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Lewis Carroll and the Alice Books: An Examination of
Biographical and Psychological Influences on
Aesthetic Techniques and Thematic Concerns

Monique Melamed

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

English

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Monique Melamed, 1984

ABSTRACT

Lewis Carroll and the Alice Books: An Examination of Biographical and Psychological Influences on Aesthetic Techniques and Thematic Concerns

Monique Melamed

Both the style and themes of the Alice books were clearly and pervasively influenced by the underlying psychological reality of Charles Dodgson's life. Some biographical information which is critically pertinent would of necessity include such exaggerated reactions as Dodgson's stammering, his severe insomnia, his love for young girls, loathing for young boys and his creation of an alter-ego -- Lewis Carroll, all concerns which inform the Alice books. Carroll's close identification with his mother and many sisters, as well as his negative experiences in the male world of a strict and competitive boarding school undoubtedly contributed to his ability to empathize with the female psyche, a fact which helps to account for his choice of the female persona in the Alice books. Carroll used Alice both symbolically and psychologically to concretize and externalize his inner conflicts. Carroll's juxtaposition of logic and nonsense is a brilliant artistic achievement enabling him to enjoy freedom from traditional literary constraints. This freedom is symbolized by dreams in the Alice books which inevitably border on the nightmarish world of

insanity. The source of Carroll's insomnia, sexual repression, helps to account for the abundance of sexual imagery in the Alice books. A close critical reading of "Jabberwocky" reveals that through literary creation the author has successfully vanquished the demons of his subconscious. Perhaps the greatest testimonies to Carroll's genius lie in the unending popularity of the works with children and adults, and in the incredibly diverse influences his works have had on subsequent writers and scholars.

This thesis is dedicated
to the two men who made it possible:
my husband, Chaim, for introducing me to Lewis Carroll,
and my supervisor, Professor Lewis Poteet,
for his good advice and humor.

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INTRODUCTION

A purely textual analysis of any work of literature precludes a psychological reading. Thus, biographical information as well as the books themselves will be employed in this examination of Lewis Carroll's Alice books.

All literature is based to a great extent on the author's first hand experience. The biographical background, properly interpreted, yields psychological insights into the character of the author, as well as the characters whom he creates. The biographical approach to literary criticism has been questioned as a valid approach to the elucidation of the works themselves. However, with certain writers and their works, biographical information has shed new light on various obscure passages, symbols and choice of references. This view does not claim that a literary work cannot be understood without external factors. In the case of Lewis Carroll, however, as with Dostolevski, Poe and others -- writers who have been examined by psychological critics -- to overlook pertinent biographical details which relate both directly and indirectly to the texts, would be an injustice and a fatal critical omission.

The psychological approach to literary criticism has faced similar condemnation concerning its *raison d'être* or applicability. Historically, the figures of the madman and the melancholiac were subjects for quasi-psychological examinations. Indeed, many aspects of character and motive are inherently psychological in essence and orientation.

No single school of literary criticism can claim to reveal more than one facet of what is essentially an extremely complex act of literary synthesis and creation. On the other hand, no school should be rejected outright since what is doctrine today may be found to be fallacious tomorrow, and vice versa. Ideally, there should be no limit of approach to understanding or re-experiencing a work of literature because the ideal reader should possess equivalent knowledge and sensibility to the writer. If this is impossible, at least the reader should maintain a mind open to the rich diversity of literary and critical approaches. While admittedly the biographical and psychological schools of literary criticism remain peripheral to the traditional approaches, one cannot help but agree with Freud's conclusion that the field of literature contains the greatest repository of psychological knowledge.

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

An examination of a writer's life often yields critical aesthetic insights into such areas as the author's choice of particular literary techniques, thematic references, and symbols. Within a brief chronological account of Lewis Carroll's life, I shall highlight certain of his psychological reactions, which included insomnia, stammering, an odd love for little girls, and a loathing for young boys. As we shall see throughout the thesis, Carroll was able artistically to transmute his experiences into the Alice books.

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, better known as Lewis Carroll, was the third child and first son born to Charles and Frances Dodgson on January 27, 1832, in Cheshire, England. The elder Charles Dodgson was the Curate of the parish of Daresbury in Cheshire, and he eventually became Rector of Croft in Yorkshire in 1843. He was described by C.S. Collingwood as "a man of deep piety and of a somewhat reserved and grave disposition"¹. The elder Dodgson had a penchant for mathematics and personally tutored his young son Charles until he was eleven years old. The younger Charles' own love for mathematics

¹Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll (Rev. C.L. Dodgson) (Toronto: G.N. Morang, 1898), p. 8.

may have been inherited from his father, as may have been Charles' gift for nonsense; for although Dodgson Senior is generally remembered as a stern authoritarian figure, an excerpt from a letter which he wrote to his son in 1840 reveals a side of the father's character which was generally kept hidden:

I will not forget your commission. As soon as I get to Leeds I shall scream out in the middle of the street, Ironmongers -- Iron-mongers.... Then what a bawling & a tearing of hair there will be! Pigs & babies, camels & butterflies, ... ducks hiding themselves in coffee cups, and fat geese trying to squeeze themselves into pencil cases -- at last the Mayor of Leeds will be found in a soup plate.

The father's use of nonsense undoubtedly helped to establish a bond between himself and his son, and allowed the elder Dodgson an opportunity to evade the strict decorum of Victorian life. The letter also demonstrates Charles Dodgson's use of incongruity as a nonsensical element: "Pigs & babies, camels & butterflies", an element which would later prove essential to Lewis Carroll's writings. In particular, the father's combination of "Pigs & babies" can be linked to the ugly child who was transformed into

¹ Charles Dodgson Senior quoted by Derek Hudson, Lewis Carroll: An Illustrated Biography (New York: Clarkson N. Potter Inc., 1977), p. 35.

a "handsome pig"¹ in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and the father's location of the Mayor of Leeds in a soup plate may have been the source for the appearance of the White Queen at the final banquet of Through the Looking Glass "over the edge of the tureen"². When the elder Dodgson died in 1868, Charles Lutwidge called it "the greatest blow that has ever fallen on my life"³.

However, it is noteworthy that Charles Lutwidge seems to have enjoyed a much closer and warmer relationship with his mother, Frances Lutwidge. Collingwood relates that she was said to have been "the most gentle of mothers"⁴. The closing of a letter which she wrote to her eldest son and which was treasured by the recipient, who inscribed it with warnings that it was not to be touched, demonstrates the warmth of her generous spirit and her influence on her son's character:

¹ Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland in The Annotated Alice, ed. Martin Gardner (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1960), p. 87. All subsequent references to this text will be internalized as AAW.

² Carroll, Through the Looking Glass in The Annotated Alice, p. 335. All subsequent references to this text will be internalized as TLG.

³ Carroll quoted by Florence Becker Lennon, The Life of Lewis Carroll (Victoria Through the Looking Glass), 3rd ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), p. 67.

⁴ Collingwood, p. 8.

"Give ... all my other treasures, including yourself, 1,000,000,000 kisses from me"¹. A study of Lewis Carroll's letters indicates that he was preoccupied with kisses and kissing, an innocent or socially acceptable type of human intercourse. A letter which he wrote in 1890 to Isa Bowman, one of his child friends, offers a childlike fantasy like his mother's, in which Carroll's interest in both mathematics and kissing combine in gleeful overstatement:

It's all very well for you & Nellie & Emsie to write in millions of hugs & kisses, but please consider the time it would occupy your poor old very busy Uncle! ... you see it would take 23 weeks of hard work².

Carroll's mother died when he was nineteen, a few days after he first entered Oxford. She had borne ten other children, the youngest of whom, Edwin, was only five years old at the time of her death.

It is significant that Lewis Carroll "was a stammerer, as were most of his seven sisters; but this embarrassment, which he suffered in talking to other adults ... disappeared in the company of little girls"³. The intermittent

¹Mrs. Dodgson quoted by Collingwood, p. 14.

²Carroll quoted by Isa Bowman, Lewis Carroll As I Knew Him (New York: Dover Publications, 1972), p.30.

³Austin Warren, "Carroll and his Alice Books," Sewanee Review 88, (Summer 1980) : 336-37.

occurrence of the stammering clearly reveals its psychosomatic origin. Phyllis Greenacre hypothesizes that the stammer may have resulted from the "conflict between childish impulsiveness and the straight jacket of obligatory and dutiful love"¹. At any rate, Carroll's stammering probably contributed to his aesthetic interest in language and to his desire to "control" it. The Dodo of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is Lewis Carroll himself, since due to his stammering, he is said to have pronounced his name "Do - Do - Dodgson" and because in 1886, he inscribed the facsimile edition of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland to his friend, Reverend Duckworth: "The Duck from the Dodo". Of course, the ability to laugh at oneself helps to solve psychological problems, assisting adjustment to reality, and laughter or humor is an essential aesthetic element in the Alice books.

Charles Lutwidge seems to have enjoyed a happy childhood in the English countryside, where he amused his siblings and himself with such diversions as a train which carried child passengers and which functioned according to a set of strict regulations. As Greenacre points out, sibling rivalry is inevitable in so large a family:

¹Phyllis Greenacre, Swift and Carroll: A Psychoanalytic Study of Two Lives (New York: International Universities Press, 1955), p. 123.

three babies arrived before he was five. That he suffered intensely from very early and organically felt jealousy is attested by the ubiquitousness of expressions of oral aggression in all his writing¹.

(See Chapter VI.) Furthermore, the fact that Charles had seven sisters and that he enjoyed a close relationship with his mother, may account, in part, for his identification with the female psyche, or "anima" in Jungian terms. "Charles ... had much in his nature that suggests the Victorian woman."² Greenacre also reports that

As he grew older, his face became more feminine in cast, an effect possibly enhanced by his wearing his hair rather long. His effeminacy was sufficiently obvious that some of his less sympathetic students once wrote a parody of his parodies and signed it 'Louisa Caroline'³.

In 1844, after the family's move to the Croft rectory, Charles began to attend the nearby Richmond Grammar School in order to prepare for entry to public school. Mr. Tate, the headmaster of Richmond was pleased with his young pupil's performance; Tate's first report relates:

¹Greenacre, p. 214.

²Ibid., pp. 222-23.

³Ibid., p. 166.

"He has passed an excellent examination in mathematics, exhibiting ... that love of precise argument, which seems to him natural"¹. This quality foreshadows Carroll's professional interest in logic, as well as its thematic prevalence in the Alice books.

A year later, in 1845, Charles Lutwidge wrote a poem, "My Fairy", believed to be "the first poem recorded from his pen"². The poem deals openly with prohibitions as the final line "Moral: 'You mustn't'" demonstrates. The initial stanza is significant since it relates to insomnia, which afflicted Carroll:

I have a fairy by my side
Which says I must not sleep
When once in pain I loudly cried
It said 'You must not weep'³.

The title of Dodgson's book of logical games, published in 1893, Pillow Problems, further attests to his insomnia. Collingwood quotes his uncle on his motive for writing Pillow Problems. The book was written so that the mind

¹Mr. Tate quoted by Collingwood, p. 25.

²Francis Huxley, The Raven and the Writing Desk (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1976), p. 142.

³Carroll, "My Fairy," quoted by Huxley, p. 142.

could

banish those petty troubles and vexations which most people experience, and which unless the mind be otherwise occupied -- will persist in invading the hours of night.... unholy thoughts, which torture with their hateful presence the fancy that would fain be pure¹.

This explanation is significant in that it demonstrates Carroll's progression in his ability to confront himself. At first he merely refers to "petty troubles" commonly experienced ("which most people experience"), then the problems "will persist" and finally they are described as "unholy thoughts, which torture with their hateful presence". Lennon hypothesizes that some of Carroll's insomnia

arose from the complete negation of his sexual needs. He had an odd, and of course frustrated, love for little girls -- in part identifying himself with them, in part substituting 'child friends' for more difficult and responsible adult relationships².

Carroll's concern with insomnia surfaces in the Alice books.

In 1846 Charles entered Rugby. Nine years later, his memories of his years here were distinctly unhappy: "I cannot say that I look upon my life at Public School with any sensations of pleasure, or that any earthly considerations would induce me to go through my three years again"³.

¹Carroll quoted by Collingwood, p. 321.

²Lennon, p. 223.

³Carroll quoted by Collingwood, p. 30.

His rejection of what was probably a fiercely competitive, male-oriented environment is evident. When he was home from Rugby, Charles began such imaginative projects as marionette shows and family newspapers. In particular, he wrote some of the parodies which were later used in the Alice books.

In 1851 Charles entered Christ Church, Oxford, where he was to reside for the remainder of his life. Perhaps the fact that he was no longer an adolescent, coupled with the fact that Oxford provided a more conducive atmosphere for the eccentric intellectual, would account for his preference for Oxford over Rugby. His mother's death shortly after his entrance into Oxford, undoubtedly reinforced his need for a surrogate "home". The following year Charles gained a Studentship, assuring him of lifetime membership at the college. "The only conditions on which these old Studentships were held were that the Student should remain unmarried, and should proceed to Holy Orders."¹ In 1854 Charles began to prepare for ordination and earned his B.A.

1855 marked the start of an important period in Dodgson's life; he became a tutor and it was also the year in which H.G. Liddell was elected Dean of Christ Church. In 1856 Carroll first met Liddell's daughter, Alice. In a diary entry for Friday, April 25, 1856, Carroll wrote:

went ... to the Deanery The three little girls were in the garden most of the time, and we became excellent friends I mark this day with a white stone².

¹Collingwood, p. 52.

²Carroll, The Diaries of Lewis Carroll, 2 vols., ed. R.L. Green (London: Cassell and Co. Ltd., 1953), 1: 83.

For Carroll, "a white stone" signified a day of great emotional importance. The significance of the year 1856 may also be seen in that he first used the pseudonym "Lewis Carroll" in this year. As we learn from a diary entry of 1856, Edmund Yates, the editor of the Comic Times to whom Carroll had previously submitted poems, made the choice of "Lewis Carroll" out of a list of four names submitted by Dodgson:

Feb. 11 [1856] (Mon.)
Wrote to Mr. Yates sending him a choice of names: 1. Edgar Cuthwellis (made by transposition out of 'Charles Lutwidge').
2. Edgar U.C. Westhill (ditto). 3. Louis Carroll, (derived from Lutwidge = Ludovic = Louis, and Charles [Carolus] , 4. Lewis Carroll (ditto).¹

All four choices put forth by Carroll are created out of 'Charles Lutwidge'; the repudiation of the paternal name "Dodgson" would support the view of Carroll's stronger psychological link with his mother in particular, and with the feminine consciousness in general. In 1856 as well, Carroll purchased his first camera.

He eventually acquired prominence as one of the leading portrait photographers of his time, what had begun as a hobby becoming an integral part of his life².

He often used Alice Liddell and her sisters as models. Carroll had hundreds of child friends during his lifetime, but as he wrote in a letter to Alice Liddell Hargreaves herself, she was

¹Carroll, The Diaries, 1: 77.

²John Fisher, The Magic of Lewis Carroll (London: Butler and Tanner, 1973), p. 13.

his

ideal child-friend. I have had scores of child-friends since your time, but they have been quite a different thing¹.

On July 4, 1862, the renowned rowing expedition on the Isis took place, on which occasion the Alice story was first told to Alice, her sisters Lorina and Edith, and Carroll's friend, The Reverant Robinson Duckworth. The latter recalled

turning around and asking, 'Dodgson, is this an extempore romance of yours?' and he replied, 'Yes, I'm inventing as we go along'².

A story told on the spur of the moment suggests stream of consciousness, a dream-like technique, in which the speaker is less subject to conscious control (somewhat like automatic writing). It may be psychologically significant as well that the original version of the story, "Alice's Adventures Under Ground" was created as a gift for Alice Liddell in 1864. The opening poem to Through the Looking Glass reveals the motivation behind Carroll's gift:

Thy loving smile will surely hail
The love-gift of a fairy-tale
(TLG, 173).

Just as Dante immortalized Beatrice, Carroll immortalized

¹Carroll quoted by Collingwood, p. 76.

²Robinson Duckworth quoted by Huxley, p. 11.

Alice, his muse, in his books. "It is the heroine Alice who enables Carroll to perform his own heroic artistic task."¹

In the third chapter of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, "The Pool of Tears", we encounter the Dodo (Dodgson), as well as the other members of the rowing expedition. Lorina Liddell is the Lory, Edith is the Eaglet, Duckworth is the Duck and Alice is, of course, Alice. Even Dinah, Alice's cat who appears in the book, was actually the Liddell family's pet. Carroll himself appears not only in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland as the Dodo, but also in Through the Looking Glass as the White Knight. Like the industrious knight, Carroll was an inveterate inventor who developed such items as a nyctograph, a device which facilitated notetaking in the dark, and the first self-photographing device².

It is no secret that Carroll modelled his White Knight upon himself. They shared the same shaggy hair, mild blue eyes, the same topsy-turvy outlook on the world [and a] mutual fondness for tricks and gadgets.³

Isa Bowman recalled that when Carroll walked, he

¹Judith Bloomingdale, "Alice as Anima: The Image of Woman in Carroll's Classic," in Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dreamchild as Seen Through the Critics' Looking-Glasses, 1865-71, ed. Robert Phillips (New York: Vanguard Press, 1971), p. 380.

²Fisher, p. 13.

³Ibid., p. 12.

"always seemed a little unsteady in his gait"¹. This feature further suggests the White Knight, who persistently experiences a problem maintaining his equilibrium.

Carroll's friend George MacDonald and his family encouraged Carroll to publish the manuscript of Alice. In 1865 an expanded version of the story told to the Liddell girls, entitled Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, was published, with illustrations by John Tenniel.

Two years later Carroll began work on Through the Looking Glass which eventually appeared in 1871. The second book was inspired by another Alice, Alice Raikes, who had suggested the mirror motif. As Alice Raikes was to recall:

'Now,' he [Lewis Carroll] said, giving me an orange, 'first tell me which hand you have got that in.' 'The right,' I said. 'Now,' he said, 'go and stand before the glass, and tell me which hand the little girl you see there has got it in.' After some perplexed contemplation, I said, 'The left hand.' 'Exactly,' he said, 'and how do you explain that?' I couldn't explain it, but seeing that some solution was expected, I ventured, 'If I was on the other side of the glass, wouldn't the orange still be in my right hand?' I can remember his laugh. 'Well done, little Alice,' he said. 'The best answer I've had yet'².

¹Bowman, p. 9.

²Alice Raikes quoted by Martin Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 180, footnote 4.

There were numerous child friends, for as Carroll told Arthur Griddlestone, an undergraduate at New College, children "are three-fourths of my life"¹. Some of the children were met at the Eastbourne sea-shore where Carroll spent many summers; others, like Emily Dixon, were encountered on the train:

July 26 (W.) [1876]

Left Oxford for Guildford. I made friends with my fellow-travellers ... a Mrs. Dixon, and her daughter, Emily Phyllis (aged 12). The adventure had the usual ending -- of my promising to send the child a copy of Alice.²

Carroll had a decided preference for pre-pubescent girls.

Mrs. Shute, the artist in whose studio he worked, later wrote that he confided to her that he preferred the undeveloped (or incompletely developed) female body to the mature one, and that 12 would be his ideal age as 'children are so thin from 7 to 10'. This may have represented some shift in his interest as in the fifties and sixties -- i.e. when he was between twenty and forty -- there is every indication that 7 to 8 was the preferred age.³

Carroll rarely maintained his relationships with young girls once they reached puberty:

¹Carroll quoted by Bowman, p. 60.

²Carroll, The Diaries, 2: 355.

³Greenacre, p. 163.

About 9 out of 10, I think, of my child-friendships get ship-wrecked at the critical point, 'where the stream and river meet,' and the child-friends once so affectionate, become uninteresting acquaintances, whom I have no wish to set eyes on again¹.

This last phrase "whom I have no wish to set eyes on again" conveys a sense of revulsion towards pubescent females, whose tone is reminiscent of Carroll's attitude towards young males:

Sometimes they [children] are a real terror to me -- especially little boys: little girls I can now and then get on with when they're few enough.... But with little boys I'm out of my element altogether.... I'm not omnivorous! -- like a pig. I pick and choose².

The association of little boys with pigs again recalls Dodgson Senior, and the later appearance of this metaphor in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

In his middle life he [Carroll] frankly loathed little boys, and refused to stand in church until after the boy choir had passed as he wished to prevent the boys from becoming conceited. He was known to invite a lady to dinner but stipulate that she should leave her husband at home³.

Carroll demonstrates his naked loathing for boys in the postscript to a letter written in 1895 to another of his

¹Carroll quoted by Collingwood, p. 369.

²Carroll quoted by Jean Gatténo, Lewis Carroll: Fragments of a Looking-Glass, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell CO., 1976), p. 282.

³Greenacre, p. 169.

child friends, Maggie:

My best regards to yourself --
to your small,
Fat, impertinent, ignorant brother
My hatred¹.

Further evidence of Carroll's negative attitude towards young boys appears in his later works, Sylvie and Bruno and Sylvie and Bruno Concluded. Bruno, the male hero, possesses an irritating habit of baby talk and is decidedly effeminate. Uggug, the other boy who appears in these books, is, as his name suggests, ugly in both appearance and character, as well as spoiled and violent. Gattégno finds that "Uggug seems to represent Carroll's quintessential boy"², Carroll's interest in undeveloped girls and the extreme nature of his aversion for young boys might indicate to a Freudian a possible repressed tendency towards homosexuality, rather than pedophilia. It is also interesting that "He disapproved of transvestite parts [at the theatre], though only when it involved a man's being dressed as a woman"³.

Nude photography was commonly practised during the Victorian period, and Lewis Carroll was a key figure in this

¹Carroll, The Works of Lewis Carroll, ed. Roger Lancelyn Green (London: Paul Hamlyn, 1965), p. 711.

²Gattégno, p. 281.

³Ibid., p. 226.

tradition. "Victorian parents ... were quite accustomed to seeing nude 'sexless' children used as objects of decoration in book illustrations and on greeting cards."¹

The first reference to Carroll's photographing nude subjects appears in 1867 and this practice probably continued until 1880; when Carroll abruptly abandoned his beloved photography. Carroll was always prudent in choosing his sitters and in verifying that their parents raised no objections: "To be successful as art, the picture required a relaxed child; and if the picture was to be taken at all, it required the parents' whole-hearted sanction"². An examination of Carroll's nude studies shows them to be provocative and overtly sensual. Many of the models are to be found reclining in erotic, Goya-like poses. (See Figure 1.)

Some parents did object to Carroll's attention to their daughters. There was a mysterious falling out with the Liddell family which lasted several years (1854-62). Unfortunately, Carroll's diaries during this period are missing, and Collingwood, who had access to the complete diaries, offers no explanation for this falling out. On February 5, 1880, Carroll notes in his diary:

¹Morton Cohen, Lewis Carroll, Photographer of Children: Four Nude Studies (New York: Clarkson N. Potter Inc., 1979), p. 7.

²Ibid.



Fig. 1. Carroll's 1873 photograph of Evelyn Hatch.

Brought in 'Atty' Owen she does not look 14 yet, and when, having kissed her at parting, I learned ... that she is 17, I was astonished, but I don't think either of us was much displeas'd at the mistake having been made¹.

The following diary entry reports Mrs. Owen's reaction:

Mrs. Owen treats the matter quite seriously! She adds 'we shall take care it does not recur'².

¹Carroll, The Diaries, 2: 385.

²Ibid.

It seems significant that Carroll refers to his having kissed seventeen year old Atty as a "mistake" (i.e. she was mistaken for a younger girl), and this diction supports the notion that Carroll was strictly interested in pre-pubescent females.

Carroll's very denials make it clear how fundamentally sexual was the importance of little girls in Carroll's life. They were the only sexual objects he allowed himself -- a man who in theory rejected sexual objects altogether -- and they provide the key to his sexuality!

and might explain the "unholy thoughts" which caused his insomnia.

In Chapter VI we will examine the abundant sexual imagery of the Alice books and of Carroll's initial illustrations for the "Alice's Adventures Under Ground" manuscript. Isa Bowman quotes a letter which Carroll wrote to her on September 17, 1893, which contains an instance of sexual symbolism:

Oh, you naughty, naughty culprit! If only I could fly to Fulham with a handy little stick (ten feet long and four inches thick is my favourite size) how I would rap your wicked little knuckles².

The "handy little stick" is notably phallic and the tone of the letter is playful, yet aggressive. There is no

¹Gattégno, p. 96.

²Carroll quoted by Bowman, p. 62.

evidence to attest to any sexual liaisons between Carroll and his child friends. It is highly unlikely that he ever acted upon any of his underlying sexual impulses towards young girls.

A dream which Carroll recollects in his diary of May 15, 1879, further demonstrates his obsessive differentiation of female children from women:

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 ... and had heard that the Terrys were staying near us, so went to call ... [Mrs. Terry] told me that Marion and Florence were at the theatre, ... where they had a good engagement. 'In that case,' I said, 'I'll go on there.... And may I take Polly with me?' 'Certainly,' said Mrs. Terry. And there was Polly, the child, seated in the room, and looking about nine or ten 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 had contrived to give to the two pictures separate individualities¹.

The dream is rich in providing other psychological insights as well. Carroll's insistence on the uniqueness

¹Carroll, The Diaries, 2: 379.

of the dream: " a feature entirely unique, so far as I know, in the literature of dreams" is interesting in that it demonstrates that Carroll himself recognized, perhaps intuitively, the degree of significance of the dream. Basically, the dream is concerned with confusion of identity, a recurring leitmotif in the Alice books. (See Chapter II.) The "child Polly" is distinguished from the "grown-up Polly"; they are given separate existences and identities. What Carroll may not have realized about the dream is that the two identities, the "child" and the "grown-up" are also representative of Carroll's own divided nature." As Carroll grew older he became more compulsive about maintaining the separation between Dodgson and Carroll, just as he was overly meticulous in his letter-recording system and in his responsibilities as curator of the Christ Church Common Room from 1882-91. "He seemed to delight in being arithmetically accurate about every detail of life."¹ In an 1897 diary entry we learn that Dodgson refused to accept mail addressed to Carroll:

a letter came, addressed to 'L. Carroll, Christ Church, Oxford'. So many such come now, that I have decided to refuse them, and gave it, unopened, ... to return to the Post Office. All such will now go back to the writers, through the Dead Letter Office, with endorsement 'not known'².

¹Collingwood, p. 266.

²Carroll, The Diaries, 2: 541-42.

The choice of the words "not known" suggests Dodgson's deep conflict with and ultimate rejection of his alter-ego. Dodgson's repudiation of Carroll, the dissociation of the conservative clergyman logician from the free-spirited, imaginative and nonsensical artist, elucidates Carroll's "divided" personality. Through such efforts as returning mail, Dodgson sought to eliminate his problems of identity. His intricate letter-recording system, his early rules for riding the Croft train, and later, his fastidious collection of old dinner menus and guest lists, demonstrate a similar desire to achieve psychological order and conscious control.

Carroll lived out the remainder of his life, continuously occupied with such projects as treatises on mathematics and logic, his Hunting of the Snark, his Sylvie and Bruno books, preaching sermons to congregations of youngsters and throughout, as always, befriending children. Lewis Carroll died on January 14, 1898 of bronchitis. However, his mind is forever preserved in the Alice books, where his psychological struggles are revealed and perhaps resolved by his act of literary creation.

CHAPTER II

THE QUEST FOR IDENTITY

In the Alice books, the quest for identity is a basic psychological concern shared by every child. Psychologists generally agree that "as soon as a child begins to move about and explore, he begins to ponder the problem of his identity"¹. Ironically, the quest for identity is also the concern of the adult author: "Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!" (AAW, 37) As evident in his works and life, the apparently irreconcilable character traits between Carroll and Dodgson, the male and the female, the adult and the child, reveal a genuine struggle of conflicting or overlapping identities. One of Carroll's child friends explains that "he had the heart of a child himself, so when he spoke to a child she understood -- even about the deeper things in life -- because he spoke her own language"². Carroll seems to have enjoyed a unique degree of empathy with the child's psyche. In Wonderland where childhood is eternal, time has stopped, for as the Hatter mourns, "It's always six o'clock now" (AAW, 99) and in Through the Looking Glass, Humpty Dumpty advises Alice to "Leave off at seven" (TLG, 266),

¹Bruno Bettelheim, The Uses of Enchantment (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), p. 47.

²Mrs. Sawyer's Reminiscences, The Diaries, 1: xxv.

another reference to an arrest of development. Alice shares Carroll's duality of character, for she is described as a "curious child ... very fond of pretending to be two people" (AAW, 33). Roger Henkle finds that in the Alice books, we have "an instance of two psychological patterns -- one associated with the concerns of a growing child, the other with the anxieties of an adult -- being posed against each other"¹.

In Wonderland and in the world beyond the looking glass, nothing has permanent identity; everything undergoes transformation. Pebbles turn into cakes, a baby becomes a pig, poetry becomes parody; the White Queen is metamorphosed into a sheep, her needles become oars, and at the end of Through the Looking Glass, Alice shakes the Red Queen into a kitten. When the Caterpillar, himself an excellent symbol of transformation since he will eventually metamorphose into a butterfly, asks Alice the classic Platonic question "Who are you?" (AAW, 67), Alice replies,

I -- I hardly know, Sir, just at present
-- at least I know who I was when I got
up this morning, but I think I must have
been changed several times since then.

(AAW, 67)

Every normal child is constantly undergoing a growth of personality, an emotional maturation to match his or her

¹Roger B. Henkle, "Carroll's Narratives Underground: 'Modernism' and Form," in Lewis Carroll: A Celebration, ed. Edward Guiliano (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1982), p. 97.

physical development. When Alice grows as large as the White Rabbit's house, she reflects:

There ought to be a book written about me, that there ought! And when I grow up, I'll write one -- but I'm grown up now ... at least there's no room to grow up any more here.

(AAW, 59)

Alice is "grown up" physically, but emotionally she remains a little girl, paralleling the dual identity of Carroll / Dodgson. Similarly, the changeling child with whom Alice is identified ("I wonder if I've been changed in the night" [AAW, 37]) does not mature.

In the Alice books, Carroll demonstrates that one's sense of identity is based upon two components: internal comparison (memory or knowledge) and external verification. Alice tries to recite poetry in order to learn whether she has "been changed for Mabel" (AAW, 38), an example of comparison through memory. When the words of Isaac Watts's "How doth the Little Crocodile" do "not come the same as they used to" (AAW, 38), Alice experiences a tearful confusion of identity: "I must be Mabel after all" (AAW, 38). Later, Alice confides to the Caterpillar that

I can't remember things as I used --
and I don't keep the same size for
ten minutes together!

(AAW, 69)

Size is an aspect of appearance which provides external verification of one's sense of identity. Since children are constantly experiencing changes in size, they are

particularly vulnerable to the attendant confusions of identity. During adolescence, bursts of growth are often perceived as particularly frustrating. Henkle believes that "the great appeal of the Alice books to children can be attributed to their ability to sense the psychological pressures of adolescence"¹.

The Alice books attest to "the importance of names to the functioning of a system of relationships"². Names provide a sense of identity which is emotionally reassuring. One has only to forget or mistake a child's name to see the subsequent crisis of identity provoked. Alice acknowledges the security provided by her name, when upon leaving the wood where things have no names, she says: "I know my name now ... that's some comfort" (TLG, 227). The knowledge of others' names also provides the child with a means of participating in human inter-relationships. At the trial, for instance, Alice is "pleased to find that she knew the name of nearly everything there" (AAW, 144). As we have seen in Chapter I, Lewis Carroll was preoccupied with the subject of

¹Henkle, p. 96.

²Kathleen Blake, Play, Games and Sport: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1974), p. 138.

nomenclature; the Alice books demonstrate a similar pre-occupation.

Early in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Alice reveals her confusion of both names and identity:

I'm sure I'm not Ada, ... for her hair grows 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.

(AAW, 37-38)

Later, when the White Rabbit mistakes her for his housemaid Mary Ann, Alice responds: "How surprised he'll be when he finds out who I am" (AAW, 56).

In the looking glass world, the gentleman on the train acknowledges Alice's confusion of identity: "So young a child ... ought to know which way she's going, even if she doesn't know her own name!" (TLG, 218). The Gnat asks Alice: "What's the use of their [insects] having names ... if they won't answer to them?" (TLG, 222) Alice replies that the names are not of any use to the insects but rather their names are "useful to the people that name them" (TLG, 222), proving that she has gained insight into the nature of names and identity.

Robert Sutherland argues that Alice's response to the Gnat and later to Humpty Dumpty demonstrates that Carroll was influenced by the second chapter, "Of Names", in the first book of John Stuart Mill's A System of Logic. In a diary entry for March 13, 1855, Carroll elaborates on his

"scheme" of "Miscellaneous Studies": "I should like to go on with Etymology ... [and] finish Mill"¹. Although Carroll does not specify whether he read Mill on logic, a cursory examination of Mill's "Of Names" reveals that at the very least, the two men shared common views regarding nomenclature. Mill writes that "names are simply marks used to enable ... individuals to be made subjects of discourse"². Alice's explanation to the Gnat regarding the usefulness of names may allude to Mill's view. Later, Alice asks Humpty Dumpty "doubtfully": "Must a name mean something?" (TLG, 263) Alice seems to agree with Mill that "Proper names are attached to the objects themselves, and are not dependent on the continuance of any attribute of the object"³.

Alice's question, "Must a name mean something?" also suggests that a name is more a label than an identity. In the Alice books, there are many references to and examples of labelling, a procedure which may be linked with scientific, rather than psychological identity. Early on in the first book, Alice observes a jar while she is falling down the

¹Carroll, The Diaries, 1: 44.

²John Stuart Mill, "Of Names," in A System of Logic: Ratiocinative and Inductive (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1959), p. 20.

³Ibid.

rabbit hole: "it was labelled 'ORANGE MARMALADE' but to her great disappointment it was empty" (AAW, 27). The question that Carroll presents is: is the object an orange marmalade jar because of its label, or is it simply an empty jar with a label?

Carroll demonstrates that in the logic of meaning, labels provide an essential bridge to abstract thought. Children who are developing their reading skills are particularly responsive to labels. Alice finds a little bottle bearing "a paper label with the words 'DRINK ME' beautifully printed on it in large letters" (AAW, 31). Since "this bottle was not marked 'poison' ... Alice ventured to taste it" (AAW, 31). Here, Alice is overly trusting and is guilty of illogic; the bottle may indeed contain poison, even though its label may fail to mention this fact.

During a series of confrontations, Alice learns that a label may signify either function or appearance, and that confusion concerning this distinction often leads to incorrect or misleading classification. Alice does not know whether Humpty Dumpty is wearing a tie or a belt:

'What a beautiful belt you've got on! ... At least,' she corrected herself on second thoughts, 'a beautiful cravat, I should have said -- no, a belt, I mean -- I beg your pardon! If only I knew, ... which was neck and which was waist!'
(TLG, 173)

Alice wishes to know the object's function in order to determine its identity. She faces two unknowns,

each interrelated, because she is unable to differentiate between Humpty Dumpty's neck and waist, and she cannot determine whether the object serves as belt or tie. The spatial location of the object is its key. Tweedledum wears a helmet, which although "He called it a helmet ... certainly looked much more like a saucepan" (TLG, 242). Thus, Tweedledum has labelled the object according to its present function, rather than its appearance. A label may be based solely on appearance; Humpty Dumpty proudly proclaims that "my name means the shape I am -- and a good handsome shape it is, too" (TLG, 273). As we have seen, however, difficulties of identification inevitably arise in a world where people and objects are constantly undergoing change, and where appearances are often misleading. Near the entrance to the Queen's Croquet-Ground, Alice notices a rose tree: "the roses on it were white, but there were three gardeners at it, busily painting them red" (AAW, 105). Are the roses red or are they white? Does their altered appearance or their traditional label establish their identity? The Pigeon is also confused by appearance. She initially identifies Alice as a serpent due to her appearance (elongated neck). Alice protests, saying, "I -- I'm a little girl" (AAW, 76). The Pigeon, again considering Alice's physical size, comments, "'A likely story indeed!' ... in a tone of deepest contempt" (AAW, 76). "A little girl" is Alice's identity and symbolizes her emotional development rather than her altered appearance.

When the Pigeon learns that Alice eats eggs, the Pigeon correlates appearance with function, and concludes that Alice must be "a kind of serpent" (AAW, 76).

The Pigeon's concern with Alice's place in the natural order may be an allusion on Carroll's part to Darwin's On the Origin of Species (1859), a work which had a profound effect on nineteenth century thought and a particularly devastating effect on traditional human ideas of unique identity. The successful struggle for food is related to Darwin's notion of the "survival of the fittest". Other references in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland to the food chain include Alice's query: "Do cats eat bats? ... Do bats eat cats?" (AAW, 28), her description of Dinah as "a capital one for catching mice" (AAW, 42), and later Alice's explanation that Dinah will "eat a little bird as soon as look at it" (AAW, 53). Carroll's illustration of the animals swimming in the pool (created by Alice's tears) also evokes Darwin's insights into the migration of life from sea to land. (See Figure 2.) An assortment of animals emerge from the water, led by Alice, thus reflecting the evolutionary supremacy of humans. Carroll's inclusion of the Dodo which had become extinct in 1681, underscores his concern with evolution. Darwin's views, however, shook the Victorian sense of the uniqueness of a separate, inviolate human identity. Examples of miscegenation would be the Frog and Fish-Footmen who symbolize the inter-penetration



Fig. 2. Carroll's illustration of Alice and the other creatures emerging from the "pool of tears".

of species, which is part of the rich evolutionary flux of nature. Significantly, Bloomingdale traces these Darwinian elements to "Carroll's fight for identity in the nursery"¹.

The alter-ego to the creative poetic genius Carroll was the scientific Dodgson, whose creative ability enabled him to provide vocabulary to ensure accurate labelling. Alice coins the labels "Fish-Footman" (AAW, 79) and "Frog-Footman" (AAW, 80) in order to describe the creature who

¹Bloomingdale, p. 381.

she considered .. to be a footman
because he was in livery: otherwise,
judging by his face only, she would
have called him a fish

(AAW, 79)

and the other footman "with a round face and large eyes like
a frog" (AAW, 79). Alice's neologisms specify both function
and appearance, once again framing nonsense in scientific
terms. Carroll may have been responding to Mill's challenge
regarding the limitations of language:

in deference to that aversion to admit
new words, which induces mankind, on
all subjects not considered technical,
to attempt to make the original stock
of names serve with but little argu-
ment to express a constantly increasing
number of objects and distinctions, and
consequently, to express them in a man-
ner progressively more and more imperfect¹.

During her adventures, Alice learns that often labels
and names are arbitrary creations, just as language is
innately ambiguous. The White Knight explains that

The name of the song is called
'Haddocks' Eyes' The name really is
'The Aged Aged Man' The song is
called 'Ways and Means' The song
really is 'A-sitting on a Gate'

(TLG, 306).

Names are not necessarily synonymous with their labels.
Ironically, the White Knight's song is itself a parody of
Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence", revealing
another facet of the ambiguity linking names and identity.

¹Mill, p. 24.

In Carroll's Sylvie and Bruno, names are similarly arbitrary. The Sub Warden's wife is called "My Lady", she chooses the title of "Vice-Wardeness", is addressed as "Her Excellency", and explains that "one must have an alias"¹. Lewis Carroll's preoccupation with names and identity may reveal his own innermost conflicts.

Lewis Carroll explores the psychological fear of namelessness. In Wonderland, the Gryphon tells Alice that the jurors are "putting down their names ... for fear they should forget them before the end of the trial" (AAW, 144). This fear is developed in Through the Looking Glass, where there is literally a wood where "they've got no names" (TLG, 222). This wood may be seen as representing the illogical and the irrational forces of the subconscious, or at least a place where language and labelling do not apply. Harry Levin compares the wood to Dante's "selva oscura where the straight way is lost, that forest of symbols whose meanings have been forgotten, that limbo of silence which prompts a cosmic shudder"². William Empson believes that the wood represents "Nature in the raw, with no names, and she [Alice] is afraid of it"³. However, it may be argued that there are certain

¹Carroll, Sylvie and Bruno in The Works of Lewis Carroll, p. 428.

²Harry Levin, "Wonderland Revisited," in Aspects of Alice, p. 182.

³William Empson, "Alice in Wonderland: The Child as Swain," in Aspects of Alice, p. 347.

benefits to namelessness: As the Gnat attempts to convince

Alice:

only think how convenient it would be
if you could manage to go home without
it! For instance, if the governess
wanted to call you to your lessons ...
she would have to leave off, because
there wouldn't be any name for her
to call

(TLG, 224).

Alice responds logically, saying that if the governess
"couldn't remember my name, she'd call me 'Miss'" (TLG, 224).

Alice demonstrates that when the particular label is missing,
a more general one must be employed, and her response serves
as a challenge to Mill's gloomy fear of the limitations of
human naming. It is of course in the nameless wood that
Alice befriends a lovely fawn, an unlikely act in the harsh
world of nature.

So they walked on together through the
wood, Alice with her arms clasped
lovingly round the soft neck of the
Fawn, till they came out into another
open field, and here the fawn ...
shook itself free

(TLG, 227).

Elizabeth Sewell believes that:

There is a suggestion here that to lose
your name is to gain freedom ... since
the nameless one would no longer be under
control.... It also suggests that the
loss of language brings with it an
increase in loving unity with living
things. It is words that separate the
fawn and the child¹.

¹Elizabeth Sewell, The Field of Nonsense (London:
Chattot and Windus, 1952), p. 128.

After the experience entailing loss of identity, Alice solemnly vows: "I won't forget it [her name] again" (TLG, 227). In moving from the subconscious to the conscious level, Alice desires to retain her identity, her name. Significantly, this behavior is illogical, since a conscious decision is not binding in the subconscious world.

The theme of death, which is the permanent dissolution of identity, "is never far out of sight in the [Alice] books"¹. A detailed examination of the books reveals close to forty allusions to death, a subject which seems to have fascinated Carroll, just as it fascinates most children. Of course, the theme of death relates to its counterpoint, the desire to remain young. Empson believes that "There seems to be a connection in Dodgson's mind between the death of childhood and the development of sex"².

The prefatory poem to Alice in Wonderland contains the first death reference: "Childhood's dreams are twined ... Like pilgrim's withered wreath of flowers" (AAW, 23). The "withered wreath" is a distinctly funereal image. As well the "wreath" refers to flowers commonly worn on the heads of pilgrims and may refer to Alice's "daisychain" (AAW, 25). Furthermore, the link between childhood and flowers may

¹Empson, p. 369.

²Ibid., p. 355.

suggest a Freudian interpretation which relates "de-flowering" to death. Death itself was an archaic euphemistic cliché for orgasm, "le petit mort", a concept dating back to the Renaissance. The first references to death in Wonderland occur in Chapter One:

"Alice did not like to drop the jar, for fear of killing somebody underneath" (AAW, 27) and as she falls, Alice remarks that after such a tumble, "I wouldn't say anything about it, even if I fell off the top of the house" which is followed by the author's sardonic intrusion: "which was very likely true" (AAW, 27). Alice frequently reveals the child's concern for the nature of death. In regard to her shrinking, she says "it might end ... in my going out altogether, like a candle.

I wonder what I should be like then" (AAW, 32). The next time that she shrinks Alice is "frightened at the sudden change, but very glad to find herself still in existence" (AAW, 39).

Swimming in the pool of her own tears, Alice laments: "I shall be punished for it now, I suppose, by being drowned in my own tears!" (AAW, 41), an ironic comment on the nature of poetic justice. The "pool of tears" may represent both the sea of emotions which tends to flood the intellect, and the bodily liquids which characterize puberty. The Mouse's poem (tale / tail) ominously ends on the word "death":

"I'll try the whole cause, and condemn you to death" (AAW, 51). It is fitting that the end of the Mouse's tail / tale is death, as it is the end of every creature's "tale". A further reference to death appears again in connection with

a change in Alice's stature. The substance contained in the bottle which Alice finds in the Rabbit's house, causes her to grow suddenly: "she found her head pressing against the ceiling, and had to stoop to save her neck from being broken" (AAW, 57). The growth in bodily size is a parody of the aging process which inevitably ends in death. Later, when Alice shrinks she is in mortal danger of being devoured by an "enormous puppy" (AAW, 64): "it would be very likely to eat her up" (AAW, 64). As a potential victim, in this reversal of the natural Darwinian order, Alice can more fully appreciate the various animals' obsession with death. Alice specifically refers to "murder" when she begins to nurse the Duchess' baby: "Wouldn't it be murder to leave it behind?" (AAW, 86). Alice demonstrates her own fear of abandonment in her concern for the child. This attitude may reflect a similar fear on the part of the author.

Alice observes of Wonderland: "They're dreadfully fond of beheading people here: the great wonder is, that there's anyone left alive!" (AAW, 112) Indeed, the majority of allusions to death in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland have to do with decapitation, which constitutes a constant threat: "Chop off her head!" (AAW, 84), "I heard the Queen say ... you deserved to be beheaded" (AAW, 105), "Off with her head!" (AAW, 109), "Off with their heads" (AAW, 109-10), "Are their heads off?" (AAW, 110), "the Queen was shouting, 'Off with his head!' or 'Off with her head!' about once in a minute" (AAW, 112),

"Off with his head!" (AAW, 114), "The King's argument was that anything that had a head could be beheaded" (AAW, 117), "either you or your head must be off" (AAW, 123), "just take his head off outside" (AAW, 150), and "Behead that Dormouse" (AAW, 151). (See Chapter VI on the sexual symbolism of decapitation.)

The presence of sharks in Alice's rendition of Watts's "The Sluggard", "'Tis the voice of the Lobster", provides another, more subtle, reference to death: "when ... sharks are around, / His voice has a timid and tremulous sound" (AAW, 139). Alice is unable to finish the poem, and yet it ends with a death threat which even a young child can discern:

When the pie was all finished, the Owl,
as a boon,
Was kindly permitted to pocket the spoon:
While the Panther received knife and fork
with a growl,
And concluded the banquet by --
(AAW, 140).

The conclusion of the banquet is the Panther's 'eating the owl'. By omitting the ending, Carroll enforces reader participation. When Alice suddenly begins to grow at the trial and disturbs the jury box she is worried that "they [the jurors] would die" (AAW, 153).

Through the Looking Glass also contains many allusions to death. The opening poem describes "a voice of dread, / With bitter tidings laden, / Shall summon to unwelcome bed / A melancholy maiden" (TLG, 173). Aside from the obvious

level of the unwilling child being called to bed, the "unwelcome bed" seems to support Empson's notion of the connection in Carroll's mind between the death of childhood and the advent of sexuality, since the bed is the locale of birth, sex, and death.

In the looking glass world, the Jabberwock is killed. Alice threatens the live flowers: "If you don't hold your tongues, I'll pick you!" (TLG, 202) The Rose tells Alice that she is "beginning to fade" (TLG, 204) and when Alice is running to the Red Queen's cries of "Faster! Faster!", Alice "felt she could not go faster, though she had no breath left to say so" (TLG, 209), the loss of breath suggests death and perhaps as well the heavy breathing may have sexual connotations. When Alice asks the Gnat how a Bread-and-butter-fly would manage if it couldn't find weak tea with cream to drink, the Gnat responds with pitiless logic, saying "Then it would die, of course" (TLG, 223). Alice remarks that "that must happen very often" (TLG, 223) and the Gnat remarks simply "It always happens" (TLG, 223), revealing the universality and inevitability of death. The overwhelming certainty of death and the impossibility of one's evading it, make death especially fearsome to the child. The "monstrous crow" (TLG, 230) who appears after Tweedledum and Tweedledee's battle, is a traditional symbol of death. "The Walrus and the Carpenter" provides yet another example of a poem which ends with death, in this case, the death of the oysters:

"They'd eaten every one" (TLG, 236). Here, we have an instance of oral aggressiveness, a feature whose prevalence is commonly noted by psychological critics of Carroll. The Red King is "fit to snore his head off!" (TLG, 238), information which echoes the decapitation references of Wonderland. Tweedledee suggests to Alice that the Red King is dreaming about her and asks "if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?" (TLG, 238) When he is dissatisfied with Alice's response, Tweedledee himself retorts: "You'd be nowhere" (TLG, 238). Tweedledum adds "you'd go out -- bang! -- just like a candle" (TLG, 238), recalling the candle of Wonderland. Thus, the Tweedle brothers cause Alice to experience an existentialist type of confrontation with "dasein" (being). "The essence of Alice's adventures ... is the grimmest comedy conceivable, the comedy of man's absurd condition in an apparently meaningless world."¹ In a classic example of the use of understatement, Tweedledee says "gravely, 'it's one of the most serious things that can possibly happen to one in battle -- to get one's head cut off" (TLG, 242). Understatement is used for accentuation; once again the reader is manipulated into focusing his attention on the discrepancy between the

¹Donald Rackin, "Alice's Journey to the End of Night," in Aspects of Alice, p. 393.

gravity of the theme and its "light" handling by the author. As well, we notice the recurrence of the notion of decapitation, and Carroll's use of the adverb "gravely" is undoubtedly a cleverly apt pun. A further reference to decapitation occurs when Alice observes Humpty Dumpty's smile: "If he smiled much more the ends of his mouth might meet behind ... and then I don't know what would happen to his head! I'm afraid it would come off!" (TLG, 265) When Alice tells Humpty Dumpty that one can't help growing older, he is prompted to remark that one can't "but two can. With proper assistance, you might have left off at seven" (TLG, 266). Evidently, Carroll speaking through Humpty Dumpty, is castigating Alice for approaching puberty. The sentence which opens Chapter Eight contains two death references: "After a while the noise seemed gradually to die away, till all was dead silence" (TLG, 293). (My underlining.) We see that Carroll's references to death range from those which are thematically explicit to others which are implicit in both psychological and linguistic analysis (words, symbols).

As one would expect, the closing poem contains an abundance of references to death: "Echoes fade and memories die: Autumn frosts have slain July" (TLG, 345) and "Dreaming as the summers die" (TLG, 345). (My underlining.) This poem, an acrostic spelling Alice's full name, was composed nine years after Carroll first told the story of "Alice's Adventures Under Ground", and constitutes a fitting epitaph to both the story and the golden period of Alice's innocence.

The prevalence of references to death in the Alice books, both in themes and diction, and the corresponding dissolution of identity may indicate Lewis Carroll's own internal confrontation with problems of identity and other subconscious concerns.

CHAPTER III

THE FEAR OF MADNESS

The Alice books contain a recurring theme, the fear of madness, which seems to indicate Lewis Carroll's own fear of losing control. Carroll sought to maintain his individuality by insisting on the separation between Carroll and Dodgson. His "meticulous Register of Letters Received and Sent, begun when he was twenty-eight, and continued for the remaining thirty-seven years of his life, [which] recorded 98,721 items sent"¹ betrays Carroll's meticulousness and fastidiousness. One might say that Carroll was obsessed with order and control. It is precisely the type of person who has difficulty achieving internal control, who seeks in frustration to maintain an exaggerated external control². Similarly, Carroll's appalled overreaction to his witnessing the total lack of control of an epileptic fit, as his diary entry for March 1, 1856, indicates is psychologically significant:

¹Warren, p. 335.

²John Skinner, "From Lewis Carroll's Adventures in Wonderland," in Aspects of Alice, p. 309.

S- was seized with a fit this morning....
I was passing through at the moment and
caught him as he fell: ... I could think
of nothing but loosening everything about
the neck, and dashing some water in his face
.... I felt at the moment how helpless
ignorance makes one¹.

Carroll's involuntary stammering would have given him an especially acute insight into the epileptic's loss of control, becoming a spectacle to onlookers. Carroll's "preoccupation with fits in his nonsense poetry and prose"² has been noted by Greenacre. His longest nonsense poem, "The Hunting of the Snark" was sub-titled "An Agony, in Eight Fits" (archaic term for book division).

Both genius and madness are greatly removed from the norm; they represent states of mind which the "normal" individual finds difficult, if not impossible completely to comprehend. It is not inconceivable that the brilliant, eccentric Carroll, like Swift, was plagued with a fear of madness, of a total absence of the ability to control repressions. A diary entry for February 9, 1856, reveals Carroll's concern regarding the nature of insanity:

Query: when we are dreaming and, as often happens, have a dream 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... define insanity as an inability to distinguish which is the waking and which the sleeping life?³

¹Carroll, The Diaries, 1: 78.

²Greenacre, p. 142.

³The Diaries, 1: 76.

Not surprisingly, Alice shares her creator's fear of madness. Thoroughly exasperated by her adventures in Wonderland, Alice laments: "It's really dreadful, ... the way all the creatures argue. It's enough to drive one crazy!" (AAW, 81) Significantly, "Michel Foucault, in Madness and Civilization, argues that the nineteenth-century conception of a person judged insane appropriated the unfortunate individual to the status of childhood"¹. This information helps to explain in part the aesthetic and thematic appearance of madness in the Alice books.

Alice asserts that "there's no use in talking" to the Frog-Footman since "he's perfectly idiotic!" (AAW, 82), demonstrating her recognition of one type of insanity. Indeed, the world into which Alice has entered may be classified as insane: animals, plants, playing cards, chess pieces, and nursery rhyme characters all come to life in a hallucinatory manner which has echoes of both dreams and drugs.

The Cheshire Cat informs Alice that she may visit either the Mad Hatter or the March Hare, since "they're both mad" (AAW, 89). Alice responds, once again demonstrating the universal aversion for madness: "I don't want to go among mad people" (AAW, 89). The Cat explains

¹Jan B. Gordon, "The Alice Books and the Metaphors of Victorian Childhood," in Aspects of Alice, p. 101.

that Alice has no choice, since "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad." (AAW, 89) The Cat's devastating generalization may be seen as a satiric condemnation of the Victorian world of repressions and illusions; from a Wonderland point of view, everyone looks mad. It is ironic, however, that the Cat attempts to use logic in making his assertion, as he purports to do when he explains that:

a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad.

(AAW, 89)

Here, the Cheshire Cat links madness to what is illogical.

The title of Chapter Seven of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, "A Mad Tea-Party" (AAW, 93), contains a direct reference to madness. Gardner points out that the phrase "mad as a hatter"

owes its origin to the fact that until recently hatters actually did go mad. The mercury used in curing felt ... was a common cause of mercury poisoning. Victims developed a tremor In advanced stages they developed hallucinations and other psychotic symptoms¹.

Significantly, Deborah Bacon reports that Carroll complained of "visual hallucinations... which came on during middle-age"².

¹Martin Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 90, footnote 7.

²Deborah Bacon, "The Meaning of Non-sense: A Psychoanalytic Approach to Lewis Carroll" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1950), p. 72.

The Hatter's madness or eccentricity is based on his non-conformist behavior. He makes socially inappropriate comments such as "Your hair wants cutting" (AAW, 94) and does not play according to social rules by asking a riddle which has no answer: "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?" (AAW, 95) Such arbitrary, contradictory and confusing samples of irrationality prove especially frustrating to children. Empson observes that "much of the technique of the rudeness of the Mad Hatter has been learned from Hamlet"¹, who himself feigned madness. Carroll greatly admired Shakespeare and Carroll's familiarity with Shakespearean drama is evident when we consider that Carroll recited passages from Shakespeare's plays in an attempt to rid himself of his stammer. Shakespeare's use of humor, madness, and wordplay (particularly puns) obviously set an example for Lewis Carroll both thematically and aesthetically.

Like the Hatter, the March Hare is associated with madness. As Gardner points out: "'Mad as a March hare' alludes to the frenzied capers of the male hare during March, its rutting season"². Thus, the source of the Hare's madness is animal sexuality. As Alice approaches the March Hare's

¹Empson, p. 373.

²Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 90, footnote 7.

residence, she says, "Suppose it should be raving mad after all!" (AAW, 91) At the tea-party itself, the Hatter and the Hare are not the sole mad characters; the Dormouse appears to suffer from narcolepsy, an abnormal psychological condition in which the victim is constantly falling asleep. The folkloric etymology of "dormouse" is based on the French "dormir", to sleep. The narcoleptic's predicament may have particularly intrigued Carroll, who, as we have seen, suffered from the contrary ailment, insomnia. Perhaps the Dormouse was a wistful creation on Carroll's part. The Hatter is obliged to pinch the unfortunate Dormouse in order to keep him from "going off into a deze" (AAW, 103). Carroll's narcoleptic Dormouse may have been inspired by the boy Joe, who is also pinched, in Charles Dickens' Pickwick Papers:

'Damn that boy, he's gone to sleep again. Be good enough to pinch him, sir -- in the leg, if you please; nothing else wakes him'1.

The first volume of Pickwick Papers was published in 1836, when Lewis Carroll was four years old. Gattégno mentions that Carroll's pamphlet "The Blank Cheque" (1874) "opens with a reference to Pickwick Papers on the title page"²,

¹Charles Dickens, Pickwick Papers (Geneva: Edito-Service S.A., 1947), p. 62.

²Gattégno, p. 132.

providing evidence that Carroll was acquainted with the novel.

Other allusions in Wonderland to madness include the Queen of Hearts' reference to the Knave of Hearts as an "Idiot!" (AAW, 107) and the description of the Mock Turtle and Gryphon: "the two creatures ... had been jumping about like mad things" (AAW, 132). (My underlining.)

Drugs are related to madness, for like nonsense and dreams they provide another escape from reality. The hookah-smoking Caterpillar who speaks in "a languid, sleepy voice" (AAW, 67) seems to suggest the user of opiates.



Fig. 3. Carroll's illustration of the Caterpillar.

Although hookahs were used for tobacco as well as for drugs, the attendant themes of transformation and identity suggest that the caterpillar is using an opiate. Carroll's own illustration for the "Alice's Adventures Under Ground"

manuscript, depicts an elaborate opium pipe with a lengthy stem (for cooling) and a wide bowl (to keep the liquid resin burning). (See Figure 3.) Considering Carroll's rigid lifestyle, it is unlikely that he himself was addicted to drugs; yet it seems worth noting that laudanum, a drug containing opiates, was commonly available in Carroll's time and was often used to treat acute insomnia. As well, Carroll may have been indirectly acquainted with the effects of opium through such authors as De Quincey. In his diary entry for November 24, 1857, Carroll notes: "Finished the first volume of De Quincey: it is perfectly delightful reading and full of information of all kinds"¹. Gattégno quotes Carroll's 1887 letter to a surgeon, regarding the best possible method of exterminating an ailing Christ Church cat: "My own idea would have been to give laudanum, (I don't know what quantity, say a drachm) mixed with some meat or fish"². It appears more than coincidental that the Caterpillar is seated upon a mushroom, since many mushrooms, particularly those from the psilocybin family, have been used both as intoxicants and hallucinants for centuries among such primitive cultures as the Indians of Mexico.

¹Carroll, The Diaries, 1: 130.

²Carroll quoted by Gattégno, p. 295.

There are no explicit references to madness in Through the Looking Glass, although the same confused, hectic, and animated scenes which we found in Wonderland prevail. When the Queens test Alice's knowledge of their version of arithmetic, the Red Queen recommends to the White Queen: "Fan her head! ... She'll be feverish after so much thinking". (TLG, 322). The combination of "feverish" and "thinking" suggests insanity and may echo the diction employed by Shakespeare's Macbeth: "fitful fever"¹ and "heat oppressed brain"².

A study of the Alice books proves that Carroll was undoubtedly concerned with the concept of madness, perhaps especially because he feared the consequences of releasing his own powerful repressions. A great writer of nonsense must necessarily be able to enter the irrational world of madness. Sewell argues that:

the really sane individual is not the completely rational and logical being but the one who can be fully rational and fully irrational, rejoice in both states and balance them in the middle³.

Ultimately, the use of madness in the Alice books provided Carroll with a healthy artistic outlet to transmute aesthetically any inner fears of insanity.

¹William Shakespeare, Macbeth III, ii, 1179 in The Complete Pelican Shakespeare, ed. Alfred Harbage et al. (New York: Viking Press, 1979). All subsequent references to Shakespeare's plays will be to this volume.

²Ibid., II, ii, 619.

³Sewell, p. 163.

CHAPTER IV

CARROLL'S AESTHETIC AND THEMATIC USES OF NONSENSE

Nonsense is the literary counterpoint to madness because it employs the "irrational", the paradoxical, reversals as well as the novelty of the unexpected. The artistic license given to the author through his aesthetic manipulation of nonsense can perhaps be more clearly illustrated by an earlier literary use of this tradition, that of the Shakespearean fool. Fools, such as the one in King Lear, often employed seemingly nonsensical statements to mask highly significant insights into reality. The use of humor enabled Shakespeare to sugarcoat the fool's bitter satire. Lear's fool tells his master:

I had rather be any kind o'thing than
A fool, and yet I would not be thee, nuncle ...
I am better than thou art now, I am a fool,
thou art nothing¹.

The fool demonstrates that Lear has abrogated his social role as King and hence his identity, while the fool himself, ironically less alienated at this point than Lear, continues to fulfill his social function, remaining a fool. The freedom of the "all-licensed fool"² gives him an opportunity to

¹Shakespeare, King Lear I, iv, 176-85.

²Ibid., I, iv, 191.

escape social, political and personal restraints until the end of the play when he is hanged, the final escape.

Nonsense, like madness and dreams, provides an escape from reality. Alice, like Carroll, displays a desire to escape through the door of imagination (Wonderland):

Alice had got so much in 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

(AAW, 33).

At the end of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Alice's sister realizes that she "had but to open them [her eyes] again, and all would change to dull reality" (AAW, 163). The reappearance of the word "dull" suggests that Carroll may have been led to explore the realm of nonsense by his boredom and dissatisfaction with mundane reality. And nonsense, like dreams, represents a movement away from conscious controls, or in Carroll's case, from stifling personal repressions and social restrictions. Gattégno neatly sums up Carroll's psychological condition, saying that he experienced "a social obligation to conform, and a psychological necessity to escape"¹. George Meredith's The Idea of Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit (1877) similarly attests to comedy's power to provide psychological freedom from social restraints,

As well, nonsense signals a return to the freedom, spontaneity, and laughter of childhood. Significantly, in non-literary circumstances, nonsense may be seen as

¹Gattégno, p. 312.

symptomatic of a psychological arrest of maturity. Carroll's aesthetic use of nonsense, however, is emotionally delightful, embodying the beauty of Blakean "exuberance". Carroll's diary entry for October 19, 1863, provides evidence that he had read Blake:

Went to Combe's in the evening to meet the publisher Macmillan and got him to print me some of Blake's Songs of Innocence on large paper¹.

Ironically, Carroll's free use of nonsense required the inevitable logical foundation which leads to meaning. In her study The Field of Nonsense, Sewell views nonsense as an orderly "structure held together by valid mental relations"², as opposed to dream and madness. This paradox is easily explained by the juxtaposition of particular elements of nonsense within a larger logical framework. Although Sewell correctly indicates the orderliness of Carroll's nonsense; according to both Jungian and Freudian schools, she incorrectly rejects the vital link of nonsense to dreams and madness. Carroll's aesthetic use of contraries (pure nonsense and logic), counterpoints the psychological divisions in Dodgson's psyche, which Carroll, his alter-ego, attempted to reconcile in art. Carroll, like Blake, discovered that

¹Carroll, The Diaries, 1: 206.

²Sewell, p. 4.

"Without Contraries [there] is no progression"¹.

In Through the Looking Glass, Carroll employs Tweedledee for a delightfully satiric definition of logic: "if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic" (TLG, 231).² The attempt to fuse the logical and the nonsensical is concretized in these phrases, which seem to reveal the parallel concerns of both art and philosophy. Dr. Warren Weaver, a modern logician, believes that "Carroll was, in a tantalizingly elusive way, an excellent and unconsciously deep logician.... It was when he let logic run loose that he demonstrated his true subtlety and depth"².

As Alice falls down the rabbit-hole, she asks herself dreamily:

'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

(AAW, 28).

Here, Carroll demonstrates that one must already possess knowledge and have a direction for the knowledge, in order even to be able to formulate sensible questions. Thus

¹William Blake, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," in Blake: Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 149.

²Dr. Warren Weaver quoted by Lennon, p. 338.

Carroll seems to merge the nineteenth century concern with utilitarianism and its focus on usefulness, with his own examinations of logic, labelling, and order.

Alice herself reasons logically when she considers that:

so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible

(AAW, 30).

As in Aristotelian aesthetics, it is better to have a probable impossibility than an improbable possibility. We learn that there are no absolute, logical restrictions in the world of the imagination.

When Alice stops to ask the Cheshire Cat for directions, she is baffled by his manipulation of logic. Alice admits that she doesn't "much care where" (AAW, 88) her destination will be. The Cat responds, saying: "Then it doesn't matter which way you go" (AAW, 88), indicating that the goal, or purpose, is critical in determining logical progression. The Cat's non-specific answer is the perfectly logical rejoinder to a non-specific question. When Alice requires that she must arrive somewhere, the Cat nonchalantly replies: "Oh, you're sure to do that ... if only you walk long enough" (AAW, 88). Again, his non-specific answer is logically appropriate. We see that "Nonsense results ... from the preservation of form at the expense of content"¹. Next, the Cat presents a series of linked

¹Susan Stewart, Nonsense (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978), p. 76.

sylogisms in order to establish proof of his madness:

a dog's not mad. You grant that? ...
A dog growls when it's angry, and wags
its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl
when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when
I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad
(AAW, 89).

The internal logic of the Cat's syllogism is sound, for as the Cat proves, a creature which demonstrates other behavior than growling when it is angry and wagging its tail when pleased, is mad. However, in relation to the real world the Cat's syllogism is erroneous since he generalizes about canine behavior and then applies the general conclusion to refer to his own person, although he is a cat. Alice disputes the verbal accuracy rather than the arbitrary generalization of the syllogism: "I call it purring, not growling" (AAW, 89), showing her growing rhetorical insights.

Moreover, Carroll demonstrates through nonsense that linguistic logic is often dependent upon focus or emphasis. Alice tells the Cheshire Cat that "I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy!" (AAW, 90) In this particular case, Alice focuses on the verbs "appearing" and "vanishing". The nonsensical verbal misunderstanding arises when the Cat focuses on the adverb "suddenly". This misunderstanding is evidenced in the Cat's response to Alice's complaint by vanishing "quite slowly" (AAW, 90).

At the tea-party Alice learns that semantic reversals which lead to the breakdown of meaningful communication,

parallel the reversal of logic to nonsense. The March Hare advises Alice that she should say what she means; Alice replies, "I do ... at least -- I mean what I say -- that's the same thing, you know" (AAW, 95). "Not the same thing a bit!" (AAW, 95) says the Hatter, and he, the March Hare, and the Dormouse proceed with nonsensical (illogical) examples of linguistic reversals involving semantic substitution:

Why, you might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'!

You might just as well say that 'I like what I get' is the same thing as 'I get what I like'!

You might just as well say that 'I breathe when I sleep' is the same thing as 'I sleep when I breathe'!

(AAW, 95)

Like substitution, the number of relevant examples is an effective device for empirical substantiation. The March Hare offers Alice "more tea" (AAW, 101). She protests that she "can't take more" (AAW, 101) since she's had none yet, but the Hatter logically points out that: "You can't take less it's very easy to take more than nothing" (AAW, 101). Again, the area of imaginative focus controls the direction of meaning.

At the trial, the King asks the Hatter to remove his hat, he replies: "It isn't mine" (AAW, 147). The King immediately concludes "Stolen!" (AAW, 147), only a logical assumption if it is based upon the alleged presumption of the Hatter's criminal nature. The disregard of other possible

interpretations provides at once the humor (the nonsensical situation) as well as the satire of the British judicial system.

The nonsensical dispute regarding the beheading of the Cheshire Cat is also based upon a logical debate:

The executioner's argument was that you couldn't cut off a head unless there was a body to cut it off from....

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

(AAW, 116-17).

Here, nonsense is equated with the paradoxical or incomprehensible.

Towards the end of the first book, Alice demonstrates her own increasing mastery of logic. The King of Hearts announces an arbitrary rule: "Rule Forty-two. All persons more than a mile high to leave the court" (AAW, 156) and declares that "It's the oldest rule in the book" (AAW, 156). Alice reacts, showing her concern for fairness, so characteristic of children, as well as her understanding of logic: "Then it ought to be Number One" (AAW, 156). The lesson the reader sees beyond the scope of Alice's insights is that those with power (the King of Hearts) can arbitrarily alter or break rules, recalling Machiavelli's insights into power in his classic, The Prince.

The second Alice book continues Carroll's thematic examination of the interplay between logic and nonsense. In the garden of live flowers, the Queen of Hearts compares opposites, causing Alice to question the logic of this

verbal maneuver:

I've seen gardens, compared with
which this would be a wilderness....

I could show you hills, in comparison
with which you'd call that a valley
(TLG, 206-7).

Alice retorts that "a hill can't be a valley.... That would be nonsense" (TLG, 207). The Red Queen, in turn, replies "You may call it 'nonsense' ... but I've heard nonsense, compared to which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!" (TLG, 207) Here, as elsewhere, Carroll reveals the dual nature of language: the rich connotations of words, as well as their ambiguity, which makes them difficult to control in logical patterns. Aesthetically Carroll employs a parody of the classical Greek dialogues (Plato, Aristotle), by including characters who are the "philosophers" or sophists.

When Alice continually sees "two finger-posts pointing the same way" (TLG, 228) bearing the names Tweedledum and Tweedledee, she makes a logical deduction: "they live in the same house" (TLG, 228). As Sutherland has pointed out, Alice's deduction represents merely one possibility, since the Tweedle brothers may inhabit separate houses in the same vicinity. The Tweedles also employ logical syllogisms with a nonsensical tone. Tweedledum tells Alice that "If you think we're wax-works ... you ought to pay, you know. Wax-works weren't made to be looked at for nothing" (TLG, 229). Tweedledee suggests that "Contrariwise ... if you think we're alive, you ought to speak" (TLG, 229-30). Once again, Carroll clearly delineates both sides of a logical argument. This technique is

aesthetically appropriate since the twins are both the same and different. When Alice asks the brothers whether they think there will be rain, they again demonstrate their play with logic:

Tweedledum spread[s] a large umbrella over himself and his brother.... 'No, I don't think it is,' he said: 'at least -- not under here....'
'But it may rain outside?'
(TLG, 240)

"The Walrus and the Carpenter" the poem which Tweedledee recites, also contains examples of nonsense based upon tautologies:

You could not see a cloud, because
No cloud was in the sky,
No birds were flying overhead --
There were no birds to fly
(TLG, 234).

The irrefutable logic of this stanza is transformed into nonsense by the pointless focus on the obvious, recalling the humor of the shepherd Corin in Shakespeare's As You Like It: "the property of rain is to wet and fire to burn"¹.

In discussing food, the White Queen explains to Alice that: "The rule is, jam tomorrow and jam yesterday -- but never jam to-day" (TLG, 247). Alice objects, saying: "It must come sometimes to 'jam to-day'" (TLG, 247), but the Queen continues "It's jam every other day: today isn't any other day, you know" (TLG, 247). The Queen's use of logic

¹Shakespeare, As You Like It III, ii, 25.

puzzles Alice, as the abstract concepts of an eternally elusive tomorrow and an eternally continuous present (today), baffle most children. When the Queen is metamorphosed into a Sheep, she retains her logical nature. Alice says that she "should like to look all round" (TLG, 252) in the store, and the Sheep replies:

You may look in front of you, and on both sides, if you like, ... but you can't look all round you -- unless you've got eyes at the back of your head

(TLG, 252-53).

The Sheep's focusing on a very narrow element in the language, the phrase "all round", and ignoring the context of the phrase, permits the transformation of the logic of language into nonsense.

Haigha, the messenger, introduces Alice as a child who is "as large as life, and twice as natural!" (TLG, 287) This nonsensical statement invites the logical question: if Alice is "twice as natural" as life, is she more or less natural? Yet another fusion of nonsense and logic in Through the Looking Glass occurs in the chapter "It's My Own Invention". The White Knight displays one of his inventions, a little box which he carries "upside-down, so that the rain can't get in" (TLG, 297). Alice, able to see the greater logic, remarks that "the things can get out" (TLG, 297) and informs the kindly Knight that the lid is open. Disturbed by this revelation, the Knight concludes that "all the things must have fallen out!" (TLG, 297) Once again the point Carroll is

stressing is that logic is never "an island unto itself".

To a large degree, Carrollian nonsense involves the subversion of order. Carroll breaks everyday conventions, and explores the underlying nonsense beneath the rules of logic and language. "Dodgson's surprises, like Joyce's, depend on the calculated subversion of well-established expectations. Order has been artfully deranged to create the illusion of chaos."¹ In particular, Carroll breaks the traditional rules of games. In Wonderland, there is a Caucus-race in which the players

began running when they liked, so that
it was not easy to know when the race
was over.... At last the Dodo said
'Everybody has won, and all must have
prizes'

(AAW, 48-49).

Thus logical expectations regarding a race, such as the "One, two, three and away" (AAW, 48) and the notion of a single winner in a competition, remain unfulfilled. The key aesthetic technique here is novelty, which like reversal, leads to the unexpected. The race "demonstrates the arbitrary nature of winning. One wins when the rules say so, the rules being issued unilaterally by the Dodo"². Logically, when there are no rules, there is no winner. When Alice first asked

¹Levin, pp. 195-96.

²Kathleen Blake, p. 114.

what a Caucus-race was, the Dodo replied: "Why ... the best way is to do it" (AAW, 48). Here, Carroll demonstrates the limitations of language on the one hand, while on the other, he exploits the process of demonstration, which is fundamental to scientific experimentation in particular, and empirical investigation in general.

Croquet is another transformed game featured in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

Alice thought that she had never seen such a curious croquet-ground in her life: it was all ridges and furrows: the croquet balls were live hedgehogs, and the mallets live flamingoes, and the soldiers had to double themselves up and stand on their hands and feet, to make the arches

(AAW, 111).

The unusual nature of the croquet-ground and of the equipment employed is utterly nonsensical. Alice comes to realize that because of the unreliability of the balls, mallets, and arches, "it was a very difficult game indeed" (AAW, 112). She is disturbed by the fact that "they don't seem to have any rules in particular; at least, if there are, nobody attends to them" (AAW, 113). Alice is adapting to the lawlessness, or lack of rules, in Wonderland. "With Carroll's games ... the metonymic of the game is maintained, and at the same time, is traversed by a substitution of elements that are incongruous with both game and plot."¹

¹ Stewart, p. 182.

Though not a game, dance is a social ritual carried out according to a series of rules and conventions. The Gryphon and the Mock Turtle introduce Alice to the Lobster-quadrille.

'You first form into a line along the seashore --'

'Two lines! ... Seals, turtles, salmon, and so on: then, when you've cleared all the jelly-fish out of the way -- you advance twice --'

'Each with a lobster as a partner! -- change lobsters, and retire in same order'

(AAW, 132).

The intricately nonsensical nature of the dance satirizes the quadrille which "was one of the most difficult of the ball-room dances fashionable at the time Carroll wrote his tale"¹.

In Through the Looking Glass, Carroll continued his aesthetic use of the game. Only one game, chess, is referred to, but this game provides the entire structure of the book. As Carroll explains in his Preface to Through the Looking Glass: "the chess problem ... is correctly worked out, so far as the moves are concerned" (TLG, 171). Before Alice passes through the looking glass, she describes the knight as "wriggling down among my pieces" (TLG, 179), an accurate view of the knight's L-shaped movement on the chessboard. Later when Alice actually encounters the Red and White Knights, she observes that they each tumble off their horses, and wear helmets "something like the shape of a horse's head" (TLG, 294), another accurate description of these chess pieces. The

¹Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 131, footnote 1.

"curious country" (TLG, 207) beyond the looking glass is "divided up into squares by a number of little green hedges" (TLG, 207). Alice is astounded and declares:

it's marked out just like a large chess-board! ... It's a great huge game of chess that's being played -- all over the world -- How I wish I was one of them! I wouldn't mind being a Pawn ... though of course I should like to be a Queen, best

(TLG, 207-8).

The brilliant verbal irony here is based upon the naive persona's revelation of her own aesthetic position in the literary work, a clear precursor to absurd literature. Both literally and symbolically, Alice is Carroll's pawn. The plot of the second Alice book revolves around Alice's movement from Pawn to Queen, that is from child to mature woman.

Upon arriving at the eighth square, the last row of the chess-board, Alice finds "a golden crown" (TLG, 315) on her head. Now she will be able to "run very fast" (TLG, 213), like the Red and White Queens, who in chess may move as far as they wish in any direction, so long as they are unimpeded by other pieces. Carroll's brilliant use of chess, the game involving the greatest use of logic, provides a heightened irony in counterpointing elements of nonsense.

Typically, Carroll is able to introduce a serious philosophical question through his use of the chess game. The "great huge game of chess ... being played all over the world" invites comparison to the game of life,

"an endless hierarchy of larger chessboards"¹. Early in Through the Looking Glass, Alice, god-like, picks up the White King, who finds himself "held in the air by an invisible hand" (TLG, 188). Although the reader is aware that the White King is being held by Alice, the reference to the "invisible hand" suggests Banquo's words: "In the great hand of G-d I stand"². As well, the invisible hand may refer to the author himself, the ultimate manipulator of the characters within his tale. The reader becomes involved in similar philosophical and psychological dilemmas through his identification with Alice as a pawn of larger cosmic forces. We recall Carroll's earlier poetic technique, employed in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, which involved the reader's completion of an unfinished poem. In Through the Looking Glass, Carroll encourages his reader to attempt the actual chess game himself, and the book ends with the chapter "Who Dreamed It?" and its final address to the reader: "Which do you think it was?" (TLG, 344). (See Chapter V for a further discussion of the Red King's dream.)

Whereas the reader involvement in completing a rhyme is based upon the fulfillment of expectation, Carroll also

¹Gardner, The Annotated Alice, pp. 208-9, footnote 7.

²Shakespeare, Macbeth II, iii, 126.

employs the unexpected to sustain an atmosphere of nonsense. The unexpected is a key element both of novelty and irony. "In Nonsense . . . one never knows what one is going to say until one has said it."¹ In reading and re-reading the Alice books, one is continually and pleasantly surprised by the ingenuity of Carroll's use of the unexpected. When Alice finds the Frog-Footman sitting outside the Duchess' home he surprises Alice by stating:

There might be some sense in your knocking, . . . if we had the door between us. For instance, if you were inside, you might knock, and I could let you out, you know
(AAW, 80-81).

The nonsense here arises from the Frog-Footman's reversal of a footman's customary function: responding to knocks of guests seeking to enter a home. The absurdity is that in our world, locks and doors are to keep people out; whereas in a reversed universe, one knocks to be let out. The nonsense based upon improbabilities is sustained by the global "irrationality" of the dream world of Wonderland.

Lewis Carroll's use of the Cheshire Cat's grin which remains "after the rest of it [the Cat] had gone" (AAW, 90) is also based on a nonsensical reversal, for as Alice considers:

¹Huxley, p. 12.

I've often seen a cat without a grin,
... but a grin without a cat! It's
the most curious thing I ever saw in all
my life!

(AAW, 91)

In madness, dreams, and the imagination, the "impossible" becomes not merely possible, but required. Bloomingdale relates the Cat's grin to riddles, finding it "an insane version of the enigmatic smile of the 'Mona Lisa', the mask of the Sphinx -- supreme embodiment of the riddle of the Universe"¹. We shall see that the riddle is an important element in Carroll's aesthetic fusion of nonsense and language. As well, the grin without the cat may represent pure form without content, like nonsense, which has form without "meaning".

Through nonsense, Carroll transforms the traditional, prim Victorian tea-party into one of madness and nonsense. It is nonsensically unexpected that at the tea-party the Dormouse, who is fast asleep, is used by the Mad Hatter and the March Hare "as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head" (AAW, 93). It is also unexpected that the Hatter wears a watch which "tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is" (AAW, 96). Similarly, it is a nonsensical surprise that the Hare has used "the best butter" (AAW, 96) in an attempt to repair the works of the Hatter's watch. At the party, the Hare dips the

¹Bloomingdale, p. 386.

watch "into his cup of tea" (AAW, 96). Carroll's imaginative freedom permits him to delight continually his reader with unexpected occurrences. Considering the pervasive absurdity of the tea-party, it is fitting that when Alice leaves, she ~~looks~~ looks back and observes that the Hatter and the Hare "were trying to put the Dormouse in the tea pot" (AAW, 103). Every action must sustain the atmosphere of nonsense and madness. The Hatter explains to Alice that "If you knew Time as well as I do, ... you wouldn't talk about wasting it. It's him" (AAW, 97). Here, Carroll reveals both the traditional personification of Father Time, as well as the colloquial use of the impersonal pronoun "it" for time. The nonsensical confusion is created by the interplay of these two approaches.

Logically, the Hatter further suggests that:

if you kept on good terms with him
[Time], he'd do almost anything you
liked with the clock. 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!

(AAW, 98)

Long before Einstein, Carroll as artist was aware of relativity, and we have already seen evidence for his interest in controlling time. At the Wonderland tea-party time has actually stopped: "It's always six o'clock now.... it's always tea-time" (AAW, 99) demonstrating Carroll's own concern that time would carry Alice beyond childhood innocence. Furthermore, temporal distortion is a common phenomenon accompanying dreams, madness, and the drugged state.

The trial, another established Victorian social event, is satirically transmuted through Carroll's nonsensical use of the unexpected. At the Wonderland trial, one of the jurors, Bill the Lizard, finds himself without his pencil and is "obliged to write with one finger ... and this was of very little use, as it left no mark on the slate!" (AAW, 145) Here, there is double irony since Bill cannot write, nor is there anything about which to write. When the Hatter, the Hare, and the Dormouse provide three different dates for the commencement of the tea-party:

the jury eagerly wrote down all three dates on their slates, and then added them up, and reduced the answer to shillings and pence

(AAW, 146).

This unexpected and illogical behavior on the part of the jury mocks the traditional gravity and highly ritualistic behavior of the British juridicial system. The misuse of mathematics ("added them up" and "reduced ... to shillings and pence") to solve a legal "problem", provides Carroll's nonsense with a seemingly logical framework. Carroll also parodies the traditional busy work of the Victorian child's arithmetic lesson, conventional nonsense. But perhaps Carroll's most severe parody of the legal system occurs in the Queen of Hearts' explanation of Wonderland justice: "Sentence first -- verdict afterwards!" (AAW, 161)

The unnatural and frequent changes in Alice's size are also nonsensical in that they do not fulfill everyday

expectations. Although rapid growth is characteristic of certain stages of childhood, puberty, and phallic arousal, Carroll exaggerates this phenomenon in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Echoing Freud, Greenacre states that: "certain forms of humor (notably satire, parody, caricature and nonsense) [are related] to distortions of the self-image, based primarily on disturbed body perceptions"¹. This observation can clearly be substantiated in the first Alice book with its persistent alterations in Alice's size. When Alice begins to grow suddenly "like the largest telescope that ever was" (AAW, 35), she demonstrates a sense of bodily dissociation as she looks down at her feet and says: "Good-bye, feet! ... I wonder who will put on your shoes and stockings for you now" (AAW, 35). A logical concept, the unity of the body, is negated through Carroll's use of nonsense. When Alice suddenly shrinks after nibbling on the mushroom "she felt a violent blow underneath her chin: it had struck her foot! She was a great deal frightened by this ... sudden change" (AAW, 73). The negative diction ("violent blow", "struck", and "frightened") supports the theory of the nonsense writer's "disturbed body perceptions" and attendant fears of dissolution of identity.

As in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass contains many nonsensical examples of broken

¹Greenacre, p. 13.

logical assumptions. The looking glass itself provided Carroll with a perfect vehicle for reversal, for as Alice observes of the Looking Glass House: "the things go the other way" (TLG, 181). The poem "Jabberwocky" employs reversal for its "words go the wrong way" (TLG, 181). (See Chapter VII for a detailed examination of this poem.) Alice learns through trial and error, the scientific method, that she must walk "in the opposite direction" (TLG, 205) in order to reach her destination. Many children have undergone this experience while walking and looking backwards into a mirror. When Alice and the Red Queen are running, and Alice inquires "Are we nearly there?" (TLG, 209), the Queen nonsensically replies: "Why, we passed it ten minute ago!" (TLG, 209) Here, Carroll undermines the logical and conventional progressions of time and space. The Queen explains that:

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
(TLG, 210).

This nonsensical situation is often used as a description of coping with economic inflation. Another nonsensical reversal occurs after the run, when Alice confides to the Red Queen: "I am so hot and thirsty" (TLG, 211), and rather than offering Alice a cool drink to quench her thirst, the Queen proffers a "biscuit" which was "very dry: and she [Alice] thought that she had never been so nearly choked in all her life" (TLG, 211). As we will note later in this chapter, Carroll avoided

employing direct references to religion in his Alice books. The dry biscuit however, may be an indirect, and perhaps unconscious reference to the host or eucharist. If so, the fear of being "choked" would suggest that Carroll may have had trouble facing any sinful feelings regarding his "unholy thoughts".

The opening stanza of "The Walrus and the Carpenter" presents a delightful example of nonsensical paradox, a reversal of logical expectations:

The sun was shining on the sea,
Shining with all his might: ...
And this was very odd, because it was
The middle of the night
(TLG, 233).

The verse itself points out the unexpected confusion of temporal elements through the statement: "this was odd". The logical question here is whether it is night or day.

In the looking glass world "one's memory works both ways" (TLG, 247), another use of nonsensical reversal. The White Queen can remember things before they happen, which explains why she screams prior to pricking her finger on her open brooch. Humpty Dumpty introduces the concept of un-birthdays, another instance of a reversal of ordinary patterns of expectation: "there are three hundred and sixty-four days when you might get un-birthday presents -- and only one for birthday presents" (TLG, 268). Yet another example of reversal in the looking glass world arises when the Unicorn instructs Alice regarding the distribution of the

cake: "Hand it round first, and cut it afterwards" (TLG, 290). As Alice reflects, "this sounded nonsense" (TLG, 291).

Through the Looking Glass is also replete with examples of Carroll's creative use of novelty and the unexpected. As in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, animation is one of the techniques employed to create these effects. In the garden of live flowers the flowers are animated, and towards the end of the book, a leg of mutton is introduced to Alice: "'Alice -- Mutton" Mutton -- Alice'. The leg of mutton got up in the dish and made a little bow to Alice" (TLG, 331).

It is delightfully nonsensical that Tweedledee tries "his best to fold up the umbrella, with himself in it" (TLG, 241). As the narrator observes, this "was such an extraordinary thing to do, that it quite took off Alice's attention" (TLG, 241). Here, the narrator's use of the term "extraordinary" points to the fact that the nonsense lies in the use of the unexpected. It is also unexpected that the Gnat which Alice encounters is "about the size of a chicken" (TLG, 221). This description may be related to the nonsense author's sense of bodily distortion. Other examples of nonsense based upon the use of the unexpected and the incongruous, include the paraphernalia which the White Knight's horse carries, such as anklets to "guard against the bites of sharks" (TLG, 298) as well as "bunches of carrots, and fire-irons" (TLG, 298).

When Alice tells the White Queen that "one can't believe impossible things" (TLG, 251), the White Queen, evoking St. Augustine's "credo quia impossibile", replies:

I daresay you haven't had much practice,
.... 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

(TLG, 251).

The White Queen's explanation supports the power of the imagination over mere logical realism. The use of precise numbers ("half-an-hour" and "as many as six") provides a logically accurate counterpoint for Carroll's nonsense. Other occasions in Through the Looking Glass where numbers and nonsense are combined include the White Queen's addition problem: "What's one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one?" (TLG, 320), and the Red Queen's explanation of the looking glass calendar: "here, we mostly have days and nights two or three at a time, and sometimes in the winter we take as many as five nights together" (TLG, 324). Once again, the latter example demonstrates that the relativity of time is part of the fabric of the Alice books.

A great deal of Carroll's nonsense involves the innate complexity of language itself. As W.H. Auden has noted: "In both worlds [Wonderland and Looking Glass], one of the most important ... characters is not a person but the English language"¹. From a young age, Carroll seems to have been

¹W.H. Auden, "Today's 'Wonder-World' Needs Alice," in Aspects of Alice, p. 9.

intrigued by the profundity of language, which could either enrich or hinder communication. A letter written to his sister Henrietta and brother Edwin on January 31, 1855 describing a nonsensical lecture, demonstrates Carroll's interest in the breakdown of communication:

The lecture goes on something like this:

Tutor. What is twice three?
Scout. What's a rice-tree?
Sub-Scout. When is ice free?
Sub-sub-Scout. What's a nice fee?
Pupil (timidly). Half a guinea!
Sub-sub-Scout. Can't forge any.
Sub-Scout. Ho for, Jinny!
Scout. Don't be a ninny!
Tutor (looks offended, but tries another question).
Divide a hundred by twelve!
Scout. Provide wonderful bells!
Sub-Scout. Go ride under it yourself!
Sub-sub-Scout. Deride the dunderheaded elf!
Pupil (surprised). Who do you mean?
Sub-sub-Scout. Doings between!
Sub-Scout. Blue is the screen!
Scout. Soup-tureen!
And so the lecture proceeds.

This excerpt is also indicative of Carroll's use of free association, a spontaneous process which is another important element in Carroll's nonsense, and which is psychologically relevant because it is fundamentally allied to the stream of consciousness technique, which reveals both the Richardian emotive and phatic aspects of language. As Huxley points out, nonsense rests "in Wittgenstein's words, on the misunderstanding of the logic of our language"².

¹Carroll, The Diaries, 1: 66.

²Huxley, p. 10.

While falling down the rabbit-hole, Alice nonsensically employs the words "Longitude" and "Latitude" because "she thought they were nice grand words to say" (AAW, 27), although she has "not the slightest idea" (AAW, 27) of their respective definitions. Alice's behavior clearly demonstrates the "misunderstanding of the logic of our language", while balancing this failure by acknowledging the pleasure of verbal dexterity.

Another breakdown of communication occurs during the Mouse's history lesson: "the ... archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable" (AAW, 47). The Duck asks: "Found what? ... when I find a thing ... it's generally a frog or a worm what did the archbishop find?" (AAW, 47) The indefinite pronoun "it" is the cause of the verbal confusion. Here, Carroll also demonstrates how each individual approaches language with his own set of preconceptions, expectations, and reactions which are based upon his own intellectual and psychological experiences.

After Alice's revelation concerning the metamorphosis of the Duchess's baby into a pig, the Cheshire Cat reappears and asks, "Did you say 'pig,' or 'fig'?" (AAW, 90) Here, the misunderstanding of language is obvious and reflects the child's struggle to learn to read or speak by differentiating phonemes. "The cat is involved in two parallel sign-situations in his attempt to identify the crucial morpheme."¹ Carroll's

¹Robert D. Sutherland, Language and Lewis Carroll (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), p. 88.

interest in language here may reflect his own psychosomatic symptom, his stammering, since "the letter over which ... [he] stuttered the worst was 'p'"¹. And the transformation of child to beast may be viewed as both a parody of Darwin's theories concerning evolutionary progress, as well as an allusion to Circe's transformation of Ulysses's crew into a herd of swine.

The Duchess who is "fond ... of finding morals in things" (AAW, 121) employs ambiguity in her diction, which is nonsensical and confusing, while at the same time, she is able to arbitrarily pluck didactic lessons from meaningless material:

the moral of that is, -- '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 other-
wise than what you had been would have
appeared to them to be otherwise

(AAW, 122).

Ironically, the Duchess, who intends to "put [it] more simply", so complicates her thoughts that they become totally incomprehensible.

The nonsense poem which the White Rabbit recites at the trial is incomprehensible in that there is no overall discernible logical theme or message, yet the individual words and linguistic patterns are correct or conventional:

¹Bacon, p. 166.

They told me you had been to her,
And mentioned me to him:
She gave me a good character,
But said I could not swim.

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?...
(AAW, 158)

The precise referential identity of each of the pronouns: "They", "you", "She", "I", "He", and "we", remains a mystery. The verbal irony here is based on a linguistic play on words since the pronouns employed are "personal", yet they remain abstract, undifferentiated and lacking identity.

Yet another example of nonsense based upon language in the first Alice book is the Mad Hatter's riddle: "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?" (AAW, 95) The riddle is nonsensical since it has no solution; as the Hatter states matter-of-factly: "I haven't the slightest idea" (AAW, 97), what the answer is. "It is essential for nonsense that the riddle should have no solution."¹ The nonsense is based upon the logical denotation of words as definition, since a riddle is an enigma to be solved. If the riddle had an answer it would not be a riddle. The preconception on the part of Alice, as well as the reader, is that every riddle has a solution. "The riddle, as originally invented, had no answer at all."² Thus, the reader is invited to participate in the game of the riddle.

¹Sewell, p. 113.

²Huxley, p. 21.

by employing his own ingenuity in discovering solutions, in the same way that he participates in games involving verbal and logical dexterity¹.

Carroll's interest in the ambiguous nature of language continues in the second Alice book. In an 1891 letter to Mrs. Hargreaves, the original Alice, Carroll clearly and directly reveals his perception of language, which is "ambiguous; most words are, I fear"². The ambiguity of language is revealed during the scene in which Alice and the Sheep are in the row boat:

'Feather! Feather!' the Sheep cried again, taking more needles. 'You'll be catching a crab directly.'

'A dear little crab!' thought Alice. 'I should like that.'

(TLG, 254)

Alice is unaware that both "feather" and "catching a crab" have secondary, alternate meanings as rowing terms.

The Sheep is asking Alice to turn her oar blades horizontally as she moves them back for the next 'catch' so that the lower edge of the blade will not drag through the water.

'Catching a crab' is English rowing slang for two kinds of fowing errors: (1) a failure to lift and feather the oar ... (2) missing the water altogether in making a stroke³.

¹Since the novel's publication, many readers have ventured to answer the Hatter's riddle. Huxley has chronicled some of their answers. He includes such responses as "Because they are both made to shut up", "Because Poe wrote on both", and "Because 'Each' begins with an 'E'". Huxley, p. 22.

²Carroll quoted by Caryl Hargreaves, "The Lewis Carroll that Alice Recalls," The New York Times Magazine, May 1, 1932, p. 7.

³Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 254, footnotes 11-12.

The nonsense lies in the language of the expressions themselves, as well as in Alice's naive misunderstanding of them. There are many examples of double entendres in both Alice books, but puns will be dealt with in a later chapter. (See Chapter VI on Sexual Symbolism and Language.) Carroll concurred with Mill that:

one of the commonest forms of fallacious reasoning arising from ambiguity, is that of arguing from a metaphorical expression as if it were literal¹.

The White Knight tells Alice that "the wind is so very strong here. It's as strong as soup" (TLG, 299). The unusual and unexpected simile which the Knight employs is an obvious example of the misdirection of language, where the same word, depending on the context, can be employed with completely different connotations. Humpty Dumpty alternates between being extremely fastidious about the use of language and being free in its use, reflecting Carroll's own views and recalling the verbal play of the gravedigger scene in Hamlet. "How old did you say you were" (TLG, 265) Humpty Dumpty asks Alice. After Alice replies by giving her age, Humpty Dumpty "triumphantly" exclaims: "Wrong! ... You never said a word like it" (TLG, 265). Here, insisting upon accuracy, he teaches Alice a lesson in both language and logic, concerning time and its linguistic counterpart, tense. The nonsense here is that Alice's focus is on the

¹Mill, p. 29.

overall message or logical intent, rather than the specific constituents of language which are fundamental to both the author and the linguist. Alice reflects that Humpty Dumpty treats language "just as if it was a game!" (TLG, 265) showing that she has learned that the game of language, like that of logic or any other game, entails both rules and free play. Humpty Dumpty, parodying the poet or rhetorician, "can manage" (TLG, 269) language. He defines "glory" as "a nice knock-down argument" (TLG, 269). Alice objects to this arbitrary definition, but Humpty Dumpty insists: "When I use a word ... it means just what I choose it to mean -- neither more nor less" (TLG, 269). Lewis Carroll is leading up to the question of the restraints and freedom which language contains for the writer, reflecting his concerns with logic and nonsense. Ironically, Humpty Dumpty employs a word which Alice does not understand, "Impenetrability" (TLG, 269), to signify to Alice her lack of verbal comprehension in general. Once again his definition of the term is completely arbitrary:

I meant by 'impenetrability' that we've had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you'd mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don't mean to stop here all the rest of your life

(TLG, 269).

As Alice remarks: "That's a great deal to make one word mean" (TLG, 269). Showing that he is well aware of the varying richness of different words, Humpty Dumpty humorously responds:

"When I make a word do a lot of work ... I always pay it extra" (TLG, 270), because language, like a labourer, is "employed".

There is further nonsense caused by the breakdown of language when Alice tells the White King: "I see nobody on the road" (TLG, 279). The King responds: "I only wish I had such eyes /.... To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too! Why, it's as much as I can do to see real people, by this light" (TLG, 279). Humorously, the King treats the indefinite pronoun "nobody" as a proper name. The nonsense is compounded when the Messenger arrives and the King asks him ~~whom~~ he passed on the road:

'Nobody,' said the Messenger.

'Quite right,' said the King: 'this young lady saw him too. So of course Nobody walks slower than you.'

'I do my best,' the Messenger said in a sullen tone. 'I'm sure nobody walks much faster than I do!'

'He can't do that,' said the King, 'or else he'd have been here first'

(TLG, 282).

There is a double misunderstanding on the parts of Alice and the Messenger, who both respond to the literal, denotative aspects of language, while the King, like Humpty Dumpty, revels in the connotative and metaphorical richness of words. Humorously here, the various characters are all logically correct in their own particular contexts. Readers on all levels of verbal sophistication can appreciate the nonsensical breakdown of language. Later, the absentminded King, while writing in his memorandum-book, asks "Do you spell 'creature' with a double 'e'?" (TLG, 286) His query is nonsensically unexpected

if the reader presumes the question is merely based on the King's ignorance of spelling. However, the King's question also provides an insight into language. The spelling of "creature" with a double 'e', more truly signifies the difference which denotes the creature, akin to Blake's choice of the Middle English spelling "tyger" or A. A. Milne's "tigger".

Superfluity, a particular use of language which contributes to nonsense, is found in both Alice books. The taste of the bottle labelled 'Drink me' is described as possessing the unusual "flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffee and hot buttered toast" (AAW, 31). The superfluity of the description is nonsensical, as are the bizarre juxtapositions (i.e. roast turkey and toffee). Furthermore, Carroll demonstrates one of the limitations of language, its inability to describe the personal and subjective, such as taste. The Dormouse tells the story of the three little (Liddell) sisters who "drew all manner of things ... begin [ning] with an M-- such as mouse-traps, and the moon, and memory and muchness" (AAW, 103). The list includes abstract concepts (such as "memory" and "muchness") which are impossible to draw, as well as items which are difficult to draw (such as "mouse-traps"). Here, the unexpected nature of the items and the superfluity of the list itself, create the nonsense effect.

There are at least two examples of superfluity in the world beyond the looking glass: the items which the Tweedle

brothers carry and the White Knight's recipe for pudding. The Tweedles return from the woods with "their arms full of things -- such as bolsters, blankets, hearth-rugs, table-cloths, dish-covers, and coat-scuttles" (TLG, 241). These diverse items are especially nonsensical when we consider that they have been inappropriately gathered in preparation for a battle. The White Knight's recipe has a combination of unusual ingredients, since the first item "blotting paper" is

Not very nice alone ... but you've
no idea what a difference it makes,
mixing it with other things --
such as gunpowder and sealing wax
(TLG, 305).

This nonsensical recipe recalls Edward Lear's "Nonsense Cookery". Although there is no direct evidence that Carroll was familiar with Lear's works, Lear's nonsense was widely available during Carroll's youth, and the two men were later to share common acquaintances, such as the Rossettis.

The juxtaposition of incongruous elements has traditionally created a nonsensical type of humor. The Dormouse's list of things beginning with an 'M' is a good example of incongruity. Carroll combines the concrete with the abstract in a seemingly random grouping, much like the juxtaposition of words in a dictionary. Sewell notes that in nonsense,

whenever an abstract occurs, particularly if it is one connected with the feelings in some way, it is frequently tethered down by a thing, and a completely unromantic and matter-of-fact thing, beside it¹.

¹Sewell, p. 136.

This explanation helps to account for Carroll's juxtaposition of "memory" (abstract) and "mouse-traps" (concrete).

Through the Looking Glass provides several classic examples of juxtaposition. The Walrus and the Carpenter, personae of the nonsense poem named after them, are a totally incongruous pair. Only in nonsense would one juxtapose two such disparate characters. Carroll's choice of this pair is itself a riddle.

The galvanic flash of Carroll's creative art ... has welded their total disparity into a unit. Each has only one characteristic that could serve as symbolic link to the Father and Mother for whom they are to substitute: the Walrus always has a mustache; the Carpenter always wears an apron¹.

The traditionally male carpenter who wears an apron may suggest the reversal of sexual identity. The most often quoted stanza of the poem contains further examples of juxtaposition:

'The time has come,' the Walrus said,
'To talk of many things:
Of shoes -- and ships -- and sealing wax
Of cabbages -- and kings --
And why the sea is boiling hot --
And whether pigs have wings.'
(TLG, 235).

Carroll's use of juxtaposition recalls the use of this technique in mock epic poetry, such as Pope's Rape of the Lock.

Parody is another aesthetic technique based upon the conscious manipulation of language, which provides nonsense in the Alice books. Carroll greatly enjoyed writing parodies

¹Bacon, p. 158.

of well-known poems, for this was an activity begun in his youth and continued throughout his lifetime. "Parody besides being a mockery of the original is at the same time a recognition of it."¹ Dodgson is certain to have agreed with the precepts of some of the poems which he parodies (such as those by Watts) and yet, as Carroll, through parody, he demonstrates that ultimately Watts's world view is narrow, incomplete, and "nonsensical" in the real world. Didactic poetry is related to the superego, whereas nonsense poetry originates from the id. Carroll's parody is a rebellion and a rejection.

Freud says ... that nonsense in dreams and so-called unconscious thinking signifies contempt and sneering. We may expect that nonsense literature is the expression of particularly strong destructive tendencies.²

When Alice attempts to recite Isaac Watts's moralistic poem, "Against Idleness and Mischief", she finds that "the words did not come the same as they used to do" (AAW, 38). Watts's industrious "little busy bee"³ who spends "each shining hour ... gather[ing] honey all the day"⁴ is transformed by Carroll into a vain and predatory "little crocodile" (AAW, 380) whose sole concerns are "his shining tail" (AAW, 38)

¹ Sewell, p. 172.

² Paul Schilder, "Psychoanalytic Remarks on Alice in Wonderland and Lewis Carroll," in Aspects of Alice, p. 289.

³ Isaac Watts, "Against Idleness and Mischief," quoted by Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 38.

⁴ Ibid.

and the welcoming of "little fishes in, / With gently smiling jaws" (AAW, 38). Carroll's use of reversal is evident in this transmutation. He reveals nature as a threatening jungle, rather than Watts's idealized garden, and the protagonist as a lazy crocodile who succeeds by doing nothing, difficult, rather than Watts's industrious, sanctimonious bee.

A second poem which is parodied in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is Robert Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them". In Southey's didactic poem, a young man asks Father William for advice on successful living. Father William confides that he has "abus'd not my health"¹ and above all "remember'd my G-d! / And He hath not forgotten my age"². Carroll may have objected to Southey's "portrait of a bargaining deity"³. Carroll's Father William is a degenerate prankster who incessantly stands on his head, turns somersaults, and jokes about his marriage:

'In my youth,' said his father, 'I took
to the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength, which it gave to
my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life
(AAW, 71).

The old hustler even attempts to sell the ointment, which he claims

¹ Robert Southey, "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them," quoted by Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 69.

² Ibid.

³ Lennon, p. 308.

has "kept [his] ... limbs very supple" (AAW, 71): "one shilling the box -- / Allow me to sell you a couple?" (AAW, 71). Carroll's ludicrous portrayal of the father figure suggests a more general rejection of male authority and the masculine identity. Rather than patiently replying to all of the young man's questions like Southey's Father William, Carroll's Father William loses his patience and threatens the young man:

'I have answered three questions, and that is
enough,'
Said his father. 'Don't give yourself airs!
Do you think I can listen all day to such stuff?
Be off, or I'll kick you down stairs!'
(AAW, 71)

Ciardi believes that both "the crocodile and Father William have a good deal in common ... both accuse their originals of hypocrisy"¹. The imagination of the genius inevitably questions personal, social, and even logical restraints. Like Blake, Carroll loathed "the bounded".

In Through the Looking Glass, Carroll's parodies are more subtle and less directly evident than in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. "The Walrus and the Carpenter" for instance "is in the meter of Thomas Hood's 'Dream of Eugene Aram' but only the style of Hood's poem is satirized"².

¹John Ciardi, "A Burble in the Tulgey Wood," in Aspects of Alice, p. 258.

²Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 233, footnote 3.

Gardner believes that the White Knight's song is "a travesty on the subject matter of . . . 'Resolution and Independence' . . . a fine poem"¹. Carroll here does not follow the iambic pentameter of Wordsworth's poem, nor does he write a line by line parody of the earlier poem, as in the cases of Carroll's parodies of Watts and Southey. The negative connotations of "travesty" (Gardner's diction) are less a condemnation of Carroll than an instance of the critic's own value judgements, personal prejudices, and "sacred cows". Both poems, however, relate the meeting between a young man and an old man, thus recalling "Father William". Wordsworth's young man asks the "oldest man"²: "What occupation do you . . . pursue?"³ and "How is it that you live, and what is it you do?"⁴ The elderly man replies in "a stately speech"⁵ that he is a leech gatherer. The younger man is deeply affected by this encounter and admires the old man's perseverance and good nature, although the young traveller admits

¹Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 308, footnote 9.

²William Wordsworth, "Resolution and Independence," quoted by Gardner, p. 309.

³Ibid., p. 310.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word
could I divide.

The White Knight relates that he too, has met an "aged aged man" (TLG, 307) and inquired of him: "Who are you, And how is it you live?" (TLG, 307) and later "tell me how you live ... And what it is you do" (TLG, 307), a direct allusion to Wordsworth's poem. Contrary to the altruism of the leech gatherer, Carroll's aged man occupies his time with such non-sensical activities as looking for "butterflies ... [to] make them into mutton pies" (TLG, 311), hunting "for haddocks' eyes ... [to] work them into waistcoat-buttons" (TLG, 312), digging for "battered rolls" (TLG, 312) and selling "Rowland's Macassar-Oil" (TLG, 311). The aged man's interest in sales also recalls Father William. Like Wordsworth's traveller, the White Knight too, admits to being distracted:

his answer trickled through my head,
Like water through a sieve
(TLG, 311).

The White Knight accounts for his distraction by revealing his own nonsensical concerns: thinking of "a plan / To dye one's whiskers green" (TLG, 311), thinking of a "way / To feed oneself on batter" (TLG, 311), and completing a

¹Wordsworth quoted by Gardner, p. 310.

design "To keep the Menai bridge from rust / By boiling it in wine" (TLG, 313).

Bacon comments on "the frustrated aggression behind the most amusing parody"¹, since creating a parody of a poem simultaneously implies both recognition as well as rejection of the original. Undoubtedly however, some of Carroll's most inspired poetry takes the form of parody. In a world of reversal, parody is a natural and obvious choice for the satirist or nonsense writer.

The omission of direct religious references in the Alice books is notable considering Carroll's position as clergyman. Carroll seems to have felt, however, that religion and nonsense should remain separate entities; although his last works, Sylvie and Bruno and Sylvie and Bruno Concluded, include both concepts. Generally though, these works are viewed as artistic failures. Gardner notes that in "The Garden of Live Flowers" chapter of Through the Looking Glass, Carroll had intended to use a passion flower

but changed it to tiger-lily when he had learned that the name had reference not to human passions but to the Passion of Christ on the Cross².

Walter De la Mare notes that Carroll's father too felt an

¹Bacon, p. 144.

²Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 200, footnote 1.

aversion to the combination of nonsense and religion:

"Dodgson's father was renowned for his wit and humour. He delighted in any amusing joke ... provided its text was not the Bible"¹.

If Carroll consciously avoided employing direct religious references in the Alice books, we would expect to find indirect and unconscious religious references in these works. The dry biscuit offered to Alice has already been discussed as a possible reference to the Eucharist. Other such references might include: the sermonizing and moralizing of various characters such as the Duchess, the diction "mystic" and "pilgrim's" (AAW, 23) in the prefatory poem, and "the loveliest garden" (AAW, 30), an Edenic locale which Alice hopes to visit. The pool of tears may be related to baptismal waters or to the flood. Similarly, the "serpent" with whom Alice is confused, may refer to the Satanic serpent of paradise. The use of the child persona itself may be seen in religious terms. Size is a problem in entering the garden and Jesus told his disciples that:

Except ye be converted, and become
as little children, ye shall not
enter into the kingdom of heaven².

The preponderance of fish imagery in both Alice books, and particularly in the poetry (as Alice tells her kitten,

¹Walter De la Mare, Lewis Carroll (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1972), p. 19.

²Matthew 18: 3, The Holy Bible, King James version.

"I had such a quantity of poetry said to me, all about fishes!" [TLG, 343]), may represent another indirect religious reference since the fish is one of the earliest and most fundamental Christian symbols, Icthus.

Nevertheless, the absence of direct religious references in the Alice books seems significant. Perhaps this enigma may be critically resolved through the fusion of nonsense and faith:

nonsense will, in a very unexpected way, come to the aid of the spiritual view of things. Religion has for centuries been trying to make men exult in the 'wonders' of creation, but it has forgotten that a thing cannot be completely wonderful so long as it remains sensible The well-meaning person who, by merely studying the logical side of things, has decided that 'faith is nonsense', does not know how truly he speaks; later it may come back to him in the form that nonsense is faith¹.

We also recall the oracular prophecies of Delphi, a body of paradoxical generalizations, essentially nonsense, which allegedly contained sacred and meaningful information to those who possessed the "inspiration" to interpret them. In a utilitarian, process-obsessed, empirical age, nonsense and madness may be necessary as a relief to the soul and may be a sort of renewal of faith; they recreate abstraction and faith after process and reductionistic logic have destroyed them (cf. Mill's, Darwin's and Carlyle's autobiographies

¹G. K. Chesterton, "A Defense of Nonsense," in Stories, Essays and Poems (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1935), pp. 24-25

which attest to this effect). A similar effect may be observed in the non-rational religious experience of glossalalia (speaking in tongues) which may be seen as a similar reaction to scientism or even reason itself. The belief that the holy spirit can speak through man indicates a return to the belief of pure inspiration.

Lewis Carroll's aesthetic and thematic uses of nonsense are not based upon an absurd universal vision, in the tradition of the existentialists; but rather they contain internal, dynamic and cohesive qualities such as the rigorous logic of satire, the artful manipulation of parody, and the more general mastery of logic and language, all of which attest to Carroll's ultimate confirmation of art as meaningful, instructive and delightful. Nonsense becomes an aesthetic door to the spiritual innocence of childhood.

CHAPTER V

THE DREAM MOTIF

The dream motif, like Carroll's use of madness and nonsense, provides yet another escape from the restraints of mere reality. "In our dreams the fetters of civilisation are loosened and we know the fearful joy of freedom"¹, writes Havelock Ellis. The dream provides the perfect bridge between psychology and aesthetics. Although the dream motif has virtually become a cliché in modern times, it is part of an important literary tradition, with such antecedents as the Bible (Joseph etc.), Greek mythology (Orpheus and Eurydice), and medieval dream visionary writings. According to Warren, "The dream as a literary convention is perhaps the most serious form of literature ... real with the reality of poetry and philosophy and religion."²

Carroll's use of the dream in both Alice books provided him with aesthetic as well as psychological freedom. For Warren, Carroll's "fictive dreams are a vehicle for conveying wonders within a commonsense framework"³. Furthermore,

¹Havelock Ellis, The World of Dreams (New York: Houghton and Mifflin Co., 1922), p. 279.

²Warren, p. 337.

³Ibid.

like art, dreams are psychologically therapeutic in that they allow the dreamer to work out problems which cannot be easily faced by the conscious mind. Freud found that "Wit, like dreams, lets us express in masquerade ideas not socially acceptable in the nude"¹. He demonstrated that dreams represented wish fulfillment and that an interpretation of their symbols could yield psychological insights. (See Chapter VI.) In the dream state the mind is free from conscious control, suggesting the parallels of madness and nonsense. Echoing Freud, Jung found that there was meaning behind the seeming chaos of dreams: the "generally unintelligible, irrational, not to say delirious sequence of images ... nonetheless does not lack a certain hidden coherence"². Ellis goes as far as denoting the "syllogistic arrangement of dream imagery"³.

Literary criticism has acknowledged the dream as a source of inspiration, as yet another door to the wonderland of the imagination. The prefatory poem to Alice's Adventures in Wonderland introduces the dream motif:

The dream-child moving through a land
of wonders wild and new
In friendly chat with bird or beast, --
And half believe it true
(AAW, 23).

¹Lennon discussing Freud, p. 304.

²C.G. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, trans. R.F.C. Hull (New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1977), p. 153.

³Ellis, p. 58.

Characteristically, Carroll immediately brings into question the authenticity of dreams: "half believe" is a marvellously vague expression which symbolizes the ambiguity of dreams themselves. The imaginative "land / Of wonders wild and new" may be indicative of both the psychological and aesthetic freedoms Carroll attained through his writing. "Wild" suggests that nonsense provides freedom from personal inhibitions, while "new" suggests artistic novelty, or freedom from the tyranny of convention. In the same poem Carroll links dreams to childhood: "Childhood's dreams are twined / In Memory's mystic band" (AAW, 23). He seems to suggest that dreams, like memory, constitute a path of return to the world of childhood innocence. This view converges with the findings of psychology; Ellis refers to Giessler's generalization that "dream consciousness corresponds to the normal psychic state in childhood"¹.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is structured upon a dream framework. The story was originally told ex tempore, and thus Carroll's choice of the dream motif was inspirational since the stream of consciousness evoked by a story told on the spur of the moment, counterpoints the unfolding of the dream. On the first page of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland Alice is "beginning to get very tired.... [for] the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid" (AAW, 25). However, it is only in the final chapter that Alice's experiences are

¹Ellis, p. 189.

directly revealed as those of a dream voyage: "'Wake up, Alice dear!' said her sister.... 'Oh, I've had such a curious dream!' said Alice" (AAW, 162). At the end of the book we learn that Alice's dream has been shaped by reality. Alice's sister perceives that: "the rattling tea-cups would change to tinkling sheep-bells, and the Queen's shrill cries to the voice of the shepherd" (AAW, 163). Here Carroll demonstrates that sounds can modify the dream experience. "Faint rudimentary noises ... in sleep, may constitute the nucleus around which the hallucinations crystallize."¹

A similar suspension of disbelief occurs in both the dream and in nonsense, where the unexpected is de rigueur. When Alice encounters a White Rabbit who speaks: "Oh dear! I shall be too late!" (AAW, 25-26), to Alice "At the time it all seemed quite natural" (AAW, 26). In both the dream and nonsense, what is "natural" in reality, becomes out of place. In the world of the imagination animals may speak, recalling the "friendly chat with bird or beast" of the prefatory poem. The slow motion of Alice's fall down the rabbit hole is dream-like: "Either the well was very deep, or she fell very slowly" (AAW, 26). Alice's fall suggests a common dream occurrence in which the dreamer is helpless to initiate any response. During her fall, Alice experiences a

¹Ellis, p. 77.

dream within her dream: "she felt that she was dozing off, and had just begun to dream that she was walking hand in hand with Dinah" (AAW, 28-29). The dream within the dream is another sensation occasionally experienced during actual dreaming and is commonly found in literature employing the dream motif. We recall Poe's phrase:

All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream¹.

Transformation, a key element in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is also a vital characteristic of dreams: "the most elementary fact about dream vision is the perpetual and unceasing change which it is undergoing at every moment"², Alice complained to the Caterpillar that "one doesn't like changing so often" (AAW, 72). But just as metamorphosis is natural to caterpillars, it is natural to the dream world of Wonderland. Virginia Woolf recognized this aspect of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland when she observed that in it "Without any conscious effort dreams come; the white rabbit, the walrus, and the carpenter, one after another, turning and changing one into the other, ... skipping and leaping across the mind"³. Transformation is native to the dream since its

¹Edgar Allan Poe, "A Dream Within a Dream," in The Works of Edgar Allan Poe (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 967.

²Ellis, p. 20.

³Virginia Woolf, "Lewis Carroll," in Aspects of Alice, p. 48.

boundaries are psychological rather than logical.

Throughout the first Alice book, Alice frequently experiences transformations of size. For instance, the liquid in the "Drink me" bottle causes Alice to contract, to shut "up like a telescope" (AAW, 31), and conversely, the "Eat Me" cake causes Alice to expand, exclaiming, "Now I'm opening out like the largest telescope that ever was" (AAW, 35). (See also Chapter VI on Sexual Symbolism and Language.) Carroll's own interest in photography and his familiarity with lenses may have inspired his metaphor of the telescope. The final transformation in Alice's stature occurs at the trial when she begins to grow uncontrollably, causing her to declare: "I can't help it ... I'm growing" (AAW, 147), an ironic image of childhood experience.

Alice is not the only one who undergoes change in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Dream reality, like a dramatic set, undergoes change:

everything seemed to have changed since her swim in the pool, and the great hall, with the glass table and the little door, had vanished completely
(AAW, 55).

The Cheshire Cat too "vanished" (AAW, 89) and subsequently "suddenly appeared again" (AAW, 90). The recurrence in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland of the fear of vanishing, and later in "The Hunting of the Snark" where the Baker confides

'if ever I meet with a Boojum, that day
In a moment (of this I am sure),
I shall softly and suddenly vanish away --
And the notion I cannot endure!

may relate to Carroll's obsession with death and the entailed dissolution-of identity, the extinguished candle.

The first book ends after Alice has recounted her "curious dream" (AAW, 162) to her elder sister, who in turn "began dreaming" (AAW, 163). Here Carroll employs cycles of "the dream of Wonderland" (AAW, 164) and reality, of innocent childhood and experience. In the second Alice book, Carroll pursues and expands upon his interest in the many aspects of the dream.

Perhaps because the reader only learns at the end of Through the Looking Glass that the story is based upon a dream, Lewis Carroll ensured that there would be many references to dreams and the dream state in this book. Although Alice is not falling asleep (as in the first book) at the start of Through the Looking Glass, there are numerous dream-like aspects to her adventures. The way in which the looking glass dissolves is dream-like: "the glass was beginning to melt way, just like a bright silvery mist" (TLG, 184). Carroll's diction recreates the ephemeral and indefinite backdrop of the dream setting. When Alice views the animated

¹ Carroll, "The Hunting of the Snark," in The Works of Lewis Carroll, p.742.

chess pieces, her response: "I feel somehow as if I was getting invisible" (TLG, 197) suggests a familiar psychological sensation of the dream state.

Carroll also includes details which recreate the dreamer's sense of movement within his dream. In the looking glass house Alice "floated gently down without even touching the stairs with her feet: then she floated on through the hall" (TLG, 197). Later Alice feels that she is "skim[ming]" through the air, hardly touching the ground" (TLG, 209). The sensation of flight is common to dreams and may indicate that the dreamer has attained psychological freedom. Heading for the top of a hill, Alice finds herself "wandering up and down, and trying turn after turn, but always coming back to the house, do what she would" (TLG, 199). Here Carroll demonstrates that in the dream one of the restrictions encountered is the freedom of choice of movement; the dreamer lacks the ability to evade certain psychological confrontations on the unconscious level and is led in endless circles back to these points of reference. The world beyond the looking glass lacks logical connections or transitions between events. Alice recalls running with the Red Queen, but is unable to remember "how it was that they began: all she remembers is, that they were running hand in hand" (TLG, 208). For Alice, memory cannot serve its traditional corroborating function. There is a similar lack of connection when Alice recalls:

it certainly was funny ... to find myself singing 'Here we go round the mulberry bush.' I don't know when I began it, but somehow I felt as if I'd been singing it a long long time!

(TLG, 232).

This quotation demonstrates the fragmented as well as timeless nature of dreams. As in a dream, Alice is prepared to expect and accept the unusual. Upon shaking the Tweedle brothers' hands, Alice finds

they were dancing round in a ring. This seemed quite natural (she remembered afterwards), and she was not even surprised to hear music playing

(TLG, 231-32).

The Tweedle brothers are familiar to Alice through her knowledge of nursery rhymes. In a dream, imaginary characters such as those from nursery rhymes, may be freed from the subconscious.

In Through the Looking Glass, Carroll recreates the elusive atmosphere of dreams. Alice's experience at the looking glass store,

whenever she looked hard at any shelf, to make out exactly what it had on it, that particular shelf was always quite empty, though the others round it were crowded as full as they could hold

(TLG, 253),

is also that of the dreamer attempting to recall the elements of his dream, only to find that these elements have eluded

him, Ellis notes that "A dream image perpetually shifts in a meaningless fashion at the focus of sleeping consciousness"¹. Carroll provides the analogy of the dream-rushes which once picked

begun to fade, and to lose all their
scent and beauty, from the very
moment that she picked them....
these, being dream-rushes, melted
away almost like snow

(TLG, 257).

The internal elements of a dream cannot be specified, concretized nor objectified. The dream is as intangible and as elusive as youth. Gardner suggests that "Carroll thought of these dream-rushes as symbols of his child-friends.... symbols of the fleeting, short-lived, hard-to-keep quality of beauty"².

Like Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass contains numerous examples of transformation, a key feature of dreams. As Alice observes of the looking glass store "things flow about so here!" (TLG, 253) Although Alice's size does not alter in Through the Looking Glass, the chess pieces are transformed through personification: "when Alice first found her [the Red Queen] in the ashes, she had been only three inches high -- and here she was, half a head taller than Alice herself!" (TLG, 205) A more dramatic

¹Ellis, p. 223.

²Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 257, footnote 13.

transformation occurs later when the White Queen is metamorphosed into a sheep. While saying "better" she begins to bleat like a sheep "Be-e-ehh!" (TLG, 252) and suddenly finds herself "wrapped in wool" (TLG, 252). As in a dream, objects are continually transformed; Alice observes that the sheep knitting with fourteen pairs of needles "gets more and more like a porcupine every minute" (TLG, 254). The knitting needles subsequently "turned into oars" (TLG, 254). Another transformation occurs when the egg in the looking glass store "got larger and larger, and more and more human" (TLG, 261), becoming Humpty Dumpty. The transformation of the egg into a "more and more human" figure may be yet another allusion to Darwin, for this progression symbolizes man's embryological evolution through hierarchical stages. At the end of the book, Alice shakes the Red Queen, who is revealed to be her kitten: "it really was a kitten after all" (TLG, 339). The relativistic nature of sense perception in an imaginative story based upon nonsense, suits the ambivalence and ambiguity of the dream motif.

The prevalence of tired characters in Through the Looking Glass contributes to the book's dream-like atmosphere. In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, we encountered the Dormouse (whose name is a pun on the French "dormir" - to sleep) as well as the "languid, sleepy" (AAW, 67) Caterpillar. In the second Alice book the Red King snores in his sleep, the Lion "looked very sleepy and tired" (TLG, 288), both the Red and

White Queens fall asleep "snoring loud" (TLG, 326) in Alice's lap and even the butterflies in the White Knight's song "sleep among the wheat" (TLG, 311).

In Through the Looking Glass Carroll employs the dream in order to explore the nature of reality. Tweedledee's philosophical examination of the Red King's dream causes Alice to question her ontological identity: "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be? You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!" (TLG, 238) Alice asserts that she is real and begins to cry, an emotional response to a logical argument. Tweedledum's subsequent remark is also based upon logic: "you don't suppose those are real tears?" (TLG, 239) Gardner finds that the Tweedle brothers "defend Berkeley's view that all material objects, including ourselves, are only 'sorts of things' in the mind of G-d"¹. In Berkeley's "Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge", he wrote that "the existence of an idea consists in being perceived 'esse' is 'percipi'"². Berkeley's theory of subjective reality would have appealed to Carroll since it represented a vindication of the imagination and of poetic vision. Following her

¹Gardner, The Annotated Alice, p. 238, footnote 7.

²George Berkeley, "Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge," in Philosophical Writings, ed. T.E. Jessop (New York: T. Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1952), p. 50.

encounter with the Lion and the Unicorn, Alice considers that she "must have been dreaming" (TLG, 293), until she discovers the plum cake dish "still lying at her feet" (TLG, 293):

So I wasn't dreaming, after all ...
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 ... I've a great mind to go and
wake him, and see what happens!

(TLG, 293)

Alice's innocent conclusion "I do hope it's my dream" is significant in that it demonstrates her desire for self-determination and for relevance. Carroll presents an anthropocentric universe, recalling Darwin's evolutionary schema. The question of the dream begins and concludes the final chapter of Through the Looking Glass, entitled "Which Dreamed It?".

Addressing her kitten, Alice considers

who it was that dreamed it all
...., You see, it must have been
either me or the Red King. He was
part of my dream but then I was
part of his dream, too Which do
you think it was?

(TLG, 343)

Carroll evidently wished to further emphasize the importance of dreams for even the poetic epilogue to the Alice books is replete with dream imagery:

Lingering onward dreamily

Dreaming as the days go by,
Dreaming as the summers die:

Ever drifting down the stream --
Lingering in the golden gleam --

(TLG, 345).

Here, the dream is related to the temporal theme, as diction such as "lingering", "die", "drifting" and "stream" suggests. The dream is timeless and as such it is the perfect vehicle for artistic expression. The use of the dream motif permitted Carroll to capture both psychologically and aesthetically the fleeting and magical "golden" moment of childhood. Carroll ends the final poem to the Alice books with a profound rhetorical question: "Life, what is it but a dream?" (TLG; 345). "Sylvie and Bruno, too, has considerable psychological interest, with its alternations of dream and reality and the elusive relationship between them."¹ The narrator of that book also wonders "Is Life itself a dream?"² The escapism provided by dreams apparently served Carroll both aesthetically and psychologically.

The two Alice books contain examples of recurrent diction. Levin points out that while "the Hare and the Hatter of Wonderland ... are metamorphosed into the messengers Haigha and Hatta of the Looking-Glass there is little recurrence from book to book"³. Although Freud wrote that

¹Edmund Wilson, "C.L. Dodgson: the Poet Logician," in Aspects of Alice, p. 201.

²Carroll, Sylvie and Bruno in The Complete Works, p. 392.

³Levin, p. 189.

"Those ideas in the dream-thought which are most important are probably also those which recur most frequently"¹, Levin overlooks the repetition of certain diction in both books.

The words "fit(s)" and "temper" appear numerous times in both books and suggest negative or nightmarish influences in dreams. Significantly, both terms allude to a loss of conscious control. In *Wonderland*, the Crab warns her daughter "never ... lose your temper" (*AAW*, 52), Alice feels she is "losing her temper" (*AAW*, 72), and the Duchess is in "a pleasant temper" (*AAW*, 119), although she is doubtful "about the temper of ... [Alice's] flamingo" (*AAW*, 121). In the land beyond the looking glass, Alice hopes to get the Tiger-lily into "a better temper" (*TLG*, 203), the White Queen's shawl is "out of temper" (*TLG*; 246), Humpty Dumpty declares that words have "a temper ... particularly verbs" (*TLG*, 269), the fish in Humpty Dumpty's poem answer: "Why, what a temper you are in!" (*TLG*, 274), the Red Queen speaks of a "vicious temper" (*TLG*, 319) and the "dog's temper" (*TLG*, 321). The fact that some of the characters whom Alice encounters have unpleasant tempers helps to sustain the dream motif, by giving it a chaotically nightmarish quality.

¹Sigmund Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," in *The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. A.A. Brill (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 337.

Furthermore, the verb "to temper" suggests a process of refinement which Alice's character undergoes during her adventures. "Fit" is another word which recurs in the Alice books. We have already seen evidence of Carroll's interest in the nature of the effects of an epileptic "fit". A fit, like a temper, signifies a loss of control. In Wonderland, the verses which the White Rabbit reads refer to an anonymous she who "had this fit" (AAW, 158). The King of Hearts inquires of his wife whether she has ever had fits; when she replies that she has not, the King puns that "the words don't fit you" (AAW, 160). In Through the Looking Glass, Lily, the Red Queen's daughter, is "nearly screaming herself into a fit" (TLG, 187), the Red King is "fit to snore his head off" (TLG, 238), the narrator of Humpty Dumpty's poem is "Fit for the deed" (TLG, 274) and the White Knight declares, as he attempts to put Alice's plate in his bag, that "It's rather a tight fit" (TLG, 298). A later work of Carroll's, "The Hunting of the Snark", is sub-titled "An Agony in Eight Fits". The word "fit" will be further examined in the next chapter on Symbolism.

Ellis believes that "the man of genius is in closer touch with the laws of the dream world than is the ordinary civilised man"¹. The experiences of Carroll's own life,

¹Ellis, p. 273.

and, according to critics like Greenacre, probably of his dreams as well, were seminal to his works. Dreams provided him with the stage required to work out his psychodrama.

"Myths and legends ... develop by means of the same mechanism as dreams"¹ and contain many similar elements such as symbols.

¹Ellis, p. 210.

CHAPTER VI

SEXUAL SYMBOLS AND LANGUAGE IN THE ALICE BOOKS

No Freudian critic is surprised that the literary creations of a man as sexually repressed as Dodgson, abound with the symbols and language of sexuality. In fact, the Alice books are a Freudian's delight. Dodgson's alter-ego Carroll could freely explore the unconscious repressed world of sexuality through literary fantasy released by his imagination. "Erotic wishes frequently make themselves felt as dreams"¹ and the dream itself, as we have seen, provides a doorway to the subconscious mind. Critics such as Empson have noted the prevalence of sexual symbolism in Alice in Wonderland: "To make the dream-story, from which Wonderland was elaborated seem Freudian one has only to tell it"². Perhaps it is because the first Alice book was based upon a stream-of-consciousness account that we find so many examples of sexual symbols and language in it.

Freud wrote that "penetration into narrow spaces and the opening of locked doors are among the commonest of sexual symbols"³. In Wonderland we find examples of these types of

¹Ellis, p. 177.

²Empson, p. 357.

³Freud, p. 392.

symbols. The narrow rabbit-hole which "went straight on like a tunnel" (AAW, 26) is a classic vaginal symbol, and rabbits themselves are renowned for their procreational proclivity. Other vaginal symbols in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland include the "very deep well" (AAW, 26), the "well" (AAW, 100) inhabited by the three little sisters, the "rat-hole" (AAW, 30), the numerous "doors all round the hall ... all locked" (AAW, 29), and the Rabbit's "chimney" (AAW, 58) through which Alice's arm is thrust. Through the Looking Glass also includes a reference to both doors and chimneys; Humpty Dumpty accuses Alice of "listening at doors ... and down chimneys" (TLG, 264).

Both Alice books, and particularly Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, contain examples of phallic symbols. In the first book, Alice herself is, symbolically, a phallus. Her ability to "shut up" (AAW, 30) and to open "out like the largest telescope" (AAW, 35) may symbolize the deflation and erection of the phallus. Similarly, Alice points out that she doesn't "keep the same size for ten minutes together" (AAW, 69). In Sylvie and Bruno as well, the fairy children are able to control their size. Jung believed that:

the 'child' is, in certain circumstances (e.g., in the case of Hermes and the Dactyls), closely related to the phallus, symbol of the begetter¹.

The Pigeon identifies Alice as a "Serpent" (AAW, 75) due to

¹Jung, p. 178.



Fig. 4.
Carroll's illustration of Alice's serpentine neck.

Alice's "immense length of neck, which seemed to rise like a stalk" (AAW, 74) and which could "bend about easily in any direction, like a serpent" (AAW, 74). Freud distinguished "the snake ... [as] the most important symbol of the male member"¹. In Tenniel's accompanying illustration the "phallic appearance of the girl"² is inescapable. Carroll's own illustration for the "Alice's Adventures Under Ground" manuscript is also notably phallic. (See Figure 4.)

¹Freud, p. 373.

²Martin Grotjahn, "About the Symbolization of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," in Aspects of Alice, p. 313.

Other phallic symbols in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland include the "three-legged table" (AAW, 29), "one of the legs of the table ... [which] was too slippery" (AAW, 32), and the "golden key" (AAW, 29). Empson humorously points out the latter when he writes that Alice "being a little girl ... has no key"¹. As well, the "cool fountains" (AAW, 30) in the garden Alice ultimately enters, may be viewed as phallic symbols, recalling Coleridge's Kubla Khan. In the second Alice book the child again assumes phallic characteristics, for at the banquet Alice declares that she will "'rise to return thanks --' ... and she really did rise as she spoke, several inches" (TLG, 335). The "candles [which] all grew up to the ceiling, looking something like a bed of rushes" (TLG, 335) are also phallic. Humpty Dumpty's "beautiful cravat" (TLG, 266) is yet another phallic symbol for according to Freud, "in the dreams of men one often finds the necktie as a symbol for the penis"².

The manifestations of the expanding and contracting phallus, even to the point of "vanishing" provide a symbolic and linguistic counterpoint to a subconscious anxiety, the fear of ~~emasculation~~ ^{emasculation}, that the penis will disappear entirely: Alice's threat to the flowers: "If you don't hold your tongues, I'll pick you" (TLG, 202) suggests castration since flowers are the sexual organs of plants. Freud found that

¹Empson, p. 357.

²Freud, pp. 372-73.

"the dream-work represents castration by baldness, hair-cutting ... and beheading"¹. Hair has traditionally been associated with sexuality, as in Pope's Rape of the Lock. There are a surprising number of references to the loss or cutting of hair in the Alice books. The Hatter tells Alice that "Your hair wants cutting" (AAW, 94) and the Queen of Hearts sentences the Dormouse to symbolic castration: "Off with his whiskers!" (AAW, 152). In Through the Looking Glass the White Knight hopes that Alice has her "hair well fastened on" (TLG, 299) and confides that he has invented a plan "for keeping it [hair] from falling off" (TLG, 299). "The Wasp in a Wig" a suppressed episode of Through the Looking Glass features a shorn wasp who suggests a eunuch-like character. The Wasp, like an emasculated Samson, laments: "what was I to do My ringlets would not grow again"². "Ringlets" and the "yellow wig" (WW, 35) which the Wasp is obliged to wear, suggest femininity, a literary tradition dating at least as far back as Chaucer's golden-haired pardoner. The Wasp is unable to renew his former potency and is unsuccessful in his attempt to reach out "a claw" (WW, 37) to remove Alice's hair. As we saw in Chapter II on the quest for identity,

¹Freud, p. 373.

²Carroll, The Wasp in a Wig, ed. Martin Gardner (Bath: Pitman Press, 1977), p. 35. All subsequent references to this text will be internalized as WW.

both Alice books contain a plethora of references to beheading. The cutting off of parts of the body has traditionally been viewed by psychologists as symbolic of castration since the time of Oedipus Rex. Some critics believe that Oedipus' blinding was a euphemism for castration, since his crime was primarily sexual. The frequent references to beheading in the Alice books confirm the existence of a castration complex on Dodgson's part, which would fit in well with the notion of Dodgson's psychological identification with the female principle (i.e. lacking the phallus).

Schilder has noted that "Oral aggressiveness is found everywhere"¹ in the Alice books. Oral aggression is another symbol of castration. Furthermore, pre-pubescent sexuality is often manifested through oral aggression and oral anxiety. Examples of oral aggression in Wonderland range from the crocodile of Alice's poem who "welcomes little fishes in, / With gently smiling jaws" (AAW, 38) to the Cheshire Cat who has a "great many teeth" (AAW, 87-88). In the land beyond the looking glass examples of oral aggression include Alice's suggestion to her nurse: "let's pretend that I'm a hungry hyaena, and you're a bone!" (TLG, 180) and the Walrus and Carpenter's treatment of the oysters: "They'd eaten everyone" (TLG, 236). It is similarly significant that the books are replete with examples of oral frustration. At the

¹Schilder, p. 286.

Wonderland tea-party Alice does not have any tea "I've had nothing yet" (AAW, 101) and at the trial the Hatter "bites a large piece out of his teacup instead of the bread-and-butter" (AAW, 147). In Through the Looking Glass, there is "never jam to-day" (TLG, 247), the White King suggests "eating hay when you're faint" (TLG, 281) and at the banquet Alice declines being introduced to the live pudding saying "or we shall get no dinner at all" (TLG, 331). Ironically, Alice is "starved at her own triumphal banquet"¹. Paralleling Dodgson's sexual frustration, Alice's appetite continually remains unsatisfied.

Corresponding to the sexual symbolism of the Alice books, we find language which is rich in erotic connotations. Since puns are accidental stumblings upon humor their spontaneity often reveals underlying psychological sources. Upon close examination, many of Carroll's puns may be seen as alluding to sexual penetration or lack of penetration. When Alice tells the Dormouse that the three sisters "were in the well" (AAW, 102), the Dormouse replies, "Of course they were ... well in" (AAW, 102). In the chapter on dreams we have already noted Carroll's preoccupation with "fitting". Humpty Dumpty, exasperated with Alice's lack of comprehension, comments, "Impenetrability!" (TLG, 269) The problem of "penetrability" or "fitting" is

¹Bloomingdale, p. 389.

is crucial to an adult male subconsciously desiring intercourse with a pre-pubescent female. Apparently Dodgson was able to more freely express his frustrated, repressed sexual desires through his literary creations. There is deep pathos in Carroll's images of oral anxiety and the problems of penetration -- all symbolic of frustrations which began in childhood and persisted throughout his life. In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland coital incompatibility due to differences in size is obvious: "either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open any of them" (AAW, 29-30).

CHAPTER VII

"JABBERWOCKY": THE INNER BATTLE

Critical work upon a complex work of literature may often appear fragmented or disjointed since particular elements serve as the focal points of attention. Indeed, the chapter of Through the Looking Glass which contains Carroll's poem, "Jabberwocky", constitutes a warning against the folly of an uncontrolled intellectual analysis. Sutherland suggests that Carroll used Humpty Dumpty to "satirize the ... philological speculators ... who committed ludicrous ... errors through ignorance of historical relationships of languages ... false analogies and hasty generalizations"¹. But the genius of a writer like Carroll is most evident through his artistic unity. Aesthetically, "Jabberwocky" is a microcosm of the Alice books since it contains the major themes and elements of both books.

The words and form of the first stanza of "Jabberwocky" are reversed, and reversal is, as we have seen, a major theme and aesthetic technique of the books. Alice finds that poetry in a "Looking-glass book" (TLG, 191) is reversed: "if I hold it up to a glass, the words will all go the right way" (TLG, 191). Empson finds that

¹Sutherland, p. 149.

"the charm of Jabberwocky is that it is a code language"¹, reflecting Carroll's interest in the obscurity of ambiguity. Similarly, as poet and logician, he was intrigued by the concepts of codes, riddles, and reversals. In 1891, he signed a letter which he wrote to Isa Bowman's sister Nelly "C.L.D., Uncle loving your!"² That the personality of the free-spirited Carroll was an alter-ego to the rigid Dodgson may help to account for Carroll's interest in reversal.

Other themes to be found in "Jabberwocky" are "battle, beheading, a victory for the child, and a reward of praise from a parental authority figure"³. Thus, the poem may obliquely reveal Carroll's own confrontation with emotional maturation. "Jabberwocky" involves a key psychological phenomenon: a rite of manhood in which the boy succeeds in slaying the formidable monsters of childhood. The portrayal of the child hero having successfully undertaken the quest apparently reveals wish fulfillment on the author's part. Therefore we see that the quest for identity, an essential Carrollian theme, is central to "Jabberwocky". The "son" (TLG, 191) is welcomed into his father's arms and is

¹Empson, p. 355.

²Carroll quoted by Isa Bowman, p. 93.

³Kathleen Blake, p. 133.

approvingly addressed as a "beamish boy" (TLG, 197). On one level, the slaying of the Jabberwock may represent the child's progression into adulthood, on another it may represent finally gaining parental approval, and on yet a third level, it may symbolize the ultimate facing of repressed fears.

"Jabberwocky" also encompasses the Carrollian thematic and aesthetic use of madness. While one may disagree with Schilder who finds that the poem's vocabulary is reminiscent of "the language ... of schizophrenics"¹, the poem does contain nightmarish qualities which balance the aforementioned positive elements. There is semantic confusion and ambiguity of language which produce an almost hypnotic effect upon the reader. The poem's nightmarish atmosphere is also heightened by the violent and ferocious nature of the creature: "Beware the Jabberwock ... / The jaws that bite, the claws that catch" (TLG, 191).

Typically, for Lewis Carroll, the form of "Jabberwocky" is nonsensical, while the meaning or content is based upon an underlying logic. In the poem Carroll reveals that language is a fusion of sound and meaning. He employs nonsense words such as portmanteaus ("frumious" is formed by combining "fuming" and "furious") and neologisms ("mimsy")

¹Schilder, p. 288.

in a rigorously correct grammatical pattern. "The portmanteau proper is Carroll's invention."¹ While on one level, Carroll's created words are examples of nonsense, as they were unknown, on another level, they symbolize the complexity and rich confusion of a great literary work itself. "In 'Jabberwocky' -- the morphemic units are manipulated and distorted while the syntagmic sequence is 'preserved.'"² Eric Partridge has noted that "chortle" is probably the "most popular, of all the Carrollian neologisms"³ and the verb has since become part of the English language. Ironically, what was nonsense yesterday, is today as sensible as a dictionary. In "Jabberwocky" verbal structures and relationships mimic the logical pattern and nature of English speech. Morphemes, especially word endings, help to indicate the part of speech in particular and the grammatical function in general. A grammatical analysis of the phrase "slithy toves" (TLG, 191) would identify "slithy" as an adjective modifying the noun "toves". Carroll supplies just enough real diction, sounds, and genuine semantic patterns to make the poem realistic and intelligible. However, examining "Jabberwocky" is curiously

¹ Stewart, p. 163.

² Ibid., p. 181.

³ Eric Partridge, "The Nonsense Words of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll," in Here, There and Everywhere (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1950), p. 188.

like shopping in the looking glass store:

whenever she looked hard at any shelf,
to make out exactly what it had on it,
that particular shelf was always quite
empty, though the others round it were
crowded as full as they could hold
(TLG, 253).

The analogy is à propos because in the poem particular instances of nonsense are defined and given meaning by larger contextual systems of logic, language, and art.

The world of "Jabberwocky" can also be related to the world of dreams. "The invention of new words ... occurs frequently in dreams"¹ as well as in the works of such great writers as Spenser, Shakespeare, Joyce, Nabokov et al. Creative word play is a more likely cause of Carroll's literary creativity than the theories of schizophrenia or psychosis proposed by some of the psychological (and not necessarily literary) critics. Condensed or combined words are created "when the forces of the system of the unconscious come into play"² as in the dream state. Furthermore, battle with a fearsome monster is an archetypal dream experience.

Not unexpectedly, "Jabberwocky" contains sexual imagery. The "sword" (TLG, 191) and the "blade" (TLG, 191) are archetypal phallic symbols, so that the poem may be seen

¹Ellis, p. 48.

²Schilder, p. 288.

as chronicling a youth's movement into the adult world of sexuality, one of the primary rites of manhood. The poem also includes a beheading: the hero "left it dead, and with its head / He went galumphing back" (TLG, 191), which again may reinforce the Freudian interpretation of the author's fear of castration.

Evidently, the literary creativity of Lewis Carroll can symbolize the vanquishing of subconscious demons. Ironically, the creative play of words, which constitutes one of the child's primary cognitive experiences, reveals the ultimate thematic and aesthetic concerns of a mature literary genius such as Carroll. Just as nonsense is not meaningless (i.e. gibberish), language is not merely play. The author's use of language may often reveal his innermost character. The work becomes a stage upon which the author Carroll may battle his alter-ego Dodgson.

Alice, as child is "a symbol which unites the opposites; a mediator, bringer of healing ... one who makes whole"¹. This view helps to reveal another facet of Carroll's aesthetic manipulation of the child in "Jabberwocky" in particular, as well as in the Alice books in general. Carroll's imagination provided a door to the world of childhood innocence, aesthetically enabling him to reconcile any dualities within

¹Jung, p. 164.

himself, achieving a "synthesis of conscious and unconscious elements in the personality"¹, which according to Jung is traditionally symbolized by the child. If psychological criticism reveals the perceived imbalances, limitations, and abnormalities of great writers, it would be totally paradoxical and self-defeating, as great works of art proclaim the mental and artistic control exhibited by their authors, without which all art would be impossible.

¹Jung, p. 164.

CHAPTER VIII

CARROLL'S INFLUENCE ON SUBSEQUENT WRITERS

Carroll's Alice books have had a great influence on subsequent literary works. In fact, according to Robert Phillips, "After Shakespeare ... Carroll is perhaps the world's most quoted author"¹. Due to the wide range of literary works influenced by Carroll, this chapter will examine a selective, but hopefully representative, selection of pertinent examples.

W.S. Gilbert's The Mikado (1885) shows a Carrollian influence. One of the opera's main characters is Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner, who like the Queen of Hearts, never beheads anyone. One song in particular, "A More Humane Mikado", contains possible allusions to the Alice books. In the song, there is a billiard sharp who plays "extravagant matches ... With a twisted cue / And elliptical billiard balls"², recalling the phantasmagoric croquet equipment of Wonderland. As well, the song's refrain, "let the punishment fit the crime"³ has echoes of Wonderland.

Max Beerbohm is another British writer who was influenced by Carroll. Beerbohm was an essayist and caricaturist,

¹Robert Phillips, Foreword to Aspects of Alice, p. xix.

²W.S. Gilbert, The Mikado, ed. B. Treharne (New York: G. Schirmer, n.d.), p. 176.

³Ibid., p. 177.

who like Carroll, often illustrated his own works. Beerbohm is best remembered however for his satirical wit. He wrote irreverent parodies, such as those contained in A Christman Garland (1895). It is interesting that Beerbohm chose to write a parody of Isaac Watts's "Against Idleness and Mischief", a moralistic poem which Carroll himself had parodied in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Beerbohm also wrote a close parody of "Jabberwocky" which perhaps best illustrates his link with Carroll:

'Twas rollog, and the minim potes
Did mime and mible in the cafe;
All footly were the Philerotes,
And the Daycadongs outstrafe¹.

T.S. Eliot, an important modern poet, owed a significant inspirational debt to Lewis Carroll. Although Eliot is best known for his serious poetry, he also wrote nonsense poetry. His volume Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats is in the direct tradition of Carroll, Edward Lear, and Christopher Smart. In "The Naming of Cats", Eliot writes

You may think at first I'm mad as a hatter
When I tell you, a cat must have THREE
DIFFERENT NAMES².

¹Max Beerbohm, "The Second Coming of Arthur," quoted by Bohun Lynch, Max Beerbohm in Perspective (New York: Haskell House, 1974), p. 22.

²T.S. Eliot, "The Naming of Cats," in Favorite Poems for the Children's Hour, ed. Josephine Bouton (New York: Platt and Munk Co., 1967), p. 7.

"Mad as a hatter" may refer to the phrase which Carroll helped to popularize, and the poem itself suggests typically Carrollian themes -- the questions of names and identity. Considered by some to be Eliot's greatest poem, The Waste Land is pervaded by thematic and stylistic elements of Carroll's Alice books. Indeed, the waste land may be seen as an adult nightmare version of Wonderland. In The Waste Land, as in the Alice books, the dream landscape prevails with its attendant fragmentation of language and reality. We move from the upper class London couple to the pub scene, and from continental Europe to India: "over Himavant"¹. And although The Waste Land has generally been treated as a serious poem, it contains a number of nonsense techniques such as juxtaposition, word play and references to nursery rhymes. The various fragments of the poem are juxtaposed, as are the different personages. Eliot's linguistic reduction is part of his nonsensical word play:

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest
burning².

In the final stanza of The Waste Land Eliot refers to a well

¹T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land, in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, ed. M.H. Abrams et al. (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1962), p. 1959.

²Ibid., p. 1956.

known British nursery rhyme: "London bridge 'is falling down falling down falling down"¹. This technique was part of a rich tradition including Shakespeare's King Lear and Carroll's Alice books, Eliot's Madame Sosostri reads "a wicked pack of cards"² recalling Alice's assertion that "You're nothing but a pack of cards!" Eliot also refers to "a game of chess"³ which may be a reference to the importance of chess in Through the Looking Glass. Even Eliot's "decayed hole among the mountains"⁴ may be linked with Carroll's rabbit-hole. The importance of the symbol of the key in The Waste Land, "I have heard the key"⁵ recalls the golden key of Wonderland. Finally the refrain heard in the pub "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME"⁶ may suggest the White Rabbit's obsession with time; "I shall be too late!" (AW, 26-27) In The Waste Land Eliot fused allusions to writers of all ages who in some way

¹Eliot, p. 1960.

²Ibid., p. 1947.

³Ibid., p. 1950.

⁴Ibid., p. 1959.

⁵Ibid., p. 1960.

⁶Ibid., p. 1951.

typified their cultures, so it is natural that he was led to Carroll.

James Joyce was even more directly influenced by Carroll than was Eliot. Like Eliot, Joyce sought to re-create an entire culture. James Atherton devotes a chapter in his study, The Books at the Wake, to the Carrollian influence in Finnegans Wake (1939). Atherton argues that Joyce only became familiar with Carroll's works after the publication of Ulysses. Significantly Atherton finds that:

many of the wildest and most startling features of Finnegans Wake are merely the logical development, or the working out on a larger scale, of ideas that first occurred to Lewis Carroll.

A number of direct allusions to Carroll may be found in Finnegans Wake; these include "the humptyhillhead"², "Treacle Tom"³, "hatter's hares"⁴, "from tweedledeedumms down to twiddledeedees"⁵, and "humbly dumbly"⁶. Towards the end of the book, Finnegan comes to realize "How small it's all"⁷,

¹James S. Atherton, The Books at the Wake (New York: Viking Press, 1960), p. 124.

²James Joyce, Finnegans Wake (New York: Penguin Books, 1967), p. 3.

³Ibid., p. 39.

⁴Ibid., p. 83.

⁵Ibid., p. 258.

⁶Ibid., p. 628.

⁷Ibid., p. 627.

recalling Alice's experiences in Wonderland. One of the last fragmented sentences at the end of Finnegans Wake "The keys to"¹ also recalls Wonderland. Apparently Joyce appreciated Carroll's verbal legerity. Joyce's phrase "deanery, danery, donnery"² contains allusions to Carroll's biography (i.e. living in the deanery and becoming an Oxford don) and also is itself an example of Carroll's own word play. Atherton says, "It seems probable that Carroll's 'Doublets' or 'Word Ladder' was the only trick with words that Joyce had not rediscovered ... before he found it in Carroll's books"³.

Vladimir Nabokov's Lolita has been called the "most ... linguistically playful novel in English since Ulysses"⁴. It appears more than coincidental that in 1923 Nabokov translated Alice in Wonderland into Russian. Lolita contains several allusions to Wonderland. The middle-aged Humbert Humbert (a typically Carrollian "double" name) is obsessed with the pubescent Lolita: "a half-naked nymphet stilled in the act of combing her Alice-in-Wonderland hair"⁵. Whenever

¹Joyce, p. 628.

²Ibid., p. 261.

³Atherton, p. 133.

⁴Alfred Appell, Preface to The Annotated Lolita (Toronto: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1955), p. ix.

⁵Vladimir Nabokov, The Annotated Lolita, ed. A. Appell, p. 266.

she is near, "a breeze from wonderland"¹ affects Humbert's thoughts. Humbert is an English teacher who, like Humpty Dumpty, delights in portmanteaus, puns, and neologisms. Furthermore, the importance of the mirror and the photograph in Lolita echoes similar elements crucial to Lewis Carroll.

Jorge Borges, a contemporary writer has also been influenced by Carroll. His short story, "The Circular Ruins", opens with an epigraph from Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. As Borges explains:

The story came from the sentence 'And I left off dreaming about you' in Alice in Wonderland it's a wonderful book! When I read it, I don't think I was quite as conscious of its being a nightmare book and I wonder if Lewis Carroll was. Maybe the nightmare touch is stronger because he wasn't aware of it And it came from something inner².

Three movie films of Alice in Wonderland have been produced, including the 1933 version with W.C. Fields as Humpty Dumpty, Cary Grant as the Mock Turtle, and Gary Cooper as the White Knight; the 1951 Walt Disney fully animated film and the 1972 British version. Grace Slick's 1966 hit song,

¹Nabokov, p. 133.

²Jorge Luis Borges quoted by Richard Burgin, Conversations with Jorge Luis Borges (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 53.

"White Rabbit": "Go ask Alice / when she's ten feet tall"¹ was also inspired by Carroll's Alice. The Alice books are constantly and widely quoted.

The thoughts and works of Carroll have withstood the tests of space and time and have proven to be a rich and fertile matrix to inspire such a wide variety of interests, from writers to semanticists, from logicians to young children. Carroll's wide influence suggests that while he may have exhibited certain eccentricities, he was nevertheless able to tap a sufficiently universal set of themes and interests to inspire such a diverse group of writers who found much in the Alice books which was worthy of imitation.

¹Grace Slick, "White Rabbit," in Aspects of Alice, p. 419.

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