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=jonathan-smith-the-huxley-wilberforce-debate-on-evolution-30-june-1860) (accessed October 3, 2014). Jonathan Smith carefully teases out what is known of the arguments and participants.

13. See Carroll, *Diaries*, 4:34–35. Wakeling’s note lists many of the people Dodgson photographed at that time.

14. Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*.

15. Dodgson, “Some Popular Fallacies about Vivisection.”

16. *Ibid.*, 854.

17. Breton, *Manifestoes of Surrealism*.

18. T. H. Huxley, *Evidence as to Man’s Place in Nature* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863).

19. Richard Chevenix Trench, *On the Study of Words* (London: J. W. Parker, 1851), 5. James Williams describes the later phase of these discussions.

20. Rose Lovell-Smith, “Eggs and Serpents: Natural History Reference in Lewis Carroll’s Scene of Alice and the Pigeon,” *Children’s Literature*, 35 (2007): 27–53.

21. Müller, *Lectures on the Science of Language*, 15.

22. Tennyson, *Maud*, part I, section 22, stanza 10, in *Maud, and Other Poems* (London: Edward Moxon, 1855). Carroll read this when it first appeared. See his appraisal, August 14, 1855, *Diaries*, 1:119–20.

23. Robert Tyas, *The Language of Flowers: or, Floral Emblems of Thoughts, Feelings and Sentiments* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1869), 118–66, 186, 193.

24. *Ibid.*, 142, 176, 177.

25. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 85.

26. All these three were published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Other of the botanical books that interested him were examples of natural theology. He continued to collect books about flora throughout his life: for example, Lovett documents John Balfour, *Botany and Religion* (4th ed. 1882),

with Dodgson's signature. He also owned Leopold Grindon's *Emblems: A Bird's Eye View of the Harmonies of Nature, Considered Especially in Relation to Divine Benevolence* (1865).

27. Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The One I Knew the Best of All* (London: Frederick Warne, 1893; facsimile ed., 1974), 23.

28. Huxley, "A Lobster, or The Study of Zoology," in *Major Prose of Thomas Henry Huxley*, ed. Parr, 1–19.

29. Gould, ed., *A System of Natural History: Containing Scientific and Popular Descriptions of Man, Quadrupeds, Birds, Fishes, Reptiles and Insects* (Brattleboro: Fessenden and Co. and Peck and Wood, 1834), xi–xii.

30. Tyndall, quoted in W. H. Mallock, *The New Paul and Virginia, Or, Positivism on an Island*, 2nd ed. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1878), 135.

31. Mallock, *New Paul and Virginia*, 135–36.

32. Huxley, *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature*, in *Major Prose of Thomas Henry Huxley*, ed. Parr, 68.

33. Gillian Beer, "Darwin and the Uses of Extinction," *Victorian Studies* 51, no. 2 (2009): 321–31, explores the importance of extinction in Darwin's thought.

34. Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*, 489.

#### CHAPTER 6

1. Or as Alice here stumblingly remembers it: "Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty in his place again" (182).

2. Much of the threat in the singer/songwriter Alice Cooper's persona was his adopting a female name alongside a Gothic male appearance.

3. *Jabberwocky* includes acrostics addressed to a number of young girls. See 280–96, notes 393–99.

4. See his letter to Mrs. E. Hatch, June 14, 1891, describing his *Stranger Circular* and his practice of disavowing without outright denying authorship of anything not published under his own name (*Letters*, 2:845)

5. Carroll, *Symbolic Logic*, 5.

6. "A Catechism," *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church According to the Use of the Church of England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, n.d. [1970]), 289.

7. J. S. Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Deductive, Being a Connected View of the Principles of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (London: John Parker, 1851), I.vi.1. This was the edition in Carroll's library. Lovett, *Lewis Carroll among His Books*, 120.

8. Mill, *System of Logic*, ed. Robson, I.vi.4.

9. Bishop was also the composer of “Home Sweet Home.”
10. Margaret Atwood, *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57.
11. Frankie Morris, *Artist of Wonderland: The Life, Political Cartoons, and Illustrations of Tenniel* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 170.
12. Carroll, *Symbolic Logic*, part 1, chap. 4, page 41/2.

## CHAPTER 7

1. Abeles, introduction to Dodgson, *Mathematical Pamphlets*, 22.
2. Carroll, *Diaries*, 2:38, entry for February 9, 1856.
3. *Ibid.*
4. See Beer, “Dream Touch,” 19: *Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 19 (2014). <http://19.bbk.ac.uk>.
5. Lewes, *Physiology of Common Life*, 2:366–72.
6. *Ibid.*
7. George Gordon, Lord Byron, “The Dream,” in *Byron: Poetical Works*, ed. Frederick Page, rev. John Jump (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 91–92.
8. Charles Lamb, “Dream Children: A Revery,” *Essays of Elia*. A new edition. (London: Edward Moxon, 1853).
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. MacDonald, *Phantastes*, 2.
12. Quoted in Stephanie L. Schatz, “Lewis Carroll’s Dream-Child and Victorian Child Psychopathology,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 76 (January 2015): 93–94. See also her “Between Freud and Coleridge: Contemporary Scholarship on Victorian Literature and the Science of Dream-States,” *Literature Compass* 12 (2015): 72–82.
13. Ann Wierda Rowland, *Romanticism and Childhood: The Infantilization of British Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 112, quoting Thomas Reid, *Inquiry Into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1764).
14. Sally Shuttleworth, *The Mind of the Child: Child Development in Literature, Science, and Medicine, 1840–1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4.
15. Review of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, *Athenaeum*, December 16, 1865, 844.
16. Hancher, *The Tenniel Illustrations to the “Alice” Books* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985), 104.
17. Quoted by Brown, *Poetry of Victorian Scientists*, 76. Elsewhere Brown emphasizes Maxwell’s delight in spontaneous play.

18. *Letters*, 2:776.
19. See Duncan Black, “Lewis Carroll and the Theory of Games,” *American Economic Review* 59, no. 2 (May 1969): 206–10, and *A Mathematical Approach to Proportional Representation: Duncan Black on Lewis Carroll*, ed. Iain McLean et al. (Berlin: Springer, 1996).
20. Edward Wakeling, *Lewis Carroll: The Man and His Circle* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 271.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Carroll, *Diaries*, 5:53.
23. Wakeling, *Lewis Carroll: The Man and His Circle*, 273.
24. Carroll, *Diaries*, 2:74–75.
25. Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847; London: Penguin, 1985), 65.
26. *Ibid.*, 66.
27. *Ibid.*
28. Carroll, *Diaries*, 2:38, entry for February 9, 1856.
29. Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 67.
30. [/www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Trial-procedures.jsp](http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Trial-procedures.jsp), accessed 5.11.10.
31. John M. Beattie, “Scales of Justice: Defense Counsel and the English Criminal Trial in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Law and History Review* 9 (1991): 221–67.
32. See *Jabberwocky*: “She’s All My Fancy Painted Him,” 51, and “Disillusionised” [sic], 77–78. “She’s All My Fancy” was gathered in Carroll’s last family magazine *Mischmasch* (1855–62) along with “Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry” (much later expanded as “Jabberwocky” in *Through the Looking-Glass*) and many other of his early poems that he thought worth preserving.
33. Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, ed. Richard Kelly (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000), appendix H, 292.
34. Victor Fet, “Beheading First: On Nabokov’s Translation of Lewis Carroll,” *The Nabokovian* 62 (2009): 52–53.
35. Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, 67.

## CHAPTER 8

1. “Philalethes,” “The Distinction between Man and Animals,” *Anthropological Review* (August 1864): 163.
2. Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 102.
3. Carroll, *Diaries*, 7:175–76.
4. Andrew Wynter, “Cartes de Visite,” *British Journal of Photography*, March 12, 1869, 125. Retrieved from [fadingimages.uk/cartes.asp](http://fadingimages.uk/cartes.asp).

5. “To Charlotte with Her Photograph,” *Punch* 42, April 26, 1862.
6. In Lucia Moholy, *A Hundred Years of Photography 1839–1939*, Pelican Special 35 (London: Penguin, 1939), figs. between 96 and 97. For further discussion of the *Alice* books and cartes de visite see Stephen Monteiro, “Lovely Gardens and Dark Rooms: Alice, the Queen, and the Spaces of Photography” and Christopher Hollingsworth, “Improvising Spaces: Victorian Photography, Carrollian Narrative, and Modern Collage,” in *Alice beyond Wonderland*, ed. Hollingsworth.
7. William Empson, *Some Versions of the Pastoral* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1935), 257.
8. Franz Kafka, *Collected Stories*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir, ed. Gabriel Josipovici (London: Dent, 1993), 414.
9. [Alexander Japp,] “Children and Children’s Books,” *Contemporary Review* 11 (May 1869): 24.
10. *Ibid.*
11. Lewis Carroll, *Jabberwocky and Other Nonsense: Collected Poems of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Gillian Beer (London: Penguin Classics, 2012), 13.
12. *Ibid.*, 44.
13. *Ibid.*, 19–20.
14. Augustus De Morgan, “Extract from Mr. De Morgan’s review of Mr. Wilson’s *Geometry*, in the ‘Athenaeum’ for July 18, 1868,” in Dodgson, *Euclid and His Modern Rivals*, appendix 2, 221.
15. Letter to the *Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience* 22 (Summer 2010): 35216, from Eric Bui et al. The syndrome was first described by Jules Todd in 1955.
16. Carroll, *Diaries*, 3, 102, September 12, 1857.
17. Carroll, *Letters*, 1:65.
18. Havilland Chepmell, *A Short Course of History* (London, 1862), 143–44. The second edition appeared in 1849 so it was a well-established book, perhaps familiar to Carroll from his own childhood.
19. Valerie Mars, “Parsimony amid Plenty: The Victorian Nursery Child’s Diet,” in *Food Culture and History*, ed. Gerald Mars and Valerie Mars (London: London Food Seminar, 1993). And see Judith Flanders, *The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed* (London: HarperCollins, 2003).
20. Carroll, *Jabberwocky and Other Nonsense*, 382.
21. *Ibid.*
22. I am grateful to the librarian of Christ Church for finding three menus for me, one of which—the most frugal—began with oysters, was in English, and ran to eight courses in 1901.
23. Charles Elmé Francatelli, *The Cook’s Guide and Housekeeper’s and Butler’s*

*Assistant* (London: Richard Bentley, 1863), 43. Lobster Quenelles are described on page 184.

24. Cheryl A. Wilson, *Literature and Dance in Nineteenth-Century Britain: Jane Austen to the New Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 104.

25. *Ibid.*

26. Michael Parrish Lee, “Eating Things: Food, Animals and Other Life Forms in Lewis Carroll’s Alice Books.” *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 68, no. 4 (March 2014): 503–4.

27. Anon, *London at Dinner, Or Where to Dine* (London: Robert Hardwicke, 1858).

28. Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus* (1836; London: J. M. Dent, 1908), 25.

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1. Dallas, *The Gay Science*, 1:216.

2. Sylvia Plath, “A Sorcerer Bids Farewell to Seem,” *Collected Poems* (London: Faber and Faber, 1981), 324.

3. See Zoe Jaques and Eugene Giddens, *Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass: A Publishing History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 95–227, and Douglas-Fairhurst, *Story of Alice*, 283–397.

4. Letter to Mrs. George MacDonald, May 19, 1868, *Letters*, 1:119–20.

5. George MacDonald, *Ranald Bannerman’s Boyhood* (London: Strachan, 1871), 64.

6. For example, the “Alice-Malice” website; Jeff Noon, *Automated Alice* (London: Doubleday, 1996); Bryan Talbot, *Alice in Sunderland* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007); Katie Roiphe, *Still She Haunts Me* (London: Hodder, 2001); Malcolm Longair, *Alice and the Space Telescope* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989). For other examples see Carolyn Sigler, ed., *Alternative Alices: Visions and Revisions of Lewis Carroll’s “Alice” Books* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1997).



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