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### **Contextualising Carroll : the contradiction of science and religion in the life and works of Lewis Carroll**

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# Contextualising Carroll

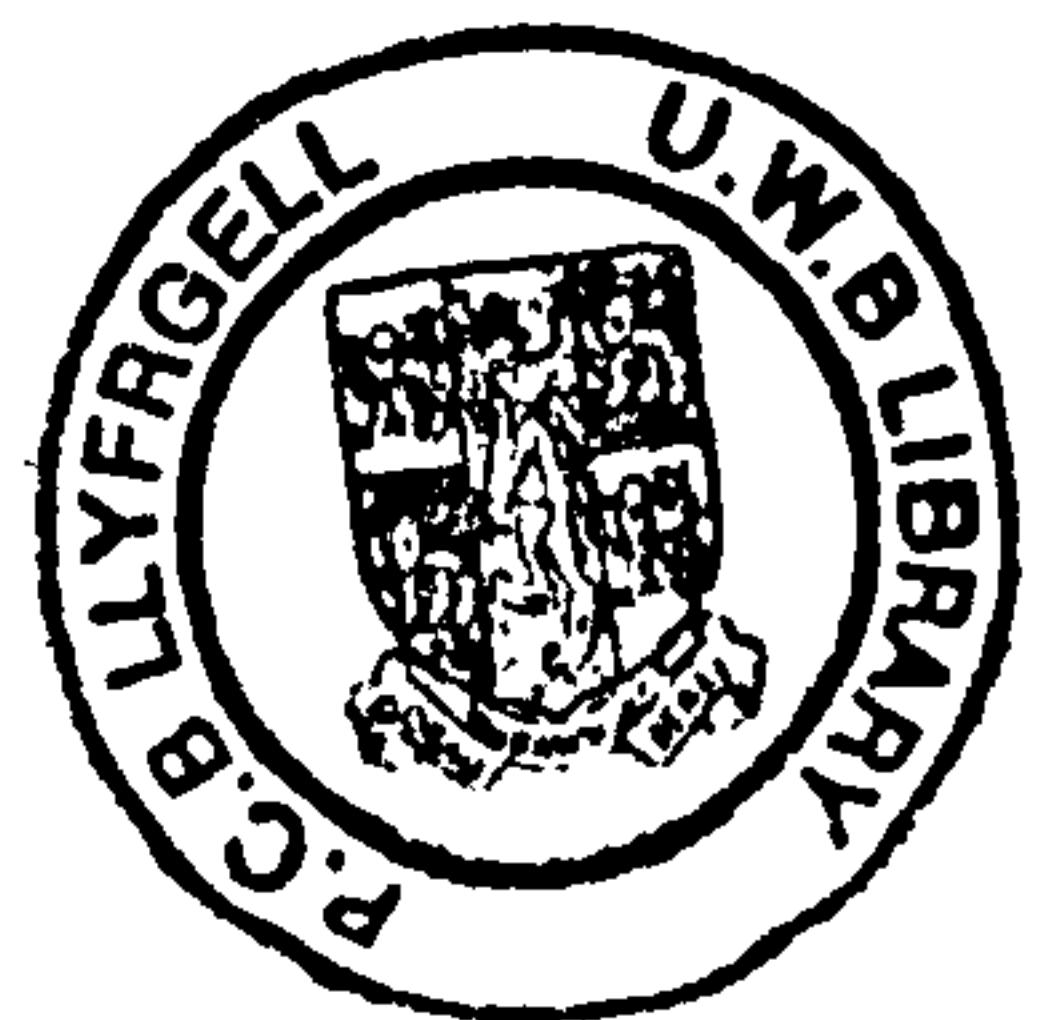
*The contradiction of science  
and religion in the life and  
works of Lewis Carroll*

**Darien Graham-Smith**

**PhD Thesis**

**University of Wales, Bangor**

**2005**



# **Contextualising Carroll**

**Darien Graham-Smith**

## Summary

This work presents a theory that Lewis Carroll's life and works were profoundly affected by a conflict between his logical world view and his religious beliefs. Three examinations are presented — the first of convention and logic in Carroll's life, the second of the nature of his religion and the third of his response to contemporary science. The thesis concludes that Victorian science brought Carroll's beliefs into contradiction, causing him to experience religious and existential doubts. It is suggested that an understanding of these doubts can inform an understanding of Carroll's relationships with Alice Liddell and other young girls, and indeed has repercussions for his entire life and works beyond the scope of this thesis.

Two brief appendices expand upon issues mentioned in the text: the first considers the artefacts at Ripon Cathedral which are supposed by some to have influenced Carroll; and the second discusses *Effie's Dream-Garden*, a children's book which bears some resemblance to the *Alice* story but which was published several years before that story was first told.



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## Preface

The life of and works of Lewis Carroll present a highly rewarding field of research: the ground has been helpfully staked out by those who have gone before, but a little digging can still unearth new connections and contradictions in the life and works of this complex but endearing man. Perhaps precisely because of this richness, it sometimes seems that there are as many different readings of Carroll as there are Carrollians; and while carrying out the research for this thesis between 1999 and 2003 I found myself among a body of critical and contextual sources as broad and diverse as Carroll's own canon. Finally, in early 2004, I submitted a thesis that sought to make sense of this immense corpus of primary and secondary material through the not very sophisticated device of juxtaposition.

Unsurprisingly, I failed; but my examiners must have seen some merit in my efforts, as I was invited to restructure the text, so as to more clearly express my own position, and resubmit. This thesis is the result of that process, and represents a major reworking of my earlier submission — more major, I suspect, than my examiners envisaged. As they suggested, I returned to work with the intention of updating my thesis so as to advance and support my own argument as clearly and strongly as possible; but it rapidly became apparent that the best way to achieve this would be to go beyond the examiners' recommendations and redraft the text entirely. The material has therefore been rearranged into a progressive order, so that the argument may emerge with something resembling logical consequence; and a commentary has been added which aims, at each stage of the argument, to make clear precisely what is being argued; why; and how this fits into the overall structure of the thesis. I hope it will be agreed by those who saw the earlier version that the result is an improvement.

On the other side of the equation, I acknowledge that parts of my earlier submission were barely relevant to my central argument, and for this edition I have ruthlessly excised such passages in favour of a tighter focus. Thus, my earlier reflections on issues such as museums, colonialism and Victorian railways will no longer be found within

this work, though if they are of interest to any reader then I should be happy to make them available.

Among all these changes, I might have welcomed the opportunity to change my title, which seems to reflect the ethos of the earlier edition more than the argument of the current one. However, since this thesis is merely a revision of an earlier submission, it has been suggested that it would be inappropriate to change its title. Having reviewed many tens of thousands of words for this second submission, I can hardly complain at leaving those particular two alone.

At any rate, though much has changed, the conclusion of my thesis remains the same: that Carroll's quirks can be at least partially illuminated by reference to religious doubts. In returning to this proposition, however, I hope the reader will enjoy and appreciate the new, more direct route I have plotted.

*Doncaster, November 2005*



## Acknowledgements

This thesis is the product of nearly six years' research, during which time I have been blessed with the support of a wide range of friends and colleagues. In particular, I wish to thank Jess Hardman, Rick Dickerson, Julie Neild, Olivia Patterson, Seamus McCauley, Dr Luke Pebody, Brian Cowe, Terrie McCann, Shreena Kotecha and my girlfriend Dr Lise Smith for her support and tolerance.

I also wish to acknowledge the support of the staff of the English Department at the University of Wales, Bangor. I thank Prof Peter Field for his enthusiasm and encouragement, which were a constant inspiration during my time on campus, and wish him a long and rewarding retirement. I thank Dr Tony Brown for his thoughtfulness and generosity throughout the examination process. And I thank my supervisors, Dr Michael Whitworth and Dr Lucie Armitt, for their guidance and support, without which this thesis could not have been finished.

And finally I extend my most heartfelt thanks and dedicate this work with love to my parents, without whom it would never even have been started.

## Definitions

References to “Carroll” where no title is specified are to Lewis Carroll, *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Alexander Woollcott (London: Penguin, 1939).

References to “*Diaries*” where no edition is specified are to *Lewis Carroll’s Diaries*, ed. Edward Wakeling, 7 vols. (vols. 8 & 9 in preparation) (Luton: Lewis Carroll Society, 1993-2003).

References to “*Letters*” where no edition is specified are to Lewis Carroll, *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Morton Cohen, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1979).

(The above definitions are repeated in the footnotes introducing the works in question.)

Where I write that a work was in Carroll’s library, my authority is Jeffrey Stern, *Lewis Carroll, Bibliophile* (Luton: Lewis Carroll Society, 1997). This work includes facsimiles of the catalogues to the various auctions at which Carroll’s library was sold, and Stern includes an alphabetical index so that works may be easily located in these facsimiles.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The life and works of Charles Dodgson – or Lewis Carroll as he is more popularly known<sup>1</sup> – seem to invite interpretation. The nonsense of *Alice* and the *Snark* provides such a rich seam of symbols and themes that the reader almost inevitably comes away with a sense of having espied something more complex lurking behind the ostensible story. It is a surprising fact, therefore, that *Alice* went seemingly without literary consideration for the whole of Carroll's life. The field was not even opened up by the publication, after Carroll's death in 1898, of *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll*,<sup>2</sup> a biography and memoir of Carroll by his nephew Stuart Dodgson Collingwood. This was followed in 1899 by *The Lewis Carroll Picture Book*<sup>3</sup> and *Isa Bowman's The Story of Lewis Carroll*.<sup>4</sup> Collingwood wrote with the benefit of full access to Carroll's personal diaries and many of his letters; and Bowman had been a close friend of Carroll since 1886. Both works thus provided a wealth of new information that might have been expected to inspire new readings of Carroll's works.

Yet the next thirty years were a barren time for Carrollian studies. The British Library catalogues only two secondary texts from this period: one is a lightweight biography by the American Belle Moses,<sup>5</sup> and the other is a bibliography, published in

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<sup>1</sup> Modern students of Carroll's life and works seem to have settled upon consistently referring to Carroll as Dodgson (though they are themselves generally called Carrollians, rather than Dodgsonians). The bulk of criticism and commentary, however, refers to him consistently by his more familiar *nom de plume*, and this is the convention that I shall follow in this thesis.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, *Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898).

<sup>3</sup> Lewis Carroll, *The Lewis Carroll Picture Book. A Selection from the Unpublished Writings and Drawings of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Stuart Collingwood (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899).

<sup>4</sup> Isa Bowman, *The Story of Lewis Carroll, told for young people by the real Alice in Wonderland, Miss Isa Bowman* (London: J.M. Dent, 1899). The subtitle is misleading, perhaps having been added by a wily publisher: Bowman portrayed Alice on the stage, but nowhere in the text claims to have inspired the original work.

<sup>5</sup> Moses' work is not literally lightweight, running to 296 pages, but the author was no Carrollian — the work was one in a series also taking in Louisa May Alcott and Charles Dickens — and the content is largely paraphrased from Collingwood, Bowman and, at considerable length, Carroll's own works. Its contribution even to contemporary Carrollian studies is negligible: for example, Moses excuses herself from analysing *The Hunting of the Snark* "for two reasons: first, because there are different



1924, by Sidney Herbert Williams.<sup>6</sup> Serious engagement with the texts themselves was confined to brief essays such as J.B. Priestley's "Note on Humpty Dumpty"<sup>7</sup> in which the eponymous egg's exchanges with Alice were considered as a satire upon the pretensions of the critical intelligentsia. As late as 1932, Edmund Wilson, writing in his book of criticism *The Shores of Light*, could observe that Carroll "was a most interesting man, and deserves better of his admirers, who revel in his delightfulness and cuteness but do not give him any serious attention."<sup>8</sup> Three years later, William Empson would echo the sentiment: "It must seem a curious thing," he mused, "that there has been so little serious criticism of the *Alices*."<sup>9</sup>

Yet Edmund Wilson was writing in 1932, the centenary of Carroll's birth, and the anniversary seems to have kick-started the field. Menella Dodgson, Carroll's niece, would recall in 1953 that

interest in [Carroll] and his writings waned after his death in 1898, but the idea of celebrating the centenary of his birth in 1932 . . . aroused interest to such an extent that my brother received many letters of inquiries — so many indeed that he called upon my help in answering and acknowledging them. . . . The interest roused in 1932 has been sustained.<sup>10</sup>

Wilson himself admitted, in a 1952 coda to his essay, that "the needs pointed out in this article were very promptly supplied" (Wilson 545). Yet during the intervening twenty-year period it must have been difficult to establish a personal conception of Carroll. The man himself was more than thirty years dead, and despite the "many letters" referred to by Menella Dodgson, the family kept Carroll's papers private: the only diary entries available remained those cited by Collingwood, plus a few passages concerning pho-

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keys for different minds; and second, because the unexplainable things in many cases come nearer the 'mind's eye,' as Shakespeare calls it, without words." Elsewhere, she suggests that the Red Queen's promise that Alice would herself become a Queen at the end of *Through the Looking-Glass* indicates that "she probably was confusing chess with checkers." Belle Moses, *Lewis Carroll in Wonderland and At Home: The Story of His Life* (London: D. Appleton, 1910) 183, 159.

<sup>6</sup> Sidney Herbert Williams, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Lewis Carroll* (London: The Bookman's Journal, 1924). A second edition followed shortly after: Sidney Herbert Williams & Falconer Madan, *A Handbook of the Literature of the Rev. C.L. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll) etc.* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1931).

<sup>7</sup> J.B. Priestley, *I For One* (London: Bodley Head, 1923) 191-200.

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Wilson, *The Shores of Light* (London: W.H Allen, 1952) 540.

<sup>9</sup> William Empson, *Some Versions of Pastoral* (Harmondsworth: Peregrine, 1966). (This is a slightly updated edition of the 1935 original.)

<sup>10</sup> Lewis Carroll, *The Diaries of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Roger Lancelyn Green (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1953) xix. Parenthetical references to "Diaries" where no other information is given do *not* refer to this edition but to Wakeling's unexpurgated edition.



tography, which the photographer Helmut Gernsheim was given special permission to read and publish in 1947 for his book *Lewis Carroll: Photographer*.<sup>11</sup> Collingwood was also the richest source of biographic detail, but his was far from an objective viewpoint: Alexander Woolcott, in his introduction to one of the first collections of Carroll's works, wrote off his work as a

fatuous biography written a few months after Lewis Carroll's death in 1898 by his oblivious and too respectful nephew, who was awed by what he called the "purity and refinement" of his uncle's mind.<sup>12</sup>

Isa Bowman too, wrote in the eulogic, rather than historic, mode, admitting at the outset that "I cannot write a critical estimate, a cold dispassionate summing-up of a man I loved" (Bowman 1-2).

In this absence of a rounded picture of Carroll to inform approaches to *Alice*, it is perhaps no surprise that critics brought their own interests to the text instead. Carrollian criticism grew into a diversity of approaches so disparate that by 1964 Elsie Leach was moved to complain that

a professional philologist concentrates on the logical fallacies and principles illustrated in *Alice* and points to [Carroll]'s concern with philosophical concepts of time, justice and personal identity. The student of semantics has long enjoyed his own *Alice in Wonderland*, though he finds *Through the Looking-Glass*, especially Humpty Dumpty's remarks, a richer text than the first book. One reader maintains that *Alice* and its companion book are allegories of the intellectual struggles of mid-Victorian Oxford. . . . they "are books for children in much the same sense as *Gulliver's Travels* is a book for children." Another reader uses *Alice* and [Carroll]'s other writings to psychoanalyze the author. And although William Empson has read the book more seriously and carefully than the others, he too focuses on what the book has in it for him.<sup>13</sup>

A demonstration of this effect is found in *Aspects of Alice*,<sup>14</sup> an anthology first issued in 1971 comprising thirty-nine critical essays and extracts. Its editor, Robert Philips, di-

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<sup>11</sup> This story is related in Gernsheim's later work, *Lewis Carroll: Victorian Photographer* (London, Thames & Hudson: 1980) 10.

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Woolcott, introduction, *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll* (London: Penguin, 1939) 4. Parenthetical references to "Carroll" where no title is given refer to this volume.

<sup>13</sup> Elsie Leach, "Alice in Wonderland in Perspective," *Aspects of Alice*, ed. Robert Phillips (London: Victor Gollancz, 1972) 89. *Aspects of Alice* is an anthology of essays, some reprinted, some written for the collection. Parenthetical references to Elsie Leach will be given as "Elsie Leach." Where only the surname is given the reference is to Karoline Leach.

<sup>14</sup> See footnote 9 for bibliographical details.



vides the pieces he reproduces into no fewer than nine different approaches to *Alice*.<sup>15</sup>

One of these essays, by Donald Rackin, confirms in its own text that

in the century now passed since the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, scores of critical studies have attempted to account for the fascination the book holds for adult readers. Although some of these investigations offer provocative insights, most of them treat Carroll in specialised modes inaccessible to the majority of readers, and they fail to view *Alice* as a complete and organic work of art.<sup>16</sup>

### Inspiration for the thesis

Rackin's comment, though now some forty years old, is the inspiration for this thesis. This is not to say that I believe Carrollian studies remain splintered, or "inaccessible to the majority of readers." Martin Gardner's *Annotated Alice*, first issued in 1960, set out to make the cultural and personal references in the *Alice* books more accessible: for

no joke is funny unless you see the point of it, and . . . in the case of *Alice* we are dealing with a very curious, complicated kind of nonsense, written for British readers of another century, and we need to know a great many things that are not part of the text if we wish to capture its full wit and flavour. It is even worse than that, for some of Carroll's jokes could be understood only by residents of Oxford, and other jokes, still more private, could be understood only by the lovely daughters of Dean Liddell.<sup>17</sup>

The attention was clearly well-received, as *The Annotated Alice* was expanded and revised in 1990 and 2000, and in 1973 was joined by an *Annotated Snark*.<sup>18</sup> Elsewhere, the most influential modern Carrollians have promoted a rational, evidence-driven approach to Carroll, in works such as Morton Cohen's biography *Lewis Carroll*,<sup>19</sup> Karoline Leach's *In the Shadow of the Dreamchild*<sup>20</sup> and Edward Wakeling's commentaries in his

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<sup>15</sup> They are: "Personal and Biographical"; "As Victorian and Children's Literature"; "Comparisons with Other Writers"; "Philosophical and Others" [sic]; "Church and Chess"; "Language, and Parody, and Satire" [sic]; "Freudian Interpretations"; "Jungian and Mythic"; and "Psychedelic."

<sup>16</sup> Donald Rackin, "Alice's Journey to the End of Night," *Aspects of Alice* 391.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis Carroll, *The Annotated Alice*, ed. Martin Gardner (London: Penguin 2000) xiii-xiv. This is a reprint of the preface from the original 1960 edition.

<sup>18</sup> Lewis Carroll, *The Annotated Snark*, ed. Martin Gardner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973)

<sup>19</sup> Morton Cohen, *Lewis Carroll* (London: Macmillan, 1995)

<sup>20</sup> Karoline Leach, *In the Shadow of the Dreamchild: A New Understanding of Lewis Carroll* (London: Peter Owen, 1999). Parenthetical references to "Leach" refer to this author; parenthetical references to Elsie Leach will give the name in full.

*edition of Lewis Carroll's Diaries.*<sup>21</sup> These works are able to draw on a far greater range of documentary sources than their predecessors – including Carroll's complete diaries and a corpus of surviving letters which have, over time, been better collected and placed in context – enabling them to proceed without demanding any special theoretical sophistication beyond an ability to put two and two together.

Nevertheless, I have found Rackin's conception of *Alice* as a "complete and organic work of art" highly suggestive. Rackin seems to imply that, although *Alice* admits of narrow interpretations, a conception of the whole should be greater than the sum of partial approaches. Yet it seems to me that *Alice* is a complex book, intimately bound up with the character and circumstances of its author, and that to consider it in isolation as a "work of art" is itself to take a partial approach. In fact, Rackin goes on to disdain commentators who "confuse Charles Dodgson the man with Lewis Carroll the author" (Rackin 391-2), making clear that his approach is, in its own way, as compartmentalised as those he set out by criticising. This thesis is thus inspired by the belief that Rackin's application of an organic approach did not go nearly far enough.

This is not to say that this thesis aims to explain the totality of Carroll's life and work. That task is surely impossible. The theory that I shall advance in this thesis has its roots in research which sought to take an organic approach to Carroll, but what is presented here focuses on a particular argument that has emerged from that research. Nevertheless, in presenting that argument I will make extensive use of the organic method, and will go on to demonstrate how it can, in turn, illuminate an organic conception of Carroll's life and works.

### Argument of the thesis

The argument of this thesis will be built up in stages. I will start out by presenting three examinations of different aspects of Carroll's life. These examinations will be thematically separate, but each will build upon what has gone before; and their findings will converge to establish the particular contradiction described in my subtitle. Once this contradiction has been established, I will go on to explore its repercussions and finally present the complete theory that is the conclusion of the argument.

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<sup>21</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Lewis Carroll's Diaries*, ed. Edward Wakeling, 7 vols. (vols. 8 & 9 in preparation) (Luton: Lewis Carroll Society, 1993-2003). Parenthetical references to "*Diaries*" where no edition is given refer to this volume.



The first examination will focus on issues of convention: Carroll has been described as a “conventional” man, and the evidence seems at first glance to support this reading. I will demonstrate that this is a misreading of his behaviour. I will suggest in fact that Carroll’s motivation was logic, rather than convention, and demonstrate how this instinct is expressed through the linguistics of the *Alice* books. I will conclude that Carroll’s logical instinct was a very strong motivator.

The second examination will be of Carroll’s religion. I will demonstrate that Carroll was raised under the influence of a father who believed strongly in church orthodoxy. Then, I will show that when he subsequently took up residence at Oxford he remained firmly under the conservative influence of the Oxford movement. I will show that Carroll’s faith was extremely firm; and yet I will argue that Carroll was not comfortable with the proscriptive mode of religion that surrounded him. I will demonstrate that, over his life, he quietly migrated towards a more liberal church, and that by the end of his life he publicly espoused a radical theology which he had effectively devised for himself.

Having undertaken these two examinations, I will then turn to the issue of science. I will demonstrate that Carroll’s relationship with some parts of science was surprisingly negative, and will suggest that this was due to Carroll’s perceiving a conflict between its principles and those of his religion. I will, however, demonstrate that a close examination of the evidence, including Carroll’s published works, reveals that, despite Carroll’s apparently negative demeanour, he was fully engaged with Victorian science.

Having concluded these three examinations, I will bring together their findings to demonstrate that Carroll’s powerful logical instincts meant that he could not help but accept some of the philosophy of science, even when that contradicted his religious beliefs. This in turn will bring me to my final conclusion: that Carroll was affected by religious doubts.

This conclusion may sound unambitious: Carroll’s own diary records that he suffered from religious doubts (for example, *Diaries* 3:18), and the issue is discussed at some length in, for example, Morton Cohen’s biography. However, Cohen’s approach is principally historical, and tends to consider the issue in isolation. In this thesis I will seek to expand greatly on what is currently understood about these doubts. Armed with the discoveries of my three examinations, I will seek to identify their roots; to establish what precisely Carroll doubted; and to demonstrate the intensity of their effect

on Carroll. Finally, I will suggest some ways in which their influence can be observed in Carroll's life and works by bringing my findings to two of the most commonly-debated questions about Carroll – “what was his relationship with Alice Liddell?” and “why the fascination with little girls?” – although the implications will resonate far beyond these examples.

### Methodology and sources

I have described my methodology as “organic.” As mentioned above, by this I simply mean regarding Carroll's published works in the context of their having been written by a man with his own values and his own reasons for writing. This is not a new approach — as I implied at the very start, most approaches to *Alice* see something of Carroll's personality and interests in the text. But in this thesis, as I have indicated above, my ultimate focus is not the text, but the man; and so, although I will make extensive reference to Carroll's works, I will also be seeking to establish a clear picture of the circumstances in which they were written and Carroll's personal relationship with them. This is not to say that my purpose is purely biographical: I will demonstrate that the theory I present in this thesis can significantly inform readings of his works. However, establishing this theory will necessarily involve attempting to place Carrollian texts within the wider context surrounding their creation; and establishing that context will also involve attempts to locate Lewis Carroll in his own personal and historical context — hence the title of this thesis.

To establish this picture I will, naturally, make use of a wide range of sources. However, in the interests of building up an accurate conception of Carroll's life, I will be selective, and in this I must acknowledge my debt to Karoline Leach. It was Leach, in her highly influential work *In the Shadow of the Dreamchild*, who suggested that the bulk of 20th Century Carrollian scholarship might have been misled by the image of Carroll presented by Collingwood. She pointed out that Collingwood was merely the official voice of a family which, for more than sixty years after Carroll's death, carried on a ruthless campaign to perpetuate the image of Carroll's “purity and refinement”, keeping his private papers secret and even going so far as to mutilate priceless documents that might have challenged this perception, as I shall discuss below. Leach warns that, as a result of this,



when early biographers wrote their studies of Lewis Carroll, they had little choice but to fill their books with the stuff of this myth. And thus, very early on, it became dignified by an apparent scholastic pedigree. (Leach 9)

This pedigree, she observes, has “put the matter beyond question”; and yet, as genuine evidence has become available, she has considered that “the *prima facie* record, as it has emerged over the past fifty years, simply does not support . . . the present certainties of modern biography” (Leach 12). I do not propose here to address the particular received notions with which Leach’s book takes issue, but the circumstance she describes is highly plausible, and in light of her observations I will, in this thesis, adopt a strong preference for primary evidence.

This is not to say I reject all secondary texts: as I have mentioned above, modern Carrollians have for some years been working from concrete evidence, and there seems little reason to reinvent the wheel. On factual matters, therefore, I will refer regularly to current scholarship, and in particular to Morton Cohen’s 1995 biography *Lewis Carroll*. This is not the only modern biography of Carroll - other works by Anne Clark and Donald Thomas come to mind - but Cohen has been researching and publishing Carrollian history for more than twenty years, and his uniquely intimate familiarity with the totality of the documentary evidence gives his biography particular weight. This is not to say, however, that I will always defer to Cohen, and I will at some points in the text indicate where the evidence, or another critic, seems to contradict Cohen, or where his personal interpretation of events differs from my own.

Earlier secondary sources too will not be wholly ignored. While Collingwood’s tone may be excessively reverent and his account selective, his proximity to the subject gives his accounts of episodes from Carroll’s life a certain authority. For the same reason I will make reference to facts reported in other posthumous recollections, such as Isa Bowman’s book, interviews with Alice Liddell and so forth — whilst attempting to steer clear of subjective value judgments.

In the main, however, in researching this thesis, I have followed Leach and favoured as sources of evidence either the writings of Carroll himself or sources which may directly have influenced him. In particular, I have identified five such types of source, which I shall detail below.

### Published works

The most readily available Carrollian sources are, of course, Carroll's published works. Naturally, attempts to find Carroll in his works must be conducted with caution, as they have been consciously prepared for publication; but, as I have indicated above, I believe that, approached properly, they can illuminate, and be illuminated by, Carroll's life. The author's choice of symbols and themes is suggestive, and his prefaces and epilogues are suggestive of his personal preoccupations.

In this thesis I shall pay particular attention to the *Alice* books, which seem to be the most personally revealing of Carroll's writings. I conflate the two books because in many ways they are of a piece, though their histories are quite distinct, and for convenience I shall refer to them as a unit by the shorthand "*Alice*" – unless, of course, I wish to refer to one of the volumes in particular. For this same reason I will generally use the term "Wonderland" to refer to either or both of the lands visited by Alice, and will make clear in the text if for any reason I need to refer to a specific land.

In addition to these, I will consider Carroll's other works of fiction, including *Sylvie and Bruno* and *The Hunting of the Snark*, and various poems, all of which are reprinted in *The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll*. Nor will I neglect Carroll's mathematical works, published under the name of C.L. Dodgson. As Isa Bowman would reminisce in later years, "even in mathematics his whimsical fancy was sometimes suffered to peep out" (Bowman 5): *Euclid and his Modern Rivals* is a good example of this phenomenon, and I will demonstrate that Carroll did not clearly compartmentalise his professional and private personæ. For this reason, I believe Carroll's mathematical works can be as revealing as his fiction.

### Pamphlets, circulars and open letters

Carroll's published works are well known, but he also authored a significant corpus of "semi-published" works, which he issued in the form of privately-printed pamphlets, open letters to officials or letters to newspapers. Clearly Carroll did not consider these works to have broad commercial viability, but they are still intended for public consumption. Many were reproduced in *Picture Book* and reprinted in *Complete Works*, and I shall refer to the reprints within that volume: others appear only in a sepa-



rate three-volume anthology, edited by Charlie Lovett, Francine Abeles and Edward Wakeling.<sup>22</sup> These works are valuable resources for understanding Carroll, as they tend to be personal responses to issues which personally concern him: I will refer to open letters, for example, objecting to developments at his university, such as his letter on *Natural Science at Oxford*. I will also cite pamphlets such as *Lawn Tennis Tournaments* and *Some Popular Fallacies about Vivisection* to demonstrate Carroll's principled positions on issues which fiction might not so clearly express.

### Carroll's letters

Alongside the open letter stands the personal letter. Carroll was a prolific letter-writer, sending thousands of letters over the course of his life. This we know because Collingwood, after the publication of *Life and Letters*, mentioned the existence of Carroll's self-devised "Register of Letters Received and Sent" which had entries numbered up to 98,721 (Cohen 262). Sadly the register has not survived, so we cannot be certain of the contents, but Carroll was an endearing letter-writer – and, latterly, a famous man to have been friends with – and many of the "Letters Sent" were kept by their recipients and are now known to Carrollian scholarship. Over a thousand of these letters are reprinted in Morton Cohen's *Letters of Lewis Carroll*, a figure which Cohen admits is "hardly a third of the assembled letters", but promises that others have been omitted for "what we hope are good and sufficient reasons"<sup>23</sup> — principally, that they relate solely to Carroll's business as a mathematician or as Curator of the Senior Common Room. It would doubtless be fascinating and informative to explore these little-seen documents, but Cohen's collection of 1,305 letters has proved sufficiently revealing for the present purpose.

These letters must be analysed with caution, because they are naturally written for a specific audience. However, this intimacy seems to inspire frankness in Carroll, and I will show how his letters express personal sentiments that are absent from his diaries. Carroll's letters thus offer an excellent insight into his feelings and opinions.

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<sup>22</sup> *The Pamphlets of Lewis Carroll*, 3 vols. (Charlottesville, USA: Lewis Carroll Society of North America, 1993-2001)

<sup>23</sup> Lewis Carroll, *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Morton Cohen, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1979) 1: xviii. Parenthetical references to "Letters" where no edition is given refer to these volumes.

### Carroll's Diaries

Carroll began keeping a regular diary as an undergraduate at Christ Church, and continued until his death over forty years later. His diary spanned twelve volumes (two from the 1850s and one from the 1860s), of which three are lost. These are widely suspected to have been destroyed by the Dodgson family to conceal some content of which they disapproved. The suspicion is strongly reinforced by the fact that the volumes that do survive show signs of wilful damage: Edward Wakeling remarks in his edition that “an attempt was made to obscure the writing” on the entry for 21st April 1863 which refers to Alice Liddell being in an “ungentle mood” (*Diaries* 4: 193). Shortly afterward, at the end of June 1863, a page has been physically removed from the diary — and, comments Wakeling, “the perpetrator is almost certainly not [Carroll]” (*Diaries* 4: 214). Indeed, in 1996 Karoline Leach discovered “a small piece of paper, tucked away among a mass of Dodgson family records in the archive at Guildford” headed “cut pages in diary”, summarising the contents of the excised entries, which appears to be in the handwriting of Violet Dodgson. It is hard to avoid a verdict of censorship. Leach also notes that up to ten other pages are missing, whose content is unknown (see e.g. Leach 50-1).

What remains, however, covers a significant proportion of Carroll's life. These volumes were first published in 1953, but in an edition that was far from complete. Their editor, Roger Lancelyn Green, felt that “items of no interest whatsoever occur fairly frequently in the diaries,” and these he “omitted whenever possible” (Green, *Diaries* xiv). His editing seems over-eager, however: for example, he explains in his preface that he has excised “long accounts of how he saw children on the shore at Eastbourne, but failed to cultivate their friendship” — passages which are surely of interest as a psychological insight.

Moreover, though he did not know it, he was not even working from complete copies of the surviving volumes, as Menella and Violet Dodgson (Carroll's nieces and trustees of his estate) opted to conceal certain entries from him as part of their jealous protection of Carroll's reputation.

However, the manuscripts of the diaries have now been in the British Library since 1969, and within the past decade the complete text has begun to be widely available, thanks to the gradual volume-by-volume emergence of Edward Wakeling's unexpurgated edition. The history of the diaries might suggest that these unexpurgated volumes would be full of scandal, but in fact most entries are mundane records of where Carroll



has been and whom he has seen, and even the more conversational entries are generally discreet and decorous. Nevertheless, although we do not know precisely why Carroll kept these diaries, they show no signs of having been intended for public consumption, and in fact do contain some highly personal admissions, as I shall demonstrate in Chapter 6. Carroll may have intended to destroy these diaries before the end of his life, but he happened to be visiting his sisters in Guildford when he was stricken with the bout of pneumonia that killed him, and so if this was the intention it was never carried out. In all, I believe the diaries may be considered a genuine, if incomplete, source of personal information, and I shall make extensive use of them as they provide solid biographical evidence for events and issues in Carroll's life.

### Carroll's library

The final resource is the collection of books which were in Carroll's library, a catalogue of which was helpfully made by E.J. Brooks, the auctioneer who sold off Carroll's possessions after his death. In 1997, Jeffrey Stern published a commentary and index of this and subsequent catalogues for auctions of Carroll's possessions, and this gives us a unique insight into the issues that interested Carroll.<sup>24</sup>

The catalogue cannot be taken as a perfect indicator of Carroll's reading habits, for several reasons. First, Carroll's family had every opportunity to remove any books they wished to keep or destroy before the rest were sent to auction. Second, Stern notes that Carroll was constantly acquiring new books (Stern xii); and since his Oxford rooms afforded limited space it is no surprise that a Christ Church contemporary recalled that "most of [Carroll's books], once read, he would get rid of at clearing-times."<sup>25</sup> This would mean that the presence of a book on the list need not mean that Carroll had read it, and the absence of a book from the catalogue would not mean that Carroll had not previously owned it. Thirdly, as a senior member of Christ Church, Carroll had every opportunity to make use of the Bodleian and Christ Church libraries, and need not have purchased every book he wished to read. And finally, Brooks' catalogue itself apostrophises heavily, gathering the books into lots such as lot 897, "Laing's *The Library, Hints on Horsemanship, Curious Puzzles, Hoyle's Games* and 16 others."

<sup>24</sup> Jeffrey Stern, *Lewis Carroll, Bibliophile* (Luton: Lewis Carroll Society, 1997)

<sup>25</sup> MS cited in Oliver P. Elton, *Frederick York Powell* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1906) 362.

For all these reasons, all we can say with certainty is that the presence of a book in this catalogue means that it was on Carroll's bookshelf when he died. Nevertheless, this is strong circumstantial evidence for his having read it, or at the very least for his having been interested in its subject.

### Looking forward

Having established the terms of this thesis – its inspiration, its argument and its methods – all that remains is to set out in full the argument detailed above. This will begin in the next chapter, with an examination of convention; then, in Chapter 3 will come religion; science will occupy Chapters 4 and 5; and Chapter 6 will show how my findings support a coherent theory which can shed light on other issues. Finally, in Chapter 7 I will review the progress and findings of the thesis, and suggest how these findings might inform approaches to other issues outside of the present work. Throughout the thesis, my aim will be to argue through contextualising, relating Carrollian texts to Carroll and Carroll to his environment through the examination of primary sources.

Alongside the main argument, I will present two appendices, in which I discuss two relevant issues which seemed to warrant a more detailed discussion than was appropriate to the main text. The first issue is the question of whether Carroll might have drawn inspiration from the carvings and crypt at Ripon Cathedral; and the second is the relationship between the *Alice* books and an earlier work entitled *Effie's Dream-Garden*. In both cases, I present my first-hand observations as a matter of support for my main argument and of possible interest to future considerations.



## Chapter 2

# Convention

The argument I shall present in this thesis has its roots in the question of precisely how Carroll perceived and interacted with the world about him. In the past, Carroll has sometimes been portrayed as a wholly conventional man, who meekly accepted the manners and mores of his society. However, a brief survey of the evidence shows that this is far from the whole truth.

In this chapter I shall make the case that Carroll was in fact an instinctively logical thinker. I shall suggest that his apparent adherence to convention was merely pragmatic, and far from unquestioning or constant. In fact, as I shall demonstrate, his logical world view led him to perceive social conventions as dispensable, and to question the authority of those that perpetuated them.

This demonstration of the primacy of logic in Carroll's world view will be crucial to what comes later, as logic will prove to be the mechanism whereby Carroll is placed into a difficult philosophical position.

### Carroll's conventional behaviour

Virginia Woolf, in her 1939 essay on Lewis Carroll, describes the man as a passive conformist who "accepted every convention."<sup>1</sup> Woolf never met Carroll, but she clearly felt sufficiently confident in this judgment to offer it without qualification. Hugh Haughton too has referred to Carroll's "thoroughly conventional" life at Oxford.<sup>2</sup> The identification is certainly justifiable: after all, Carroll was raised and lived in environments that enshrined convention. Every Victorian child would have been expected to learn proper behaviour, perhaps with the aid of "improving" books with titles like *Instructions in*

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<sup>1</sup> Virginia Woolf, *The Moment and Other Essays* (London: Hogarth P, 1947) 70.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Haughton, introduction to *Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (London: Penguin, 1998) xxvii.

*Etiquette*.<sup>3</sup> His father, a churchman, would naturally have given moral and religious guidance from an early age, and taught him how to behave in church; and his public school education would have cemented the principle of rules that must be followed and customs that must be observed.

More than this, Carroll's meticulous adherence to convention is a recurrent feature of recollections of him. One of his child-friends, Ruth Gamelan, recalled that "Mr. Dodgson was always extremely careful in observing social conventions."<sup>4</sup> He was morally scrupulous beyond the mere point of practicality: his Oxford contemporary Lionel Tollemache went so far as to call him "a strict moralist."<sup>5</sup> On Christmas Eve 1889 he returned a gift of a box of Portugal fruits sent to him by Messrs. Snow, wine merchants to the Christ Church [Senior] Common Room, of which he was Curator, explaining that he "would have thought it hardly necessary to point out that the Curator, whose duty it is to try to procure the *best* goods he can for Common Room, cannot possibly accept *presents* from any of the tradespeople concerned." The note concludes with a warning that "any repetition of such attentions may seriously affect their position as wine merchants dealt with by Common Room" (*Letters* 2:771).

Carroll also took pains to appear humble, seeming almost over-eager in self-effacement. Writing to the Lowrie children in Boston, Massachusetts, dated August 18th 1884, he begged:

please never again *praise* me at all, as if any powers I may have, in writing books for children, were my own doing. I just feel myself a trustee, that is all — you would not take very much credit to yourselves, I suppose, if a sum of money had been put into your hands and you had been told "spend all this for the good of the little ones"? (*Letters* 1:547)

Although he was himself a photographer, his child-friend Isa Bowman recalled that he had a "horror" of being photographed himself (Bowman 14). It seems he hated to be praised or singled out in any way. We may imagine he considered that such approaches endangered his strict conventionality, as they both challenged his modesty — a key conventional principle of polite society — and treated him as an exceptional, and hence

<sup>3</sup> James Pitt, *Instructions in Etiquette Intended for the Use of Schools & Young Persons* (Manchester: J. Pigot, n.d. — the British Library Catalogue gives "[1840?]").

<sup>4</sup> Derek Hudson, *Lewis Carroll* (London: Constable, 1995) 317.

<sup>5</sup> Lionel L. Tollemache, "Reminiscences of Lewis Carroll," *Literature* Feb. 5 1898; reprinted in *Lewis Carroll: Interviews & Recollections*, ed. Morton Cohen (London: Macmillan, 1989) 48.



unconventional, person. His fear of special attention is perhaps most clearly visible in his desperate avoidance of fame. Even Collingwood admits that Carroll took this to remarkable extremes, recalling that, once he became known as the author of *Alice*, he

hated publicity, and tried to avoid it in every way. "Do not tell any one, if you see me in the theatre," he wrote once to Miss Marion Terry. On another occasion, when he was dining out at Oxford, and some one, who did not know that it was a forbidden subject, turned the conversation on *Alice in Wonderland*, he rose suddenly and fled from the house. I could multiply instances of this sort, but it would be unjust to his memory to insist upon the morbid way in which he regarded personal popularity. (Collingwood 19)

Even when pursuing unconventional goals, such as seeking to photograph children in various states of undress, Carroll took pains to be courteous. Morton Cohen points to a letter sent in 1879 to the mother of his child-friend Annie Henderson in which Carroll fairly ties himself in knots tiptoeing around the unconventional issue:

I hope my mention of my admiration of children's feet did not make you think I meant to propose taking *Annie* with bare feet. I shall propose no such thing, as I don't think she knows me well enough and is also too nervous a child to like it. So I hope she has heard nothing of it, as it might make her afraid to come. . . . With children who know me well, and who regard dress as a matter of indifference, I am very glad (when mothers permit) to take them in any amount of undress which is presentable, or even in none (which is more presentable than many forms of undress) but I don't think your Annie is a child of that sort. If you ever meet with any such "children of Nature," I shall be glad to hear of them. (Cohen 168-9)<sup>6</sup>

Even once permission had been received, Carroll remained anxious not to flout conventionality. Two years later he wrote to Mrs. Henderson again, asking her

if you would like to have any more copies of the full-front photographs of the children. I have 2 or 3 prints of each, but I intend to destroy all but one of each. That is all I want for myself, and (though I consider them perfectly innocent in themselves) there is really no friend to whom I should wish to give photographs which so entirely defy conventional rules. . . . The negatives are already destroyed. (*Letters* 1:434)

In fact, artistic images of nude children were hardly unknown in Victorian society: Roger Taylor notes that, over the Victorian period in general, "themes of childhood innocence and vulnerability became increasingly popular with novelists, poets, art-

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<sup>6</sup> The letter is reprinted in full in *Letters* 1:345-6.

ists and sculptors. [Carroll]’s photographs of children fit squarely within this context.”<sup>7</sup> Actual photographs might have been unusual (and Collingwood seems to skirt around the issue), but Carroll’s suggestion that they “entirely defy conventional rules” seems to overstate the case.

In all, there is certainly evidence to support Woolf’s image of Carroll: the opinions of Ruth Gamelan, Lionel Tollemache and, latterly, Collingwood all seem to confirm that, even in such a rarefied environment as an Oxford college, Carroll displayed an uncommon concern for behaving in accordance with the rules of social interaction.

### Conventional or conformant?

Against these opinions, however, must be weighed an opposing judgment. Carroll’s niece, Violet Dodgson, recalled after his death that “my uncle shared . . . his sisters’ indifference to the conventions. He wore, and did, what seemed good to him.”<sup>8</sup> We have seen documentary evidence of Carroll’s conventional behaviour, yet we would expect a niece to know her own uncle’s temperament. Can she have been correct?

Although Carroll certainly did follow conventional rules, we might more generally say that he preferred to follow established modes of behaviour. Indeed, where there was no conventional rule he seems frequently to have made up his own. For example, Collingwood comments on the orderliness of his daily routine:

He always rose at the same early hour, and, if he was in resident at Christ Church, attended College Service. He spent the day according to a prescribed routine, which usually included a long walk into the country . . . the only irregularity noticeable in his mode of life was the hour of retiring, which varied from 11pm to four o’clock in the morning, according to the amount of work which he felt himself in the mood for. (Collingwood 266-7)

Sometimes his rules were fastidiously practical: when planning a rail journey he habitually divided up his purse into compartments and put money for each stage of the journey into each compartment (Bowman 37). At other times they seemed arbitrary: Collingwood writes that

he hardly ever wore an overcoat, and always wore a tall hat, whatever might be the climatic conditions. . . . He very seldom sat down to write, preferring

<sup>7</sup> Roger Taylor & Edward Wakeling, *Lewis Carroll: Photographer* (Oxford: Princeton UP, 2002) 56.

<sup>8</sup> Violet Dodgson, “Lewis Carroll — As I Knew Him,” *London Calling* 28 June 1951, 6-7; *Interviews and Recollections* 18. Cohen erroneously gives the date as 1851, some 27 years before the author’s birth.



to stand while thus engaged. . . . Great were his preparations before going a journey; each separate article used to be carefully wrapped up in a piece of paper all to itself, so that his trunks contained nearly as much paper as of the more useful things. . . . The bulk of the luggage was sent on a day or two before by goods train, while he himself followed on the appointed day, laden only with his well-known little black bag, which he always insisted on carrying himself. . . . At meals he was very abstemious always, while he took nothing in the middle of the day except a glass of wine and a biscuit. (Collingwood 389-90)

For twenty years he wrote his diaries in purple ink: then (for reasons tantalisingly unknown) he stopped and never used it again (*Diaries* MS). He also adopted journalistic conventions from the Romans, describing days in his diary as “*dies mirabilis*” or writing that “I mark this day with a white stone.” Surely nobody apart from Carroll would have ever even been aware of these regularities, yet he maintained them anyway.

His recreation too suggests a preference for following established behaviours: when he took up photography it was already one of the most popular pastimes for a Victorian gentleman,<sup>9</sup> and his involvement with it began with a letter to his Uncle Skeffington Lutwidge on January 22nd 1856 asking that he obtain a camera for him simply because “I want some [other] occupation here than mere reading and writing” (*Diaries* 2:26). Among his New Year’s Resolutions for 1857, Carroll wrote that “I hope to make good progress in Photography in the Easter Vacation: it is my one recreation, and I think should be done well” (*Diaries* 2: 129) — suggesting that his progress in his hobby was motivated as much by a concern for “correct” behaviour as by enthusiasm.

Alongside this, another challenge to the identification of Carroll as simply “conventional” is the conspicuousness, in all the above examples of conventional behaviour, with which Carroll insisted on being unexceptional. It is not enough for Carroll to acknowledge that naked photographs are unusual: they must “entirely defy conventional rules.” He cannot merely avoid being photographed: he must have a “horror” of it. He cannot simply demur at discussion of *Alice’s Adventures*; he must flee from the house. I wonder whether the evidence reflects not a genuine respect for convention, but rather

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<sup>9</sup> See e.g. Helmut Gernsheim, *Lewis Carroll: Photographer* (London: Max Parrish, 1949) 2-3. The growing popularity of the pastime is clear from the preface to the second edition of H.H. Snelling’s 1851 amateur guidebook *The History and Practice of the Art of Photography*, in which the author writes that “the rapid sale of the first edition of *The Art of Photography* has made it incumbent upon me to issue a second several months sooner than my most sanguine wishes led me to hope”; later adding in the preface to the third edition that “we are again called upon to issue another edition of this work in less than one year from the publication of the last.” H.H. Snelling, *The History and Practice of the Art of Photography* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1851) x.



a desire, perhaps born of his shyness, to impress upon others the depth and sincerity of his desire to be unexceptional. It is as if, paradoxically, Carroll's determination to appear unexceptional and conventional is itself exceptionally unconventional. It is hard to avoid the suspicion that, should an unwelcome topic arise, a truly conventional man would simply hold his tongue, rather than fleeing in the middle of dinner.

In all, although Carroll did follow conventions, I conclude that he was motivated not by a respect for convention *per se*, but by a general preference for orderly behaviour which, for the most part, conveniently meshed with the behaviours of polite society. Under pressure, however, his behaviour sometimes resembles a performance of conventionality, rather than a genuine expression of it. I suggest that, though Carroll may never have intended to deceive, he was a man who might pragmatically wear his conventionality on his sleeve to persuade a parent that he could be trusted with their naked daughter; or to impress upon his companions the modesty of the author of *Alice*; or to demonstrate his loyalty to his colleagues in the Senior Common Room. This exploitation of conventionality for practical ends goes some way towards justifying Violet Dodgson's judgment that Carroll did "what seemed good to him."

### Convention and logic

It is well known that Carroll was a professional mathematician who specialised in logic; and this might seem to explain his taking a rational, rather than conventional, approach to society. The truth, however, is slightly more complex. Having demonstrated how Carroll's behaviour seems sometimes at odds with strict conventionality, I shall now move on to explore Carroll's own conception of convention, and how it affected the way in which he perceived and interacted with the world. The issue of logic will be a good starting point for such an investigation into Carroll's world view, as it is not enough to say that Carroll was logical because he was a logician; the evidence argues, rather, that Carroll was a logician because he was logical.

An indication that Carroll was an instinctively logical thinker emerges as early as 1844, when Carroll was just twelve. James Tate, Headmaster of Richmond Grammar school (at which Carroll was a resident student), wrote in a letter to Carroll's father that his son was "marvellously ingenious in replacing the ordinary inflexions of [Latin] nouns and verbs, as detailed in our grammars, by more exact analogies or convenient



forms of his own devising."<sup>10</sup> The same instinct resurfaces at the other end of Carroll's life: in the preface to *Sylvie & Bruno Concluded*, published 49 years later, Carroll showed that he was still devoted to "more exact analogies" in language:

Critics have objected to certain innovations in spelling [in *Sylvie & Bruno*], such as "ca'n't", "wo'n't", "traveler". In reply I can only plead my firm conviction that the popular usage is *wrong*. As to "ca'n't", it will not be disputed that in all *other* words ending in "n't", these letters are an abbreviation of "not", and it is surely absurd to suppose that, in this solitary instance, "not" is represented by "t"! . . . As to such words as "traveler", I hold the correct principle to be, to double the consonant when the accent falls on that syllable; otherwise to leave it *single*. This rule is observed in most cases (e.g. we double the "r" in "preferred" but leave it single in "offered"), so that I am only extending to other cases an existing rule. (Carroll 461-2)

His broader interest in logical systems is clear from his enduring fascination with the propositions of Euclid, which appears almost obsessive.<sup>11</sup> He also wrote several popular works that seemed designed to promote logic: *Symbolic Logic*, for example, which is dedicated to the memory of Aristotle, promises that logic will enable the reader to "tear to pieces the flimsy, illogical arguments which you will so continually encounter."<sup>12</sup> For Carroll, logic was the ultimate force: as Achilles observes in the squib, *What Achilles Said to the Tortoise*, even if one did not wish to accept a logical conclusion, "logic would take you by the throat and *force* you to do it!" (Carroll 1107)

Perhaps more tellingly, commentators regularly observe that Carroll's logical world view is reflected even in his non-mathematical work. The French Carrollian Sophie

<sup>10</sup> Cited in Collingwood, *Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* 25. It is, however, worth noting that Robert Sutherland presents an analysis by Prof. Roger A. Hornsby of the University of Iowa of a surviving Latin composition in verse written by Carroll at the age of 12. "The poem shows little marvellous ingenuity," Hornsby concludes: "In fact, it betrays the kind of clichés one would expect from a beginner, and the kind of 'made Latin' which one would also expect from one conversant with English and with a smattering of Latin." Perhaps Tate's comment was inspired by some other composition that does not survive. Robert D. Sutherland, *Language and Lewis Carroll* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970) 233.

<sup>11</sup> Sidney Herbert Williams, Falconer Madan & Roger Lancelyn Green, *The Lewis Carroll Handbook* (London: Oxford UP, 1962) gives bibliographic details for *The Fifth Book of Euclid* (1858), *Notes on the First Two Books of Euclid* (1860), *Enunciations of Euclid* (1863, enlarged 1873), *Symbols and Abbreviations for Euclid* (1866) a different *Fifth Book of Euclid* (1868), a third work on *Euclid Book V* (1874) his own edition of *Euclid Books I & II* (1875, 1882), *Euclid and His Modern Rivals* (1879) and an attempt to improve Euclid's 12th axiom in *Curiosa Mathematica Part I* (1888). *Euclid and His Modern Rivals* is written as dialogue, in which Euclid himself is a major character, and is dedicated, perhaps slightly redundantly, "to the memory of Euclid." Charles Dodgson [i.e. Lewis Carroll], *Euclid and his Modern Rivals* (London: Macmillan, 1879) vii.

<sup>12</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Symbolic Logic* (London: Macmillan, 1896) xiii.



Marret sees Carroll's fiction as "according with his concerns as a teacher of mathematics."<sup>13</sup> David B. Searls writes that Carroll's "fascination with linguistics, symbolic logic, number theory, cryptography, probability theory, geometry, etc. was not confined to his academic persona, but pervaded his literary efforts and even his social interactions."<sup>14</sup> Thus we find mention of Euclid not only in Carroll's academic works, but in the poem "Hiawatha's Photographing" (written in 1857, Carroll's first year as a photographer) in which a camera is whimsically described as "Like a complicated figure | In the Second Book of Euclid" (Carroll 769) — and, some 37 years later, as the basis of Carroll's comic essay *What the Tortoise Said to Achilles* (Carroll 1104-8). After Carroll's death, Alice Liddell mused that "perhaps only a brilliant logician could have written *Alice in Wonderland*" (*Interviews & Recollections* 88).

In letters to newspapers, Carroll would engage with real-world issues, but here too he approached them as if they were puzzles in mathematical logic. For example, in his 1885 letter to *St. James' Gazette* on *Election Gains and Losses*, he addresses the issue of the recent general election, which had involved changes to the number of seats assigned to constituencies, making it difficult to determine the relative performances of the political parties. Carroll suggested that readers should simply

Let  $S_1$  be the number of seats formerly assigned to the town, and  $S_2$  the new number. Similarly, let  $L_1$  be the number of seats formerly held by the Liberals, and so on. Then the Liberal gain is  $(L_2S_1) - (L_1S_2)$ . . . . Thus, the old set of numbers,  $S_1, L_1, C_1, I_1$  are 8, 5, 2, 1, and the new set are 6, 4, 1, 1. Hence the Liberal "gain" is  $(4 \times 8 - 5 \times 6)$  divided by 8, i.e. one-fourth; the Conservative "gain" is  $(1 \times 8 - 2 \times 6)$  divided by 8, i.e. minus one-half; and the Independent "gain" is  $(1 \times 8 - 1 \times 6)$  divided by 8, i.e. one fourth. Thus the Conservatives have lost half a seat, which has been shared equally between the Liberals and the Independents. (*Pamphlets* 3:201-10)

In the pamphlet "Lawn Tennis Tournaments", Carroll uses similar reasoning to demonstrate how the then-current system of scoring could produce a champion who had won fewer games than the second-placed player. He goes on to propose an improved system of his own. The work's subtitle promises "The *True* Method of Determining the Winner" (emphasis added), clearly demonstrating that Carroll did not accept that a scoring sys-

<sup>13</sup> "conformément à ses préoccupations de professeur de mathématiques." Sophie Marret, *Lewis Carroll: De l'Autre Côté de la Logique* (Rennes: Rennes UP, 1995) 38.

<sup>14</sup> David B. Searls, "From 'Jabberwocky' to Genome: Lewis Carroll and Computational Biology," *Journal of Computational Biology* 8:3 (2001) 339.



tem could be legitimate simply through conventional acceptance, but that truth must be established through logic (Carroll 1082).

“Lawn Tennis Tournaments” was only one in a string of papers he wrote which sought to identify and remedy the faults in an existing system by the application of logic: the third volume of *Pamphlets* is dedicated entirely to such works. His Christ Church contemporary T.B. Strong recalled that in any debate Carroll was “relentless in pointing out the logical results of any position assumed by his opponent, and quick to devise a puzzling case when he wanted to bring objections against a rule of principle.”<sup>15</sup>

### Logic and language

Carroll’s logical instincts also gave him insights into the English language.<sup>16</sup> I mentioned above his enduring interest in bringing “more exact analogies” to language, which in practice clearly meant making rules apply consistently. We will remember from *Sylvie & Bruno Concluded* that Carroll felt countenancing an exception to the rule, so as to write “won’t” instead of “wo’n’t”, would be “surely absurd”; and that he arrived at the spelling “traveler” by replacing the conventional form with one that conformed to the “correct principle” on consonantal doubling.

As any reader of *Alice* will confirm, Carroll’s interest did not stop at orthography. In these books he turned his practical-logical approach to English usage, and observed that, although words and phrases had precisely regular meanings, these were often superseded by conventional usages. In the *Alice* books he frequently draws attention to the language’s vagaries in this regard:

“Take some more tea,” the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly.  
 “I’ve had nothing yet,” Alice replied in an offended tone, “so I can’t take more.”  
 “You mean you can’t take *less*,” said the Hatter: “it’s very easy to take *more* than nothing.”(Carroll 74)

<sup>15</sup> T.B. Strong, “Lewis Carroll,” *Cornhill Magazine*, March 1898: 303-310; *Interviews & Recollections* 34.

<sup>16</sup> English was not Carroll’s only language: as might be expected, he had a good grasp of French, and his fluency in Latin and Greek are evident from the many classical epigrams and allusions that permeate his Oxford pamphlets (see *Pamphlets* 1). He appears to have understood German too, as his library contained several books in German such as H. Scheffler’s *Die Magischen Figuren* and Paul Konewka’s *Falstaff und Seine Gesellen*. It would be no surprise if he also had some familiarity with other European languages such as Italian (into which he oversaw the translation of *Alice’s Adventures*), and may well have acquired some Russian too during his trip to Russia in 1867. However, nothing in his writings suggests that he engaged with any of these languages in the spirit of logical exploration with which he wrote in English, with the exception of the occasional pun in Latin.

T.B. Strong, considering the impact of the *Alice* books, notes that one of Carroll's achievements was this type of demonstration that

ordinary conversation is built up very largely of phrases which are used conventionally. Their exact meaning is hardly thought of, and they are used without question. . . . [Carroll] has shown the existence of all sorts of pitfalls and surprises round the ordinary course of conversation. (Strong 42)

This may seem an obvious realisation, and it is regularly raised by critics: Patricia Meyer Spacks, for example, mentions "the punning which demonstrates the looseness with which words are ordinarily used."<sup>17</sup> However, what seems to have attracted little attention is the fact that, in examining the disjunction between what is said and what is understood, Carroll's ideas were far ahead of their time. The linguistic insights that he seems to have arrived at wholly unaided provide a striking illustration of just how deeply his intellect was permeated by logic. Moreover, his forays into structural linguistics promoted a philosophical model which encouraged him not merely to view conventionality with "indifference", as Violet Dodgson suggested, but in fact to consider it wholly empty and meaningless. In the following sections of this chapter I will demonstrate how.

### **Carroll's exposure to linguistics**

Many of the "pitfalls and surprises round the ordinary course of conversation" that T.B. Strong credits Carroll with describing would nowadays come within the purview of pragmatics, the branch of linguistics concerned with the practical workings of everyday language use. Yet I believe it is not an exaggeration to say that pragmatics was wholly unknown as an academic study in the nineteenth century. Robert D. Sutherland argues that "Carroll's life spanned the period of greatest linguistic ferment, and evidence appears throughout his work that he was aware of, and influenced by, the currents and cross-currents in the air about him" — but these are identified as etymology, antiquarian language and dialect (Sutherland 45-58). This linguistic agenda had been set far away, in Germany, by historicists such as Jakob Grimm and Franz Bopp.

Indeed, the most direct external influence on Carroll may well have been another leading German linguist, Max Müller. Müller was an Oxford colleague of Carroll's, and

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<sup>17</sup> Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Logic and Language Through the Looking-Glass," *Aspects of Alice*, ed. Robert Phillips (London: Victor Gollancz, 1972) 273.



the two men were close enough for Carroll to have photographed Müller by 1860, photographed him again in 1867, and dined with him on occasion.<sup>18</sup> Carroll admired Müller's work, publicly opposing (in an open letter to the Vice-Chancellor) a proposal to employ a successor at half the rate of pay Müller had received: "for surely the very proposal . . . is to say, by implication, that the work has been hitherto overpaid — against which supposition I, for one, desire to record my protest" (*Pamphlets* 1:122).<sup>19</sup> A week later, Carroll sent a follow-up letter in which he referred to Müller as a "learned Professor, from whom I have never experienced anything but kindness, and whom I am proud to number among my friends." Carroll clearly saw much to admire in Müller, whose approach to linguistics was determinedly historical. Indeed, the controversy over his successor was caused by his intention to retire "to devote himself without interruption to . . . studies on the Ancient Literature of India" (*Pamphlets* 1:121).

Alternative viewpoints were almost nowhere to be heard: G.W. Cox, writing in the *Edinburgh Review* on Müller's 1861 *Lectures on the Science of Language*, observed that "It can scarcely be said that this science has opposed popular ideas, for all ideas on the subject have been confined comparatively to a few."<sup>20</sup> As R.H. Robins notes, "as late as 1922, O[tto] Jespersen . . . could write in the still prevailing nineteenth-century climate of opinion that linguistics was mainly a historical study."<sup>21</sup>

### Pragmatics

In fact it was not until 1967 that the formal study of pragmatics emerged, when H. Paul Grice attempted, in his William James Lectures at Harvard, to identify the assumptions that underpin a conversation. He concluded that interlocutors assume that each oth-

<sup>18</sup> Müller's name appears on a list Carroll made in 1860 of people he had photographed (Cohen 76). Carroll's diaries record the second photographic session (5: 247) and detail his meeting Müller on at least four other occasions (*Diaries* 4: 161; 6:275; 7:144; 7:239). Carroll also called upon the Müllers on the afternoon of 24th May 1879, but they were out (*Diaries* 7:177).

<sup>19</sup> Morton Cohen implies that Müller "neither forgot nor forgave" Carroll for his opposition to the proposal (Cohen 390), a suggestion which I find quite baffling. The source he cites – *The Life and Letters of Friedrich Max Müller* (London: Longmans, Green, 1902) – certainly praises Liddell, but it has nothing whatsoever to say on Carroll.

<sup>20</sup> G.W. Cox, "Max Müller on the Science of Language," *Edinburgh Review* January 1862, repr. in *Language and Linguistic Theory*, ed. Roy Harris (London: Routledge/Thoemmes P, 1995) 3: 247.

<sup>21</sup> R.H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (London: Longman, 1967) 164.

er's utterances are "accurate," "relevant," "sufficient" and "non-extraneous."<sup>22</sup> It was not until 1975 that he codified these maxims and named the principle "conversational implicature."

Yet over a century before, and in the apparently utter absence of any related discourse, Carroll had already implicitly identified these maxims. He did not write a tract on pragmatics, nor deliver lectures: as Robert Sutherland notes, "Carroll rarely made explicit statements of theoretical problems which intrigued him. Instead, he preferred to illustrate them obliquely through humorous dramatization in his fiction" (Sutherland 15). And so it is at the Mad Tea Party, which is made mad by the flouting of the maxims, a device which brings their existence into sharp relief. Ulrich Beckmann identifies three ways in which Alice's assumptions about conversation are challenged at the Mad Tea Party:

1. Alice is challenged to do something which she is not able to do: "Have some more wine,' the March Hare said in an encouraging tone . . . 'I don't see any wine,' [Alice] remarked. 'There isn't any,' said the March Hare."

2. The Hatter asks Alice a riddle without knowing the answer himself: "Have you guessed the riddle yet?' the Hatter said, turning to Alice again. 'No, I give it up,' Alice replied. 'What's the answer?' 'I haven't the faintest idea,' said the Hatter."

3. Alice is not able to identify the intended speech act, e. g. "No room! No room!' they cried out when they saw Alice coming. 'There's plenty of room!' said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table. . . ."<sup>23</sup>

Alice finds it almost impossible to communicate satisfactorily with these speakers who do not seem to say what they mean. Yet the inhabitants of Wonderland perceive her as guilty of precisely the same behaviour:

"I believe I can guess that," [Alice said] aloud.

"Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?" said the March Hare.

"Exactly so," said Alice.

"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.  
(Carroll 69)

<sup>22</sup> H.P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation," *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*, ed. P. Cole and J.L. Morgan (New York: Academic Press, 1975); cited in Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge UP, 1983) 100.

<sup>23</sup> Ulrich Beckmann, "Carroll's Play with Possibilities: Aspects of Coherence in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*," *Semiotics and Linguistics in Alice's Worlds*, ed. R. Fordyce and Carla Marello (Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 1994) 103.



Alice is humbled by the realisation that it is not just Wonderland characters who communicate illogically. Humpty Dumpty too points up the conventional assumptions underpinning Alice's conversation – seemingly with the intention of catching her out – simply by speaking with literal precision: he asks her “how old did you say you were?” which she takes to mean “how old *are* you?” “If I'd meant that,” he replies triumphantly, “I'd have said it.” (Carroll 194). In the light of all that we have seen above, it is hard to escape a sense of Carroll mocking conventional usage.

### Structural linguistics

Nor did Carroll's logical approach to language stop at the level of the sentence. Just as a phrase might have a conventional meaning unconnected to its construction, he perceived that individual words could carry meanings wholly unconnected to their construction — and that, in fact, it was only convention that connected most words with their meanings.<sup>24</sup> Half a century later this idea would be central to Ferdinand de Saussure's influential *Course in General Linguistics*, which divided the word into the “sign” (the concept to be expressed) and the “signifier” (the actual naming word to be uttered), and identified the link between the two as arbitrary.<sup>25</sup> The approach is known today as structural linguistics.

In Carroll's day, however, the structural approach was heretical. Max Müller, in his lectures, had explicitly dismissed the notion of words as “artificial signs of which the meaning [is] fixed by mutual agreement,” chuckling that, if this were the case, language could never have evolved — for “no one has yet explained how, without language, a discussion on the merits of each word . . . could have been carried on.”<sup>26</sup> As an anonymous writer for *The London Review* was happy to affirm, after having read the text of Müller's lectures,

De Quincey called the study of languages the dry-rot of the human mind; and he would not be far wrong if it were true, as he alleges, that in language

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<sup>24</sup> Exceptions would be onomatopoeic words. Compound words and Carrollian “portmanteau” words also have meanings that can apparently be deduced from their construction, but the deduction leads only to another word. The gulf between this word and its referent is still bridged only by convention.

<sup>25</sup> F. De Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris (London: Duckworth, 1983) 66-9.

<sup>26</sup> Max Müller, “The Growth of Language in Contradistinction to the History of Language,” *Lectures on the Science of Language* (London: Longman, Green, Longman & Roberts, 1861) 30-31.



everything is arbitrary. The precise contrary is the fact. In language – so the new-born science is bold enough to assure us – nothing is arbitrary.<sup>27</sup>

The reference is to the third of De Quincey's *Letters to a Young Man Whose Education has been Neglected*, a work originally published thirty-nine years previously in *London Magazine*, in which De Quincey does indeed describe language as "arbitrary and conventional, which yields no reason why it should be this way rather than that, obeying no theory or law."<sup>28</sup> Carroll owned a copy of De Quincey's *Works*, in which this essay was reprinted;<sup>29</sup> but De Quincey seemed subsequently to be won over by historicism, and his latter essay on the subject – "The English Language," published in 1839 – is a historically-minded piece, whose first section ("A History of the English Language Needed") pursues a teleological story of progressive development from Anglo-Saxon to modern English (De Quincey 14: 146-61).

Another contemporary essayist, Richard Chevenix Trench, also rejected the notion of the arbitrary sign. In discussing how words pass from one language to another he discussed an ingenious example of adaptation:

. . . . "carbunculus," though a real word, full of poetry and life for a Latin, would have been only an arbitrary sign for others, ignorant of that language. What then did they, or what, rather, did the working genius of the language, do? It adopted, but in adopting modified slightly, the word, changing it into "Karfunkel," thus retaining the outlines of the original, yet at the same time, inasmuch as "funkeln" signifies "to sparkle," reproducing now in an entirely novel manner the image of the bright sparkling of the stone, for every knower of the German tongue.<sup>30</sup>

As Sutherland comments above, Carroll was doubtless influenced by the prevailing atmosphere of historicism: the first stanza of "Jabberwocky" was originally written by Carroll at the age of 13 under the title "Stanza of Anglo-Saxon poetry"

<sup>27</sup> n.n., "Max Müller on Language," *The London Review* January 1862, *Language and Linguistic Theory 1800-1865*, ed. Roy Harris (London: Routledge, 1995) 3: 226

<sup>28</sup> Thomas De Quincey, *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. David Masson, 14 vols. (Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1889-90) 10: 35.

<sup>29</sup> The auction catalogue states simply "De Quincey's Works (14 vols.)" (repr. in Stern 17), so this could have been either the A.C. Black edition cited above or the earlier *Works: Selections Grave and Gay, from Writings Published and Unpublished*, 14 vols. (Edinburgh: James Hogg, 1853-60) 14: 40.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Chevenix Trench, "Introductory Lecture," *The Study of Words* (London: John W. Parker, 1851) 135. Chevenix Trench apparently saw no need to describe the precise operation of the "working genius of the language," nor to explain how the link between the world "funkeln" and the appearance of sparkling is not arbitrary.



(*Picture Book* 37-8) and a surviving letter to his sister Louisa is written in mock Middle English (*Letters* 1:15).

And yet, in the face of all of this, Carroll's absolute faith in logic over convention led him away from popular historicism and towards a systemic, structuralist approach. In the oblique manner noted by Sutherland, Carroll raises the key questions of structural linguistics by putting them into the mouths of his characters: "When *I* use a word," explains Humpty Dumpty, in one of the most famous lines in literature, "it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less." (Carroll 196). Alice provides the obvious rebuttal.

Perhaps more interestingly, Carroll also asserts the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign via a similar device to that which he uses to indicate idiomatic usages. I showed above how he points up the existence of idiomatic locutions by supposing that they are *not* idiomatic, and having characters like Humpty Dumpty use them literally. With the structural sign, Carroll challenges the prevailing wisdom that "nothing is arbitrary" by showing the unreal situations that emerge if there *is* a link between a concept and its name. Early on we learn that the White Rabbit's name is "W. Rabbit" (Carroll 38), and Humpty Dumpty explains directly that his name *describes* his form, rather than merely referring to it (Carroll 192). William Empson suggests that the same principle applies in "Jabberwocky," whose neologisms he considers

such good tongue-gestures, in Sir Richard Paget's phrase, that they seem to carry their own meaning; this carries a hint of the paradox that the conventions are natural. (Empson 214)

In the Forest of Namelessness, the Fawn cannot establish a relationship with Alice until it knows her name — because without a name she has no nature (Carroll 164). Small wonder that Alice initially fears that when she loses her name she will not have an identity until "they"<sup>31</sup> give her another name — which is "almost certain to be an ugly one" (Carroll 162). As Empson comments, "she may lose her 'good name' when she loses the conventions" (Empson 223). In Carroll's inverted linguistics, a name seems to serve the

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<sup>31</sup> Presumably "they" are the same people that Alice invokes when explaining to the Gnat that insects having names is "no use to *them* . . . but it's useful to the people that name them." (Carroll 158-9) In other words, "they" are a personification of the general social agreement that Chevenix Trench personified and Müller ridiculed.

function of what Thomas A. Sebok terms the “semiotic self,”<sup>32</sup> though he perhaps overstates the case when he observes that “some people, such as Alice . . . feel that their name *should* embody the exceptional status of their semiotic self” (46; emphasis added). I should say that Alice would probably prefer for her nature to be inherent: as we see at the very start of *Alice’s Adventures*, she supposes that if her nature has changed then her name must have also, and fears that her fate will depend on what her name becomes (Carroll 26). The absurdity of this idea confirms that, despite the certain pronouncements of the most esteemed Victorian linguists, the sign *is* arbitrary. As the Bellman would later cry, in *The Hunting of the Snark*, “What’s the good of Mercator’s north poles and equators, | Tropics, zones and meridian lines?” They may be useful devices, but the crew knows their true value: “They are merely conventional signs!” (Carroll 683)

### Axioms

In structural linguistics, the relationship between the sign and the signifier is thus necessarily conventional, precisely because it is arbitrary: nothing beyond customary usage binds a word to its meaning. This is the position beyond indifference I mentioned above: Carroll seems intuitively to have arrived at a sense of the conventional rule as having no logical justification whatsoever, and being merely a contrivance to enable social functions.

To a mathematician such as Carroll, the evident analogue would have been the logical axiom. Carroll’s familiarity with axioms is clear from his engagement with Euclid, whose axioms were the foundation of Carroll’s geometrical work. Indeed, in *Euclid and His Modern Rivals*, Carroll demonstrates how axioms proposed by the “modern rivals” are in fact not axiomatic precisely because they can be derived logically. And, in the light of what has gone before, it will be no surprise that he extended this intellectual concept outside of mathematics: in 1897, for example, he wrote that the articles of Christian faith

are what would be called in Science “axioms,” . . . quite incapable of being proved, simply because proof must rest on something already granted. . . .  
(*Letters* 2:1122)

His extension of the concept to language is demonstrated in a passage from an

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<sup>32</sup> Thomas A. Sebok, *A Sign is Just a Sign* (Indianapolis: Bloomington UP, 1991).



appendix to *Symbolic Logic*, in which he wrote that

if I find an author saying, at the beginning of his book, "Let it be understood that by the word 'black' I shall always mean 'white,' and that by the word 'white' I shall always mean 'black,'" I meekly accept his judgment, however injudicious I may deem it.<sup>33</sup>

Carroll envisions an author, like a mathematician, setting out his axioms at the beginning of a work (though he clearly deems it "injudicious" to arbitrarily invert such a well-respected custom).

The notion that conventions are axiomatic enables more than Carroll's insights into structural linguistics: it brings a sense of arbitrariness to all social behaviour. This is implied in *Alice* via the same device by which Carroll implied the existence of conversational implicature: by confounding Alice's expectations. Thus, even when she is able to communicate on a semantic level, she often behaves inappropriately for a given circumstance: "you've begun wrong!" chides Tweedledum (Carroll 167). She accidentally offends the Mouse by her repeated mentions of Dinah (Carroll 29-30). She addresses the Duchess "a little timidly, for she was not quite sure whether it was good manners for her to speak first" (Carroll 60); she feels relief at seeing that guests have come unbidden to her coronation feast, for "I should never have known who were the right people to invite!" (Carroll 240); and Patrice Salsa notes her internal agonies over whether or not Humpty Dumpty's cravat is "a good subject." (Carroll 195)<sup>34</sup> The problem here is not language: there is, in these examples, no confusion over what words mean. The issue is that Alice has no way of determining the correct behaviour — what the anonymous

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<sup>33</sup> It has been objected that perhaps Carroll did not believe that the word "black" could ever truly mean "white," but was merely temporarily allowing it in the same way that a reader of *Sylvie & Bruno* might temporarily accept the existence of fairies. His reference to the non-standard usage as "injudicious" certainly suggests that he does not encourage authors to redefine words. However, I submit that this judgment was purely on practical grounds of comprehensibility. Carroll was an aggressively logical writer, and if he had seen any reason why "black" could not mean "white" then it is very hard to imagine him unconditionally accepting the proposition.

<sup>34</sup> In fact Salsa slightly misrepresents this episode, offering two quotes purportedly demonstrating that "certain topics are appropriate . . . while other topics are not." Both quotes actually refer to the same topic (the cravat). Salsa also removes Carroll's last two words and italicisation in citing Alice's pleasure at finding "that she *had* chosen a good subject after all," and does not mention that it is Humpty, not Alice, who has raised the issue of topic. The overall effect is to imply that Alice is more preoccupied with the suitability of topics than is in fact the case. Nevertheless, that Alice is unable to discern their suitability for herself is a fair point.



editor of the 1834 *Encyclopaedia of Manners and Etiquette* terms “the manners, customs, and habits, of general society.”<sup>35</sup>

### Carroll’s own axioms

I presented evidence earlier that suggested that Carroll’s conventionality was modulated by other considerations. Having now established a particular conception of convention as logically empty, I will move on to demonstrate that Carroll’s approach to convention in his own life conformed closely with this conception. This is not to suggest that Carroll simply discarded conventionality altogether: I have already shown how Carroll instead exploited conventionality for practical purposes. As mentioned above, T.B. Strong found him adroit at identifying “the logical results of any position”, and he surely recognised that conventionality was necessary to be “a useful member of society” (*Encyclopaedia of Manners and Etiquette* iv). We will recall that he considered it “injudicious” to try to redefine white as black, and the fact that he is so frequently described as conventional strongly suggests that he deemed it both considerate and politic to interact with guests and peers in the way they expected.

However, in a context of axiomatic conventions, Carroll would have considered himself quite entitled – even morally bound – to flout them if this “seemed good to him”; and there are plenty of examples of his doing precisely this. When, for example, he took Isa Bowman to church at Eastbourne, he would permit her to read a book should the sermon prove beyond her, a flagrantly unconventional act that, Bowman confesses, “must, I feel sure, sound rather dreadful to many” (Bowman 78). As he grew friendly with an increasing number of young girls, he began to refer dismissively to “Mrs. Grundy,” a personification of conventional disapproval.<sup>36</sup> In 1879 he wrote to E. Gertrude Thomson to ask “are you sufficiently unconventional (I *think* you are) to defy

<sup>35</sup> n.n., *Encyclopaedia of Manners and Etiquette* (London: H.G. Bohn, 1834) iv.

<sup>36</sup> Mrs. Grundy was not an invention of Carroll’s: she is the censorious next-door-neighbour in Thomas Morton’s 1798 play *Speed the Plough*. By Carroll’s time her name had passed into common usage as a figurative character of disapproval. However, although Carroll did not invent Mrs. Grundy, he seems to have made her his own: the index to Morton Cohen’s *Letters* identifies 23 references to her, starting in 1879. In 1885 Carroll wrote that he had invited Isabel Standen on an “anti-Grundyish expedition” (*Letters* 1:576); in 1890 he mentioned to Gertrude Chataway that he had had an 18-year-old girl visit and “so far as I know, ‘Mrs. Grundy’ has made no remarks at all.” (*Letters* 2:807); in 1894 he invited Bertha Browne to visit him, should she be “sufficiently reckless of ‘Mrs. Grundy.’” (*Letters* 2:1039)



Mrs. Grundy and come down to spend the day with me at Oxford?"<sup>37</sup> In college he happily defied the letter of the law by seeking (and finding) an ecumenical loophole that would enable him to take orders – and thus retain his Studentship at Christ Church – without being obliged to take on the duties that would conventionally accompany his position as a Deacon.<sup>38</sup>

If any doubt remained about Carroll's approach to rules, it should be dispelled by his straightforward explanation in *Twelve Months in a Curatorship* of his interpretations of the rules of the Wine Committee in his role as Curator of Christ Church Senior Common Room:

In Rule 3, for "in the second week of each Term" I read "when necessary" . . . . In Rule 4, for "All questions" I read "All important questions" . . . . In Rule 5, for "No business" I read "No important business; and for "at least 3 members" I read "at least 2 members." (*Pamphlets* 1:156)

There is even an appendix, entitled "Details of Rules Broken," documenting the various actions that were taken without due process during Carroll's year in the job (*Pamphlets* 1:169). The overwhelming impression is that, far from meekly "accepting every convention", as Virginia Woolf would have it, Carroll was perfectly willing to openly defy the rules if he believed he knew better.

### Rules for children

Before closing this examination of Carroll's relationship with convention, I will present a final piece of evidence in support of the argument that Carroll took an axiomatic world view: Carroll's own representations of the opposing, conventional, position.

Above I have given examples of Carroll's preference for universal principles in orthography, and this desire for generality seems to have extended to his whole logical outlook. Specifically, he seems to have taken the view that if *he* could disregard convention then so could anyone; and, in particular, Collingwood tells us, "He could not bear to see the healthy pleasures of children spoiled by conventional restraint" (Collingwood 373). Collingwood goes on to quote Adelaide Paine relating that this freedom gave her

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<sup>37</sup> E. Gertrude Thomson, "Lewis Carroll: A Sketch by an Artist-Friend," *Gentlewoman* 16: 147 (1898) 166-7; *Interviews & Recollections* 230.

<sup>38</sup> This simple account is from Collingwood, *Life and Letters* 74, but I will explore Carroll's handling of his religious obligations in more detail in the next chapter.

“very great glee,” an unsurprising revelation, for – as mentioned at the start of this chapter – the Victorian child was expected to adhere to any number of behavioural rules.

Books from the period give the flavour of expected behaviour: *The Manual of Manners, or Child’s Book of Etiquette* cautions children to “never enter the house with your hat on,” and gives a list of sundry improprieties such as “pulling out your watch in company.”<sup>39</sup> James Pitt’s abovementioned *Instructions in Etiquette Intended for the Use of Schools & Young Persons* ran to a third edition in the light of “the very flattering manner in which the two former editions [were] received.” This is a work which warns the reader that to write a letter in pencil “would be quite improper, and exhibit a great want of attention to good breeding” (Pitt 10), and that “the kissing of the hand can never be proper except to persons with whom you are intimately acquainted” (Pitt 18). From a 21st century perspective we can find a certain comedy in the gravity it attaches to seemingly inconsequential matters:

*Question:* If I meet a person on the street who attempts to take the wrong side, should I persist in taking the right?

*Answer:* I should hope that, except from inadvertence, no person would be guilty of the impropriety of taking the wrong side; but, if, indeed, a lady should persist in doing so it will discover at once your good sense and good breeding . . . to give way to her. (Pitt 25-6)

Yet however obviously arbitrary these instructions may seem, children were expected to follow authority without question. *The Manual of Manners* tells children to “be humble, submissive and obedient to those who have a just claim to your subjection, by nature of providence; such are parents, masters or tutors” (*Manual* 6). Nigel Temple cites an anonymous passage, published in the periodical *Children’s Friend* for November 1868, ominously warning that “the great God who made heaven and earth, and can make good all he says, looks upon disobedience to parents as one of the most grievous sins a child can commit, and pronounces a dreadful curse upon it.”<sup>40</sup> The fifth commandment indeed seemed to deny any possibility of challenging a parentally-sanctioned edict, however nonsensical.

The arbitrary expectations laid upon the Victorian child were parodied by a young Carroll in a poem entitled “Rules and Regulations” (1845) — a list of instructions such

<sup>39</sup> n.n., *The Manual of Manners, or Child’s Book of Etiquette* (Glasgow: John Reid, 1837) 7, 55.

<sup>40</sup> Nigel Temple, ed., *Seen and Not Heard* (London: Hutchinson, 1970) 23.



as “Don’t waste your money, | Abstain from honey | Shut doors behind you, | (Don’t slam them, mind you.)” By the end the string of imperatives has devolved into senseless commands such as “Starve your canaries” and “Be rude to strangers.” The moral is simply: “behave” (Carroll 705). The parody returns in *Alice*, as the Duchess continually draws unhelpful morals from nonsensical assertions, such as

“There’s a large mustard-machine near here. And the moral of *that* is — ‘The more there is of mine, the less there is of yours.’” (Carroll 89)

Perhaps this was not a wholly fair reflection on improving literature. Gordon Roe, in his memoir *A Victorian Child* notes that “though there were unhappy, over-drilled children. . . . a great deal of what children were taught as a matter of course was the sheerest decency and common sense in a civilisation such as theirs.”<sup>41</sup> The Earl of Chesterfield’s letters to his son, which, though written a century previously, were influential upon Victorian etiquette,<sup>42</sup> promoted the pragmatic view that good breeding is “the result of much good-sense, some good-nature, and a little self-denial for the sake of others, and with a view to obtaining the same indulgence from them.”<sup>43</sup>

Nevertheless, while we have no evidence that Carroll was “over-drilled” as a child, the thirteen-year old author of “Rules and Regulations” must have known whereof he wrote; and in *Alice* the adult Carroll clearly still sympathises with the frustration of the Victorian child. Glen Downey proposes that, before Alice travels *Through the Looking-Glass*, she is “sublimating her frustration and channelling it at some other object” as she scolds the black kitten for its “misbehaviour”:

“Do you know, I was so angry, Kitty,” Alice went on, as soon as they were comfortably settled again, “when I saw all the mischief you had been doing. I was very nearly opening the window, and putting you out into the snow! And you’d have deserved it, you little mischievous darling! What have you got to say for yourself? Now don’t interrupt me!” she went on, holding up one finger. “I’m going to tell you all your faults.” (Carroll 131)

“The kitten’s inability to respond coherently to the succession of charges brought against it,” Downey surmises, “symbolises Alice’s own powerlessness in her desire for

<sup>41</sup> Gordon Roe, *A Victorian Child* (London: Aldine P, 1959) 47-54.

<sup>42</sup> The entire first part of *Encyclopaedia of Manners and Etiquette* is an edition of these letters.

<sup>43</sup> Lord Mahon, ed., *The Letters of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield* (London: Richard Bentley, 1845) 341.

autonomy. This one-sided exchange gives the reader a sense of how often Alice has been forced to endure some harsh criticism without understanding what she has done to deserve it."<sup>44</sup>

The reader certainly does gain this sense, but I would suggest that Alice is not only sublimating her own frustration but also satirising the arbitrariness and illogic of adult instructions: the subtle juxtaposition of "What have you got to say for yourself?" and "Now don't interrupt me!" turns the language of parental authority against itself, making it appear inconsistent and ridiculous.

Alice makes the same point more directly in *Looking-Glass Land*: upon being ordered by the Red Queen to speak only when she is spoken to, Alice retorts

"But if everybody obeyed that rule," said Alice, who was always ready for a little argument, "and if you only spoke when you were spoken to, and the other person always waited for you to begin, you see nobody would ever say anything, so that —"

"Ridiculous!" cried the Queen. "Why, don't you see, child —" here she broke off with a frown, and, after thinking for a minute, suddenly changed the subject of the conversation. (Carroll 230)

In rebuking Alice with the epithet "child," the Queen makes crystal clear the nature of the authority she is claiming over Alice. The heroine meets with a similarly unsatisfactory response when she tries to get the Mock Turtle to explain what happened at his school after the "lessons" had "lessened" away to nothing: "That's enough about lessons," interrupts the Gryphon in "a very decided tone" (Carroll 95).

The *Manual of Manners* assured the reader that an adult's "commands and laws have no other tendency than your truest good" (*Manual* 6), but Alice's experiences strongly imply that many of the instructions and pronouncements of authority are justified only by the imperative of seniority — which of course is no logical justification at all. Elsie Leach takes the view that "when [Carroll] makes a ridiculous character like the Duchess praise and practice moralising . . . he clearly indicates his attitude toward didacticism directed against children" (Elsie Leach 89). And, as W.H. Auden observes,

it is the child-heroine Alice who is invariably reasonable, self-controlled and polite, while all the other inhabitants, human or animal, of Wonderland and

<sup>44</sup> Glen Downey, "Why Alice Accepts her Humble Position in the Looking-Glass Chess Game," *Reflections on Lewis Carroll* (Shelbourne, Ontario: Battered Silicon Dispatch Box, 2000) 80.



the Looking-Glass are unsocial eccentrics — at the mercy of their passions and extremely bad mannered.<sup>45</sup>

Carroll thus set himself against convention with the clear implication that the expectations adult society placed upon children were as nonsensical and dispensable as those Mrs Grundy wished to place upon him. He appeared proud that his works, unlike the majority of Victorian children's literature, did not attempt to present improving lessons for children: in 1867 he sent a copy of *The Fountain of Youth* by Frederik Paludimüller to his child-friend Lilia MacDonald, explaining that "the book has got a moral — so I need hardly say it is *not* by Lewis Carroll" (*Letters* 1:96). Jan B. Gordon notes the symbolism of Alice's disdain for the everyday book "without pictures or conversations" which her sister reads at the start of *Alice's Adventures*:<sup>46</sup> she rejects the conventional adult story in favour of running off on her own, and is rewarded with fascinating discoveries. "Adventure," Gordon concludes, "is possible only after turning one's back upon civilization and its joyless values" (Gordon 91).

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to establish the fundamental principle upon which this thesis is founded, to which I shall repeatedly return throughout the rest of the thesis. That principle is that Carroll instinctively desired order and regularity, and pursued them primarily through logic. Conventions could be a useful means to an end: they enabled communication and social interaction, and he generally followed them, if only for pragmatic reasons. However, being logically unsupported, they held no compulsive force for him. He casually discarded those for which he had no use, and sympathised with Victorian children who could not choose to do the same. This view of convention was clearly expressed in *Alice*, in which he allowed the child to challenge the adult's authority and demolish its illogical, conventional arguments; but this was no artistic trope. The genuineness of Carroll's axiomatic disregard for convention is confirmed by his own, real-life behaviour.

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<sup>45</sup> W.H. Auden, "Today's 'Wonder-World' Needs Alice," *Aspects of Alice* 9.

<sup>46</sup> Jan B. Gordon, "The *Alice* Books and the Metaphors of Victorian Childhood," *Aspects of Alice* 93.

## Chapter 3

# Religion

In the previous chapter, I established a picture of Carroll as an original, logical thinker, who perceived the world in terms of systems of rules. I will now turn my attention to a second major influence on Carroll's world view: his religion.

Carroll's engagement with religion is not in doubt. Though he is not known as a religious writer, religious issues are a constant undercurrent in *Sylvie & Bruno*, and a regular theme of his letters. Morton Cohen, after a broad examination of Carroll's life, concludes that Carroll was a "solid Christian" who "lived by Christian principles more diligently than most of those high-minded churchmen" (Cohen 372).

Sometimes it is proposed that *Alice* suggests religious doubts: Charles W. Johnson, for example, presents a reading of *Through the Looking Glass* which questions Carroll's confidence in church orthodoxy,<sup>1</sup> while Donald Rackin sees *Alice's Adventures* as an expression of "nature's ultimate emptiness."<sup>2</sup> These readings are suggestive, and I will return to them in Chapter 5; but in this chapter I shall seek to go beyond *Alice* and apply the broader methodology laid out in my introduction to gain a more rounded picture of Carroll's faith.

In this chapter I shall argue that Carroll was conscientiously religious throughout his life, but that the nature of his faith appears to have evolved over time. His approach to religion was doubtless originally founded on the High Church principles espoused by his father; but over the course of his life he was exposed to the Broad Church, which emboldened him to develop, over time, his own personal interpretation of Christianity. By the end of his life he was practising and preaching a highly unorthodox form of Christianity that strongly emphasised the individual's conscience over his adherence to liturgy. I will conclude by suggesting that Carroll's engagement with religion clearly confirms the findings of the previous chapter: his systematic approach to the sac-

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<sup>1</sup> Charles W. Johnson, *Philosophy in Literature* (San Francisco: Mellen Research UP, 1992) 188.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Rackin, "Blessed Rage," *Lewis Carroll: a Celebration*, ed. Edward Guiliano (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1982) 16.



raments exhibits the preference for rules, and for applying his own logic in the face of convention, that we have already seen him display in relation to language and social behaviour.

### Religious sincerity

I demonstrated in the previous chapter that Carroll felt he could legitimately choose to disregard social conventions. This flexibility seems not to have extended to moral conventions: there is no record of Carroll ever taking a pragmatic decision to behave immorally in the way that he explicitly defied “Mrs Grundy.” This seems to indicate that, while he considered social intercourse merely a system of arbitrary rules enforced and refereed by his peers, morality for Carroll proceeded from a higher authority. This appears clear from a letter sent in 1894 to Dora Greet, co-author of the play *The Little Squire*, commenting on an issue arising from the drama: “I feel sure you will allow,” Carroll writes, “that if a thing is *wrong* in itself . . . it matters not whether some advantage would be gained by doing it” (*Letters* 2:1018).

The sincerity with which Carroll respected the moral obligation not to do wrong shines through his private writings, in humble prayers and matter-of-fact statements of religious intent that occur frequently, and with no special fanfare: they appear an everyday part of Carroll’s life. On 2nd October 1864, to take an example at random, he wrote in his diary:

Communion Sunday. May God grant that I in sincerity “repent of my sins, and intend to lead a new life.” For Jesus Christ’s sake.

I have omitted all account of my visit to Whitburn. I went on the 19th of September, and was housed by William and Fanny at their little house. (*Diaries* 5:12)

He had a horror of irreverent behaviour, and in his writing religious matters are kept strictly separate from nonsense: Martin Gardner relates the story of how the Tiger-Lily in *Through the Looking Glass* was originally a Passion-Flower, until the author realised that this flower’s name was a reference to the Passion of Christ (*Annotated Alice* 166) and insisted on changing it. Later, in *Sylvie & Bruno*, he would permit himself to touch on religious issues, but justified himself at length in his preface, and described the work’s religious content as “I would fain hope, not wholly out of harmony with the graver cadences of life” (Carroll 257). It is clear that religion is, for Carroll, one of the



“graver cadences”, and his use of the archaic “fain” marks a subtle switch in register which seems intended to convey gravitas. The only other published instances of Carroll using the word “fain” are also religious: they are to be found in *Three Sunsets and Other Poems*<sup>3</sup> (his collection of serious verse), and in the introduction to *Pillow Problems*, in which he refers to “the fancy that would fain be pure”<sup>4</sup> — a reference to which I shall return in Chapter 6. *Pillow Problems* postdates *Sylvie & Bruno*, and although many of the poems in *Three Sunsets* collection date from the 1860s, the collection was not published until 1898, the year of his death.<sup>5</sup> It appears that Carroll’s willingness to publicly engage with such sombre religious issues emerged only late in his life. Indeed, our richest resources on Carroll’s religion are the prefaces to *Sylvie & Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie & Bruno Concluded* (1893), in which the author directly expounds some of his religious views, and which provide much of the material upon which this chapter rests.

Alongside this gradual increase in willingness to publish religious sentiments, Carroll also became increasingly vocal on religious matters in his personal life. After around 1880 evidence begins to emerge of his adopting a conspicuous intolerance for irreverence in others: Ethel Arnold would recall that

his sense of humour . . . failed absolutely when any allusion to the Bible, however innocuous, was involved. . . . I shall never forget the snub administered to one unfortunate acquaintance . . . who ventured to tell him . . . [a story] which, in his opinion, treated religious matters with levity.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The word is found in “After Three Days”, a serious religious poem “written [in 1861] after seeing Holman Hunt’s picture, ‘The Finding of Christ in the Temple’” (Carroll 874); “Beatrice”, a solemn and consciously archaic ode, employing the imagery of angels, written in 1862 to “a sainted, ethereal maid” who is five years old (presumably not Alice Liddell, who was born in 1852) (Carroll 863); and “The Valley of the Shadow of Death”, an 1868 poem in which the narrator finds solace from existential dread through religious faith (Carroll 856). The word also appears in *Phantasmagoria*, in the comic poem “The Lang Coortin”, but this work is written in cod-Scots, and the word is used by “a ladye fair” rather than by the narrator (Carroll 800).

<sup>4</sup> Charles Dodgson [i.e. Lewis Carroll], *Curiosa Mathematica Part II: Pillow Problems Thought Out During Wakeful Hours* (London: Macmillan, 1895) xv.

<sup>5</sup> After this thesis was submitted, I discovered that this is an inadvertently misleading claim. The poems to which I refer were indeed published in *Three Sunsets*, but they had also previously appeared in *Phantasmagoria* in 1869. My erroneous implication was based on an edition of the *Complete Works of Lewis Carroll* (see chapter 1, footnote 12 for bibliographic details) which silently omits the re-published poems from this earlier collection, presumably so as to avoid duplication. In the light of this discovery, my argument must be slightly revised: clearly the younger Carroll did not keep his religious-inspired verse so private as I suggest here and later in the main text. Nevertheless, his decision to reissue these poems at the end of his life is suggestive of a persistent, or perhaps resurgent, religious concern which is consistent with my overall theme.

<sup>6</sup> Ethel M. Arnold, “Reminiscences of Lewis Carroll”, *Atlantic Monthly* 143 (June 1929) 782-6; *Interviews & Recollections* 164.



On 1st July 1889 he wrote to the Duchess of Albany, following a dinner party he had attended, musing on

the desirability of remembering, or forgetting, a remark made by one of your children, on a scene in the life of Our Lord – a remark which . . . gave a humorous turn to the passage. . . . Is it not a cruelty (however unintentionally done) to tell any one an amusing story of that sort, which will be for ever linked, in his or her memory, with the Bible words. . . ? (*Letters* 2: 748)

As with the “graver cadences” of *Three Sunsets*, however, the fact that Carroll did not publicly express this censoriousness until his later years does not mean he did not feel it in earlier years. On 21st June 1862, aged 30, he visited an exhibition of paintings at the Royal Academy and noted in his diary that

Outside the exhibition is a place where the Bible Society are giving away portions of the Bible in various languages, and next it a building for preaching and praying, with the profane name of “Gospel Hall.” (*Diaries* 4:85)

Earlier still, in 1855, he noted that he had

Received from Frank Smedly the second number of *Comic Times*. Some things in it are very good . . . . I wrote, remonstrating on the use of Bible phrases in several articles of the first number. (*Diaries* 1:122-3)

There is perhaps an element of the “performances” of the previous chapter in Carroll’s conspicuous insistences on piety; but there is no reason to suppose the sentiment was anything but genuine. As early as 14th May 1855, aged just 23, he records in his diary that “I finished reading *Shadows of the Clouds*, by Froude (which I have lately had bound, after cutting out the objectionable parts of the book)” (*Diaries* 1:97). Carroll does not expand on which parts he felt objectionable, or why, but Morton Cohen describes *Shadows of the Clouds* as

an autobiographical novel in which the hero endures, like his model in Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus*, a spiritual crisis that causes him to question the validity of his orthodox upbringing. [Carroll] could not even then brook such outright and forthright challenges to what he considered divine precepts. (Cohen 374-5)

This seems a reasonable surmise (though a surmise is all it is).<sup>7</sup> It may seem odd that Carroll would wish to censor the book and yet value what remained to the extent of having it bound; but there is perhaps a sense of his wanting to “fix” the literature, the binding process effectively making his edits permanent.<sup>8</sup> This motive would be made explicit 34 years later when, in the preface to *Sylvie and Bruno*, Carroll would express a wish to create an edition of Shakespeare that was suitable for girls. “Neither Bowdler’s, Chambers’s, Bandram’s nor Cundell’s ‘Boudoir’ Shakespeare seems to me to meet the want,” he wrote: “they are not sufficiently ‘expurgated.’” He felt that Bowdler in particular had allowed all manner of unacceptable material to remain: “looking through it,” he wrote, “I am filled with a deep sense of wonder that he should have cut *anything* out!” (Carroll 260)

In all, Carroll’s relationship with religion appears to have been sincere, but his views bordered on the sanctimonious. His words suggest a certainty that he knew better than his peers how to be Christian.

### Religious certainty

The original source of Carroll’s certainty is probably not hard to deduce. We have already seen his aptitude at logical induction in fields far from mathematics. Given a set of religious precepts, he would surely have had no problem arriving at the “correct principle” of behaviour; and such precepts he certainly received, from his father, Charles Dodgson Senior.

Dodgson Senior was a holy man of some standing. By the end of his life he would be Archdeacon of Richmond. At the time of Carroll’s birth he was Rector of Croft, and in 1837 (when Carroll was five years old) he additionally took on the office of Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Ripon, becoming closely involved in the preparation and examination of aspiring candidates for ordination into the Church of England. In 1843 he became Canon of Ripon Cathedral. His religious views, therefore, carried a certain

<sup>7</sup> It seems Carroll could not even bring himself to properly read *Sartor Resartus*: on 25th September 1885 he wrote to Edith Rix apologising that “I have read very little of *Sartor Resartus*, and I don’t know the passage you quote.” (*Letters* 1:604)

<sup>8</sup> The catalogue of Carroll’s library includes an 1847 edition of *Shadows of the Clouds* bound in half calf duodecimo. (Stern 23) This is almost certainly Carroll’s expurgated edition, though the auction house naturally did not realise it, and the eventual buyer was doubtless surprised to discover the book unique in more ways than expected.



authority, and if he did not deliberately stamp this authority on his son, it nevertheless took hold. As I observed in Chapter 2, Carroll had a strong preference for regulated models of behaviour, and the particular strength of the parental example is well-recognised in psychology: in the words of one modern textbook,

it is from our parents . . . that we receive and swallow most of the axioms we will continue to use in order to make meaning of life, relationships and ourselves.<sup>9</sup>

Thus it is no surprise to read Collingwood's conclusion that, to the young Carroll, Archdeacon Dodgson was "the ideal of what a Christian gentleman should be" (Collingwood 131). What was this gentleman like? "His reverence for sacred things was so great," Collingwood adds, "that he was never known to relate a story which included a jest upon words from the Bible."<sup>10</sup> Derek Hudson observes that, as we have seen above, "the same might be said, word for word, of Lewis Carroll as he developed" (Hudson 23).

Dodgson Senior's reverence for sacred things reflected a solemn respect for Church authority and tradition. In his 1850 book *The Controversy of Faith*, which discusses the then-current debate over the role and practice of baptism, he observes that

we learn in our childhood to believe implicitly the deductions from Scripture, before we are even capable of "searching the Scriptures whether these things are so." Such is the will of God: and it is only one among many evidences that the principle of authority and of tradition is an essential part of His plan for instructing mankind in religious truth.<sup>11</sup>

His orthodoxy went further than that of many of his colleagues: he was a friend of Dr. Pusey, one of the prime drivers of the Oxford (or Tractarian) Movement, and shared the Tractarian belief in the primacy of traditional texts and sacraments. "The precious deposit of Catholic Truth," he wrote, "has been committed not to our will as lords, but to our trust as stewards" (Dodgson Senior, *Controversy* 16). As Wakeling notes, in 1842 Dodgson Senior had even adopted the *modus operandi* of the Tractarians in publishing his own tract — a translation of Tertullian (*Diaries* 4:10), whose "testimony to facts and

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<sup>9</sup> Charlotte Sills, Sue Fish & Phil Lapworth, *Gestalt Counselling* (Bicester: Winslow P, 1995) 60.

<sup>10</sup> Collingwood, 8. This comment is presented as a direct observation, but, since Dodgson Senior died in 1868, and Collingwood was born in 1870, that seems unlikely.

<sup>11</sup> Charles Dodgson Senior, *The Controversy of Faith* (London: John Murray, 1850) 21

doctrines,” as he wrote in his preface, “to the rites of the Church, is, of course, always of the highest value.”<sup>12</sup>

Not all of Dodgson Senior’s contemporaries shared the Tractarian regard for “Catholic Truth.” In Leicester in 1853, a Priest named Charles Lee gave an anti-Tractarian sermon in which he aggressively told the tale of

a personal friend of my own, who would have been accepted as orthodox by the Archbishop of York, or even by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Primate of all England, rejected from the Diocese of Ripon, because he did not believe that “every baptised infant is in and by baptism regenerate.” Surely I need not quote further to prove that the Romish dogma of the “*opus operatum*,” or to speak in plain English, the mere performance of the act of Baptism, conveys that grace [is here in operation] . . . .<sup>13</sup>

At the time, Dodgson Senior was the Canon of Ripon, and one cannot but wonder whether he had had any hand in enforcing this strict interpretation of the Bible text. It is easy to imagine: the previous year he had given a sermon in Leeds entitled *Ritual Worship* which had led to his being accused by William Goode, the Dean of Ripon, of the heresy of “publishing and preaching false doctrines”:

Dodgson’s longtime friend Bishop Longley persuaded Goode to withdraw the charge. Dodgson nevertheless insisted on defending his position, and later that year published *A Letter to the Lord Bishop of Ripon*, iterating the stout conservative position on baptism, absolution and Holy Communion. . . . (Cohen 346-7)

The letter rejects entirely any imputation of “Romish error” and “Popish Heresy,”<sup>14</sup> but defends nevertheless an emphasis on sacrament: “for what is looking to Sacraments but Faith in Him who ordained them?” He describes the language of the scripture as “to be regarded not as metaphorically explaining an explicable truth, but as simply denoting ‘a great mystery,’ incomprehensible and inexplicable. . . . [I] hold most strongly that the language both of the Scripture and of the Church is to be regarded as purely *mysterious*, not as metaphorical” (Dodgson Senior, *Letter* 14, 16-17). The same uncompromis-

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<sup>12</sup> Charles Dodgson Senior, *Tertullian Vol 1: Apologetic and Practical Treatises* (Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1842) xv.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Lee, *Tractarian Teaching Contrasted With The Doctrine of the Church on Baptism* (Leicester: T. Chapman Browne, 1853) 9.

<sup>14</sup> Charles Dodgson Senior, *A Letter to the Lord Bishop of Ripon* (Leeds: T. Harrison, 1852) 9-10.



ing steadfastness underpins *The Controversy of Faith*, which Dodgson Senior concludes with the insistence that

If any one shall declare himself offended by what I have said, because it contradicts his own deliberate views and long cherished convictions, I can only reply that my views also on this subject have been deliberately formed, and continually strengthened by much study and long and deep reflection; and that, until I shall see stronger reasons advanced against them than I have hitherto seen, I have nothing to retract, to alter, or to qualify. (Dodgson Senior, *Controversy* 101)

The example handed down to Carroll is clear: Dodgson Senior expounded and stridently defended a model of religion in which the Christian tradition was authoritative and absolute — and the subsequent behaviour of his son reflects these principles. Carroll's uncompromising insistence on his beliefs has been demonstrated above, and there are many more examples of his imposing his views on irreverence on others by rebuking friends, walking out of theatres and, in the case of "Jabberwock" — an American children's periodical to which he had lent his support — entirely ending his relationship with the magazine, causing it to close.<sup>15</sup>

Dodgson Senior's special regard for the language of the scriptures seems to have impacted on his son as well. Carroll's letter to the Duchess of Albany, above, suggests the existence of special "Bible words," which he feels should not be cheapened by association with jocularity. More generally, it seems to have prompted Carroll to take a thoughtfully literal approach to the scriptures. His refusal to countenance jokes on religious topics, for example, he explains neatly in the preface to *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, where he writes:

There is, I fear, at the present time, an increasing tendency to irreverent treatment of the name of God and of subjects connected with religion. . . . and surely every one, who desires to live in the spirit of the prayer "Hallowed be Thy Name" ought to do what he can, however little that may be, to check it. (Carroll 471-2)

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<sup>15</sup> The offending article was a limerick that ran: "There was an old deacon of Lynn, | Who confessed he was given to sin, | When they said 'Yes, you are!' | Oh, how he did swear! | That angry old deacon of Lynn." Carroll wrote, in his letter ending his association with the magazine, that he was "deeply disappointed that the young editors could allow anything in their columns which made light of so solemn a subject as the confession of sin." (*Letters* 2:705-6)

Carroll's precise identification that the verse of prayer refers to the *name* of God (rather than to His essence or nature) confirms that he, like his father, is reading the scripture not as metaphor but as an accurate expression of a mysterious topic.

I conclude that Carroll acquired his axioms of religion from his father, and held to them thereafter with a tenacity born of logical imperative. In 1885, long after his father's death, Carroll would write to Mrs Rix (mother of his child-friends Edith and Charlotte) that "My dear father was a 'High Church' man . . . and I have seen little cause to modify the views I learnt from him" (*Letters* 1:586).

### Influences in Oxford

However, while Carroll identified his religion with that of his father, his views in fact became somewhat more liberal over the course of his life. This development is well known, and Morton Cohen suggests that it began at Rugby School, where "Archibald Tate, [Carroll]'s headmaster and housemaster, like Dr. Arnold before him, was a liberal churchman, opposed as strongly to his predecessor to shackling Christianity in rigid chains" (Cohen 347). A letter survives from the 16-year old Carroll to his sister Elizabeth in which Carroll mentions his reward for some academic achievement at Rugby:

Thank you for your letter: in reply to your question, I *do* get a prize, value one guinea. I have chosen for it Butler's *Analogy* in 2 vols. which exactly comes up to the value. (*Letters* 1:6)

Bishop Joseph Butler's 1736 tract *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* was hardly a heterodox choice: it was a well-known work of philosophy, a defence of established, "revealed" religion against deistic rationalism, that by 1867 had "long been a text-book both at Oxford and Cambridge."<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, it was also noteworthy for its rational, questioning approach, and indeed was so undogmatic that it was referred to favourably and at length by John Tyndall in his 1874 presidential address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science.<sup>17</sup> Carroll's choice of it as a prize suggests that even at sixteen he was curious about reli-

<sup>16</sup> Richard John King, *Handbook to the Cathedrals of England: Western Division* (Oxford: Johnm Murray, 1867)

<sup>17</sup> *Victorian Science*, ed. George Basalla, William Coleman & Robert H. Kargon (New York: Anchor, 1970) 449-456. This work reprints presidential addresses to the British Association from throughout the eighteenth century, and will be revisited in Chapter 4.



gion, and in particular wished to see it defended logically. We can easily imagine Carroll nodding his head along to Butler's assertion that

All reasonable men know certainly, that there cannot, in reality, be any such thing as *chance*; and conclude, that the things which have this appearance are the result of *general laws*, and may be reduced into them. . . . This much is manifest, that the whole natural world and government of it is a scheme or system.<sup>18</sup>

At Oxford, Carroll's curiosity grew into an identifiable drift towards liberalism. Derek Hudson ascribes this to the "liberal spirit of reform encouraged by the appointment of the first University Commission in 1850"<sup>19</sup> (Hudson 62). Such a movement was certainly abroad in the country: a multiplicity of pamphlets and sermons were appearing denouncing the Oxford Movement's insistence on sacramental form as moving in the wrong direction. A pamphlet issued in 1855, for example, argued that

Tractarianism, without controversy . . . is Popery disguised. In its celebration of divine worship, the external is everything, and the spiritual profit of the worshippers is lost sight of and forgotten. Into whatever parish this monster evil is intruded (and in whatever form it may develop itself), division and discord are sure to be the result. . . . [But] the truths of the Gospel are expansive truths; they enlarge the souls of men and make them more liberal. They lead one Christian man to love his fellow-Christian — to seek his spiritual welfare, and not to throw stumbling-blocks in his way, and thereby occasion the enemy to blaspheme.<sup>20</sup>

That pamphlet was anonymous, but others were proud to put their good names to repudiations of Tractarianism; for example, T.B. Macaulay, MP for Edinburgh, issued a pamphlet on "Puseyism," in which he roundly dismissed the idea:

Whether we consider the palpable absurdity of this doctrine, its utter destitution of historic evidence, or the outrage it implies on all Christian charity, it is equally revolting. The arguments against it are infinite, the evidence for it absolutely nothing. It rests not upon one doubtful assumption but upon fifty; and when these are compounded together, according to Whately's re-

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Butler, *The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature* (London: J.C. Bishop: 1851) 168-70.

<sup>19</sup> The University Commission recommended the reforms later enacted in the Oxford University Act 1854 (17 and 18 Vic c81); however, these were reforms of the University's organisation, and had no religious import. See e.g. <http://www.oua.ox.ac.uk/enquiries/congandconvthree.html> as at 2/8/05.

<sup>20</sup> n.n. *Tractarian Novelties: We Will Not Have Them In Our Parish* (London: Seeley, Jackson and Halliday, 1855) 3, 9.



ceipt for gauging the force of arguments, it defies the power of any calculus invented by man, to determine the ratio of improbability.<sup>21</sup>

Dodgson Senior, in his 1852 letter, refers to his sermon having been the subject of “popular catch-words in the No-Popery vocabulary of the day,” making clear the popular opposition to the Romeward leanings of the Tractarians (Dodgson Senior, *Letter 8*).

Yet while the Oxford Movement clearly did not advance unchallenged, Hudson does not identify any avenue by which an opposing spirit of reform might have had a religious impact on Carroll; and Wakeling concludes that in fact the Tractarian movement was “gaining momentum” during Carroll’s early years at Oxford, as “clergymen were developing and adopting theological ideas based on the early Christian Fathers, medieval philosophers and High Church principles” (*Diaries* 4:10). By 1867, William Bennett, Vicar of Froome-Selwood, could declare in his retrospective essay “Some Results of the Tractarian Movement of 1833” that “we never, or very rarely, now hear of true Catholics forsaking the English church, simply because now the ancient Catholic doctrines and the ancient Catholic usages have prevailed.”<sup>22</sup> Later, in 1882, when Edward Pusey died, John Tyrwhitt, one of Carroll’s Christ Church contemporaries, gave a memorial sermon which praised Pusey’s influence in defending “the Sacramental rites and teaching, so fully renewed and reinforced of late years . . . . but I think that I myself can remember, or bear some kind of witness, that forty or fifty years ago these thoughts were little regarded by the people, and imperfectly insisted upon by clergy in the pulpit.”<sup>23</sup> In Norwich, another speaker, George Barrett, announced that

that religious movement . . . beginning at Oxford more than fifty years ago has been the principal cause of the Ritualistic revival in the Anglican Church which has been the most remarkable ecclesiastical feature of this century. . . . There is no need to spend much time in proving that an enormous change has passed over the English Church during the last fifty years.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> T.B. Macaulay, *Puseyism, or The Oxford Tractarian School* (Edinburgh: D.L. Welch, n.d.) 10. Though no date is given, the pamphlet cites nine works narrowly dated between 1840 and 1843, suggesting a date of publication little later than the last.

<sup>22</sup> William Bennet, “Some Results of the Tractarian Movement of 1833”, *The Church and the World* ed. Orbey Shipley (London: Longmans, 1867) 25

<sup>23</sup> John Tyrwhitt, *Other Men’s Labour: A Sermon on the Death of the Rev. E.B. Pusey, D.D.* (Oxford: Parker, 1882) 7.

<sup>24</sup> George Barrett, *The Influence of the Late Dr. Pusey* (Norwich: Jarrold, 1882) 3.



Later, in 1893, Carroll himself would write, in the preface to *Sylvie & Bruno Concluded*, that the "Ritual" movement, a progression of the Oxford Movement, "has effected a vast improvement in our Church-Services, which had become dead and dry to the last degree" (Carroll 469). Wakeling's appraisal thus seems accurately to reflect the growth and firm establishment of Tractarian principles, at least in and around Oxford during Carroll's time there.

Carroll's surroundings seem therefore to have reflected his father's orthodoxy rather than any spirit of liberalisation. Naturally Carroll was already on good terms with many senior churchmen thanks to his upbringing, and when away from Oxford he regularly mentions meetings with Charles Longley, Bishop of Ripon (1836-56), then Durham (1856-60), then Archbishop of York (1860-62) and Archbishop of Canterbury (1862-68).<sup>25</sup> He doubtless encountered many other holy men at home, for his family regularly found itself living on the doorstep of Ripon Cathedral:

[Carroll's] father became Canon of Ripon Cathedral soon after the family moved to the rectory at Croft-on-Tees in 1843. He was obliged to spend the first three months of the year in residence at Ripon, and the family occupied a large house close to the Cathedral during this time. (*Diaries* 1:50)

At Oxford Carroll's exposure to prominent churchmen continued: for Whitsun in 1856 he heard the Bishop of Lincoln preach at St. Mary's (*Diaries* 2:69). In March 1857 he "heard a grand sermon from the Bishop of Oxford on 'Final Impenitence,' taking the history of Saul as a basis" (*Diaries* 3:37). In May 1863 he "dined at the Deanery, to meet the Bishop of Bangor, with Mrs and Miss Campbell, who seem to be very pleasant people" (*Diaries* 4:198). As he later wrote to his godson W.M. Wilcox, he sought the personal advice of the Bishop of Oxford as to whether he should take holy orders (*Letters* 1:602). He even records that he once "called on the Archbishop of York, to ask him to sit for a photograph" — but sadly the Archbishop was out (*Diaries* 4:316).<sup>26</sup>

He had learnt a respect for holy offices such that even in his personal diary, he would use a Bishop's title instead of his name, resulting in constructions such as "the Bishop of Bangor, with Mrs and Miss Campbell" as above. Even with Charles Longley, well-known to the family, he would write entries such as "Breakfasted with Longley, to

<sup>25</sup> These dates are given by Wakeling at *Diaries* 1:93.

<sup>26</sup> This was in 1864, after Longley's tenure; the successor upon whom Carroll called was probably known to him but not as a family friend like Longley.



meet the Bishop, Mrs., Miss, and George Longley" (*Diaries* 1:93), or "The Bishop called in the afternoon, with Fanny Longley, Caroline and Rosamond" (*Diaries* 2:10). Indeed, Cohen notes that on one occasion – in a diary entry for 20 January 1865 – even Carroll's own father became "the Archdeacon" (Cohen 328).

Academically too, Carroll would probably have been schooled in established orthodoxy. As an undergraduate he mentions the theology books he is reading over the Easter Vacation 1855: they are "Burton's *History of the [Christian] Church and Scripture History*" (*Diaries* 1:84). He probably received occasional reinforcement from his father too, mentioning in 1856 that he "Received from my father a copy of his *Sermons on the Christian Sabbath*" (*Diaries* 2:74). I have not been able to locate this volume, but it presumably contained "The Sabbath a Delight," a sermon in which Dodgson Senior argues that Christians should count themselves lucky to keep Sundays holy, promising that they might "derive much more real pleasure from the strictly religious occupations of the Sabbath, than they would from any others for which they could exchange them."<sup>27</sup> It is a characteristically proscriptive tract, reproving those who consider worship a burden and disdaining "those, who, professing themselves Christians, and members of our Church, would maintain that a mere attendance, perhaps a single attendance, on public worship, is a sufficient observance" (Dodgson Senior, "Sabbath" 241).

Nor does Oxford seem to have offered any liberal influence in Carroll's personal life. One of his best friends at Christ Church (and one of only four life-long friends at Oxford)<sup>28</sup> was Henry Parry Liddon,<sup>29</sup> who went on to be Canon and Chancellor of St. Paul's Cathedral and is credited with furthering the Oxford Movement after its inception by Keble and Pusey. Half a century later, Liddon would be identified as having been "a leader in the new spring of the Oxford Movement. . . . Oxford heard him again and again with admiration and growing affection."<sup>30</sup> Karoline Leach characterises Liddon as a "prodigy of piety considered a near-saint by his fellow Anglo-Catholics" (Leach 139). Liddon's religion appears to have been as earnestly literal as Dodgson Senior's: in

<sup>27</sup> Charles Dodgson Senior, "The Sabbath a Delight", in *Sermons of XXXIX Living Divines of the Church of England* (London: Rivington, 1840) 235.

<sup>28</sup> Wakeling writes that "among his Oxford contemporaries, only [Thomas] Vere Bayne, Henry Liddon, [E.F.] Sampson and [Henry] Barclay were life-long friends." (*Diaries* 1:43)

<sup>29</sup> It was Liddon with whom Carroll spent two months in the summer of 1867 travelling across Europe to Moscow and back.

<sup>30</sup> Augustus B. Donaldson, *Five Great Oxford Leaders: Keble, Newman, Pusey, Liddon and Church* (London: Rivingtons, 1900) 238, 243.



a sermon he gave in London in 1862, Liddon announced that St. John's "first epistle is our Chart or Handbook of the Life of God in the human soul," and praised the apostle's "calm yet firm grasp of revealed dogma." He described human life as "renewed by our Lord's blessing *and doctrine*" (emphasis added).<sup>31</sup>

As well as Carroll's exposure to Liddon, the aforementioned Pusey was one of the Canons of Christ Church — indeed, it was Pusey, the very eponym of Macaulay's ridiculed Puseyism, who nominated Carroll for his Studentship (*Letters* 1:602). The Regius Professor of Divinity at the College was William Jacobson, whose lectures Carroll attended (*Diaries* 2:44) and who went on to become Bishop of Chester.

### Uncertain engagement

Yet, whilst it seems the younger Carroll did nothing to rock the orthodox boat, Wakeling notes that "there is a sense of 'duty' rather than 'eagerness'" in his religious involvement in Oxford (*Diaries* 4:78). He mused over taking on an active church role, but without much apparent enthusiasm: he wrote in June 1862 that "I think of getting some Sunday duty in Oxford next term" (*Diaries* 4:78), but in November he was still musing:

For some while I have been thinking about getting Sunday-duty, but cannot decide on which church to offer my help to. (*Diaries* 4:141)

He had opportunities to participate in the religious life of his college: "read second lesson in Chapel both morning and afternoon," he records on 19th April 1857 (*Diaries* 3:49). However, his diary entry for 8th February 1857 indicates that he had not previously been taking full advantage of these opportunities — for when he took Alice Liddell's brother Harry to Chapel, his reading was clearly a great novelty to the boy:

Went to chapel in surplice for the first time since the 14th of October, 1855. I read the second lesson in the afternoon. Harry [Liddell] ran up to me afterwards to tell me "you've got your white gown on, and you read in the church!" (*Diaries* 3:23)

The precision of the date in 1855, which Carroll recalls at nearly 16 months' remove, suggests that it might be significant, but Carroll's journals from that period are missing, "presumed lost or destroyed" (*Diaries* 2:3). We might speculate that the relevant volume conveniently went missing after his death to conceal a controversial development on

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<sup>31</sup> Henry Parry Liddon, *Active Love a Criterion of Spiritual Life* (London: Spottiswoode, 1862) 3-6.

that day; but all we can say with confidence is that Carroll was well aware of precisely how long it had been since he had last read at Chapel.

His decision to resume readings need not imply a resurgence of enthusiasm for the institution: Carroll writes in his letter to W.M. Wilcox that Dr. Pusey had expressed a desire to nominate him for a Studentship, but had “made a rule to nominate *only* those who were going to take holy orders” (*Letters* 1:602). Whether inspired by genuine devoutness or by a pragmatic desire to claim the Studentship, Carroll gave his assurance that he would. He does not give a date for this meeting, but his intention to be ordained is made explicit in a diary entry dated 2nd February 1857, six days before the above-mentioned episode. It is hard to escape the suspicion that this commitment, rather than any internal change, lay behind his return to Chapel.

Carroll’s commitment, however, was not confident. On 2nd February 1857 he expressed it in his diaries in the context of an argument with his brother Wilfred, in which Carroll felt he had failed to persuade Wilfred of his obligation to observe College statutes.

This . . . suggests to me grave doubts as to the work of the ministry which I am looking forward to, if I find it so hard to prove a plain duty to one individual, and that one unpractised in argument, how can I ever be ready to face the countless sophisms and ingenious arguments against religion which a clergyman must meet with! (*Diaries* 3:18)

By the end of the year, he seemed if anything even less convinced. In his New Year’s Resolutions he wrote:

What do I propose as the work of the New Year? (1) Reading for Ordination at the end of the year, and settling the subject finally and definitely in my mind. (*Diaries* 3:142)

If Carroll’s mind was unsettled, we might expect him to have sought the advice of his father. Dodgson Senior had explicitly written in *The Controversy of Faith* (subtitled *Advice to Candidates for Holy Orders*) that his position as Examining Chaplain had

afforded me much opportunity of becoming acquainted with the various doubts and perplexities to which young men of thoughtful minds are liable. . . . On such occasions I have frequently been able, by correcting some mistake as to facts, by removing some misapprehension, by offering some suggestion, or by setting before them some argument . . . to give to a younger brother a clearer view and a steadier hold of some important point in the system of Ministerial Teaching. (Dodgson Senior, *Controversy* 6)



Yet there is no evidence that Carroll sought his father's advice once in the three years that passed between his determining to "settle the subject" and his finally submitting himself for ordination. Perhaps he was ashamed to admit to his father that he did not share his unshakeable theological certainty, or perhaps he simply did not believe his father could help.

For whatever reason, Carroll eventually decided to proceed only so far as Deacon's orders, on the advice of his friend Liddon that a Deacon could still consider himself "practically a layman" (*Letters* 1:602). In October 1862 he resisted Dean Liddell's suggestion that he was obliged to take Priest's orders, and succeeded in having the matter dropped, "so that I consider myself free as to being ordained Priest" (*Diaries* 4:138). The phrasing suggests that Carroll liked to think that it was now up to him whether or not he should be ordained Priest, but there can be little doubt that in reality he had no intention of doing so.

### Discovering the Broad Church

Carroll's own College Chapel seemed to hold little attraction for Carroll, but once ordained he began to undertake services elsewhere. At first he did not relish this: in July 1862 he laments that

I have been at work at examination papers most of this week, and have put off going to Streatley, where I was to have preached next Sunday. I have also been asked by Hackman and by Chamberlain to preach for them: till I can rule myself better, preaching is but a solemn mockery. (*Diaries* 4:107)

The closing comment is highly suggestive — perhaps Carroll's doubts had not subsided, as he clearly did not consider himself worthy to give services. However, before long he got into the swing of his role. He took his first funeral at Croft in October 1862 (*Diaries* 4:128); performed his first baptism at the Iron Church in Cowley in February 1863 (*Diaries* 4:163); gave a service and baptism in Darlington in August 1863 (*Diaries* 4:231); preached in Croft Church the following week (*Diaries* 4:231); etc. etc.

One particular clerical incident stands out: during a trip to London in February 1863, Carroll writes that he

went to Mr Maurice's Church (Vere Street). There was Communion, and as there seemed to be no one to help him, I sent him my card and

offered to help. This lucky accident led to my making his acquaintance.  
(*Diaries* 4:160)

“Mr. Maurice” was Frederick Denison Maurice. Carroll had long admired Maurice’s preaching: eight months earlier he had recorded “Morning and afternoon at Vere Street. Mr. Maurice preached both times: I like his sermons very much” (*Diaries* 4:105). Despite Carroll’s not living in London, it seems to have been Maurice’s sermons, rather than the Oxford Movement, that inspired in him a sense of enthusiasm towards his religious obligations. Though he had seemed increasingly happy to take services, this is the first record of his actively seeking one, and the impulsiveness with which he does so contrasts starkly with his dithering over Sunday duty in Oxford. He seems to have started attending Maurice’s sermons regularly, writing on 24th June 1866 that he went to “Maurice’s church as usual” (*Diaries* 5:157).

Yet Maurice’s church was not usual. Maurice was part of the Broad Church — a diverse “movement” almost diametrically opposed to the tradition in which Carroll had been raised. In the words of modern historian M.A. Crowther, the Broad Church was defined by the belief that “the authority of the Bible and the church might be subjected to historical and scientific criticism” and that “certain parts of the Scriptures were not useful as a moral guide, but that the spirit of Christianity . . . was strong enough to withstand any such criticism.”<sup>32</sup>

This philosophy squared perfectly with Carroll’s critical, inquisitive character. Indeed, Carroll had already demonstrated a broad approach to religion. In 1856 he had been to hear the Italian Protestant Alessandro Gavazzi give a talk on Tractarianism in the Town Hall, where, he noted regretfully, “very little could be heard, as the undergraduates present hooted and hissed a great part of the time” (*Diaries* 2:63). In 1857 he records an earnest discussion with a colleague on whether it was proper for a Lay preacher to preach on a Sunday during church services (*Diaries* 3:46). He declares that “there is a point on the subject on which I am still in doubt” — by which he appears to mean that his own conclusion (that there is no objection), which he lays out logically in his diary, differs from the position of the church authorities. It is easy to see the attraction of Maurice’s thoughtful, undogmatic approach.

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<sup>32</sup> M.A. Crowther “Church Problems and Church Parties”, *Religion in Victorian Britain*, ed. Gerald Parsons (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1988) 4:18



Cohen notes also Carroll's interest as an undergraduate in Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*, a highly unorthodox tract that today we might perhaps call spiritualist: Carroll records reading it at least twice, in January 1855 (*Diaries* 1:56) and January 1858 (*Diaries* 3:147), each time professing an intention not just to read it but to create a written analysis of it.

But Carroll's living inspiration seems to have been Maurice, whose philosophy we hear echoed in the words of *Sylvie & Bruno's* Arthur: "the highest motive of all [is] the desire for likeness to, and union with, the Supreme Good. I think you will find that to be the teaching of the Bible, *as a whole*" (Carroll 396). In the Broad Church, Carroll found himself no longer circumscribed by dogma, but empowered to use his ingenuity and logic in the pursuit of holiness. Cohen cites works by Maurice which do not appear in the catalogue of Carroll's library (the only two that do are *Theological Essays* and *Social Morality*<sup>33</sup>) but which address topics which must have come up over the course of the two men's acquaintance, and demonstrate how Maurice espouses the undogmatic philosophy which Carroll would later come to adopt: in *The Kingdom of Christ* (1838), for example, Maurice argues that "truth does not belong to any one party but exists partly in what each sect believes, and . . . condemning the beliefs of others [is] reprehensible" (Cohen 354). In this tradition there was no need for the reticence which led Carroll to withhold the poems that would eventually appear in *Three Sunsets*,<sup>34</sup> and which perhaps dissuaded him from discussing his doubts with his father. We will remember from the previous chapter how, later in life, Carroll would write to Mrs Rix that

as life draws nearer to its end, I feel more and more clearly that it will not matter in the least, at the last day, what form of religion a man has professed — nay, that many who have never even *heard* of Christ, will in that day find themselves saved by His blood. (*Letters* 1:586)

"More and more," he wrote to an (unknown) invalid in October 1890, "I am becoming content to know that Christians have *many* ways of looking at their religion, and less confident that my views must be right and all the others wrong, and less anxious

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<sup>33</sup> F.D. Maurice, *Theological Essays* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1853); F.D. Maurice, *Social Morality* (London: Macmillan, 1869)

<sup>34</sup> As noted in Chapter 3, footnote 5, it is in fact inaccurate to suggest that Carroll *withheld* these poems; but I would observe that he was originally happy to publish them within in an otherwise whimsical collection, as if not wishing to make them too conspicuous.

to bring everybody to think as I do" (Cohen 363). His tolerance extended even beyond Christians: he wrote to the Lowrie children on 18th August 1884 that

one [hospital] manager wrote that he knew of a place where there were a number of sick children, but he was afraid I wouldn't like to give them any books — and why, do you think? "Because they are Jews!" I wrote to say of course I would give them some: why in the world shouldn't little Israelites read *Alice's Adventures* as well as other children! (Cohen 376)

Carroll's library also contained something entitled *Book of Mormons*, which of course might well be the Book of Mormon. He even makes a surprising reference in the preface to *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* to humans moving between their world and the Fairy-world "by actual transference of their immaterial essence, such as we meet with in 'Esoteric Buddhism'" (Carroll 464).<sup>35</sup>

The above-quoted letter to Mrs Rix is actually the self-same one in which he claimed that his views were little altered from those of his father — but he did admit that "perhaps I regard the holding of different views as a less important matter than he did" (Cohen 373-4). In fact, around six months later, in January 1886, Carroll admits to Mrs Rix's daughter that he is "an ultra broad churchman" (*Letters* 2:618) — though perhaps even this understates the case.

### A personal religion

I have argued that, as a child, Carroll had learnt a strident orthodoxy. However, by the time the adult Carroll came to pass on religion to other children, his was a very different message. He felt, as his father would have, that the Oxford Movement had led to "a vast improvement" in religious practice, but felt the High Church went too far. His views are made crystal clear in Chapter XIX of *Sylvie and Bruno*, when the party attends a small, rural church:

The service would have been pronounced by any modern aesthetic religionist — or religious aesthete, which is it? — to be crude and cold: to me, coming fresh from the ever-advancing developments of a London church under a soi-disant "Catholic" Rector, it was unspeakably refreshing. . . . "Yes," said

<sup>35</sup> Carroll's use of quotation marks suggests this is a reference to A.P. Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885).



Arthur, apparently in answer to my thoughts, “those ‘high’ services are fast becoming pure Formalism.” (Carroll 394-5)<sup>36</sup>

Where Dodgson Senior, in “The Sabbath a Delight”, had waxed imperious on the value of soberly observing the Sabbath, his son wrote in his 1890 “Easter Greeting to Every Child Who Loves ‘Alice’”, that

I do not believe God means us thus to divide life into two halves — to wear a grave face on Sunday, and to think it out-of-place to even so much as to mention Him on a week-day. Do you think He cares to see only kneeling figures and to hear only tones of prayer — and that He does not also love to see the lambs leaping in the sunlight, and to hear the merry voices of the children, as they roll among the hay? Surely their innocent laughter is as sweet in his ears as the grandest anthem that ever rolled up from the “dim religious light” of some solemn cathedral?<sup>37</sup>

Carroll had already made clear his views on a child’s introduction to religion in the preface to *Sylvie and Bruno*, in which he suggested a need for

a Child’s Bible. The only real essentials of this would be carefully selected passages, suitable for a child’s reading, and pictures. One principle of selection, which I would adopt, would be that Religion should be put before the child as a revelation of *love* — no need to pain and puzzle the young mind with the history of crime and punishment. (On such a principle I should, for example, omit the history of the Flood.) (Carroll 258)

Liddon’s 1862 sermon, cited above, had been entitled *Active Love a Criterion of Spiritual Life*; but it seems that, over time, Carroll came to consider active love the *sole* criterion of spiritual life. In all, as Morton Cohen concludes, “even though he aligned himself with his father, he rejected much of his father’s teaching” (Cohen 373).

I suggest that these changes were set in train by Carroll’s discovery of the Broad Church. As I suggested earlier, the conservative example of Carroll’s father would have carried great weight, and Carroll would doubtless have experienced a strong psychological imperative to maintain it. However, once he discovered a context that celebrated the application of personal intellect, he began to feel empowered to form and express his own opinions on religious matters. These opinions were, naturally, formed through the application of logic: on 28th June 1889 he wrote to Mary Brown, then 28, appar-

<sup>36</sup> Carroll protested in the preface to *Sylvie & Bruno Concluded* that “I do *not* hold myself responsible for *any* of the opinions expressed by the characters in my book”; but four pages later admits that, on this issue, “I am much in sympathy with Arthur.” (Carroll 461, 468)

<sup>37</sup> This letter, written in 1876, was inserted into various Carroll’s books (Cohen 403).



ently in response to a question she had raised about Hell. “The difficulties you mention are such as I have long felt,” he comments, before giving advice directly contradictory to the tenets of the Anglican Church. Carroll explains that he reconciles the difficulty by holding to the primacy of his belief that God is perfectly good, and that if the Bible seems to contradict this then it must be in error:

If any one says “it is certain that the Bible teaches that, when once a man is in Hell, no matter how much he repents, there he will stay for ever,” I reply “if I were certain the Bible taught that, I would give up the Bible.” But, as a matter of fact, that result is by no means necessary: it is quite enough to say “either that text is not genuine, or you have translated it wrong.” . . . You will perhaps think my beliefs strange and wild. But settle your belief on that principle: i.e. settle, when two things contradict, which you will hold to, and I think you will find peace and comfort in such belief. (*Letters* 2:746)

As Carroll must have been aware, in 1853 Maurice had been dismissed from the chair of divinity at King’s College London for taking precisely this approach to this question (Crowther 24), and Morton Cohen suggests that Carroll’s own doubts on the matter might have been a reason for his having avoided taking Priest’s orders (Cohen 367), since one of the Articles of Faith is a belief in Hell. Of this we cannot be certain, as this was a time when Carroll seemed less confident about openly expressing such unorthodox views; but the issue was certainly a regular concern of his: Collingwood refers to an (undated) sermon that Carroll preached in the University Church on “Eternal Punishment” which “is not likely to be soon forgotten by those who heard it” — though he goes on unhelpfully to admit that “I, unfortunately, was not of that number” (Collingwood 76). Later, in 1895, Carroll even wrote a tract entitled “Eternal Punishment” which set out “to treat some of the religious difficulties of the day from a logical point of view” (Cohen 481). By this time, Carroll had grown bold enough to openly reject the “mystery” of the scriptures in favour of a simple matter of love and logic for the individual.

Nor was Carroll’s position on damnation his only heresy: in the preface to *Sylvie and Bruno*, a little further on from the above-quoted passage, Carroll actually felt qualified to tell his readers the purpose of life, urging them to

realise what the true object is in life — that it is not pleasure, not knowledge, not even fame itself, “that last infirmity of noble minds” — but that it is the development of character, the rising up to a higher, nobler, purer standard, the building up of the perfect Man. (Carroll 263)



This proclamation goes beyond the Broad Church: it does not refer to religion at all!<sup>38</sup> Carroll's preference for the personal over the institutional is also seen in a letter to Mary Brown dated 26th December 1889, in which he counsels her:

Don't worry yourself with questions of abstract right and wrong. When you are puzzled, go and tell your puzzle to your Heavenly Father . . . and pray for guidance, and then do what seems best to you, and it will be accepted by Him." (Cohen 373)

The reference to "*your* Heavenly Father" is perhaps as revealing as the advice itself. Carroll has taken the Broad Church belief in the primacy of the Christian spirit over the details of worship and carried it further, seemingly accepting the equality not just of every denomination but of every individual's personal sense of religion. As if to make this utterly explicit, he addresses in the preface to *Sylvie and Bruno* the question of whether it is irreverent to attend a theatre. The Bishop of Oxford had declared that it was improper; but Carroll himself had carried on the practice throughout his life. He argues that

If the thought of sudden death acquires, for *you*, a special horror when imagined as happening *in a theatre*, then be very sure the theatre is harmful for *you*, however harmless it may be for others; and that *you* are incurring a deadly peril in going. (Carroll 262)

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate that, while Carroll was growing up, his father and the High Church encouraged a particular conception of religion; but from what we have seen of the adult Carroll's character it seems clear that unquestioning supplication did not well suit him. This is perhaps the reason for his evident unease about being ordained into the High Church tradition.

The Broad Church, however, allowed Carroll far greater freedom to apply his inquisitiveness and logic to religious issues. Once Maurice had emboldened Carroll to challenge the restrictive axioms he had acquired from his father, Carroll eagerly took control, moving from the "stout conservative" position of his father to his own

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<sup>38</sup> Carroll does go on to place this assertion in a religious context, declaring that, once this is accepted, death will seem "a beginning rather than an end"; but beyond this he gives no further explanation, religious or otherwise.

personal religious practice — a liberal theology which ultimately went beyond even that of his mentor.

Carroll's personal religion maintained the most fundamental tenets of Christianity; but his logical instinct was so deep-seated and powerful that over time he developed a conception of Christianity as a hierarchy of axioms. In a letter to Mary Brown he enumerated these, at least as he perceived them in 1889:

I believe, first and above all, that there is an absolute, self-existent, external distinction between Right and Wrong . . . . Secondly, I believe I am responsible to a Personal Being for what I do. Thirdly, I believe that Being to be perfectly good. And I call that perfectly good being "God." (*Letters* 2:746-7)

He adhered unswervingly to these principles, and demanded adherence from others; the second axiom was presumably the source of many secondary principles, such as that religious matters demand reverence, which we have seen that Carroll insisted upon. However, as in the social sphere, this philosophy also seems to have emboldened Carroll to disregard precepts he disagreed with, such as that of eternal punishment. Cohen's suggestion that Carroll lived "diligently" by Christian principles may seem uncontroversial so far as it goes: but the logical liberalism he adopted was a radical position, which reflected his intellectual instincts as much as his religious beliefs.



## Chapter 4

# Science

Over the past two chapters I have sought to establish the fundamental intellectual principles by which Carroll interacted with the world. I have demonstrated that his logical approach and his desire for regularity seemed to provide his framework for engaging with every issue in his life. I have then demonstrated that, despite his firm commitment to what he perceived as the fundamental tenets of Christianity, this instinctive desire for order exerted itself even here, leading him away from prescribed orthodoxy and towards a more personal, more systemic interpretation. Having established this, we are ready to move on to the pivotal issue of this thesis.

While Carroll was grappling with religious issues, eminent Victorians such as Thomas Henry Huxley and John Tyndall were driving what has been termed the “scientific movement.”<sup>1</sup> The movement promoted, with increasing success, a world view which applied logic to real-world situations in an attempt to determine general rules. Clearly, this would have been perfectly in tune with Carroll’s own instincts, and it is a natural presumption that the thoughtful, logical Carroll was a supporter of the movement.

The reality, however, is not so straightforward. In fact, it is surprisingly complex. In this chapter I will demonstrate that science in Victorian England was not (despite my phrase) a single movement, but a broad concept encompassing a wide range of pursuits and principles. I shall show that Carroll did enthusiastically engage with some branches of science, but that he kept his distance from the fields at its core, mocking their practitioners and speaking out against the movement’s growth. I will argue that this behaviour seems out of character, and in the next chapter I will go on to suggest that a

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<sup>1</sup> Over the coming chapters I will use this phrase as a shorthand reference to the progressive efforts of Victorian scientists and laypeople to advance the achievements and elevate the stature of science. It is worth being clear, however, that the movement was larger than any coherent organisation, and seems not to have identified itself in these terms. The phrase may originate from Edward Dowden’s 1877 essay “The Scientific Movement and Literature”: it is certainly from this source that Tess Cosslett borrows the phrase for her own 1982 work *The “Scientific Movement” and Victorian Literature* (Brighton: Harvester, 1982) 3; and it is via Cosslett that I have acquired this convenient term. Dowden’s essay may be found in Edward Dowden, *Studies in Literature* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1878) 44-121.

possible explanation for it lay in Carroll's sense that some types of science contradicted his religious beliefs.

### Carroll's exposure to science

Carroll's relationship with science is rarely closely examined, and this may be because there is very little primary evidence of it. Carroll's published writings contain almost no direct reference to scientific issues, and his unpublished writings are scarcely more informative: Morton Cohen's *Letters* runs to over a thousand pages but does not even have an index entry for "science." In stark contrast with mathematical or religious issues, on which he wrote, both publicly and privately, at some length, science appears, at first glance, not to have made any impact at all upon Carroll.

Nevertheless, Carroll was surely aware of the growing influence of science. He lived in academic society during what has been called

the high noon between 1800 and the 1870s, when Victorian 'stars' such as Davy, Huxley, Tyndall and Robert Ball used lecture demonstrations, didactic information, polemic and rhetoric to radiate an optimistic positivist message about science and its applications.<sup>2</sup>

The spread of this message would have been clearly detectable right on Carroll's doorstep: as recorded in one history of Oxford University,

From 1832 to 1860 the experimental philosophy and geology of the School of Natural History were given more spacious quarters next door to the Museum, in the Clarendon Building. . . . A key step was the establishment in 1850 of the Honour School of Natural Science, which – the 1850 commissioners noted – should be built around "a great Museum for all departments of Physical Science." The latter, the previously mentioned University Museum, was erected alongside the Parks and opened in 1860. It had facilities for the physical sciences of chemistry, experimental philosophy, mineralogy and geology, as well as a small observatory for the Professor of Astronomy.<sup>3</sup>

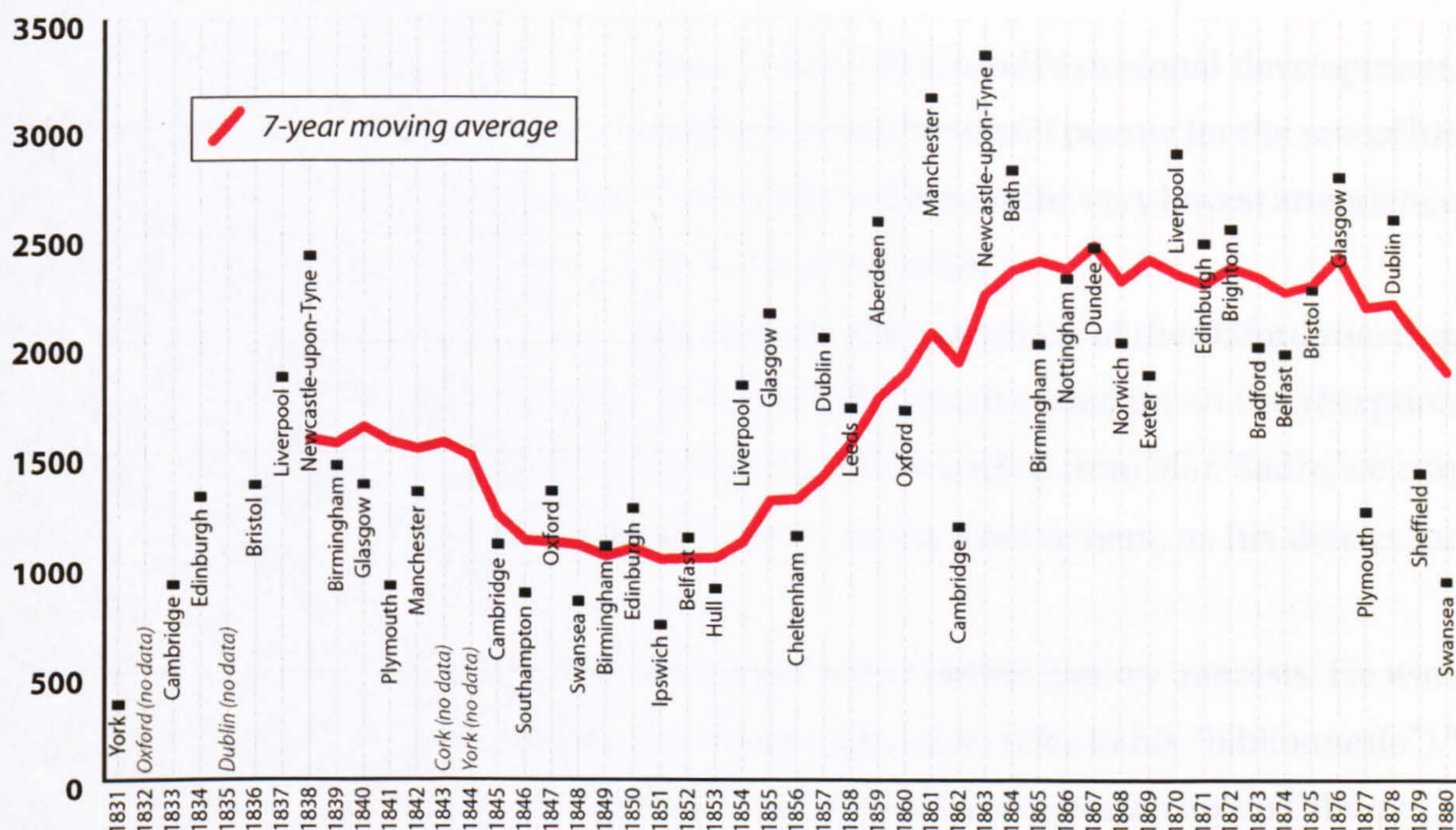
In 1867, changes to the University Ordinances allowed for a "Lee's Reader in Anatomy" and a "Lee's Reader in Chemistry" (endowed through the will of Dr. Matthew Lee)

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<sup>2</sup> *Advancement of Science* 4 (1946-48) 33. Cited in William H. Brock, "Advancing Science: The British Association and the Professional Practice of Science", *Parliament of Science* (London: Science Reviews, 1981) 90. Repr. in William H. Brock, *Science for All* (Aldershot, Variorum 1996) 109.

<sup>3</sup> *The Illustrated History of Oxford University*, ed. John Prest (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993) 312.





Attendance at British Association meetings 1831-1881

(*Pamphlets* 1:63), and elsewhere in Oxford the Clarendon Laboratories, which were among Europe's first dedicated physics laboratories, were established in 1872.

This meteoric rise of science in academia would surely have been sufficient to bring it to Carroll's notice; but the impact of science was yet broader. The historian Frank Miller Turner has found that between 1850 and 1880 "the memberships of all the major scientific societies markedly increased, with many of them doubling their numbers. Total memberships during that period grew from 4,597 to 12,314."<sup>4</sup> One such society was the British Association for the Advancement of Science (or, as it familiarly referred to itself, just the "British Association"), founded in 1831 to further and promote British science. The Association's aim was to attract "more general attention for the objects of science" (*Victorian Science* 4), and to this end it held annual meetings of "one week or longer"<sup>5</sup> all around the country. As can be seen from the above chart,<sup>6</sup> the first 50 meetings attracted variable audiences, doubtless due in part to the vagaries of geography;

<sup>4</sup> Frank Miller Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 179.

<sup>5</sup> *Objects of the Association* (n.p.: n.n., 1833). British Library copy bound within *British Association for the Advancement of Science: List of Members, Journal etc. 1832-54*.

<sup>6</sup> Data is from William Harrison, *The Founding of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (London, W.H. Harrison, 1881) 10. The choice of a seven year moving average is arbitrary, but smoothes over variations to give a clear illustration of the trajectory of attendance.



but during the 1850s and 1860s – a critical period in Carroll’s personal development, when behaviours and interests were established that he would pursue for the rest of his life – the Association was clearly in the ascendant, with even the very lowest attendance of the 1860s still higher than the average during the 1840s.

At the very least we can be certain that Carroll was aware of the Oxford meeting in 1860, which drew 1,689 attendees, since Carroll himself ended up on the reception committee for the event,<sup>7</sup> welcoming those who had travelled from afar. Sadly, we can only speculate at the circumstances and nature of his involvement, as his diaries for this year are missing.

Scientific ideas would also have reached Carroll via his literary interests. He was, as Jeffrey Stern notes, a bibliophile (Stern goes so far as to refer to his “bibliomania”),<sup>8</sup> and could not have missed the emergence of, in the words of historian Robin Gilmour, a “huge appetite among all classes of society for scientific popularisations.”<sup>9</sup> Throughout the mid-1800s publishers issued a steady stream of accessible texts that sought – in the words of one publisher – “to make the masses of the people familiar with the grand discoveries of philosophy as they bear on the circumstances of every-day life.”<sup>10</sup> In 1829 a group calling itself the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, numbering among its members many MPs and Fellows of the Royal Society, began to churn out large tomes dedicated to “imparting useful information to all classes of the community, particularly to such as are unable to avail themselves of experienced teachers.”<sup>11</sup> Over the coming decade, the *Library of Useful Knowledge* would cover topics including mechanics, hydraulics, optics, electricity, galvanism, astronomy and chemistry. Another series, Jarrold’s *Science for the Household*, included essays entitled “The Great Round World,” “Mass and its Might” and “The Composition and Chemistry of the Soil”; and

<sup>7</sup> Carroll’s name is among those given in that year’s *Proceedings of the British Association* (Cohen 351).

<sup>8</sup> Stern xi. This judgment is based partly on a circular issued in 1893 in which Carroll claims to have been following the second-hand book market for “30 or 40 years”, and that he has received “more than 80” booksellers’ catalogues in the past few weeks. Even if these numbers are exaggerated, they suggest that Carroll must have been well aware of contemporary trends in publishing.

<sup>9</sup> Robin Gilmour, *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature 1830-1890* (London: Longman, 1993) 114.

<sup>10</sup> n.n., *Science for the Household* (London: Jarrold, n.d.) advertisement at end. The British Library holding (8704.a.25) comprises three volumes bearing acquisition stamps dated 1859, 1860 and 1866.

<sup>11</sup> Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, *Library of Useful Knowledge: Natural Philosophy*, 4 vols. (London: Baldwin & Cradock, 1829-1838) 5.



by 1859 the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was offering a range of over 60 “scientific and interesting works” which included *Agricultural Chemistry*, *British Geology*, *Light, its Nature, Sources and Applications*, *The Rain Cloud* and *Handbook to the Vegetable Kingdom*.<sup>12</sup>

Alongside these broad tracts sat popularisations of major scientific works that might otherwise have been inaccessible to the masses: Charles Lyell’s seminal *Principles of Geology* (1833), for example, was turned by Gideon Mantell into *The Wonders of Geology* (1838), “with an evocative frontispiece of a print by John Martin showing three iguanodons fighting in a primæval landscape.”<sup>13</sup> Leading figures in science were celebrated in the popular press: the *Illustrated London News* published dignified portraits of Michael Faraday (1861); the Astronomer Royal, George Biddell Airy (1868); T.H. Huxley (1870); John Tyndall (1870); Charles Darwin (1871); Thomas Edison (1888); and Sir Richard Owen (1892).<sup>14</sup>

In all, it seems very unlikely that Carroll’s relative taciturnity on the issue of science arose from any lack of awareness. Science was making a highly visible impact at Carroll’s university, among his peers, and at his booksellers. Indeed, at the time of his death several works of popular science, of the type described above, were to be found in his library.<sup>15</sup> These books made up only a small proportion of his collection of several thousand volumes,<sup>16</sup> but they sat alongside eight volumes of *Knowledge, an Illustrated Magazine of Science* and a few “serious” scientific texts, including Whewell’s *History and Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences* and John Tyndall’s *Heat: A Mode of Motion*,

<sup>12</sup> *Evenings at the Microscope* (London: SPCK, n.d. but Preface is dated 1859), advertisement at end.

<sup>13</sup> In fact, this description (Gilmour 115) sells the plate, entitled “The Country of the Iguanodon”, rather short. In addition to the three iguanodons fighting in the foreground, there are two more engaged in a separate battle behind, while a small pterodactyl and some turtles look on, accompanied by a nautilus, various snail-type shells, something resembling a pineapple and several palm trees. In the distance lurks what may be a sixth iguanodon, but the print is very murky. G.A. Mantell, *The Wonders of Geology or A Familiar Exposition of Geological Phenomena* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848)

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Wilson, *Victorian Science and Engineering Portrayed in the Illustrated London News* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993)

<sup>15</sup> These include Francis Trevelyan Buckland’s *Curiosities of Natural History* (London: Richard Bentley, 1858); Catherine Buckton, *Twenty Five Lectures on Elementary Physiology* (London, Longmans 1875); John Frederic Daniell, *An Introduction to the Study of Chemical Philosophy* (London: John W. Parker, 1843); William Allen Miller, *Elements of Chemistry: Theoretical and Practical* (London: Parker, 1855); C.F. Oldham *What is Malaria? And Why is it Most Intense in Hot Climates?* (London: H.K. Lewis, 1871); and George Oliver, *Plain Facts on Vaccination* (London, 1871).

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey Stern enumerates just over 2,200 titles, but many hundreds more books are detailed without names in the auction catalogues.



confirming that, despite Carroll's lack of overt comment, he was well aware of, and took some interest in, the progress of Victorian science.

### Definitions of science

It is no surprise that Carroll engaged with science, for its root principles were entirely in harmony with his own. Prince Albert, addressing the British Association in 1859, declared that

to arrange and classify [the] universe of knowledge [is] . . . the first, and perhaps the most important object and duty of science. It is only when brought into a system . . . that we can hope to grapple with the boundlessness of [God's] creation. (*Victorian Science* 50-51)

George Henry Lewes, in an 1878 essay for the *Fortnightly Review* described science as “knowledge classified, systematised, made orderly, impersonal and exact.”<sup>17</sup> In light of the picture of Carroll established in the previous two chapters, these definitions suggest that Carroll would wholeheartedly embrace Victorian science.

However, we must be careful when generalising about Victorian science, for the term “science” was popularly applied to any systematic approach to a topic, as distinct from a philosophical or religious treatment. Books from the 1850s and 1860s refer to such “sciences” as railway construction, double-entry book-keeping, music, palmistry and even cricket.<sup>18</sup> Carroll himself had a copy of H.N. Day's *The Science of Aesthetics*,<sup>19</sup> and his friend Max Müller published his most influential lectures under the title *Lectures on the Science of Language*. In this context, even mathematics was “science”: a letter that Carroll wrote to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1866, giving a mathematical method for calculating whether the odds offered by a bookkeeper were worth taking, was published under the heading “The Science of Betting.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> George Henry Lewes, “Magic and Science,” *Versatile Victorian: Selected Writings of George Henry Lewes*, ed. Rosemary Ashton (Bristol: Bristol Classical P, 1992) 318.

<sup>18</sup> n.n. *Rudimentary and Practical Instructions on the Science of Railway Construction* (n.p., Weale, 1861); Daniel Sheriff, *The Whole Science of Double-Entry Book-Keeping* (n.p.: London, 1852); Sir John Hawkins, *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (London: J. Alfred Novello, 1853); A.R. Craig, *The Book of the Hand: Or, The Science of Palmistry* (London: Sampson Low, 1867); J. Pycroft, *Cricket Field: Or, The History and the Science of the Game of Cricket* (London: Longman, 1859)

<sup>19</sup> Henry Noble Day, *The Science of Aesthetics* (New Haven, CT, USA: C.C. Chatfield, 1872)

<sup>20</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 19 November 1866, 3; this letter was then reprinted in *The Times*, 22 November 1866, 9. Carroll noted in his diary that he had already sent substantially the same letter to *Bell's Life* on 5 May 1857.



Yet I believe that Carroll's personal notion of science was – unsurprisingly – more organised than this. In fact, I suggest that it strongly resembled the conception he would have found in his copy of Whewell's *History of the Inductive Sciences*, and below I shall demonstrate how. I should make clear that this link is merely speculative, and there is no suggestion that Carroll directly followed Whewell. Nevertheless, Whewell is the best-represented scientist in Carroll's library, and it is easy to imagine that Carroll might give more regard to this mathematically minded man (who, like Carroll, had written on Euclid)<sup>21</sup> than to younger "stars" such as Huxley. After all, Whewell is often credited with first clearly defining modern science, and indeed coining the term "scientist" in 1833 to describe its practitioners.<sup>22</sup>

At any rate, whether or not Whewell is behind any of Carroll's ideas on science, I will demonstrate how the distinctions Whewell draws between the major branches of science, in his *History of the Inductive Sciences* and elsewhere, helpfully reflect Carroll's conception of the sciences — a conception it is crucial to understand if we are to make sense of Carroll's response (or, rather, range of responses) to "science."

### The types of science

Whewell's principal type of science is the "Inductive Sciences." These include chemistry, biology, physics and related fields. Whewell defined this type of science by the attempt to "infer true theories from observed facts, and more general from more limited laws."<sup>23</sup> In Carroll's time, as today, the unqualified term "science" (often capitalised) often referred specifically to this area of science.<sup>24</sup>

Whewell's "Deductive Sciences", by contrast were "the branches of Pure Mathematics (Geometry, Arithmetic, Algebra, and the like)." These "do not infer true theories from observed facts . . . but they trace the conditions of all theory, the properties of space and number; and deduce results from ideas without the aid of experi-

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<sup>21</sup> William Whewell, *The Mechanical Euclid* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1837)

<sup>22</sup> Richard Yeo, *Defining Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993) 5.

<sup>23</sup> William Whewell, *History of the Inductive Sciences* (London: John W. Parker, 1857) 15-16.

<sup>24</sup> Whewell confirmed this in 1851: "to discover the laws of operative power in material productions, whether formed by man or brought into being by Nature herself, is the work of a science, and indeed is what we more especially term Science." William Whewell, "The General Bearing of the Great Exhibition on the Progress of Art and Science", lecture delivered on November 26 1851 and latterly published in *Lectures on the Results of the Great Exhibition of 1851* (London: David Bogue, 1852) 7.



ence" (Whewell 15-16). Carroll recognised these too as a part of science: in one letter to Pall Mall Gazette, Carroll described himself as "one who has taught science here for more than twenty years (for mathematics . . . is still reckoned among the sciences)" (Collingwood 191). It is conspicuous that he feels the need to clarify that he is a mathematician, clearly feeling that not to do so would falsely imply that he was a teacher of the inductive sciences. Elsewhere, in a comic letter sent to the Senior Censor in 1868 under the name "Mathematicus" he describes mathematics as an "important branch of science" (*Pamphlets* 1:60); and in a pamphlet advertising his forthcoming book *Symbolic Logic*, he promises that the student will gain "the power of solving for himself the fascinating problems of the science."<sup>25</sup>

The third group of sciences, the "Mechanical Sciences", is less precisely defined: Whewell airily comments that they involve "Physical Astronomy and the like,"<sup>26</sup> which he distinguishes from other sciences by the fact that in other sciences "instead of developing our theories, we have to establish them; instead of determining our data and rules with the last accuracy, we have to obtain first approximations to them."<sup>27</sup> Thus the mechanical sciences seem to involve the observational sciences, such as astronomy, and the industrial sciences such as engineering. Carroll seems not to have directly delineated this group of sciences in writing, but I shall demonstrate below how his behaviour implies a perception of its boundaries.

In addition to these definitions, Whewell gave a general definition of the "Scientific Idea" which helped to delineate science as a whole. On this he wrote that

Scientific Ideas and common Notions differ in this, that the former are precise and stable, the latter vague and variable; the former are possessed with clear insight and employed in a sense rigorously limited, and always identically the same; the latter have grown up in the mind from a thousand dim and diverse suggestions, and the obscurity and incongruity which belong to their origin hang about all their applications. (Whewell, *History* 13)

<sup>25</sup> Lewis Carroll, advertisement [in the form of a circular letter] for *Symbolic Logic* (London: Macmillan, 1895) 2.

<sup>26</sup> William Whewell, "On the Influence of the History of Science Upon Intellectual Education", *Lectures on Education Delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain* (London: John W. Parker, 1855) 29.

<sup>27</sup> William Whewell, *Address Delivered in the Senate-House at Cambridge, June 25, 1833, on the occasion of the Opening of the Third General Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science* (Cambridge: John Smith, 1833) 7.



“Precise and stable . . . possessed with clear insight” were qualities that Carroll would surely have appreciated, and Carroll did use the term “scientific” in this positive sense: in 1877, for example, Carroll asks for opinions on his pamphlet *A Method of Taking Votes on More Than Two Issues*, lamenting that “a really scientific method for arriving at the result . . . seems to be still a *desideratum*” (*Pamphlets* 3:59). Of an imaginative answer he received in response to Knot VII of *A Tangled Tale*, he wrote that it “may be a good solution, viewing the problem as a conundrum: but it is *not* scientific” (Carroll 947). *Euclid and his Modern Rivals* is explicitly presented, in its preface, as a “scientific” text (*Euclid* ix) and later in the text one of the rivals is ridiculed for the unscientific methods he chooses to prove a theorem:

*Minos*: Do you think you could make a more awkward or more obscure proof of this almost axiomatic theorem?

*Niemand*: (*cautiously*) I would not undertake it.

*Minos*: All that about folding and re-folding the paper is more like a child’s book of puzzles than a scientific treatise. (Carroll, *Euclid* 154)

Carroll thus demonstrates that the word “scientific” may be applied to a mathematical approach, even if he might, like Whewell, hesitate to refer without qualification to mathematics as “science.”

### Carroll’s positive engagement with science

So I have shown above that Carroll recognised that his own mathematical pursuits were one type of science, and was comfortable in describing them as scientific. For the modern commentator Jack Meadows this was enough to make Carroll “a fringe member of the nineteenth-century scientific community.”<sup>28</sup> However, as we have seen above, Carroll generally took care to use the term precisely, so as not to imply (as Meadows seems to) that he was engaged in what was generally understood by “science.” An exception to this was his unqualified adoption of the term in his advertisement for *Symbolic Logic*, but this was clearly with the intention of emphasising the intellectual weight of his text. In general, while the inductive sciences sought to “infer true theories from observed facts”, Carroll made clear that his field was purely theoretical, writing in his preface to *The Game of Logic* that

<sup>28</sup> Jack Meadows, *The Victorian Scientist* (London: British Library, 2004) 139.



it isn't of the slightest consequence to us, as *Logicians*, whether our Premises are true or false: all *we* have to make out is whether they *lead logically to the Conclusion*.<sup>29</sup>

However, while Carroll defined his work as outside of inductive science, he took a certain personal interest in the mechanical sciences. It is well known, for example, that he was greatly interested in optics: when he visited his uncle Skeffington Lutwidge the pair would make observations with Lutwidge's telescope and microscope (Cohen 41), and at the time of Carroll's death the auction catalogue shows that he owned two telescopes of his own, one described in bold type as "Very Fine" (Stern 10). The list also included two microscopes, from which Carroll had presumably got some use: he records in his diary that he spent the morning of April 4th 1865 "watching Rolleston dissect, and trying various objects under my microscope, which I had carried over with me" (*Diaries* 5: 59). In addition to this is listed a large range of photographic apparatus — photography being another optomechanical science, though with a chemical aspect as well in the developing process. The catalogue of Carroll's library lists at least one book on optics,<sup>30</sup> and several more on microscopy and telescopicy.<sup>31</sup> A diary entry for December 15th 1856 records tantalisingly that his uncle Skeffington had demonstrated to him "a curious new French toy, the 'Orthoscope'" — though what this was or did is not detailed (*Diaries* 2: 123).

Carroll's interest in mechanical innovation was not limited to optics. Morton Cohen finds that he "tirelessly collected gadgets, toys, games, puzzles and mechanical and technological inventions, for his own use and for the use, delight and amusement of friends and family." He reproduces a long list of devices which Carroll owned, including an "Electric Pen" and a flying-machine called "the bat" (Cohen 288). Isa Bowman recalls that he was "a clever mechanist", repairing broken music-boxes with "a box

<sup>29</sup> Lewis Carroll, *The Game of Logic* (London: Macmillan, 1887); cited in Blake 70.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Potter *Elementary Treatise on Optics* (London: Taylor & Walton, 1847).

<sup>31</sup> On the topic of microscopy Carroll had Philip Henry Gosse's *Evenings at the Microscope* (London: SPCK, n.d. but Preface is dated 1859) and E. Lancaster's less ambitious *Half-Hours with the Microscope*. Telescopicy is married to an interest in astronomy, represented by Joseph Norman Lockyer, *Astronomy* (London: Macmillan, 1874); William Peck *Constellations and How to Find Them* (London: Gall & Inglis, 1885); J. Gall's *An Easy Guide to the Constellations*, (Edinburgh: Gall & Inglis, 1856); and the encouragingly-titled *Astronomy Without Mathematics* by Edmund Beckett Denison (SPCK: London, 1865). Stern mistakenly gives Denison's name as "Dennison", following the erroneous Art & Antique Agency auction catalogue of 1898, rather than the Sotheby's catalogue of December 1902 in which it is correctly spelt.



of little screwdrivers and punches" (Bowman 21), and he is popularly identified (e.g. Gardner 296) with the White Knight in *Through The Looking Glass*, who is forever inventing new devices and schemes. In January 1867 Carroll even went to visit Charles Babbage (whom he had never met): he had heard that Babbage had invented a new Calculating Engine and wanted to know "if any were to be had" (none was) (Cohen 288-9). We cannot be certain whether or not he often read the periodical *English Mechanic and Mirror of Science*, but he was familiar enough with the magazine to write to his publisher on 9 May 1879 saying that he had learnt that there was a review of *Euclid and his Modern Rivals* in the latest edition, and would Macmillan kindly acquire a copy for him? (*Letters* 336)

One famous expression of his fascination with the mechanical sciences comes early in Carroll's life when he attended the Great Exhibition in 1851. He had not at this point started to keep a diary, but an enthusiastic letter to his sister Elizabeth survives in which he describes his visit:

There are some very ingenious pieces of mechanism. A tree (in the French Compartment) with birds chirping and hopping from branch to branch exactly like life. The bird jumps across, turns round on the other branch, so as to face back again, settles its head and neck, and then in a few moments jumps back again. A bird standing at the foot of the tree trying to eat a beetle is rather a failure (I am blotting dreadfully): the beetle is lying very conveniently before it, but it never succeeds in getting its head more than a quarter of an inch down, and that in uncomfortable little jerks, as if it was choking. I have to go to the Royal Academy, so must stop: as the subject is quite inexhaustible, there is no hope of ever coming to a regular finish. (*Letters* 18)

That letter was written as a 19-year old, but nearly 40 years later Carroll's enthusiasm for technology was undimmed: he wrote in his diary for 11th-13th August 1890 that he:

Went to an exhibition of "Edison's Phonograph." It is indeed a marvellous invention. . . . It is a pity, as I remarked to a lady there, that we are not 50 years further on in the world's history, so as to get this wonderful invention in its perfect form. It is now in its infancy; the new wonder of the day, just as I remember Photography was about 1850. (*Diaries* 8: 523-4)

The entry spans two dates because on Carroll's first visit he did not have the opportunity to try the sound through the "ear-trumpet," but was so keen to fully experience the new device that he went back again two days later.

A few technological mechanisms even make their way into Carroll's fiction, such as the Hatter's extraordinary watch - which "tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell



what o'clock it is!" (Carroll 70) – and the Outlandish Watch of *Sylvie and Bruno*, which controls time, rather than reporting it. The Lizard Bill in *Alice's Adventures* adopts the imagery of mechanisms when he exclaims, after being kicked by a gargantuan Alice, that "all I know is, something comes at me like a Jack-in-the-box, and up I goes like a sky-rocket!" (Carroll 44). The spirit of invention is, of course, embodied in the character of the White Knight in *Through the Looking Glass*, and the Professor in *Sylvie & Bruno* invents a rather impractical Plunge-Bath. Later the Professor also reports that he is working on a new invention for carrying oneself about. "Won't that be very tiring, to carry yourself?" Sylvie enquires. "Well, no, my child," the Professor replies: "You see, whatever fatigue one incurs by carrying, one saves by being carried!" (Carroll 344). A different branch of mechanical science comes in for the same whimsically fallacious treatment in Knot IX of *A Tangled Tale*, which involves a comic take on the Archimedes principle.<sup>32</sup>

### Carroll's negative engagement with science

Clearly Carroll followed the mechanical sciences with an enthusiasm not far off his love of mathematics. We may easily imagine how both appealed to his love of systems, and it is only reasonable to expect that he would feel the same about the inductive sciences. Yet here, however, his attitude seems to have been consistently negative. I observed above that he defined his work in opposition to inductive science, and Francine Abeles notes that he

was not a member of any of the newly-founded scientific societies of his time  
<sup>33</sup> . . . He did correspond with other mathematicians, seeking their comments about his work or opinions on mathematical topics on which he was interested. He was not a member of the Royal Society . . . although his paper on determinants was presented to that group in 1866. (*Pamphlets* 2:2)

<sup>32</sup> "Suppose a solid held above the surface of a liquid and partially immersed: a portion of the liquid is displaced, and the level of the liquid rises. But, by this rise of level, a little bit more of the solid is of course immersed, and so there is a new displacement of a second portion of the liquid, and a consequent rise of level. Again, this second rise of level causes a yet further immersion, and by consequence another displacement of liquid and another rise. It is self-evident that this process must continue till the entire solid is immersed, and that the liquid will then begin to immerse whatever holds the solid, which, being connected with it, must for the time be considered a part of it. If you hold a stick, six feet long, with its ends in a tumbler of water, and wait long enough, you must eventually be immersed." (Carroll 915)

<sup>33</sup> As mentioned earlier, Carroll in fact does appear to have been involved in some capacity with the British Association during 1860: but it seems his involvement lasted only as long as the Association's visit to Oxford, as his name has not been reported as appearing in any other proceedings.



In other words, Carroll was happy to be considered a mathematician, but he did not identify himself more generally as a man of science. As we have seen, even when he claimed to be a teacher of science, he made sure to be clear that he was not a “scientist”; and, although *Pall Mall Gazette* headed another letter from him “The Science of Betting” (and it is reprinted in *Pamphlets* under that name), Carroll makes no claim to be practising science: rather, he writes precisely that, under his system, “it may be *mathematically* demonstrated that, provided all the bets are paid, winning is a certainty” (emphasis added).

In fact, on several occasions Carroll overtly distanced himself from the inductive sciences. Naturally, he expressed no quarrel with the scientific quest to “make knowledge orderly”; rather, he suggested that the inductive sciences simply did not warrant the attention they were gaining. This may seem a strange objection, as a major basis of the popularity of science was its very practicality: “science touched the imagination by its tangible results,” declared the historian G.M. Young of early Victorian England.<sup>34</sup> Agriculture in particular benefited enormously from advances in chemistry: one pamphlet, entitled *What Science Can Do For the Irish Farmer*, carried on the back several reviews from various periodicals, all of them offering enthusiastic variations on the *London Inquirer’s* opinion that “it would be well if this lecture were in the hands of every farmer in the kingdom.”<sup>35</sup>

Nevertheless, a resistance to science was not uncommon in Oxford: despite the inexorable rise of the discipline, the historian V.H.H. Green considers that “in general the Victorian don regarded science with suspicion, if not with contempt; and colleges were slow to elect scientists to fellowships.”<sup>36</sup> In 1864, when a proposal was made to extend the teaching of undergraduate science, Carroll issued a squib suggesting that those in favour of the proposal had lost their perspective and were overvaluing science:

A is for [Acland], who’d physic the masses;  
B is for [Brodie], who swears by the gases;

...

<sup>34</sup> G.M. Young, *Victorian England: Portrait of an Age* (New York: Oxford UP, 1964) 7.

<sup>35</sup> John F. Hodges, *What Science Can Do For the Irish Farmer* (Dublin: William Curry, 1844) OBC.

<sup>36</sup> V.H.H. Green, *A History of Oxford University* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1974) 183.

Q is the Quad, where the Dons are collecting.  
R is for [Rolleston], who lives for dissecting.<sup>37</sup>

The verse mocks the pro-science parties only quite gently, perhaps partly because they are friends and colleagues of Carroll's (it was Rolleston, for example, with whom Carroll would, the following year, "try various objects" under his microscope in the above-mentioned diary entry). However, this type of gentle mockery recurs in Carroll's writing: in 1873's *The Vision of the Three T's* Carroll made fun of the general admiration of German science, having the Professor advise the scholar that

Now-a-days all that is good comes from the German. Ask our men of science: they will tell you that any German book must needs surpass an English one. Aye, and even an English book, worth naught in this its native dress, shall become, when rendered into German, a valuable contribution to science. . . . no man of Science, that setteth any store by his good name will cough otherwise than thus: *Uck! Cuck! Uuck!* (*Pamphlets* 87)

Arthur in *Sylvie & Bruno* (a character with whom we will recall Carroll is, on at least one point, "much in sympathy") gently teases a young lady in explaining to her "with all the gravity of ten professors rolled into one" that the brain is really upside-down, and that "what we call the *vertex* of the brain is really its base . . . . it is simply a question of nomenclature" — an explanation she laps up (Carroll 381). And in 1886's *Three Years in a Curatorship*, Carroll hints that the Lee's [i.e. science] Readers have narrow approaches to the world. He jokes that

surely any Curator, worthy of the name, would be found, if tested by one Lee's Reader, to possess a density varying directly, and a gravity varying inversely, to the potency of the Port — if tested anatomically by a second, to have the word "WINE" neatly emblazoned on his heart — and, if finally submitted to quantitative analysis by a third, to consist principally of  $C_4H_6O_2$ . (*Pamphlets* 1:223)

Carroll seems not to have been impressed even by one of the most famous scientists of the period: as mentioned above, the catalogue of his library lists not a single work by Huxley; yet Carroll certainly knew the man was famous, and even once had him sit for a photograph (Taylor & Wakeling 249). The fact of his having wanted to photograph Huxley might suggest a certain enthusiasm for the man, but Carroll always

<sup>37</sup> The names are tactfully omitted from the original, but Edward Wakeling provides them, as found written into Vere Bayne's copy, in his edition of the pamphlet reproduced in *Pamphlets* 1:7.



liked to photograph celebrities, and while he famously went to great lengths to capture Tennyson, he seems to have made no particular effort to capture Huxley, who simply happened to be in Oxford in 1860 to debate Darwin with Bishop Wilberforce. Nor did Carroll single out Huxley at that event: Wakeling notes that, in addition to Huxley,

other important people of the day who attended the debate were photographed by [Carroll], and he arranged for many of them to sign their names in his albums. (*Diaries* 4: 34)

Indeed, if Carroll had had any particular regard for Huxley he could probably have arranged an introduction, for one of Carroll's child-friends, Julia Arnold,<sup>38</sup> went on to marry Huxley's son Leonard in 1885. It seems he made no attempt to arrange such a meeting.

Still, Carroll was at least outwardly civil to men of science, and parodied their labours without obvious malice. Beneath this courtesy, however, lay a decided contempt for inductive science. When it was proposed that Oxford students should be able to graduate by being examined on science alone (rather than being required to take classics as well) Carroll burst into print, sending a lengthy letter to *Pall Mall Gazette* dated May 1877<sup>39</sup> deriding the proposal:

I shall be told that . . . some of the greatest minds of the day are to be found in the ranks of science. I freely admit that such may be found, but my contention is that they made the science, not the science them; and that in any line of thought they would have been equally distinguished. As a general principle . . . my experience as a teacher has shown me that even a considerable proficiency in Natural Science, taken alone, is so far from proving a high degree of cultivation and great natural ability that it is fully compatible with general ignorance and an intellect quite below par. (Collingwood 191)

Collingwood explains below this letter that Carroll "was a thorough conservative, and it took a long time to reconcile him to any new departure." In the end, the motion passed, by 63 to 40 (Cohen 391), so Carroll must have been more conservative than the average don. Collingwood adds that "it must not be supposed that the writer's views on the subject remained the same all through his life"; but no reference is given to suggest another view, and by the time of this letter Carroll was 43 years old and the battle was

<sup>38</sup> A letter to Julia and her sister Ethel arrives in which he scolds them jocularly for not returning a story-book they had borrowed. "What remarkably wicked children you are!" he writes, before signing off "Affectionately yours, CLD" (*Letters*, 1:209).

<sup>39</sup> Morton Cohen gives the date as 15th May 1877, but Collingwood gives it as 17th May 1877.



all but lost. Perhaps Collingwood was misled by Carroll's enthusiasm for other types of science. At any rate, no document has been found in which Carroll supports the teaching of science at Oxford.

### **"Gold-sucking leeches"**

Alongside Carroll's scorn for the intellectual value of science ran denunciations of its demands for resources. Earlier in the letter cited above, Carroll gave the following lengthy and rather nuanced account of the arrival of science at Oxford:

In the dark ages of our University (some five-and-twenty years ago), while we still believed in classics and mathematics as constituting a liberal education, Natural Science sat weeping at our gates. "Ah, let me in!" she moaned; "why cram reluctant youth with your unsatisfying lore? Are they not hungering for bones; yea, panting for sulphuretted hydrogen?" We heard and we pitied. We let her in and housed her royally; we adorned her palace with re-agents and retorts, and made it a very charnel-house of bones, and we cried to our undergraduates: "The feast of Science is spread! Eat, drink, and be happy!" But they would not. They fingered the bones, and thought them dry. They sniffed at the hydrogen, and turned away. Yet for all that Science ceased not to cry "More gold, more gold!" And her three fair daughters, Chemistry, Biology and Physics (for the modern horse-leech is more prolific than in the days of Solomon) ceased not to plead, "Give, give!" And we gave; we poured forth our wealth like water (I beg her pardon, like H<sub>2</sub>O), and we could not help thinking there was something weird and uncanny in the ghoulish facility with which she absorbed it.

The curtain rises on the second act of the drama. Science is still weeping, but this time it is for lack of pupils, not of teachers or machinery. "We are unfairly handicapped!" she cries. "You have prizes and scholarships for classics and mathematics, and you bribe your students to desert us. Buy us some bright, clever boys to teach, and then see what we can do!" Once more we heard and pitied. We had bought her bones; we bought her boys. And now at last her halls were filled — not only with teachers paid to teach, but also with learners paid to learn. And we have not much to complain of in results, except that perhaps she is a little too ready to return on our hands all but the "honour-men" — all, in fact, who really need the helping hand of an educator. "Here, take back your stupid ones!" she cries. (Collingwood 188-9)

The sardonic reference at the start to "the dark ages . . . while we still believed in classics and mathematics as constituting a liberal education" makes clear that Carroll's contempt for the value of the sciences underpins his complaint. His claim that, at first, undergraduates "sniffed at the hydrogen, and turned away" may well have some truth in it: V.H.H. Green tells us that the first Professor of Astronomy attempted to give lectures, but could not attract an audience. However, since the University did not examine candidates in Astronomy, nor support it in any other way, not even by giving the Professor a



University room in which to lecture, it is perhaps only natural that undergraduates did not take his classes seriously. Carroll's disdainful description of Science crying "More gold, more gold!" seems uncharitable given the lack of resources science was initially afforded at Oxford:

Professors of science lacked laboratories and even the most elementary apparatus with which to conduct experiments. Dr Daubeny, the Professor of Chemistry, was allocated the lower room of the Ashmolean Museum for his use in 1817, and, when he requested additional accommodation, was offered a share of the keeper's kitchen with the use of the common pump. After rejecting the offer as "humiliating to science", he equipped some rooms at his own expense. (V.H.H. Green 134)

From these beginnings it seems rather impressive that in a relatively short span of time, science had become a respected part of the curriculum, of which even Carroll had to grudgingly admit that "we have not much to complain of in results." His mocking reference to "learners paid to learn" ignores the fact that new prizes and scholarships in the sciences merely brought the field into line with classics and mathematics.

The same uncharitable regard for the sciences can be seen in the poem "Fame's Penny-Trumpet", which claims to be "Affectionately dedicated to all 'original researchers' who pant for 'endowment.'" This, perhaps Carroll's most spiteful work, is addressed to "ye little men of little souls", whom Carroll condemns as "Gold-sucking leeches" and "vermin" anointed with "mutual Flattery's golden slime." Carroll compares these modern scientists with forebears such as Plato and Newton, and chides that "be yours the pay: be theirs the praise . . . | They toiled not for reward nor thanks." Written in 1876, the year before the letter cited above, it was submitted to the *Pall Mall Gazette*, but was apparently considered too vituperative for publication, and in the end appeared in *Rhyme? and Reason?*

### Vivisection

Carroll's final objection to science was its practice of vivisection. By contrast with the apparently emotive resistance to science we have seen above, this was clearly a principled objection, and Carroll engaged with the issue more practically than he did with his more general complaints. In 1875 he wrote to Lord Salisbury on the "not very inviting subject of 'Vivisection' which I believe will soon come before Parliament for debate and (I hope) for restrictive legislation" (*Letters* 1:224), and in the same year – perhaps in the

hope of influencing the debate – he published *Some Popular Fallacies About Vivisection*. This pamphlet argues that “the principle of selfishness lies at the root of this accursed practice” (Carroll 1080), and naturally Carroll deploys his logical faculties to challenge it, even referring in the title to the “fallacies” which support it:

“The aggregate amount of wrong” — I quote from an article in *Pall Mall Gazette* for February 13th — “which is perpetrated against animals by sportsmen in a single year probably exceeds that which some of them endure from vivisectors in half a century.” The best refutation of this fallacy would seem to be to trace it to its logical conclusion — that a very large number of trivial wrongs are equal to one great one. For instance, that a man, who by selling adulterated bread inflicts a minute injury on the health of some thousands of persons, commits a crime equal to one murder. (Carroll 1074)

However, though Carroll pursued his opposition to vivisection in a precise and systematic manner, he also allowed it to feed into his more emotive rejections of science. In a letter he wrote to the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1875 he expressed fear that an age would arrive when

chemistry and biology shall be the ABC of a State education enforced on all; when vivisection shall be practised in every college and school; and when the man of science, looking forth over a world which will then own no other sway than his, shall exult . . . that he has made of this fair green earth, if not a heaven for man, at least a hell for animals. (Cohen 391)

A few years later he would touch upon the issue in another part of the letter to *Pall Mall* cited above, picturing science rejecting the less able students with the cry that “except as subjects for the scalpel (and we have not yet got the Human Vivisection Act through Parliament) we can do nothing with them!” (Collingwood 189). In “Fame’s Penny Trumpet” another of the many reasons he damns scientists is their “marking with complacent ears | The moaning of some tortured hound.” Taken all together, Carroll’s public writings on science enable us to build up a picture of his stereotypical scientist: blinkered, grasping, vain and cruel.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate that Carroll did not have a straightforward relationship with Victorian science: he partook enthusiastically of some aspects of it, but he set himself publicly against the inductive sciences in published poems, college circulars and open letters.



This may be partially explicable by what we have already seen of Carroll's character: his opposition to vivisection at least clearly arises from the determinedly moral position outlined in Chapter 3: at the outset of *Some Popular Fallacies About Vivisection* he invokes moral issues of right and wrong, asserting that "All who recognise the difference of right and wrong must admit, if the question be closely pressed, that the infliction of pain is in some cases wrong" (Carroll 1071).

However, his more general opposition to inductive science seems to stem from mere contempt. He mocked its supporters, denied its value and even slandered its practitioners with aspersions of greed and vanity. His public letters on the subject, and "Fame's Penny-Trumpet", identify all of science with vivisection, although he must have realised that this was a gross generalisation; and even where vivisection is not an issue he still damns chemists and physicists as "little men with little souls" who "swear by the gases"; mere "horse-leeches" who cry for gold. Even Collingwood feels the need to justify these dubious caricatures, ascribing them to Carroll's conservatism; but this explanation does not square with Carroll's enthusiasm for new developments in the mechanical sciences, nor with the ability we have seen in him to embrace radical concepts. I believe that the antipathy Carroll expressed in his published works towards inductive science was not the whole story, and in the next chapter I will suggest what may have caused it.

## Chapter 5

# Darwin and the Dodo

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that Carroll publicly distanced himself from the inductive sciences, and suggested that this seemed unjustified. In this chapter I will suggest that Carroll's public position on the sciences was not the whole story. I will propose that Carroll in fact did find the inductive sciences just as compelling as other branches of science; but decided to reject them because he perceived that they came into conflict with his Christian beliefs. This conclusion was not unique to Carroll: it was widespread in Victorian society, as science's progress in explaining of nature in terms of universal rules, and Darwin's *Origin of Species* in particular, seemed to challenge spiritual conceptions of the universe. But for Carroll the issue was particularly black and white: the existence of spiritual mysteries was one of the axioms of his faith, so if a proposition contradicted it then logic dictated that that proposition was by definition to be rejected.

Despite this, I will argue that Carroll's instinctive appreciation of logic and rules drew him into a closer involvement with science than he chose to admit, even in his diary; and I will suggest that the *Alice* books, which reveal much about Carroll's subconscious, imply that, despite his formal rejection of the principles and progress of inductive science, he had nevertheless taken them on board. In particular, I will argue that they are strongly suggestive of an intellectual engagement with Darwinism, and I will conclude this chapter by arguing that although Carroll could not bring himself - even privately - to endorse Darwinism, he nevertheless found it almost irresistibly compelling.

### Scientific materialism

In the previous chapter I noted that Carroll publicly criticised science for a variety of reasons, which - with the exception of his principled opposition to vivisection - seem uncharacteristically irrational. I suggest that in fact these public protestations were not the whole story.



In a more private forum, Carroll criticises science in different terms: in a letter he wrote on December 4 1882 to James Langton Clarke, he mentions that:

I have just read a small pamphlet, the first report of the Psychical Society, on "thought-reading". . . . I think we are close on the day when this shall be classed among the known natural forces, and its laws tabulated, and when the scientific sceptics, who always shut their eyes till the last moment to any evidence that seems to point beyond materialism, will have to accept it as a proved fact in nature. (*Letters* 1:471-2)

Here at last Carroll presents a clear objection to the inductive sciences, and one that makes sense in the light of what we have seen of his personal beliefs: evidently, he considered that the scientific focus on "observed facts" ignored that which was "beyond materialism." Of course, science could hardly be expected to address metaphysical issues, and Whewell had made clear that the "scientific idea" was "employed in a sense rigorously limited." But whereas, broadly speaking, the sciences which Carroll endorsed had practical ends – inventing labour-saving devices, or enriching culture through creations such as the camera and the phonograph – the inductive sciences were working towards a grander goal: an explanation of the entire universe in wholly material terms. An 1865 advertisement for a book entitled *A New System of Philosophy* overstated science's achievements in this direction, but eloquently summed up its goal:

nothing less than to unfold such a complete philosophy of Nature, physical, organic, mental and social, as Science has now for the first time made possible.<sup>1</sup>

This quest for a "complete philosophy of Nature" was not merely a concern of certain practitioners: it was central to the scientific movement. John Herschel, in his 1845 Presidential Address to the British Association, declared that to oppose this project "would be worse than folly. It would be treason against all our highest feelings to doubt that to those who spread themselves over . . . opposite lines [of enquiry], each moving in his own direction, a thousand points of meeting and mutual and joyful recognition will occur" (*Victorian Science* 404). William Whewell coined the phrase "successive generalisation" to describe the hoped-for process whereby, as natural laws were discovered,

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Spencer, *Illustrations of Universal Progress* (New York: D. Appleton, 1865) v.

so these laws would come to form a homogenous doctrine,<sup>2</sup> wherein “the progress of moral, and political, and philological, and other knowledge is governed by the same laws as that of physical science” (Yeo 232).

The idea that human material investigation could attain such a complete explanation of nature was naturally controversial in a society concurrently undergoing (as observed in Chapter 3) a strident movement away from human interpretation and towards a strictly conventional concept of the “mysterious.” Carroll’s phrase “scientific sceptics” hints at a conflict between science and faith, and indeed such a conflict was stridently perpetuated by both sides. John Tyndall, in his Belfast address to the British Association, set out the demands of science:

We claim, and we shall wrest, from theology the entire domain of cosmological theory. All schemes and systems which thus infringe upon the domain of science must, in so far as they do this, submit to its control, and relinquish all thought of controlling it. (*Victorian Science* 474-5)

The theologian J.M. Winn, writing in *The Collapse of Scientific Atheism*, responded in equally vehement terms:

To the British Association for the Advancement of Science is due the unenviable distinction of having inaugurated, through their former President, Dr. Tyndall, the infidel doctrines which have of late poisoned the minds of thousands, through the medium of the public press, which has conveyed his baneful teaching even to our very thresholds, and, we fear, made shipwreck of the faith and hopes of numbers of the rising generation.<sup>3</sup>

Another work, issued in 1876 by Thomas Birks, then Knightsbridge Professor of Moral Philosophy at Cambridge, fiercely opposed

the modern Fatalistic Philosophy. . . . I believe the views they advocate to be radically unsound, full of logical inconsistency and contradiction, and flatly opposed to the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and even the very existence of Moral Science.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Robert E. Butts, “Whewell’s Logic of Induction,” *Foundations of Scientific Method: The Nineteenth Century* ed. Ronald Giere & Richard Westfall (London: Indiana UP, 1973) 65.

<sup>3</sup> J.M. Winn, *The Collapse of Scientific Atheism* (London: David Bogue, 1880) 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Birks, *Modern Physical Fatalism and the Doctrine of Evolution* (London: Macmillan, 1876) 1. The auction catalogue in which this work appears (E.J. Brooks, May 10, 1898) wrongly gives the author’s name as “Burke;” it is corrected in the catalogue for the subsequent auction held by James Parker & Co. in October of that year.



Science did not dispute the charge. Huxley, who originally coined the word “agnostic” to describe himself,<sup>5</sup> bluntly agreed that the pursuit of science had “no sort of relation to moral ends.”<sup>6</sup> In the “Prolegomena” to the 1867 edition of Lewes’ *History of Philosophy*, the author observed that,

after having for centuries pursued its researches under the denunciation of Theology, and under the burden of a fear, terrible to delicate consciences, of approaching heresy when it was seeking truth, Science has at length ceased its timorous and futile efforts to reconcile its conclusions with anything but its own principles.<sup>7</sup>

### Origin of Species

At the epicentre of the conflict stood Charles Darwin’s *Origin of Species*. While the inductive sciences in general threatened to make the universe mundane and mechanical, Darwin’s book, first issued in 1859, seemed to present such a universe as a *fait accompli*. Darwin had already, in David M. Knight’s slightly comical phrase “brought order to the *Cirripedia*”<sup>8</sup>; but *Origin of Species* went far, far beyond that achievement, presenting a conception of all of life, “with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one.”<sup>9</sup> The hypothesis chimed with the quest for unity and consistency, and Darwin explicitly associated the image with established laws of physics, writing that evolution had produced the current state of the world “whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity” (Darwin 490). The work was celebrated for the elegant way it “reduced phenomena to community and knowledge to unity” (Lewes 300), but the achievement was not universally welcome: as Gillian Beer comments, “new organisations of knowledge are particularly vexatious when they shift man from the centre of meaning or set him in a universe not designed to serve his needs,”<sup>10</sup> and Darwin met with furious opposition. The new conception of an “uncon-

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<sup>5</sup> An account of this is given in Huxley’s widely-reprinted essay “Agnosticism.”

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Henry Huxley, “Evolution and Ethics,” Lecture, 1893, qtd. in Gilmour 138.

<sup>7</sup> George Henry Lewes, *The History of Philosophy from Thales to Comte* (London: Longman, Green, 1867) xx.

<sup>8</sup> David M. Knight, *Science in the Romantic Era* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998) 227.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (London: John Murray, 1859) 490.

<sup>10</sup> Gillian Beer, *Darwin’s Plots* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983) 9.

soling natural universe" (Gilmour 103) and the exposition of what Ruskin called "the filthy heraldries which record the relation of humanity to the ascidian and the crocodile,"<sup>11</sup> was vivid enough to set, as Lewes noted, "men wholly incompetent to appreciate the evidence for or against Natural Selection" against the principle with "surprising fervour and facility" (Lewes 300). A book entitled *The Wonderland of Evolution* summed up the opposition in terms reminiscent of Birks' rejection of fatalism:

Are all the remarkable processes we see around us to be regarded merely as one interminable system of gradual incessant though possibly slowly perfecting changes? Is this all? Can it be true that we are little better than mere machines? Then pure utilitarianism is the only true system of philosophy, and mere selfishness will win the day. This cannot be.<sup>12</sup>

We have seen, in Chapter 3, Carroll's uncompromising insistence on religious principles; and in Chapter 4 I showed his fierce rejection of "mere selfishness" in his response to vivisection. In such a climate he could hardly have sided with the "scientific sceptics." Indeed, whereas I observed in the previous chapter that Carroll seems to have owned very few scientific texts, both of the above-cited anti-scientific works sat in his library at the time of his death. Karoline Leach takes the view that Carroll "disliked, or feared, perhaps . . . the hubristic, mechanistic 'science' that was just developing in his time and was all about denying what we can't currently explain or don't wish to accept."<sup>13</sup>

Although the evidence suggests that this was Carroll's position, he apparently did not state it any more overtly than in his letter to Langton Clarke. However, he seems to hint at it in a suggestive passage from *Sylvie & Bruno*, as the Earl discusses the limits of science and is chided for overlooking the metaphysical value of charity:

"When I transport myself, in thought, through some thousands or millions of years, and fancy myself possessed of as much Science as one created reason can carry, I ask myself 'What then? With nothing more to learn, can one rest content on knowledge, for the eternity yet to be lived through?' It has been a very wearying thought to me. I have sometimes fancied one might, in that event, say 'It is better *not* to be', and pray for personal annihilation — the Nirvana of the Buddhists."

<sup>11</sup> John Ruskin, *Love's Meinie* (Keston, George Allen: 1873) 59; qtd. in Beer, *Plots* 9.

<sup>12</sup> Albert & George Gresswell, *The Wonderland of Evolution* (London: Field & Tuer, 1884) 134. Despite the promising title, the book has more or less no connection with Alice beyond its episodic adventure structure and employment of the dream-motif.

<sup>13</sup> Karoline Leach, correspondence with the author, 3 September 2005.



“But that is only half the picture,” I said. “Besides working for oneself, may there not be the helping of others?”

“Surely, surely!” Lady Muriel exclaimed in a tone of relief, looking at her father with sparkling eyes. (Carroll 602)

These words were published in 1889, and though they were here given to fictional characters, Carroll was surely in sympathy with them, for he echoed them the following year in a personal letter to Ellen Terry which mentioned “one of the deep secrets of Life — that all that is really *worth* the doing, is what we do for *others*” (*Letters* 2:813).

### Ontological conflict

In Chapter 3 I cited the principle that Carroll would later recommend to Mary Brown when faced with an ontological difficulty:

settle, when two things contradict, which you will hold to, and I think you will find peace and comfort in such belief.

Clearly Carroll had determined that where science came into contradiction with his faith, he would stick with faith and reject science. Yet, as observed above, he did not advertise this decision. Rather, he chose in public to dismiss science in the quite different terms cited in the previous chapter.

I suggest that this reticence reflected the personally uncomfortable position in which Carroll’s principled rejection of science placed him. As I have shown in earlier chapters, the values of science were entirely consistent with his own world view, and in general he engaged with science enthusiastically. Indeed, the attempts of inductive science to derive and apply general rules and principles in real-world situations differed only in focus from Carroll’s own work on linguistics, lawn tennis *et al*, as discussed in Chapter 2. As I noted in Chapter 3, at the age of 16 Carroll had been awarded a copy of Bishop Butler’s *Analogy* which assured him that “the whole natural world and government of it is a scheme or system” (Butler 170). To reject the seemingly irrefutable findings of inductive science must have been all but impossible for Carroll: as he himself would, many years later, write in one of his letters to an agnostic,

if a proposition of Euclid were put before a man, able to understand it but very anxious not to believe it, he would not be able to help himself: he *must* believe it. (*Letters* 2:1122)

Nevertheless, this seems to have been what Carroll attempted. For if Carroll *had* felt able to reject the inductive sciences in rational terms, it is very hard to imagine that this supremely systematic man, who seems to have confronted nearly every question in life as an exercise in logic – whom T.B. Strong, we will recall, characterised as “relentless in pointing out the logical results of any position assumed by his opponent” – would have resorted instead to the broad, emotive abuse we have seen. In this light, his detached relationship with the inductive sciences looks like a way of avoiding having to confront their logic, and his public objections smack of posturing — a front intended to justify this detachment.

### Surreptitious engagement

To what extent this was a conscious strategy is probably impossible to say; but even as Carroll was denouncing the sciences he surely instinctively felt the urge to engage with them. Indeed, his private papers hint at a far greater personal involvement in science than his outward behaviour would have suggested. On 2nd June 1877, for example, he notes in his diary that, at night, he “made rhymes on Huxley’s ‘histological data’” (*Diaries* 7: 38). I have not been able to identify this work, but it is clearly an anatomical tract, and therefore seems overwhelmingly likely to be the work of T.H. Huxley. It is striking that, despite the apparent lack of interest in Huxley and his work I discussed in Chapter 4, Carroll nevertheless admits – just once, and in private – that he has taken such an interest in his “histological data” that he wishes to “make rhymes” on it, presumably as a mnemonic.

Another glimpse comes later in Carroll’s life, when he devised a system for remembering numbers which he called his “Memoria Technica.” He first describes it in a letter to Alice J. Cooper dated May 1890 in which he writes that he has used the system to remember the founding dates of Colleges (*Letters* 2:789). Four months later he writes to Florence Jackson, offering to teach her “my system of artificial Memory, in case you ever wish to learn any dates.” (*Letters* 2: 809). To Mary Newby he offers to teach the girls at the Oxford High School “a Memoria Technica (of my own devising) by which they can learn with ease any *dates* they like” (*Letters* 2:1038). Carroll has evidently decided to advertise this system as a way of remembering dates. And yet in just one letter, dated July 1893 and sent to Lucy Soulsby, he mentions that it is good for remembering any sort



of number: “For instance, I know the specific gravities (to 2 decimal places) of the common metals” (*Letters* 2:966).

What possible practical use can the 61-year old mathematician, photographer and children’s author have had for this knowledge, or for Huxley’s “histological data”? It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Carroll was simply personally interested in the discoveries of the inductive sciences – so interested that he wished to memorise them – and yet made very nearly no record of the fact. We also know that he *did* read at least one of Huxley’s works, but that when he died it was not mentioned in the catalogue of his library – perhaps a hint that perhaps science books were particularly vulnerable at the “clearing-out times” mentioned by Powell. In all, it appears that, while Carroll formally denied an interest in the sciences, he was nevertheless inspired him to enter into what I shall call a “surreptitious engagement” with them.

### Carroll and Darwin

The most suggestive evidence of surreptitious engagement is Carroll’s relationship with Darwin. In the light of what we have seen, it is no surprise that Carroll seems not to have made any clear pronouncement, public or private, on Darwin’s theory of evolution. However, perhaps because of the ubiquitous impact of Darwin’s theories, Carroll seems to have found it particularly difficult to keep his distance from Darwin, and clues remain that enable us to piece together some part of the picture.

The most direct and revealing evidence of Carroll’s engagement with Darwin appears in a diary entry for December 26th 1872. Carroll writes that he has written to “Mr. C. Darwin, whose book on *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* I am reading, and to whom I have given a print of [my photograph] ‘No Lessons Today’” (*Diaries* 6: 244). Carroll does not give any view on the work, but he was presumably impressed enough to want to attract Darwin’s attention by sending him the print. Indeed, though Carroll does not mention it in his diary, he not only wrote to the author but apparently offered to furnish photographs for a future work by Darwin: Wakeling annotates to this diary entry the text of Darwin’s letter in response, in which Darwin promises that he will not forget “your obliging offer,” should an occasion arise. Darwin was a figurehead for the “scientific sceptics” whom Carroll was supposed to reject, and Carroll would surely not have forgotten the debate in Oxford in 1860, at which Sam Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford (and, as seen in Chapter 3, a friend of Carroll’s) was



savaged by Huxley in Darwin's name. Yet here we see Carroll offering to collaborate with Darwin on a book — though apparently not daring to admit it even to his diary.

Characteristically, on the issue of evolution itself, and on *Origin of Species*, Carroll remains entirely inscrutable, leaving no clear indication as to his response to it. If he wrote about the Oxford debate in 1860 his views are lost in that lost volume of his diary. Nothing else survives. It may be suggestive that Carroll projected himself into *Alice* as the Dodo<sup>14</sup> — a bird that exemplified the popular interest in natural history, a stuffed dodo being one of the most popular attractions at the University's natural history museum. But "suggestive" is all that can be said for the observation. Direct allusions to Darwin do occasionally appear in Carroll's works, but these seem scrupulously to avoid passing judgment on his theories: in "The New Belfry of Christ Church, Oxford", for example, he borrows the language of Darwin whilst entirely evading its significance:

Bitterly, bitterly do all old Ch. Ch. men lament this latest lowest development of native taste. "We see the Governing Body," say they: "Where is the Governing Mind?" And Echo (exercising a judicious "natural selection" for which even Darwin would give her credit) answers — "where?" (Carroll 1030)

Elsewhere, in *Sylvie & Bruno*, while the narrator and Lady Muriel are discussing the progressive shortening of railway-literature, the following exchange takes place, alluding more directly to Darwin but still stopping far short of either endorsement or rejection:

"And when we travel by Electricity - if I may venture to develop your theory - we shall have leaflets instead of booklets, and the Murder and the Wedding will come on the same page."

"A development worthy of Darwin!" the lady exclaimed enthusiastically. "Only you reverse his theory. Instead of developing a mouse into an elephant, you would develop an elephant into a mouse!"

But here we plunged into a tunnel, and I leaned back and closed my eyes for a moment, trying to recall a few of the incidents of my recent dream. (Carroll 294)

Another place where we might look for clues as to Carroll's engagement with Darwin is Carroll's library. Morton Cohen considers that the contents of Carroll's li-

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<sup>14</sup> The identification is not in dispute: when *Alice's Adventures under Ground* was published in facsimile, Carroll presented Robinson Duckworth a copy inscribed to "the Duck, from the Dodo." However, as has been repeatedly pointed out (e.g. by Jan B. Gordon (Gordon 93) and Harry Levin (*Aspects* 177)), this could well have been a joke on Carroll's stammering pronunciation of his own (real) surname - "Do-Do-Dodgson" - and so the choice of avatar must be considered suggestive rather than revealing.



brary indicate that he “approached Darwin and *Origin of Species* in his usual measured way.” Cohen makes this judgment on the grounds that, at the time of his death, Carroll’s library contained “19 volumes of works by Darwin and his critics” (Cohen 350). The implication is that Carroll had a collection of Darwin’s works, including *Origin of Species*, and various anti-Darwinian works. Unfortunately, this is a misleading implication, for at least one reason and possibly two.

First, Cohen’s endnotes give W. John Smith’s short article on the subject, published in 1984 in the quarterly journal of the Lewis Carroll Society, as the source of his claim. Smith’s article in fact states that Carroll’s library held “19 books *on* Darwin, his theories and his critics.”<sup>15</sup> In reality, the auction catalogue of Carroll’s library lists only the one Darwin book mentioned above — *Expression of the Emotions in Man & Animals*, originally issued by John Murray in 1872, thirteen years after *Origin of Species* had first made its impact.

Secondly, Smith does not name the other 18 works on Darwin, and I cannot identify nearly so many; so, while Smith’s count may be accurate, the possibility cannot be dismissed that Smith’s total includes books with suggestive titles such as Samuel Haughton’s *Animal Mechanics* (a work constructed “with the view of showing the mutual advantages obtainable by anatomists and geometers from a combination of the sciences which they cultivate”)<sup>16</sup> and J.G. Wood’s *Man and Beast* (an attempt “to show that the lower animals do possess those mental and moral characteristics which we admit in ourselves to belong to the immortal spirit, and not to the perishable body”),<sup>17</sup> both works only dimly relevant to Darwin. He may also have been misled by Thomas Smith’s *Evolution*, an arithmetical work discussing “evolution” in the sense of the discovery of square roots, cube roots etc.<sup>18</sup> In fact, I have identified only five works in the

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<sup>15</sup> W. John Smith, “Dodgson’s Scientific Interests with Reference to the Books in His Library,” *Jabberwocky*, Winter 1984-5: 8.

<sup>16</sup> Samuel Haughton, *Principles of Animal Mechanics* (London: Longman, Green, 1873) v.

<sup>17</sup> : J.G. Wood *Man and Beast: Here and Hereafter* (London: Daldy, Isbister, 1874) vi.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Smith, *Evolution* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green & Longman, 1830), 81. Of course, we may hypothesise that Carroll himself acquired the book mistakenly expecting it to be about Darwin; but this is mere speculation, and as a mathematician he would surely have been aware of this other sense of the term.



catalogue that directly address the question of evolution (though there may be many more I have not recognised), and they are unanimously anti-Darwinian.<sup>19</sup>

Despite his silence, then, Carroll was clearly respectful of Darwin and aware of his theories. Indeed, the fact that he felt the need to acquire at least five books claiming to debunk Darwin suggests to me that none of them did so to his satisfaction. The late publishing dates of these books – Pocock's being dated 1891 – suggest that Carroll spent his whole life in search of a conclusive anti-Darwin argument.

His inability to find a satisfactory rejection may have been partly because *Origin of Species* offered little to reject, being not a statement of certainty but merely a working hypothesis. Darwin himself, in his introduction, humbly admitted that

No one ought to feel surprise at much remaining as yet unexplained in regard to the origin of species and varieties, if he makes due allowance for our profound ignorance in regard to the mutual relations of all the beings which live around us. (Darwin 6)

Darwin appears eager to point out gaps in his own theory: he acknowledges that “many and serious objections may be advanced against the theory of descent with modification through natural selection” (Darwin 459), and pauses half-way through the book in a chapter entitled “Difficulties on Theory” to make his own objections. “Why,” he wonders, “if species have descended from other species by insensibly fine gradations, do we not everywhere see innumerable transitional forms? . . . Is it possible that an animal having, for instance, the structure and habits of a bat, could have been formed by the modification of some animal with wholly different habits?” (Darwin 171-2) The questions are not rhetorical: Darwin simply does not know.

Perhaps Carroll's closest overt approach to the issues raised by Darwinian evolution is *Some Popular Fallacies About Vivisection*. Carroll clearly considers it immoral

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<sup>19</sup> Charles Bree, *An Exposition of the Fallacies in the Hypothesis of Mr. Darwin* (London: Longman, 1872); George Matheson, *Can the old Faith Live With The New? Or, the Problem of Evolution and Revelation* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1885); William Willmer Pocock, *Darwinism a Fallacy* (London: C.H. Kelly, 1891). The fourth work is listed in the catalogue only as *Evolution of the Human Race*, but its full title turns out to be *Evolution of the Human Race from Apes, and of Apes, from the Lower Animals a Doctrine Unsanctioned by Science* by T.W. Jones (London: Smith, Elder, 1876). The fifth is Sir Humphrey Davy's *Consolations in Travel* (London: John Murray, 1830), the anti-Darwinist argument in which was brought to my attention by Knight, *Age of Science* 33 (though of course Knight is unaware of the Carrollian connection). Another book in the catalogue – Daniel Wilson, *Caliban: The Missing Link* (London: Macmillan, 1873) – seems to provisionally accept Darwinism (13-38) but does not engage with Darwin's theories except in discussing how they might account for the eponymous Shakespeare character (the book's real subject).



to cause needless pain to animals, and sceptically refers to the “inscrutable boundary line” (Carroll 1080) which is assumed by vivisectors to distinguish humans from animals. Thomas Hardy would later explicitly credit Darwin with having inspired this intellectual insight, writing in a notebook that

The discovery of the law of evolution, which revealed that all organic creatures are of one family, shifted the centre of altruism from humanity to the whole conscious world collectively.<sup>20</sup>

Carroll also wittily argues that scientists who embrace Darwinism are guilty of hypocrisy if they also condone vivisection: the notion “that man is infinitely more important than the lower animals” is, he observes, “strange, from the lips of people who tell us that man is twin-brother to the monkey!” (Carroll 1073).

Yet alongside these apparent celebrations of the unity of creation, Carroll paradoxically also seeks to maintain that man must have his special place in the universe, and must be permitted “an absolute right to inflict death on animals, without assigning any reason.” Otherwise, he fears,

never may we destroy, for our convenience, some of a litter of puppies – or open a score of oysters when nineteen would have sufficed – or light a candle in a summer evening for mere pleasure, lest some hapless moth should rush to an untimely end! (Carroll 1072)

Indeed, at the very last, Carroll explicitly employs a Darwinian term in its darkest possible aspect, with the clear intention of aligning Darwin with the despised vivisectors: he envisions a future human vivisection whose practitioner assures the vivisectee that “with so feeble a physique as yours, you have only to be grateful that natural selection has spared you so long” (Carroll 1081).

Overall, it seems that Carroll’s relationship with Darwin was complex. He was surely drawn to the elegant logic of Darwin’s theories, and moved by their tendency to encourage sympathy for animals, whose suffering he deplored. His personal letter to Darwin bespeaks a high regard for the man, and his offer to illustrate future works indicates a desire to align himself with Darwinian natural unity. Suggestively, a photograph survives, taken by Carroll, of his friend Reginald Southey standing next to several

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<sup>20</sup> Elliot B. Gose, Jr., “Psychic Evolution: Darwinism and Initiation in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 28 (1963): 261-72; qtd. in Bruce Johnson, “The Perfection of Species and Hardy’s *Tess*,” *Nature and the Victorian Imagination* 272.



human and ape skeletons, emphasising their similarities. Another photograph from the same set shows a group of students studying one of the skeletons.<sup>21</sup>

Yet Carroll also observed that, as a universal system, Darwinism denied any notion of man as a superior spiritual being, and this he could not accept. His library indicates a keen interest in challenging Darwinism on these grounds. Though this contradiction emerges implicitly in *Some Popular Fallacies About Vivisection*, issued in 1875, Carroll's general response to the challenges of Darwin is silence. His diaries, letters and published writings make very little mention of Darwin; and when they do betray that evolution is on Carroll's mind, he steers well clear of controversy. In all, I conclude that Carroll sought to deal with Darwinism in the way he avoided the challenge of the inductive sciences more generally: through avoidance. Yet what I have termed his surreptitious engagement with science certainly extended to Darwin.

### Reading Carroll through Alice

I have shown that what scant material evidence there is suggests that Carroll was internally conflicted over Darwinism. This is no surprise, for, as I indicated above, inductive science set Carroll's core principles at odds with one another. However, Carroll's response to this conflict is central to the argument of this thesis, and it would therefore be helpful to gain a clearer view of the scale of the challenge Darwinism presented.

Naturally, this presents grave difficulties. As we have seen, Carroll did not openly confront the tension between science and his religious principles, and so documentary evidence is simply not available. However, Carrollians are fortunate in having an uncommonly helpful insight into the author's unguarded thoughts, in the form of the *Alice* books; and indeed it is in Wonderland that I believe Carroll inadvertently reveals the true extent of his engagement with science. This conclusion necessarily rests upon a psychological reading which falls short of the documentary standard I have tried to maintain in this thesis; but it will not be necessary to make any great leaps of interpretation to support it. I will first explain why I believe such an approach is appro-

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<sup>21</sup> The albums containing these photographs are held at Princeton University; they are reproduced in Taylor & Wakeling 134-141. These photographs were apparently taken with a view to selling copies to those who might wish to own, as nearly as they could, a piece of natural history: this intention is recorded in Carroll's diary for 15th June 1857, his stated object being "to see if I can in any way make photography pay its own expenses" (*Diaries* 3: 69). If they do indeed predate *Origin of Species* then the obvious conclusion is that Darwin confirmed what Carroll had already intuitively suspected.



appropriate here, then go on to demonstrate how this approach provides striking evidence that, despite Carroll's reservations, Darwinism had profoundly affected his perception of the universe.

The first question is whether *Alice* is susceptible to this type of reading. I believe it is because the text is, to a most unusual extent, the product of its author's subconscious. This, I believe, is not a controversial claim: as far back as 1933, A.M.E. Goldschmidt introduced perhaps the first Freudian reading of *Alice* with an explanation that the material was ideal for psychoanalysis because "we have [Carroll's] own word for it that he simply said the first thing that came into his head."<sup>22</sup> In fact, *Alice* is not *quite* a stream of consciousness, and we do not have to rely on Carroll's word, but Goldschmidt is basically correct. The original *Alice* story was, in the words of Robinson Duckworth (the other adult present at the boat trip at which it was told) "an extempore romance," related quite off the cuff (*Picture Book* 358). Many subsequent commentators, including William Empson (Empson 204), have taken this to confirm that *Alice* is at least partly a product of Carroll's subconscious.

Of course, the actual story that Carroll improvised is lost. The versions of *Wonderland* that survive are reworkings of the extempore story, and *Through The Looking Glass* tells a different story altogether. However, Carroll wrote in an article published in *The Theatre* in April 1887 that these secondary texts too arose from his subconscious:

*Alice* and *The Looking-Glass* are made up almost wholly of bits and scraps, single ideas which came of themselves. In writing it out, I added many fresh ideas, which seemed to grow of themselves upon the original stock; and many more were added when, years afterwards, I wrote it all over again for publication; but (this may interest some readers of *Alice* to know) every such idea and nearly every word of the dialogue came *of itself*.<sup>23</sup>

Small wonder that Sophie Marret would note "the particular resemblance of Lewis Carroll's nonsense writing (notably the *Alice* books . . . ) to the products of the unconscious mind"<sup>24</sup> (Marret 13). The psychological reading thus seems to be on relatively strong ground, and indeed it is ground tested not only by Goldschmidt and Empson,

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<sup>22</sup> A.M.E. Goldschmidt, "Alice in Wonderland Psychoanalysed," *Aspects of Alice*, 280.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis Carroll, "Alice on the Stage," *The Theatre* April 1887: 180.

<sup>24</sup> "la proximité particulière des écrits nonsensiques de Lewis Carroll (notamment les *Alice* . . . ) et des productions de l'inconscient."



but also subsequently by a string of essayists, including Paul Schilder,<sup>25</sup> John Skinner<sup>26</sup> and Phyllis Greenacre.<sup>27</sup> The complexities of their theories need not detain us, since I wish to make only a single, simple point, but the consensus is encouraging.

Before proceeding, however, I must also ask the reader to grant my analysis one interpretative translation: that Alice represents Carroll. This too should not be controversial: Morton Cohen considers Alice “an easy disguise” for the author (Cohen 195), and the identification is also made by Judith Bloomingdale in her Jungian reading of *Alice*.<sup>28</sup> Karoline Leach goes so far as to assert that, in the *Alice* books, “the author and his creation have penetrated one another, merging until the boundaries of their identities are no longer clear” (Leach 15).

Nevertheless, the point is worth justifying, as the historical circumstances of the creation of the Alice story superficially suggest that *Alice’s Adventures*<sup>29</sup> is about Alice, not Carroll. This idea is also supported by the presence in Wonderland of croquet, card games, chess and other interests of the Dean’s young daughter — later, recalling the genesis of the *Alice* books, Alice Liddell would observe that

much of *Through the Looking-Glass* is made up of [other stories Carroll extemporised for the Liddell children] . . . particularly the ones to do with chessmen, which are dated by the period when we were excitedly learning chess.<sup>30</sup>

Her circumstances also appear in the allusions to the three sisters on the boat trip as “Elsie, Lacie and Tillie”<sup>31</sup> in the Dormouse’s story (Carroll 73), and later to her younger

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Schilder, “Psychoanalytic Remarks on Alice in Wonderland”, *Aspects of Alice* 283.

<sup>26</sup> John Skinner, “Lewis Carroll’s Adventures in Wonderland”, *Aspects of Alice* 293.

<sup>27</sup> Phyllis Greenacre, “The Character of Dodgson as Revealed in the Writings of Carroll”, *Aspects of Alice* 316.

<sup>28</sup> Judith Bloomingdale, “Alice as Anima: The Image of Woman in Carroll’s Classics”, *Aspects of Alice* 379.

<sup>29</sup> Though all three Liddell sisters were present, Robinson Duckworth’s account of the telling of the story makes it clear that Alice was Carroll’s primary audience: “the story was actually composed over my shoulder for the benefit of Alice Liddell.” (Collingwood, *Picture Book* 358) Alice alone was the recipient of the original MS *Alice’s Adventures under Ground*, and Carroll affixed at the end a photograph of her alone, which he had undoubtedly taken and developed himself.

<sup>30</sup> Caryl Hargreaves, “Alice’s Recollections of Carrollian Days, as Told to her Son,” *Cornhill Magazine* 73 (1932); *Interviews & Recollections* 84.

<sup>31</sup> As Martin Gardner glosses, “Elsie is L.C. (Lorina Charlotte), Tillie refers to Edith’s family nickname of Matilda, and Lacie is an anagram of Alice.” (*Annotated Alice* 100)



sisters Violet and Rhoda, who were not present at the original boat trip, in the Garden of Live Flowers (Carroll 146).

Yet apparently this was a regular trick of Carroll's: Gertrude Chataway, another child-friend, would recall the way that Carroll "would see the drift of her thoughts and make her feel she was part of the story."<sup>32</sup> Her phrasing makes clear that this was an illusion, however warmly meant. While all the apparatus of Alice's story invited Alice Liddell to identify with her namesake, the images from Alice's life are necessarily also images from Carroll's. Morton Cohen believes that the *Alice* books are a "double-layered" metaphor, and that beneath the overt references to Alice lie codified references to Carroll's own life:

If the Red Queen is a parody of [the Liddell children's governess] Miss Prickett, she is also an exaggeration of someone in or near the Dodgson household in Daresbury or Croft. The metaphor holds true through both books. The Caucus-Race is a parody of games at Richmond and Rugby. The conversation between the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, in its absurd, lethargic silliness, captures the essence of a conversation between intimate adults, perhaps between two dim-witted parsons or between two fossilised Oxford dons. (Cohen 139)

Cohen is, of course, indulging in pure speculation. But I am hesitant to dismiss his view of the *Alice* books as "a record of [Carroll's] childhood", not least because of the resemblance I have identified between an early scene in *Alice's Adventures* and the crypt at Ripon Cathedral (see Appendix A).

At any rate, regardless of the provenance of the circumstances in which the heroine Alice finds herself, she speaks with an adult voice and exhibits a concern for logic, social form and systemic linguistics which is more obviously from Carroll's own psyche than Alice Liddell's; and she is gracious, thoughtful and considerate — not attributes unequivocally attributable to Alice Liddell.<sup>33</sup> We will remember Alice Liddell's com-

<sup>32</sup> A. Gertrude Atkinson [née Chataway], "Memories of Lewis Carroll", *Hampshire Chronicle*, March 13th 1948, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Morton Cohen writes of the adult Alice's "unpleasant petulance" and "nasty, vicious temper" (Cohen 521-3). Carroll's mentions of her as a child paint her more charitably, but still suggest that she was no saint: she may well be the "imperious Prima" in the prefatory poem to *Alice's Adventures* who "flashes forth" with an "edict" to tell the story (Carroll 11). I suspect that this is her, rather than either of her sisters, because the word "imperious" also appears in Carroll's diary entry for April 21st 1863, which records that, having sprained her ankle, "Alice was in an unusually imperious and ungentle mood." This sentence does not appear in Roger Lancelyn Green's edition of the diaries, and Edward Wakeling remarks in a footnote to the entry in his unexpurgated edition that "An attempt was made to obscure the writing on this page." (*Diaries* 193) This was presumably intended to protect Alice's



ment, cited in Chapter 2, that “perhaps only a brilliant logician could have written *Alice in Wonderland*” (*Interviews & Recollections* 88). She recognises her circumstances in *Alice*, but identifies the work overall as the product of a logician.

### Carroll’s scientific Wonderland

Having outlined my psychological method, it is now time to apply it. Once we grant that Alice is a subconscious projection of Carroll then we can look to her behaviour to provide a clue as to Carroll’s own instincts; and it is no great surprise to find that it squares very comfortably with the philosophy of the inductive sciences. Alice’s primary impulse is to make sense of Wonderland. She is not driven by a moral or practical purpose: she wants to find things out. She is not like the overbearing Duchess, for whom every story must have a moral imposed upon it, no matter how contrived (Carroll 88-9); rather, she shares the inquiring spirit of the contemporary scientist W.K. Clifford — the “pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and without even such regard to collateral interests as most people would think a matter of common prudence.”<sup>34</sup> She follows the White Rabbit because she is “burning with curiosity,” darting into the Rabbit hole “never once considering how in the world she was to get out again” (Carroll 16). She drinks the “Drink Me” bottle because “I know *something* interesting is sure to happen” (Carroll 39). After being told that she is just a “sort of thing” in the Red King’s dream, she has “a great mind to go and wake him, and see what happens!” (Carroll 214).

Alice’s response to Wonderland is not merely suggestive of the ethos of scientific enquiry: it is an enactment of that ethos. She does not merely observe, but looks for overarching rules in the mode of the inductive sciences. W.H. Auden believes this concern motivates Alice’s responses to the instructions she is given: he sees at the heart of the *Alice* books a message that

what a child desires before anything else is that the world in which he finds himself should make sense. It is not the commands and prohibitions, as such, which adults impose that he resents, but rather that he cannot perceive any law linking one command to another in a consistent pattern. (Auden 11)

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character, though it was a poor effort as the writing is still legible behind the black ink crosshatching that runs over the words (*Diaries MS*).

<sup>34</sup> Frederick Pollock, introduction to, W.K. Clifford, *Lectures and Essays*, ed. Leslie Stephen and Frederick Pollock (London, 1879) 1: 29-30, qtd. in Cosslett 13.



Alice does her best to identify consistent patterns, such as that “wherever you go on the English coast, you find a number of bathing-machines in the sea, some children digging in the sand with wooden spades, then a row of lodging-houses, and behind them a railway-station” (Carroll 27). As all the King’s horses process past, she speculates that it might be “a regular rule that whenever a horse stumbled, the rider fell off instantly” (Carroll 203). She is “very much pleased at having found out a new rule” when she determines that pepper is what makes people hot-tempered (Carroll 87). She tries (without much success) to work out the rules of battle between the Red Knight and the White Knight (Carroll 216). Her concern for structure can also be seen in her complaints when she does not find it: on encountering Humpty Dumpty, she realises in her own recital that “that last line is much too long for the poetry” (Carroll 192); and she laments that the kittens won’t adopt a system of communication more lucid than purring regardless of the circumstance, pouting “how *can* you talk with a person if they *always* say the same thing?” (Carroll 247). She even dabbles in the mechanical sciences, proudly identifying her glide down the stairs of Looking-Glass House as “a new invention for getting down stairs quickly and easily” (Carroll 142).

At this point the reader may feel disappointed at the mundanity of what the psychological reading has so far revealed. Carroll’s systemic instincts have been a constant refrain of this thesis from the outset, and my insight into Carroll’s subconscious seems to have revealed little that was not already overt. William Empson’s attempt to read beneath the surface of *Alice* reached the same conclusion: “on the whole,” he wrote, “the results of the analysis, when put into drawing-room language, are [Carroll’s] conscious opinions” (Empson 203). However, this reading has more to offer; for Carroll has not only authored Alice’s responses to the world: he has also authored a world for her to respond to. Wonderland thus offers a unique insight into Carroll’s instinctive model of the universe.

This model is not what we might expect. We have seen that Carroll’s twin guiding principles are order and religion, and for this reason we might expect his projection of the world to be an orderly intellectual universe of mathematical simplicity and spiritual hierarchy. However, just as in Chapter 2 we saw Wonderland point up the arbitrariness of Alice’s conventional language, here, on a grander scale, we see it point up the arbitrariness of her conventional ontology. For while Alice expects to be able to find order, Wonderland is haphazard and inconsistent; it is populated with a jumble of all of crea-

tion, where size, nature and even time are inconsistent. In Wonderland, a fish can be a footman and a baby can become a pig. When Alice emerges from the Pool of Tears she finds herself among a “whole Noah’s Ark” (Empson 204), and still at her coronation feast she is surrounded by “guests, of all kinds: some were animals, some birds, and there were even a few flowers among them” (Carroll 239). It is like *The Country of the Iguanodon*:<sup>35</sup> here, all creatures and even vegetables participate in society, all equal to each other — and to man. The strong suggestion is that, despite Carroll’s determination to keep science at arm’s length, he had been profoundly influenced by Darwin’s anti-hierarchical theories, and now instinctively perceived the universe around him in terms of Darwinian unity.

### Darwin in Wonderland

Having made such a grand claim, I must justify my identification of Wonderland as Darwinian. After all, the device of talking animals goes back at least as far as Aesop, and that is certainly not necessarily Darwinist. However, Carroll’s subconscious projects animals and humans into community in a manner which is unconventional in two ways, both of which make the animal society of Wonderland more Darwinian than other such fictional societies.

The first way in which Wonderland is exceptional is the stark literality with which the animal society is realised. Earlier literature had either, like Aesop, placed animals in a society that mirrored, but was separate to, human society; or otherwise anthropomorphised animals to the extent that they effectively became humans in animal’s bodies. Wonderland, by contrast, presents a society in which animals retain their animal nature whilst participating as equals with humans. This is not to say there is no element of anthropomorphisation: to make it possible for Alice to recognise and participate in animal society it must be invested with some human trappings. Gillian Beer, for example, cites the practical objection, voiced in her example by Max Müller (Beer 121), that animals cannot be in community with humans because they have no language with which to communicate with one another or humans. Carroll is forced to grant human language to animals, along with a few other luxuries such as sheltered housing and

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<sup>35</sup> See Chapter 4, footnote 13.



clothing — and indeed, it is the white rabbit's waistcoat and pocket-watch that prompt Alice to follow it in the first place (Carroll 29-30).

Nevertheless, the creatures' animal natures are never lost. One expression of this is the way the food chain looms over proceedings: the mouse is scared of cats and dogs (Carroll 29-30); and when, after the Caucus Race, Alice explains that Dinah will "eat a little bird as soon as look at it" the speech causes "a remarkable sensation among the party", which of course includes a large avian contingent (Carroll 37). Alice learns from her mistake, realising that she is now going among the sort of creature over which she used to unthinkingly presume dominion, and watches her mouth so as not to make any further *faux pas*:

"As to the whiting," said the Mock Turtle," they — you've seen them, of course?"

"Yes," said Alice, "I've often seen them at dinn—" she checked herself hastily. (Carroll 98)

When Alice accidentally upsets the jury-box, the sight of the jury-men sprawling on the floor reminds her "very much of a globe of gold-fish she had accidentally upset the week before." Equivalence is thus suggested between the sentient (if incompetent) creatures of Wonderland and the mindless real-world creatures Alice is used to dealing with. Her invocations of Dinah have a similar effect, suggesting that Dinah could participate in community with these talking creatures, and, by extension, with Alice — a notion which Alice makes explicit as she goes in search of a pair of gloves for the White Rabbit:

"How queer it seems," Alice said to herself, "to be going messages for a rabbit! I suppose Dinah'll be sending me on messages next!" And she began fancying the sort of thing that would happen: "Miss Alice! Come here directly, and get ready for your walk! 'Coming in a minute, nurse! But I've got to watch this mouse-hole till Dinah comes back, and see that the mouse doesn't get out.' Only I don't think," Alice went on, "that they'd let Dinah stop in the house if it began ordering people about like that!" (Carroll 38-9)

In all, it seems clear that the animals Alice meets in Carroll's Wonderland are not codified humans or allegorical representations, but actual animals. Carroll has rendered a communion of creation as naturalistically as a story about a little girl could accommodate.

The second way in which Carroll's depiction of human/animal society is original comes in its egalitarianism. In Victorian culture, man's dominion over animals was as-

sured by scriptural authority; but in Wonderland, Alice's species counts for nothing. The fact of her being human gives her no superiority over the inhabitants of Wonderland, and indeed she is frequently treated as an inferior by the creatures she meets: the White Rabbit sends her on an errand; the Caterpillar addresses her with haughty disdain; the Dormouse chides her – “if you can't be civil,” he announces, “you'd better finish the story yourself!” (Carroll 74); – small wonder that Alice finds herself despairing that “it's really dreadful . . . the way all the creatures argue. It's enough to drive one crazy!” (Carroll 59), and later reflects that “I never was so ordered about before, in all my life, never!” The *coup de grâce* arrives in *Through the Looking Glass* when Alice meets the Unicorn and its first response is astonishment: “I always thought [children] were fabulous monsters!” it exclaims. “Is it alive?” (Carroll 210). A new, humble perspective is thrust on Alice, as she finds herself depersonalised by the impersonal pronoun she used earlier to refer to her pet cat, while elsewhere the narrator refers to the Mouse as “a *person* of some authority” (Carroll 32, emphasis added). The same equivalence of man and animal would later recur in *The Hunting of the Snark*, in which the fact that one member of the crew is not human, goes wholly unremarked. Small wonder that William Empson supposes that Alice “would prefer a more aristocratic system” (Empson 205).

### Amoral Alice

The equality of creatures in Wonderland is striking; but it is not the most Darwinian characteristic of the *Alice* stories. To be sure, it is fascinating to see the Darwinian principle of the unity of creation, which Carroll approached only cautiously in 1875, expressed so starkly in his earlier, less contrived work. But Wonderland expresses not only that aspect of Darwin. Despite Carroll's steadfast insistence on morality, Wonderland also exhibits Darwin's troubling amorality.

The most immediate mark of the amorality of the *Alice* books is their literal lack of a moral. Indeed, Carroll considered this a defining quality of the book: as mentioned in Chapter 2, he wrote to his child-friend Lilia MacDonald that Frederik Paludin-Müller's *The Fountain of Youth* “has got a moral — so I need hardly say it is *not* by Lewis Carroll” (*Letters* 1:96). Today it may seem strange to even notice such a detail, but for Victorian children's literature this was a striking departure: as I observed in Chapter 2, the Victorian child was beset with “improving” literature, and the conventional pre-*Alice* story-book had a didactic purpose, acting – often overtly – as a channel for instruction.



Hence, *The Children's Friend*, an 1843 book of "Moral and Interesting Stories for the Amusement and Instruction of Youth" begins with a direct explanation that its aim is

to amuse children and, at the same time, to incline them to virtue, by presenting it under the most amiable form. . . . [The protagonists'] punishments are made the consequences of their faults, and their rewards consist chiefly in the pleasure which they derive from doing good actions. Every thing here disposes them to love virtue for the sake of their own happiness, and to deter them from vice as the source of sorrow and mortification.<sup>36</sup>

The self-identification of this joyless tome as children's "friend" gives a measure of the expected relationship between child and literature. Elizabeth Sewell's 1858 children's novel *Ursula* makes clear on its very first page that adult instruction was supposed to be for the child's own good, and that those who disregarded it had only themselves to blame: "I took little heed to advice which was given me when I was young," begins its heroine, "and so, perhaps, no heed will be given to me when I tell of my mistakes and difficulties."<sup>37</sup> Another such book is Charlotte Yonge's *Scenes and Characters*, which Carroll gave to Alice Liddell in 1863 as an eleventh birthday present (*Diaries*: 4: 196). The book begins with a preface that overtly explains the authorial intention:

the maxim which has influenced the delineation of the different "scenes and characters" is that feeling, unguided and unrestrained, soon becomes mere selfishness; while the simple endeavour to fulfil each immediate claim of duty may lead to the highest acts of self-devotion.<sup>38</sup>

Even the second most famous book of the 1860s, Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies*, is dusted with authorial interjections such as "I am very glad to say that Tom learnt such a lesson that day that he did not torment creatures for a long time after."<sup>39</sup> A passage at the end, entitled "moral", advises the reader to "learn your lessons, and thank God that you have plenty of cold water to wash in; and wash in it too, like a true English man" (Kingsley 349). Roger Lancelyn Green memorably characterises the book as "an absolute orgy of self-conscious didacticism in which the fancy moves awkwardly, even guiltily, and the moral purpose is underlined throughout" (Green 54). Jan Gordon notes

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<sup>36</sup> *The Children's Friend* (London: T. Allman, 1843) iii. (This is not the contemporary children's periodical of the same name cited in Chapter 2.)

<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Sewell, *Ursula: A Tale of Country Life* (London: Longman, 1858) 1.

<sup>38</sup> Charlotte Yonge, *Scenes and Characters: or Eighteen Months at Beechcroft* (London: John & Charles Mozley, 1853) vi.

<sup>39</sup> Charles Kingsley, *The Water Babies* (London: Macmillan, 1863) 99.



(Gordon 93-113) that Alice herself has read “several nice little stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts, and other unpleasant things, all because they *would* not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them” (Carroll 20).

This was the pervasive tenor of pre-*Alice* children’s literature: Ronald Reichertz goes so far as to argue that “informational literature . . . was incorporated, to some degree, into all of the other official literatures before the publication of the *Alice* books” (Reichertz 21). This is not to say that *Alice* was a shocking departure: the *Daily News* review of *Alice’s Adventures*, published in December 1866, suggests that the “puritanical tone” of early nineteenth-century children’s literature had already, before the publication of *Alice*, been “amended for several years”; and Edward Salmon, writing in 1887, opined that “there is nothing extraordinarily original about either [*Alice* book], and certainly the former cannot fairly be called, as it once was, the most remarkable book for children of recent times.”<sup>40</sup> Robinson Duckworth, the other adult present on the rowing trip to Godstow, recalled after Carroll’s death that the books had not seemed like a ground-breaking departure at the time:

I wish I had preserved some of the interesting notes which [Carroll] had occasion to write to me . . . after the publication of the book which has made him famous; but in those days one did not foresee the interest which was destined to attach to his name. (*Picture Book* 360)

As Hugh Haughton warns, “Lewis Carroll’s thoroughly ‘modern’ transformation of the traditional ‘fairy tale’ . . . is part of a much broader development of writing specifically directed at children in the Victorian period” (Haughton lviii). All the same, P. Gila Reinstein’s doctoral thesis concludes, that, though *Alice* may not have been not the first children’s book to relax the moral purpose, it was the first to discard it altogether:

All of Carroll’s predecessors . . . capitulate at one point or other to the pressures of their society, and bring into their novels moral or didactic instruction.<sup>41</sup>

Whereas the *Alice* books do not have an explicit moral, Gordon points out that their form is redolent of the *Bildungsroman*, a popular Victorian genre which followed an individual’s growth through an episodic series of situations from youth into

<sup>40</sup> Edward Salmon, “Literature for the Little Ones,” *Nineteenth Century* October 1887: 563.

<sup>41</sup> P. Gila Reinstein, *Alice in Context* (London: Garland, 1988) 171-7.



maturity, and thus still represented personal development (the name literally means “education novel” in German). The genre includes such prominent works as Dickens’ *Great Expectations* and *The Water Babies*, and Judith McDaniel, in her doctoral dissertation, notes that the *Bildungsroman* model had relatively recently been extended to a female protagonist:

Jane Eyre [(1847)] established for the first time the pattern of the female *Bildungsroman*. Within this pattern, Jane’s problem is to become a self-fulfilled, self-contented individual. Each of Jane’s adventures leads her toward this resolution.<sup>42</sup>

Morton Cohen too sees elements of *Bildung* in *Alice*; just as Jane Eyre “achieve[s] independent adulthood through a series of trials” (Ralph 109-110), so Cohen perceives that, in *Through the Looking-Glass*,

Alice is climbing the social ladder, and ultimately reaches the top, a queen, a figure of independence and power; and as she moves from square to square, she sheds her childishness and becomes adult. (Cohen 215)

The events of the *Alice* books fit so comfortably into the form of the *Bildungsroman* that it is easy to follow Professor Cohen into the trap of assuming that Alice grows through her trials. Yet in fact, Alice, unlike Jane Eyre, neither surmounts the obstacles she encounters, nor learns from her experiences. Elsie Leach observes that “Alice’s ‘progress’ cannot be described in meaningful, social, spatial, temporal or moral terms” (Elsie Leach 90). The presumption that when Alice becomes a Queen she has progressed within society is immediately demolished by the Red and White Queens, who, rather than treating her as an equal, pointedly deny her authority, pre-empting her in inviting one another to her dinner-party, bamboozling her with a catechism that resembles a humbling *viva voce* examination and humiliatingly using her as a pillow for their own comfort (Carroll 231-6). It is a far cry from Jane’s ability, at last, to confidently announce that “I am independent, sir . . . I am my own mistress” (Brontë 440). Martin Gardner sees moral progress in the “Wasp in a Wig” passage of *Through the Looking Glass*, feeling that “Carroll must surely have wanted to show Alice performing a final deed of charity that would justify her approaching coronation” (Gardner 303): yet this chapter

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<sup>42</sup> Judith McDaniel, *Fettered Wings Half Loose: Female Development in the Victorian Novel* (doctoral dissertation, Tufts U. 1975); cited in Phyllis C. Ralph, *Victorian Transformations: Fairy Tales, Adolescence and the Novel of Female Development* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989) 91.

was excised by Carroll. The last word must go to Reinstein, who concludes that, “unlike all other protagonists in pre-1865 juvenile fiction that I have encountered, Alice ends her adventures neither older nor wiser” (Reinstein 177).

In short, Carroll’s Wonderland, like Huxley’s science, has “no sort of relation to moral ends.” As Hugh Haughton notes,

in the nonsense of the *Alice* books, as nowhere else, [Carroll] found a licence to explore . . . the disorienting “sceptical” dimension of his own intelligence, which most of his life he had to hold at bay. (Haughton xxiv)

Carroll was aware of this, and even appears to have been proud, of the agnosticism of his work: as Roger Lancelyn Green notes, he himself wrote that “I can guarantee that the books have no religious teaching whatever in them — in fact they do not teach anything at all.”<sup>43</sup> Jean Gattégno notes that in *Alice* “there is nothing left of the grand inspiration” that characterised earlier Victorian literature.<sup>44</sup> Donald Rackin observes that “there can be no *telos*, no final goal or ultimate meaning within Alice’s biological nature or her natural surroundings” (Rackin 400). Carroll seems instead to have created the first work of Darwinian fiction.

### Conclusion

Carroll’s apparent scorn for science thus seems to have been a smokescreen. As we might have predicted all along, his instinct for systematisation drew him toward the inductive sciences every bit as much as it did towards the less challenging branches. He evidently calculated that he must reject them because they came into conflict with his religious axioms; but he did not find it easy to suppress his intellectual instincts.

The fallout seems to have been a pattern of surreptitious engagement with science. Naturally, we cannot be sure of the extent of this engagement, but its existence is implied in the scientific terms that occasionally appear in his works and in the hints he leaves in his diaries. Most revealingly, Wonderland indicates a perception of the universe which suggests that, despite Carroll’s efforts to reject science, he was intellectually wholly immersed in Darwinism. In modern psychological terms, the *Alice* books

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<sup>43</sup> Roger Lancelyn Green, *Lewis Carroll* (London: Bodley Head, 1960) 53.

<sup>44</sup> Jean Gattégno, “*Sylvie & Bruno*, or the Inside and the Outside,” *Lewis Carroll: a Celebration* 168. The reference is directly to Carroll’s creation of *Sylvie & Bruno* (which Carroll began to conceive of before *Through the Looking-Glass* was completed) by constructing heterogeneous scraps into a narrative.



are works of projection, in which the fantasy subconsciously expresses a world view which Carroll could not have overtly admitted to.<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps Carroll had a particular weakness for Darwin because he recognised a kindred spirit. Darwin, like Carroll, was conflicted over the implications of evolution, having been driven to them by logic rather than desire. Science historian Derek Gjertsen notes that, in a letter to Hooker in 1844, Darwin

wrote that "I am almost convinced . . . that species are not (it is like confessing a murder) immutable." The same candour and horror at his own temerity can be found in many of his letters. In 1856, for example, he was still going through his confessional motions, this time with the American botanist Asa Gray: "As an honest man I must tell you that I have come to the heterodox conclusion that there are no such things as independently created species — that species are only strongly defined varieties. I know this will make you despise me."<sup>46</sup>

As Gillian Beer puts it, Darwin found that his theories meant "more and other than he could control" (Beer 38); and Carroll admitted in a letter in 1896, with reference to *The Hunting of the Snark*, that he had experienced the same phenomenon: "words," he wrote, "mean more than we mean to express when we use them."<sup>47</sup> In Carroll's case, they appear to have betrayed an irreconcilable inner conflict that Carroll could try to deny but could not contain.

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<sup>45</sup> For more on projection, see e.g. Fritz Perls, *Ego, Hunger & Aggression* (Highland, NY: Gestalt Journal P, 1992).

<sup>46</sup> Derek Gjertsen, *The Classics of Science* (New York: Lilian Barber P, 1984) 321.

<sup>47</sup> Cohen describes this letter as written "to some children" on August 18th 1884 (Cohen 409): it appears under this date as "To the Lowrie children" in *Letters* (1:547). Martin Gardner, however, dates it to 1896 in *The Annotated Snark* (22). No explanation for this discrepancy is apparent, though *Letters* does note that the letter was published after Carroll's death in *The Critic* 29: Mar. 5 1898, 166-7.

## Chapter 6

# Dreams and Doubts

Over the previous four chapters of this thesis I have built up a picture of Carroll as a fundamentally logical character, whose behaviour was heavily informed by logical principles. I have shown that, over the course of his life, even his religious beliefs became rational and systemic. I have argued that his rationality drew him towards science, and demonstrated that, even as he outwardly rejected “scientific sceptics”, he quietly took an interest in science. Indeed, it seems science affected him more than he would admit, and while he outwardly insisted on religiosity, I have shown how the *Alice* books suggest that Darwin had encouraged in him an entirely amoral conception of the universe.

I have thus established a clear tension between Carroll’s religious values and his intellectual beliefs; and in this, the final chapter of my argument, I will explore the effect of this tension. I shall start from a perhaps surprising angle, with a consideration of what the dream device reveals about Carroll’s relationship with Alice. My conclusions will feed into a discussion of the tension established over the previous chapters, and finally I will move on to consider how Carroll’s relationships with little girls in general might have provided solace from religious difficulties.

In previous chapters I have tried to support my arguments wherever possible with reference to primary sources. This has not always been possible, especially in attempting to assess Carroll’s covert involvement with science, where primary sources are necessarily absent; but I have nevertheless tried to conduct a principally evidence-driven enquiry. At points during this chapter, however, I will be forced to move into a more speculative mode, as my conclusions involve concerns to which Carroll would not have admitted — if indeed he had even been fully aware of them. This chapter will therefore offer fewer footnotes than those that have gone before, and ultimately will advance a theory rather than present a proof. I hope, however, that the reader will agree that this theory, when fully expressed, provides a new approach to Carroll’s life which rings true and which invites further study.



### The dream device

In the previous chapter, I argued that the *Alice* books were a product of Carroll's subconscious. Indeed, it was their impromptu provenance that emboldened me to read them psychoanalytically, and to regard their content and form as a source of clues as to Carroll's internal conception of the universe. The conclusion was that this conception was heavily influenced by then-current scientific discourse.

In thus approaching the *Alice* books, however, there was one significant aspect of them which I did not consider: the fact that both are presented as dreams. This presentation is quite explicit: in the very first line of *Alice's Adventures* we are told that "Alice was beginning to get very tired." Subsequent comments such as that Alice is feeling "very sleepy and stupid" clearly signal that Wonderland, when it arrives, is a dream-vision. Alice's sister confirms, at the end of her adventures, that Alice has indeed been asleep: "wake up, Alice dear," she urges. "Why, what a long sleep you've had!" Alice herself, despite not having recognised her passage into the dream-world, acknowledges in response that she has returned from it: "Oh, I've had such a curious dream!" she immediately exclaims (Carroll 117). *Through the Looking-Glass* follows exactly the same pattern: during her time in Looking-Glass Land, Alice seems not to realise that she has fallen asleep; but once she reawakens she is able to chide Kitty that "You woke me out of oh! such a nice dream!" and happily discusses the events of "her dream" with the other cats (Carroll 247-9). In short, Carroll explicitly presents Alice's adventures as having been dreamt by her, and provides a realistic portrayal of the process of nodding off, dreaming and waking.

This device might be considered a challenge to the theory I advanced in the previous chapter, as it ontologically separates Wonderland from reality within the story. The Darwinian jumble of creation in which Alice finds herself is explicitly presented as a fiction, inviting the thought that it might be intended allegorically. Alternatively, since Wonderland is depicted as an illogical, inconsistent place which Alice eventually rejects, it could even be argued – overlooking other evidence presented in the previous chapter – that the *Alice* books express Carroll's contempt for the scientific universe.

Carroll was certainly aware that the dream carried certain connotations. Morton Cohen notes that Carroll would surely have been aware of the conventional cultural weight of the dream:



Without the benefit of later “scientific” work on dream interpretation, [Carroll], steeped in classical literature, knew that the ancient Greeks taught that dreams . . . had to be regarded seriously; they bore real meaning for the dreamer. (Cohen 224-5)

Carroll’s awareness of this supernatural aspect of dreams is easy to confirm: in the catalogue for the first posthumous auction of his library, lot 899 includes Frank Seafield’s *The Literature and Curiosities of Dreams*, Edward Clodd’s *Myths and Dreams*<sup>1</sup> and “*Phantom World* by H. Christmas.” The subsequent lot includes “Ingram’s *Haunted Homes*, 2 vols., Sully’s *Illusions, Miracles Past and Present, Confessions of a Medium*, and 6 others.” It is of course unclear whether the arrangement of dream literature together with supernatural literature reflects Carroll’s own system of classification or that of the auction house;<sup>2</sup> but that such books were in his library at all strongly implies his awareness of this aspect of dreams.

The conventional conception of a dream as a supernatural vision enabled the literary dream to be “supernatural” in terms of the narrative. Peter Merchant’s PhD thesis concludes that the dream in Victorian (and earlier) novels is conventionally “a device whose uses are before all else structural — summarising, information giving, prefiguring, suspense-creating.”<sup>3</sup> One example he cites is Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa*, where it represents, quite as much as in Greek literature, “an episode capable of revealing what is shielded from view” (Merchant 2).

<sup>1</sup> The full title of the second half of this latter book (the portion dealing with dreams) is *Dreams: Their Place in the Growth of Beliefs in the Supernatural*.

<sup>2</sup> Morton Cohen comments that, after Carroll’s death, his family was “forced to clear out his rooms quickly, and while [his] relatives were sorting through his papers, a constant pillar of smoke rose from the chimney over his rooms as bundle after bundle of his papers, letters and manuscripts went up in flames” (Cohen 528). The suggestion is that the family travelled to Oxford and cleared out Carroll’s rooms themselves, and this being the case the arrangement of lots might well reflect the family’s own idea of order. However, Cohen gives no source for this vivid narrative, and is perhaps following Roger Lancelyn Green’s preface to his edition of the Diaries which mentions that “however carefully the family sorted the multitudinous papers in those rooms, still it was inevitable (however much we may regret it now) that many cartloads were taken out and burnt” (Green, *Diaries* xii). This version of events was presumably acquired via the Dodgson sisters, with whom Green was working, and it is challenged by a letter that Jeffrey Stern cites from Wilfred Dodgson – Carroll’s brother and executor of his will – to E.J. Brooks, the auctioneer, commenting that “it would be a great deal of trouble bringing the sacks of papers all the way down here, and, as you stated that you could have them burnt in the manner we wish at Oxford, I should be glad if you would do so.” (Stern iii) This would suggest a marked lack of interest among the family in the disposal of his possessions. Curiously, Cohen acknowledges this letter but describes it as having been sent “to an unidentified recipient.”

<sup>3</sup> Peter Merchant, *The Role of Dreams in the English Novel from Richardson to Dickens* (PhD thesis, Cambridge U, 1979) ix.



In children's literature, this capacity of the dream to act metatextually was, unsurprisingly, employed didactically: as the critic Ronald Reichertz has noted,

The few examples of dream vision printed for children in the first six decades of the nineteenth century [i.e. before *Alice's Adventures*] are religious didactic works, perhaps owing to the perennial popularity of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a facsimile edition of which was part of Carroll's library.<sup>4</sup>

Reichertz gives evidence supporting Carroll's exposure to this type of literature, and we may presume that Carroll's bibliophilia would have exposed him to other examples. In Appendix B I present a brief discussion of one such example — *Effie's Dream Garden*, a work which predates *Alice* but which uses the same type of dream device and imagery. There is no direct evidence that Carroll was familiar with this particular book, but it provides a useful model of the conventional contemporary dream-story.

Thus, if we presume that Carroll *did* intend from the start for Wonderland to be a dream then we must acknowledge that he gave himself every opportunity to present an allegorical or dystopian vision. Yet this was an opportunity that he did not take. Instead of a conventional dream-story, Carroll authored a representation of a dream that reflected empirical observation. I note that, in both books, the actual moment of falling asleep is not signalled: Alice enters the dream seemingly without her or the narrator realising it. Indeed, in *Alice's Adventures Underground* – the closest thing we have to a transcript of this original story – the moment of transition is so discreet that it occurs mid-sentence:

So she was considering in her own mind, (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid,) whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain was worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when a white rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.<sup>5</sup>

This discreetly naturalistic depiction of nodding off contrasts starkly with *Effie's Dream-Garden*, which introduces the dream with an explicit “thus did she dream:”<sup>6</sup> The impression is that Carroll did not intend to emphasise a separation between Wonderland and reality. Indeed, if anything, the two seem deliberately blurred. It is possible this is a

<sup>4</sup> Ronald Reichertz, *The Making of the Alice Books: Lewis Carroll's Uses of Earlier Children's Literature* (Montreal: McGill UP, 1997) 64.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures under Ground* (Leicester: Windward, 1980) 2. This is a facsimile of the original held in the British Library.

<sup>6</sup> J.D.K. or J.D.R., *Effie's Dream-Garden* (London: Binns & Goodwin, 1853) 8.



relic of an original story in which Carroll did not even intend to author a transition between states at this point: the textual and historical evidence is wholly consistent with Carroll's having earnestly extemporised Wonderland, and hit upon the dream device only retrospectively when he needed to bring the narrative to a close. This form would then be repeated in *Through the Looking Glass*, which follows an identical model to its predecessor, down to the unremarked moment of falling asleep.

In all, there seems no evidence, beyond imperfect analogy with other literary dreams, to support the posited argument that the science of Wonderland might have been intended to be rejected. More than this, however, the verisimilitude of the dream Carroll presents reinforces the perception of Wonderland as uncontrived, and thus lends it credibility: we find what Merchant describes as "a less stylised kind of dream whose overall coherence is to be seized more in terms of psychological authenticity than in terms of dramatic form."<sup>7</sup>

I say that Carroll's dream reflected empirical observation because it exhibits certain characteristics of genuine dreams. One of these recognisable characteristics would have been described in Carroll's copy of Frank Seafield's *The Literature and Curiosities of Dreams*:

As a locomotive will travel long after its impelling power has ceased to put forth new energy; as a vessel will plough its way through the waters long after the furling of the sail, or the last revolution of the paddle or the screw; so will the activity of the waking mind project itself into the intellectual operations of the sleeping person. . . . The mind makes any combinations, but it is with elements that have been previously supplied. It cannot exercise itself upon what it has not received.<sup>8</sup>

Carroll himself alludes to this quality of regurgitating previously supplied information when, on her way to the fourth square in Looking-Glass Land, Alice sits on a train surrounded by passengers who repeatedly use the phrase "a thousand pounds." "I shall dream about a thousand pounds tonight, I know I shall," she thinks (Carroll 155). Elsewhere, in *Phantasmagoria*, the narrator has a supernatural encounter, following

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<sup>7</sup> Merchant ix. Merchant does not include Carroll in his review of dream literature, and this is not a direct description of the dream in *Alice* but a generalisation about a type of literary dream that Merchant identifies as emerging in the late Victorian period. I suspect, however, that if Merchant had broadened his study to include Carroll, he might have found the source of this development.

<sup>8</sup> Frank Seafield, *The Literature and Curiosities of Dreams* (London: Lockwood, 1865) 58-61.



which he writes that he “slept, and dreamed till break of day | Of Poltergeist and Fetch and Fay | And Leprechaun and Brownie!” (Carroll 765).

This process of recombining elements that have been previously supplied is certainly at work in the *Alice* books. In the previous chapter I cited an interview with Alice Liddell in which she confirmed that various aspects of the *Alice* books reflected elements of her personal life, and suggested that aspects of Carroll’s life were also present. I then went on to argue that Wonderland showed that Carroll must have engaged with Darwin, for, as Seafeld points out, the subconscious mind “cannot exercise itself upon what it has not received.” Rather, “the occurrences of business or pleasure or daily occupation will frequently indulge in a repetition in travestie” (Seafeld 42). It is hard to better “repetition in travestie” as a description of the chaos of Wonderland reflecting Carroll’s thoughts.

This chaos indirectly provides another indicator of the verisimilitude of Carroll’s dream. I commented in the previous chapter that we would expect Carroll’s systemic instincts to lead him to author a universe of perfect order, and I suggested that the jumble that we in fact see reflected the lack of hierarchy in the Darwinian world view. Faced with this jumble, we might expect Carroll to panic; but in fact, as I have shown, Alice is forthright and methodical, almost never seeming in the slightest unnerved by the chaotic developments she observes. This too suggests a dream: Seafeld observes that, whilst dreaming,

we have no consciousness of incoherence or incongruity. In sleep we get out of the laws of time and space; and being in chaos we find nothing chaotic. (Seafeld 43)

The description fits Wonderland perfectly: as Phyllis Greenacre confirms, “in the content of the *Alice* books, there is no regular order in time or space.”<sup>9</sup> Time is upset at the Mad Tea-Party, and inverted in Looking-Glass Land. Space can be distorted so that anything in Wonderland can be resized or repropportioned; in Looking-Glass Land, Alice steps over the boundary of the second square and finds herself instantaneously on a train; on arriving at the fourth square the train vanishes just as abruptly. Carroll seems to directly acknowledge this quality of dreams in *Sylvie & Bruno*, in which the

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<sup>9</sup> Phyllis Greenacre, *Swift and Carroll: A Psychoanalytic Study of Two Lives* (New York: International UP, 1955) 210.

narrator comments that “Shakespeare must have travelled by rail, if only in a dream” (Carroll 293) — the implication being that, in a dream, Shakespeare could coexist with a vehicle invented long after his death.

Thus the nature of the dream Carroll presents clearly identifies it not as a conventional dream, but as an actual dream. Indeed, critics have commented on its apparent genuineness: A.M.E. Goldschmidt, in “Alice in Wonderland Psychoanalysed”, observed that “The story is in the form of a dream, and it has the strange spontaneity of a dream” (Goldschmidt 280). Walter De La Mare describes as “*the sovereign element in the Alices*” the accurate presentation of “what is often perfectly rational, practical, logical . . . in a state and under conditions of life to which we most of us win admittance only when we are blessedly asleep.”<sup>10</sup> We might marvel at the precision with which Carroll creates such a perfect facsimile of a dream world; but in the light of what we know of the story’s genesis, and of the psychological insights it has afforded us, it seems more plausible that Carroll simply allowed his subconscious mind to dream a Wonderland for his heroine to visit. In achieving this he seems to have demonstrated the rare talent referred to by John Addington Symonds in one of his 1851 lectures on dreams:

Many minds would be quite unable, however much they might try, to call up before their mental eyes such scenes and forms as appeared to them in sleep. But the man of genius is distinguished by his capability of effecting such combinations for a particular purpose.<sup>11</sup>

### Haunted by Alice

Carroll may have rejected the literary supernatural dream in favour of a more down-to-earth representation, but this does not mean his conception of the dream was entirely mundane. The poems that surround the *Alice* books seem to hammer repeatedly on the word “dream”, suggesting it has a special significance: the prefatory poem to *Alice’s Adventures* mentions “dreamy weather”, describes Alice as “the dream-child” and asks Alice to lay the story “where Childhood’s dreams are twined | In Memory’s mystic band” (Carroll 11-12). The prologue to *Through the Looking Glass* refers to Alice’s “dreaming eyes of wonder” (Carroll 123), and the epilogue describes the original row-

<sup>10</sup> Walter De La Mare, “Lewis Carroll’s Dream Vision,” in Rackin 218. (A most misleadingly-named essay.)

<sup>11</sup> John Addington Symonds, *Sleep and Dreams: Two Lectures* (London: Murray, 1851) 52.



ing boat “lingering onward dreamily.” The children within sit “dreaming as the days go by, | Dreaming as the summers die.” “Life,” concludes Carroll at the last; “what is it, but a dream?” (Carroll 250) Though the tale itself wears its dream status lightly, Carroll festoons its surrounding poems with explicit references to the unreality of it all.

A possible reason for this apparent disparity is that, while the stories are arguably fictional projections of Carroll’s own subconscious, the poems exist in a different conceptual space. Here, “Alice” really is Alice Liddell. The introductory poem to *Alice’s Adventures* refers explicitly to the factual origins of the story that follows. The poem before *Through the Looking Glass* appears to be directly addressed to Alice Liddell and, though the heroine of the story is just six months older than she was in *Alice’s Adventures*, the verse refers directly to the years that have elapsed since the story was “begun in other days, | When summer suns were glowing.” The closing verse echoes the allusion: “Autumn frosts have slain July.” Thus, Carroll’s emphasis of the dream can be seen to focus not on the story of *Alice*, but on, as it were, the story of the story.

It appears that Carroll does not seek to emphasise the dream *within* the story of *Alice*, but he is insistent upon it in metatextual reference to that story. This may be partly a nostalgic romanticisation: though Carroll’s relationship with Alice lasted several years, *Alice’s Adventures* was his most substantial expression of affection for her, and his references to “lingering onward dreamily” in “dreamy weather” seem to lend an unworldly quality to its origins. However, a “dream” can also mean a reminiscence, and the poems’ repeated references to the passage of time seem also to hint at a melancholy sense of the circumstances being dreamy because they are now mere memories. Carroll admits in the prefatory poem to *Through the Looking Glass* that “though time be fleet, and I and thou | Are half a life asunder . . . | echoes live in memory yet.” At the close, Carroll confirms that the little girl who inspired his story is now a ghost who lives on only in his dreams: “Still she haunts me, phantomwise. | Alice, moving under skies | Never seen by waking eyes.”

The dreaminess that surrounds the *Alice* books thus seems to bear a sense of a recurrent vision of their creation, and some commentators – most assertively Morton Cohen – have seen this as Carroll brooding over an unrequited romantic love for Alice Liddell. Certainly, the fact that, nine years after the boat-trip to Godstow, Carroll was still creating adventures for Alice (in the form of *Through the Looking Glass*) does suggest a remarkable persistence of interest, and its opening dedication to her is quite pa-



thetic in its self-abasement: “No thought of me shall find a place | In thy young life’s hereafter — | Enough that now thou wilt not fail | To listen to my fairy-tale.”

In support of this theory, Morton Cohen points to the prayers in Carroll’s diary that were briefly mentioned in Chapter 3. One such example appears on the last day of 1863 — i.e. during the gap of twenty-two months between his completing the manuscript of *Alice’s Adventures under Ground* on 10th February 1863 and his presenting it to her on 26th November 1864 (*Diaries* 5: 9).<sup>12</sup> Cohen notes that Carroll has written: “Here, at the close of another year, how much of neglect, carelessness, and sin have I to remember! Oh God . . . take me, vile and worthless as I am. . . . Help me to be Thy servant. . . .” Two months later, on March 6th, 1864, he wrote: “Oh God . . . help me to live to Thee. Help me . . . to remember the coming hour of death. For myself I am utterly weak, and vile, and selfish. . . . Oh deliver me from the chains of sin.” (*Diaries* 4: 267)

What is striking about these prayers is their self-abasement — and these are far from unique examples. On 28th December Carroll had curtly written “God grant me that with this dying year may die in me all the old evil life, and that a new life may begin. For Christ’s sake. Amen.” The next day he made no entry, but on 30th December he returned to add: “Amen, Amen” (*Diaries* 4: 266).

Such wretched prayers recur throughout the diaries, and Cohen clearly suspects that they were prompted by his inability to overcome his feelings for Alice Liddell, and he demonstrates that such passages appear with the most striking frequency between 1862 and 1871 (Cohen 204-5) — dates corresponding with Carroll’s relationship with the Liddell family. “As the mentions of the Liddell children vanish,” he notes, “his complaints and resolves subside” (Cohen 219).

Yet this theory has several weaknesses. Karoline Leach argues against it in her chapter “The Unreal Alice” (Leach 161-183), in a case which revolves around one very straightforward objection: that it is barely supported.

After half a lifetime of research, Cohen, a convinced believer in Alice Liddell as the “dreamchild,” has managed to discover only two pieces of documentation that can be claimed to offer it any corroboration. One is a fragment of rumour, dating from the late 1870s, when Alice Liddell was twenty-six and

<sup>12</sup> Carroll’s diary for 13th September 1864 includes a timeline of the genesis of *Alice’s Adventures*, to which later events (such as the presentation mentioned here) have been added, presumably at the appropriate later dates. The long gap between the completion of the text and the presentation of the manuscript appears to be because, according to this timeline, it took Carroll until 13th September 1864 to finish the pictures.



had long ceased to be a child. The other is a cryptic reference in [Carroll's] diary to someone he calls "A.L." . . . There is no evidence beyond remote supposition to justify linking this diary entry with Alice Liddell at all and absolutely nothing to suggest it means she was [Carroll's] love-object. (Leach 164)

Nevertheless, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence; and a theory regarding unknown aspects of a literary life need not be certain to be productive and rewarding. However, Cohen's theory is challenged not just by a lack of evidence supporting it, but by the existence of other evidence that weakens it. For despite the implicit suggestion that Carroll's relationship with Alice was unique, she was not alone in being described in these terms: in the final stanza to the inscription to *The Hunting of the Snark*, Carroll employs strikingly familiar vocabulary to recall a sea-side holiday with his subsequent child-friend Gertrude Chataway:

Away, fond thoughts, and vex my soul no more!  
Work claims my wakeful nights, my busy days —  
Albeit bright memories of that sunlit shore  
Yet haunt my dreaming gaze! (Carroll 679)

The identity of the haunting dream with Carroll's love for Alice is somewhat diminished by Carroll's switching its referent to a different girl some four years later. Indeed, the poem is subtitled "in memory of golden summer hours and whispers of a summer sea", a phrase which resonates ineluctably with the vocabulary of the poems surrounding the *Alice* books. It might be argued that the haunting dream was thus simply a vehicle for whichever girl was Carroll's favourite at the time — but Carroll had made use of the image long before *Alice* without the involvement of any child at all. His poem "The Sailor's Wife," first published in 1857 in the popular journal *The Train*, describes the "fearful dream that haunts" the eponymous wife — a nightmare of her husband dying at sea (Carroll 870-2). Indeed, while Carroll was writing this poem he noted in his diary that he planned to "include some stanzas written long ago," suggesting that perhaps the image of the haunting dream was itself "haunting" him (*Diaries* 2:113). Moreover, when he submitted the poem for publication, he suggested an illustration with "as much of a *spectral* effect as possible" (*Diaries* 3:30). The notion of Alice as a uniquely haunting dream weakens further as we find the same device employed in fiction five years before the original telling of the *Alice* story, as well as applied to another girl four years after *Through the Looking Glass*.

Another challenge to Cohen's theory is the claim that Carroll's complaints subside as he drifts apart from the Liddells. They are certainly at their most frequent between the years 1862 and 1871, as Cohen notes, but the correlation is far from perfect: Cohen himself admits that the first prayers emerge in 1856, and "no link between these entries and his friendship with the Liddells emerges" (Cohen 206). Perhaps the statistic most supportive of Cohen's idea is the appearance of eleven such passages during 1871, when Carroll was writing *Through the Looking Glass* – more than twice as many as recorded in 1870 or 1872.

Yet such prayers recur as late as 1897, and it is hard to imagine that Alice can possibly still have been the cause. A clue is perhaps found in the preface to *Curiosa Mathematica II: Pillow Problems*, issued in 1895, in which Carroll makes the curious observation that it may be impossible, whilst lying in bed, to avoid thinking about a worrying subject; but that

it is possible — as I am most thankful to know — to carry out the resolution "I will think of so-and-so." Once fasten the attention upon a subject so chosen, and you will find that the worrying subject, which you desire to banish, is practically annulled. It may recur, from time to time — just looking in at the door, so to speak; but it will find itself so coldly received, and will get so little attention paid to it, that it will, after a while, cease to be any worry at all. (Carroll, *Pillow Problems* ix-x)

This seems to provide very clear evidence that Carroll was still struggling with some troubling issue in 1895, to the drastic extent of collecting an entire volume of puzzles devised to keep his mind from "sceptical thoughts, which seem for the moment to uproot the firmest faith . . . unholy thoughts, which torture, with their hateful presence, the fancy that would fain be pure" (*Pillow Problems* xv). The determination to keep faith in the face of unnamed challenges clearly echoes the tone of the diary entries of nearly forty years previously, and the obvious inference is that these complaints had some cause other than Alice.

### Religious doubts

The years during which Carroll's diary prayers occur most frequently do, as Cohen suggests, loosely correspond with his relationship with the Liddells. However, they also



represent the period after Carroll took Deacon's orders in December 1861.<sup>13</sup> As I noted in Chapter 3, Carroll harboured doubts about his abilities to fulfil this office, dithering over it for several years. It was not until 1862 that he managed to obtain Dean Liddell's permission not to proceed to Priest's orders, but he felt unworthy even for a Deacon's duties, lamenting in July 1862 that "till I can rule myself better, preaching is but a solemn mockery" (*Diaries* 4:107).

Morton Cohen believes that Carroll soon resolved his difficulties, determining to "believe where he could not prove" (Cohen 348). But Carroll's admission of difficulties in "ruling" himself resonates strongly with the prayers in his diary. In Chapter 5 I argued that Carroll had determined to reject science in favour of religion, but found himself not well able to do so. I suggest now, therefore, that when Carroll prays that God will "Help me to be Thy servant", he is not alluding to some unknown impropriety; rather, he means exactly what he says.

Thus we arrive at the key theory I wish to advance in this thesis. Carroll's failure to keep his distance from science was not a mere formal difficulty: it was a crisis. As I showed in Chapter 3, as Carroll had grown up he had quickly lost his father's religious certainty, gradually replacing it with a system that proceeded from logic as much as faith. It was some years before he explicitly adopted the language of axioms to describe his faith, but as we have seen in Chapter 2, Carroll had a strong and instinctive grasp of argument by axiom, and long before this he must realised that his faith could not be logically supported. If he wished to maintain that the universe was moral then, as I demonstrated in Chapter 5, he would have been obliged simply to disregard arguments that suggested otherwise. Doubtless he would have liked this rejection to be as easy as it is in *Euclid and his Modern Rivals*, in which he breezily champions the axioms of Euclid and, with a few incisions of his logical scalpel, reduces their challengers to "utter collapse" (*Euclid* xix).

But in the religious conflict Carroll was on the other side: the application of logic only challenged his own axioms. If Carroll *had* been able to "believe where he could not prove", this might have been manageable; but logic provided the fundamental framework by which Carroll perceived the world, and this fundamental contradiction must have led to horrific tensions. For example, in Chapter 3 I noted that his dogmatic insist-

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<sup>13</sup> Carroll's diaries for 1858-61 are missing, but the pattern of such entries does not suggest that 1861 would have been any less turbulent.



ence on reverential treatment for “Bible words” was a firmly-held tenet of his faith; yet this was challenged by his own insights into structural linguistics. In fact, as I argued in Chapter 5, the *Alice* books suggest that his entire perception of the universe was massively coloured by inductive science, and yet for the sake of his faith he could not bring himself to openly embrace it, nor even often to name its practitioners. The system under threat of “utter collapse” was clearly Carroll’s own religion.

Over time, Carroll came to terms with the tension in the only way he could: by relaxing his religious axioms so that they no longer conflicted with his world view, leading to the “ultra-broad” religious outlook discussed towards the end of Chapter 3. During the years indicated by Cohen, however, this process was just beginning, and Carroll’s doubts must have been at their most acute. The wretched diary passages to which Cohen points are filled with expressions of guilt, and I believe that this guilt arose in response to what Carroll would have seen as a dereliction of his faith in his inability to properly reject the scientific principles that contradicted it. His prayers are requests for God’s help in keeping his faith against the challenges of his own epistemology.

The theory may sound dramatic, but there is evidence to suggest a crisis of faith going far beyond the doubts he expressed in his diary. We have seen that as late as 1895 he suffered from “sceptical thoughts, which seem for the moment to uproot the firmest faith,” and I suggest that these thoughts express themselves in Carroll’s *œuvre* in the form of morbidity and existential dread: Martin Gardner notes the preponderance of death jokes in *Alice* (Gardner 13), and William Empson concludes that “death is never far out of sight in the books” (Empson 228). The fear of annihilation is particularly clear in Alice’s anxious response to being told she is part of the Red King’s dream, and would vanish were he to wake up: at first she is tearful, then determines simply to brush away her tears and carry on “as cheerfully as she could” (Carroll 174). Elsewhere, I have already mentioned “The Sailor’s Wife,” in which the wife has nightmares about her husband’s death, and “The Valley of the Shadow of Death” – another poem published in *Three Sunsets* but written in 1868 – is told in the persona of a dying man who admits “the tale of fear | That hidden in my breast hath lain | Through many a weary year” (Carroll 856) — that fear being death.



Perhaps the most obvious expression of existential terror is *The Hunting of the Snark*, in which the crew sets out in hopes of securing a fantastic, indescribable prize, but finds at last only oblivion. One member of the crew even expresses this haunting fear: “I engage with the Snark,” the wretched Baker confesses, “every night after dark — in a dreamy, delirious fight” (Carroll 687). The Baker’s fear is that, should he meet with a Boojum, “I shall softly and suddenly vanish away — and the notion I cannot endure!” The Christian notion of an afterlife is entirely absent.<sup>14</sup>

It is perhaps also suggestive that in all three of these instances, death is tied up with a dream and sleep. Carroll employs the imagery of dreams and sleep to existential purpose in two complementary ways. First, he makes an explicit analogy between sleep and death in the fourth stanza of the prefatory poem to *Through the Looking-Glass*:

Come, hearken then, ere voice of dread,  
With bitter tidings laden  
Shall summon to unwelcome bed  
A melancholy maiden!  
We are but older children, dear,  
Who fret to find our bedtime near. (Carroll 123)

Martin Gardner glosses this as “a reference to the melancholy maiden’s death, with the Christian implication that it will be merely a bedtime slumber” (Gardner 141); but the pointedly curt fricative “fret” at the last line hardly seems confident. The final stanza of the poem makes explicit Carroll’s sorrow at the passage of time — a sorrow that, he effectively confesses, he must repress:

And, though the shadow of a sigh  
May tremble through the story,  
For “happy summer days” gone by,  
And vanish’d summer glory —  
It shall not touch, with breath of bale,  
The pleasance of our fairy-tale. (Carroll 124)

Conversely, in the very last line of the terminal poem to *Through the Looking-Glass*, Carroll writes “life, what is it but a dream?” In this construction, life is presented

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<sup>14</sup> Cohen disagrees with this view. “[Carroll] was not addressing his fear of death or annihilation . . .” he insists; “otherwise, [his] fierce honesty would have forced him to own up to it” (Cohen 410). This may be so; but Carroll in fact disavowed that he had been addressing anything at all in writing *The Hunting of the Snark*, claiming that he “didn’t mean anything but nonsense” (*Letters* 1:548). Surely therefore it should be no surprise to see this text reflect Carroll’s own concerns without his overtly owning up to them.

as a dream because it is insubstantial, for the sense of the poem is that everything in life melts inevitably into memory. The image appears more bluntly in 1884, in a dedication “To My Child-Friend” in an edition of *The Game of Logic*: “may the stream of Life’s long dream / Flow gently onward to its end” (Carroll 843). It is a surprisingly morbid image for such an inscription.

In all, I conclude that Carroll’s difficulties in genuinely accepting religion left him under a chronic apprehension that life was simply a constant, meaningless process of annihilation. It is this apprehension that informs the terror of the *Hunting of the Snark*, and which, for Carroll, hangs melancholy over the story of *Alice*. The vision of Alice “haunts” Carroll because of the temporal tragedy it represents. It seems Charles W. Johnson hit the nail on the head when he speculated that “it is possible that Lewis Carroll wrote *Through the Looking-Glass* and *The Hunting of the Snark* to express his affection for his child-friends and his sorrow when he thought he lost them after they matured” (Johnson 293) — though I suggest that he was, perhaps, not fully cognisant of this motivation.

### **Thank Heaven for little girls**

The theory outlined above regarding Carroll’s relationship with mortality can be further supported by the evidence of his relationships with girls other than Alice. I will first establish the nature of these relationships, then go on to explain how it fits into the picture of Carroll I have built up.

I have shown that, after Alice Liddell had grown up, his erstwhile attitude toward her seemed to be transferred to another child – Gertrude Chataway, whom he met in 1875. In fact, Carroll had already befriended Alexandra (“Xie”) Kitchin in 1869, and in 1886 he became firm friends with Isa Bowman. The overriding impression is that the strength of Carroll’s affection towards Alice was not solely inspired by her character but expressed a more general attraction to young girls.

In some part this affection may simply have been the type of pattern-following I mentioned in Chapter 2. When Carroll was growing up at Croft Rectory he seems to have taken a delight in entertaining his ten younger siblings (seven of whom were sisters): Collingwood writes that he was



very fond of inventing games for the amusement of his brothers and sisters; he constructed a rude train out of a wheelbarrow, a barrel and a small truck. . . . The boy was also a clever conjuror, and, arrayed in a brown wig and a long white robe, used to cause no little wonder to his audience by his sleight of hand. With the assistance of various members of the family and the village carpenter, he made a troupe of marionettes and a small theatre for them to act in. He wrote all the plays himself. (Collingwood 19-20)

It must therefore have seemed comfortably familiar to him in later life to surround himself once more with young girls and entertain them in precisely these ways; and, as had happened at home, when one became too old to relate to in such a way, there was always another who was just becoming old enough to appreciate it.

However, to describe Carroll as simply “following a pattern” hardly does justice to the duration and intensity of what Morton Cohen memorably terms Carroll’s “pursuit of innocents.” The girls named above were among his closest friends, but throughout Carroll’s life, he maintained affections with at least a hundred little girls (see e.g. Cohen 147-95). Indeed, when he wrote to Alice Liddell in 1885 to ask her permission to publish *Alice’s Adventures under Ground* he admitted that he had “had scores of child-friends since your time” (*Letters* 1:561). In fact, as early as 25th March 1863, whilst still writing *Alice’s Adventures*, Carroll made in his diary a list of 107 girls’ names under the heading “Photographed or to be photographed” (*Diaries* 4: 178-81). Sixteen have birth dates written beside them, revealing their ages: the eldest of these is 15 years old.

Interpretations of these relationships have often centred on the unrequited love theory addressed earlier, with Carroll forever seeking substitutes for Alice Liddell. Alternatively, Florence Becker Lennon,<sup>15</sup> Judith Bloomingdale and Phyllis Greenacre have all suggested an Œdipus complex, with Alice Liddell and subsequent child-friends as substitutes for Carroll’s mother: “It appears that his œdipal love for his mother was never displaced,” Greenacre observes, “except in a typical Carroll fashion – by reversal – in which he instantly fell in love with girls who were young enough to be his daughters” (Greenacre 216). These theories, however, come from the “dark” period of the mid-twentieth century, and the more complete information available to modern Carrollians seems not to have encouraged this view. I believe instead that these relationships may tie in with the apprehension of mortality discussed above.

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<sup>15</sup> Florence Becker Lennon, *The Life of Lewis Carroll* (New York: Collier, 1962) 210.

### Photographing children

The fact that one of Carroll's particular desires with children was to photograph them is most suggestive. I suggested in Chapter 2 that photography was a conventional pastime, and Carroll's diaries record many visits to art exhibitions in which he takes a wholly conventional interest in the composition of successful portraits, clearly earnestly seeking to improve his work. For example, after visiting an exhibition of paintings at the Society of British Artists in London on 22nd April 1857, he noted in his diary that

I took hasty sketches on the margin of the catalogue of several of the pictures, chiefly for the arrangement of hands, to help in grouping for photographs. (*Diaries* 3: 51)

However, alongside the aesthetic aspect of photography, Carroll was also eager to capture prestigious subjects through his lens. Helmut Gernsheim, working from Carroll's diaries, has identified 45 distinguished subjects from all walks of life who agreed to sit for Carroll. They include J. Holman Hunt, John Millais, Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Christina Rossetti, Bishop Sam Wilberforce of Oxford, Archbishop C.T. Longley of Canterbury, Lord Salisbury, Prince Leopold and Prince Frederick (later King Frederick VIII of Denmark). Edward Wakeling has unearthed the print of T.H. Huxley mentioned in Chapter 5 (Taylor & Wakeling 249). To make clear that Carroll himself was the impetus behind these photographs, Carroll's diaries also record unsuccessful attempts to photograph luminaries including W.M. Thackeray, Robert Browning, Princess Beatrice and the Prince of Wales (Gernsheim 102).

If photographing celebrities enabled Carroll to capture their fame then photographing little girls enabled him to capture their youth. This ability must have been an immense psychological comfort, for as Carroll's child-friends grew up they almost invariably grew away from him. In a letter to one former child-friend, dated January 9th 1884, Carroll lamented that

the majority (say 60 p.c.) of my child-friends cease to be friends at all after they grow up: about 30 p.c. develop "yours affectionately" into "yours truly": only about 10 p.c. keep up the old relationship unchanged. (*Letters* 525)

Gardner notes that, "as Freudian critics never tire of pointing out", the phrase "summon to unwelcome bed", which I identified above as a symbol of death, also carries "overtones of the marriage bed" (Gardner 141). But from Carroll's perspective, the two were



effectively the same: as Empson notes, “there seems to be a connection in [Carroll]’s mind between the death of childhood and the development of sex” (Empson 214). This connection may have motivated Carroll’s rejection of the *Bildungsroman* form, though, as discussed in Chapter 5, this alternative was no more optimistic. Carroll laments, in the introduction to *Through the Looking Glass* that “I have not seen thy sunny face, | Nor heard thy silver laughter.” Karoline Leach insightfully observes that this comment is “completely meaningless if addressed to the Alice Liddell who lived across the quad from him.” She theorises that the lines are instead addressed to “the child-reader of future ages, whom he would never see” (Leach 179); but the many allusions to Alice (including the use of the word “pleasance” in the last line, which Leach simply dismisses) suggest to me that the point is instead that the “sunny face” and “silver laughter” of the young Alice who inspired the story are now lost to Carroll. Now Alice haunts him “phantomwise”, as if she is a ghost. Thus the surroundings of *Through the Looking Glass* resonate with a sense of the always-imminent death of Carroll’s relationships with his child-friends, a sense which can only have sharpened his morbid sense of the insubstantiality of life.

This surely was a major factor in Carroll’s hunger to photograph little girls, for such images lent permanence to visions that would otherwise quickly melt into the insubstantial “dreams” of the *Alice* poems. I do not suggest that this was Carroll’s overt motivation, and indeed he photographed a large number of adults and buildings that had no obvious symbolism to him. But little girls clearly had a special significance: in May 1880 he wrote to Xie Kitchin’s parents complaining that they had sent Xie’s brothers to be photographed in her place:

What have I done, to be supposed desirous of photographing *boys*? Or perhaps you thought that two boys were a sufficient substitute for one girl? Never!<sup>16</sup>

The long list of girls to be photographed almost suggests a Freudian compulsion, and while I might hesitate to fully defend such a reading, the evidence does strongly suggest that Carroll felt some psychological impulse beyond mere aesthetics to photograph little girls.

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<sup>16</sup> *Lewis Carroll and the Kitchins*, ed. Morton Cohen (New York: Lewis Carroll Society of North America, 1980) 38.

## Innocence

Yet there was more to Carroll's relationships with children than a simple desire to preserve their youth through photography; and although youth appears to have been a prerequisite for the sort of friend Carroll sought, the precise quality that seems to have attracted him was childish innocence.<sup>17</sup> In the preface to the published facsimile edition of *Alice's Adventures under Ground*, Carroll expresses a conception of the child which seems to romanticise its innocence:

The "Why?" of this book cannot, and need not, be put into words. Those for whom a child's mind is a sealed book, and who see no divinity in a child's smile, would read such words in vain. . . . [I]f one can put forth all one's powers in a task where nothing of reward is hoped for but a little child's whispered thanks and the airy touch of a child's pure lips, one seems to come somewhere near to this. (Carroll, *Alice's Adventures under Ground* v-vi)

In the preface to *Sylvie & Bruno Concluded* Carroll is forgiving of children who make irreverent comments because their "utter ignorance of evil must no doubt acquit them, in the sight of God, of all blame" (Carroll 470). Indeed, Sylvie and Bruno themselves are models of this sort of perfect child, of "airy touch" and "pure lips", that Carroll idolised. It is no surprise that these characters live outside of the real world, as if children are blameless due to their ignorance then the antithesis of innocence must be worldliness. In Chapter 2 I cited a letter to Mrs Henderson in which he opined that

With children who know me well, and who regard dress as a matter of indifference, I am very glad (when mothers permit) to [photograph] them in any amount of undress which is presentable, or even in none (which is more presentable than many forms of undress) (*Letters* 1:345-6)

With the assertion that nakedness is "more presentable than many forms of undress" Carroll seems to be saying that corruption arrives only with worldly sophistications such as clothes. In contrast to this might have stood an awareness that it was his own progression from childish ignorance to adult intellectual sophistication that lay behind his own weakness of faith. As I noted in Chapter 2, W.H. Auden observed that the child in the *Alice* books is the only uncorrupted figure:

it is the child-heroine Alice who is invariably reasonable, self-controlled and polite, while all the other inhabitants, human or animal, of Wonderland and

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<sup>17</sup> This would explain his preference for girls over boys, girls being by nature less presumptive and mischievous.



the Looking-Glass are unsocial eccentrics — at the mercy of their passions and extremely bad mannered. (Auden 9)

It is also noteworthy that in Tenniel's illustrations, Alice is drawn naturalistically while the adults are grotesques. Carroll had a close involvement with the process of creating these illustrations,<sup>18</sup> and he may have been the impetus behind scenes such as Alice standing beside the Duchess and the equally exaggerated cook, her simple grace contrasts pointedly with the grossly distorted adults.

This is not to say that Carroll believed adults were necessarily a lost cause: as mentioned above, in the opening poem to *Through the Looking Glass*, he declares that adults "are but older children"; and Lady Muriel in *Sylvie & Bruno* seems to have retained contact with her childish nature. Indeed, Carroll clearly implies an analogy between Lady Muriel and Sylvie: on first laying eyes on Lady Muriel, the narrator tries to imagine what her face looks like behind her thick veil, but his "experiment in Telepathy" yields only the face of Sylvie (Carroll 272). Later, it emerges that Lady Muriel really does resemble Sylvie, but in a weathered form:

"She has Sylvie's eyes!" I thought to myself, half-doubting whether, even now, I were fairly awake. "And that sweet look of innocent wonder is all Sylvie's too. But Sylvie hasn't got that calm resolute mouth — nor that far-away look of dreamy sadness, like one that has had some deep sorrow, very long ago —" (Carroll 290)

The identification of the child as a perfect human form, and the adult as a lapsed child, strengthens the force of Carroll's almost obsessive association with children. For the "sceptical thoughts" that tortured Carroll were unknown to his child-friends, whose perfect innocence seemed effortlessly to embody the sort of holiness he longed for. The point is made clearly in a letter note to Mrs Henderson, written in 1880, after he had finally photographed her children in the nude: "their innocent unconsciousness," he wrote, "is very beautiful, and gives one a feeling of reverence, as at the presence of something sacred" (*Letters* 1:381). The very first line of the opening poem to *Through the Looking Glass* eulogises the young Alice as "child of the pure unclouded brow": her carefree nature is, for Carroll, her primary attribute.

<sup>18</sup> Leo De Freitas, "The Making of the Alice Illustrations," address delivered at Ilkley Book Festival, October 8 2005.

The innocence of little girls was thus surely a religious inspiration: Carroll projected onto his subjects the type of carefree innocence whose absence from his own life he felt so keenly. Indeed, the pattern-following element of his association with them anchored him in a time of life when he himself had been an innocent. Their loss of innocence, and his loss of closeness with them, was a constant source of sorrow, but through photography and literature Carroll could capture some part of that innocence and rescue it from the passage of time.

### **Conclusion**

In this, the final chapter of my argument, I have followed the findings and suggestions of my earlier chapters through to their logical conclusion. I have suggested that the roots of Carroll's references to Alice in terms of dreams, and his curious claim of being "haunted" by Alice, lie in a crisis of religion prompted by the axiomatic conflict discussed in previous chapters. I believe that this crisis caused Carroll to undergo agonies of doubt and existential dread which echo throughout his work, and that his writings and behaviour may be interpreted as attempts to cling onto youth – and, in particular, the innocence of youth – in a desperate attempt to mitigate these agonies.



## Chapter 7

# Conclusion

In my introductory chapter I explained that the argument of this thesis had emerged from an organic approach to the life and works of Lewis Carroll. I also stated that, in supporting that argument, I would favour the evidence of sources with a direct historical connection to Carroll, and tend to avoid secondary interpretations, especially those made without the benefit of modern access to Carroll's papers. This attempt to take a broad and historical, rather than narrow and abstracted, view of Carroll is what led to the characterisation of this thesis as an attempt at "*Contextualising Carroll*."

The argument of the thesis has now been presented in full. In the second chapter I demonstrated how evidence from personal recollections of Carroll conflicted with secondary accounts of his "conventionality", and examined historical evidence which seemed to show that Carroll's real impulse was not for convention but for logic. To confirm this conclusion, I took a linguistic approach to the *Alice* books, not as part of a narrow approach to the text such as those found in *Semiotics and Linguistics in Alice's Worlds* or Marina Yaguello's *Language Through the Looking Glass*, but, according to my organic methodology, as a general clue towards the way that Carroll perceived the world. Other evidence from personal recollections, Carrollian juvenilia and the *Alice* books seemed to seal the conclusion that Carroll interacted with the world in terms of logical axioms.

In Chapter 3 I then moved on to the issue of religion. A focus on contemporary texts provided an insight into Carroll's religious environment, and the writings of Carroll's own father gave a very clear image of the type of religious grounding Carroll would have received. I then showed that, by the end of Carroll's life, he was expressing a religious position, in both private letters and popular publications, which was radically removed from this grounding. I showed how Carroll's diary entries quietly segue from the expression of religious doubts to an ongoing involvement with Frederick Denison Maurice, and suggested that this was the catalyst for Carroll's religious development.

Finally, I considered the nature of the religious position that Carroll arrived at and found it to square precisely with the axiomatic world view suggested in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 4 I considered the issue of science. By reference to both modern and contemporary sources I established that science was sufficiently conspicuous that Carroll's apparent lack of engagement with science probably did not indicate a lack of awareness. I then went on to show, with reference to diary entries, letters and even published fiction, that Carroll was in fact fully engaged with the peripheral sciences such as mathematics and mechanics; but I also presented evidence from Carroll's published writings demonstrating that he wished, at least outwardly, to distance himself from the inductive sciences.

In Chapter 5 I pressed into the primary evidence to try to uncover the motive for this distancing. With reference to private correspondence and books from Carroll's own library, I arrived at a theory that Carroll felt the inductive sciences conflicted with his religious axioms. However, with the aid of close research into Carroll's diaries and letters, I demonstrated a pattern of "surreptitious engagement" with the sciences; and Carroll's library and published works indicated a particularly deep involvement with Darwin. A lightly interpretative reading of *Alice* seemed to confirm that Carroll had been profoundly affected by theories of evolution, despite his sense that this conflicted with his religion.

In Chapter 6 I examined the fallout from this conflict. I began by noting that the poems surrounding *Through the Looking Glass* seemed to indicate a complex relationship between Carroll, Alice Liddell and Alice the heroine of the books. I considered Morton Cohen's theory regarding this, but suggested that the evidence of other dedicatory poems and of Carroll's historical relationships with girls argued against this theory. Instead, I brought the findings of my previous chapters to bear on the issue, arguing that Carroll's focus on the young Alice Liddell that was no longer present in his life, rather than the older Alice Liddell who was, makes sense in the context of a brooding sense of mortality. I argued that precisely such a sense of mortality lurked in both Carroll's fiction and in his more serious writings, and suggested that perhaps his photography too suggested such a sense.

Finally, I presented my complete theory. I argued that this sense of mortality was the result of a crisis of religion that was prompted and perpetuated by Carroll's inability to refute scientific principles which challenged his self-constructed religious axioms.



The value of the organic methodology has been clear: at numerous points throughout this thesis, I have found that Carroll's published works can strengthen or weaken the apparent implication of other evidence. For example, in Chapter 5 I argued at length that *Alice* provided a revealing insight into Carroll's relationship with Darwin. Conversely, in Chapter 2, I argued that evidence of Carroll seeming to act highly conventionally was misleading; Carroll's early poem "Rules and Regulations" and his depiction of the behaviour of children and adults in the *Alice* books lent strong support to this refutation. At the same time, an awareness of the broader context in which Carroll operated enabled me to determine whether writing amoral children's books, progressing from the High Church to the "Ultra Broad Church" and exploring the principles of structural linguistics constituted conventional behaviour, or whether they were personal divergences from the mainstream which could potentially shed light on Carroll as an individual.

In turn, the conclusions of this thesis feed back into an organic conception of Carroll. If Carroll's religious tensions were of the nature I have suggested, and if they manifested themselves in the manner that I have suggested, then this has implications far beyond what I have considered here, reaching across the whole field of Carrollian studies. In literature the theory may, for example, encourage new readings of his ghost-poem *Phantasmagoria*, or a more tenacious quest for religious symbolism in *Sylvie & Bruno*. In historical terms, it provides an alternative hypothesis regarding the fate of the missing diary volumes: we can imagine that they might have contained questioning complaints about religion, prompting Carroll's censorious descendants to decide that the Archdeacon's son must never be associated with such heresies, and destroy them. In terms of Carroll's own life it could perhaps account for his keen interest in mysteries of the supernatural, which might be interpreted as a desire to find some concrete evidence of spirituality that would give empirical support to his beleaguered religious axioms.

In closing I affirm that, though the issues of Carroll's logical instinct, religious principles and relationship with science have naturally been considered before, they have, to my knowledge, never before been brought together into an overarching theory capable of advancing our understanding of Carroll's literary works, his relationships with little girls, and other issues outside of this thesis. Moreover, though my mode of enquiry is inspired by Karoline Leach, I believe that the examinations of logic, religion

and science presented here are unprecedented in their application of an organic focus to primary material, and I hope that this methodology has given my conclusions on these topics more credibility than the “narrow approaches” of half a century ago mentioned in my introduction. In all, I hope I have succeeded in my quest to show that, despite Donald Rackin’s proscriptions, contextualising Carroll is a rewarding pursuit; and I hope that the conception of Carroll I have advanced in this thesis may perhaps be accepted in the same terms as those in which Darwin’s *Origin of Species* was accepted by his contemporary Edward Clodd: as “a working hypothesis which, if it does not explain every fact, is inconsistent with none.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Clodd, *The Story of Creation: A Plain Account of Evolution* (London: Longman, 1888) 3.



## Appendix A

# Ripon Cathedral

During the research for this thesis, I visited Ripon Cathedral where, as I indicated in Chapter 3, Carroll's father served as Canon between 1852 and 1858. The Cathedral is proud of its Carrollian connection, and enthusiastically presents itself as an inspiration for some of the content of the *Alice* books. It therefore seemed a place worth visiting in search of evidence to support a key principle of Chapter 5 — that the *Alice* books reflect Carroll's own life as well as that of Alice Liddell. The Cathedral's Carrollian claims are detailed on its website:

If you visit the Cathedral you will see old carvings which inspired parts of *Alice in Wonderland*. The beautiful medieval misericords (mercy seats) in the Choir allowed elderly priests to rest during long services. One misericord shows a white rabbit disappearing down a rabbit hole! You might also spot the Cheshire Cat smiling out at you somewhere in the Cathedral — not to mention the Queen of Hearts. But you'll have to look very carefully!<sup>1</sup>

It is certainly true that the visitor will have to look "very carefully" for the Cheshire Cat and Queen of Hearts. The "Cheshire Cat" turns out to be a small grimacing stone face — not obviously feline — set into a wall some thirty feet in the air, while the "Queen of Hearts" is a neighbouring statue of a slender lady whose head appears to be crowned with a geometric shape reminiscent of the Carrollian character. The helpful tour-guide was in no doubt as to the identities of these indistinct shapes far above, but the visitor was less certain.

More persuasive is the misericord, which certainly does show a rabbit. Since the misericords are carved from dark wood, the identification of a "white" rabbit seems hopeful, but it is interesting to note that the rabbit is indeed darting into a hole to escape the talons of what might be a swooping eagle — or, as the tour-guide described it, "the gryphon." Carroll was certainly not an "elderly priest" in need of rest, but this particular carving is one of the most prominent misericords, and it is surely possible that

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<sup>1</sup> Text from <http://www.riponcathedral.org.uk/education/lcarroll.htm> as at 8th November 2005.



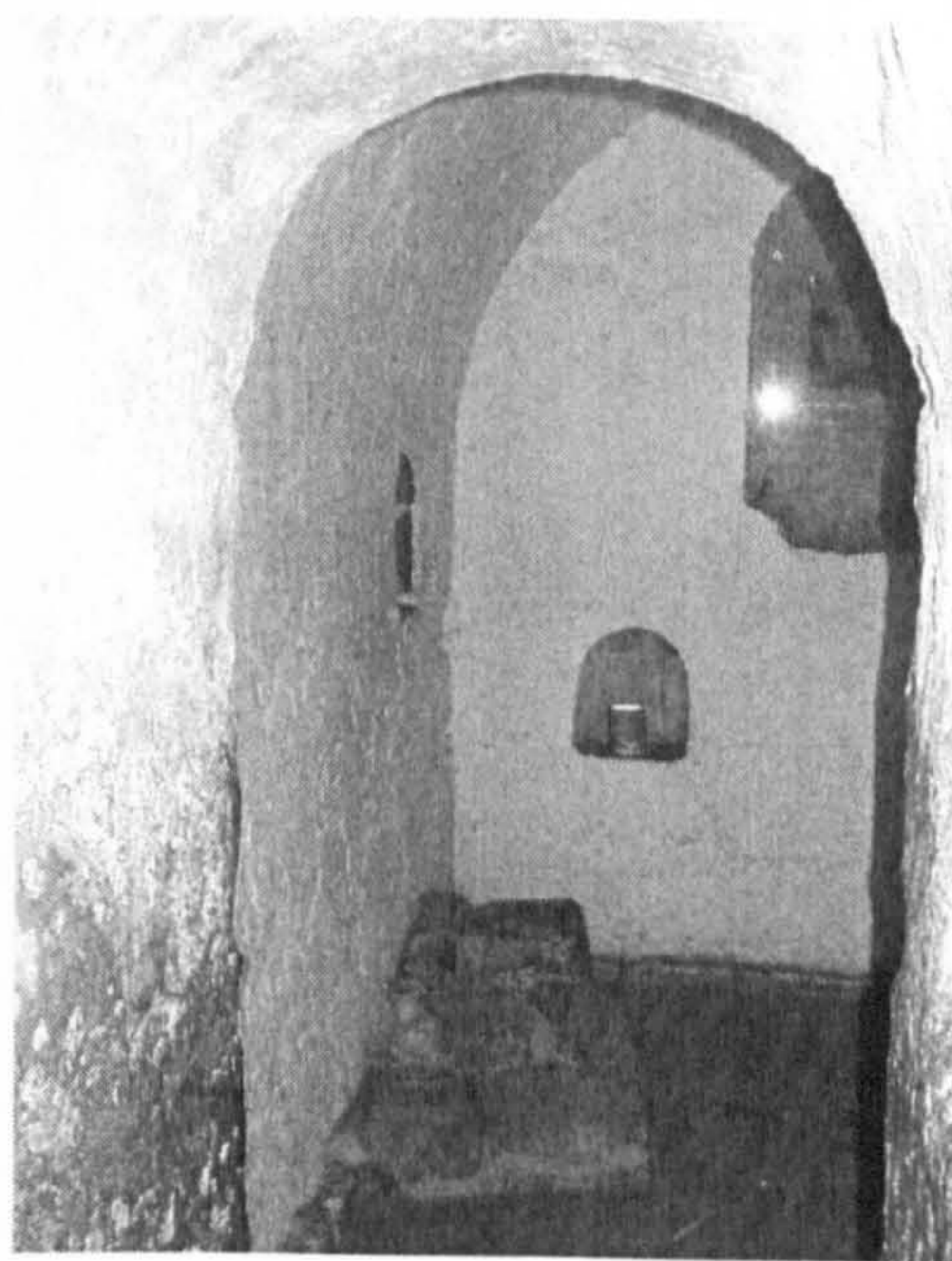
he may have seen this dramatic scene and remembered it years later. Suggestively, it is the Gryphon and the White Rabbit who are depicted on the front cover of the posthumous *Lewis Carroll Picture Book*, but no explanation for their presence is given.

Yet by far the most persuasive evidence of Ripon Cathedral having influenced Carroll is not mentioned on the website, nor fully appreciated by the tour guide. For after the brief Carrollian tour I was urged to go down into the Crypt to see the “little underground room” where Alice’s adventures begin. This was a reference to Alice’s arrival in the hall of doors:

The rabbit-hole went straight on like a tunnel for some way, and then dipped suddenly down . . . Alice was not a bit hurt, and she jumped up on to her feet . . . before her was another long passage, and the White Rabbit was still in sight, hurrying down it. . . . She was close behind it when she turned the corner, but the Rabbit was no longer to be seen: she found herself in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked; and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door . . . she came upon a low curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little door about fifteen inches high. (Carroll 18-19)

The crypt at Ripon Cathedral does in fact bear relation with this passage far beyond what was suggested by the tour-guide. The entrance to the crypt involves a short underground tunnel which “dips suddenly down”; and at the end of this tunnel one turns the corner and finds oneself in the crypt. Naturally, though the space is fairly low, it is not a “long hall” (which presumably explains the tour-guide’s misleading phrase), and it is not illuminated by lamps. Nevertheless, it does have several “doors.” Two of these are the normal human-sized doors, which are used to enter and exit the crypt; the rest are recesses in the stone walls which are the same shape as the real doors, but are indeed “about fifteen inches high” — or at least only slightly smaller. The accompanying photograph shows the view through one of the full-sized doors showing two of these miniature “doors” (along with a hole in the opposite wall). There are more of these



**The crypt at Ripon Cathedral**

*Photo by Sandy Wilson*



small “doors” on each of the other walls of the crypt, as the full-sized doors are described in Carroll’s text.

This is, of course, merely a suggestive connection: the ambitious claims of the Ripon Cathedral tourism committee notwithstanding, there is no proof that Carroll had this particular location in mind when extemporising *Alice’s Adventures*, and even if there were, that information in isolation would be no proof of anything else. However, the superficial similarities between this crypt and Carroll’s description of the hall in *Alice’s Adventures* are circumstantial evidence in favour of the theory that Carroll’s process of authoring was not solely focused on Alice Liddell, but involved the recombination of concepts from his own life which had no connection with his child-friend.

## Appendix B

# Effie's Dream Garden

Whilst investigating pre-*Alice* children's literature for my examinations in Chapters 2 and 5, I came upon an obscure work with the suggestive title of *Effie's Dream Garden*,<sup>1</sup> dated 1853 and acquired by the British Library in 1858. The author is given only as "J.D.K." or "J.D.R." — the heavy gothic script is ambiguous. The British Library catalogue gives the latter reading, but the author is also described on the title plate as "author of *Gold and Pearls*," of which the only known copy resides in the National Library of Scotland. The catalogue entry for that work gives the full title: "Gold and Pearls, an allegory by J.D.K."

*Effie's Dream-Garden* is an explicit allegory — a "religious didactic work," just as described by Ronald Reichertz. The narrative tells how Effie, the protagonist, falls asleep and dreams of a garden which is an overtly allegorical representation of the world, with God as the gardener and people as the plants. It ends with her waking and thanking God for the vision. The text is prefaced by quotations from the Psalms and the Song of Solomon, and heavily annotated with references to relevant verses of scripture.

This laboured allegory is a model of precisely the didactic mode rejected by Carroll; and yet the particulars of the story bear a striking resemblance to *Alice's Adventures*. Since *Effie's Dream-Garden* predates the story of Alice by nearly a decade, I felt that its existence was suggestive, and demanded further examination — hence this appendix.

The only copy of *Effie's Dream-Garden* now known to survive is the British Library's holding, but it is a small (duodecimo), slim (54 pages, of which 16 are advertisements) volume, on a conventional theme, by an obscure author. It could very easily have come to Carroll's attention and then been lost or forgotten. This is not to assert that *Alice* deliberately borrowed ideas from *Effie*: if Carroll had had any sense that the story upon which his reputation (and a large portion of his income) depended was not wholly his

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<sup>1</sup> J.D.K. or J.D.R., *Effie's Dream-Garden* (London: Binns & Goodwin, 1853)



own creation, it would have required considerable chutzpah for him to write, in the preface to *Sylvie & Bruno*, directly alongside his earnest reflections on religion, that

I do not know if *Alice in Wonderland* was an original story — I was, at least, no conscious imitator in writing it — but I do know that, since it came out, something like a dozen story-books have appeared, on identically the same pattern. The path I timidly explored — believing myself to be “the first that ever burst into that silent sea” — is now a beaten high road. (Carroll 257)

At any rate, to argue that Carroll knowingly plagiarised *Effie* would demand an investigation that falls far outside of the scope of this thesis, and I leave that idea to some future enterprising analyst. For the purposes of this appendix, I wish merely to outline the connections between this work – previously unknown, so far as I can ascertain, to Carrollian studies – and the *Alice* books, as further evidence of the extent to which Carroll transformed conventional themes.

The resemblance between *Effie* and *Alice* is unmissable. The story opens with Effie falling asleep, and ends with her waking up. In between, she visits a magical garden. The framing of the story is very familiar: the first sentence is “Effie was tired” (*Effie* 5), immediately echoing the opening of *Alice*. Like Alice, Effie goes to sleep on a river bank: she is “lulled by the sweet music of the little river which ran at the foot of the garden” (*Effie* 7). At the end, she awakes, “wonder[ing] that she had slept so long” (*Effie* 36) – echoing Alice’s sister’s exclamation of “Why, what a long sleep you’ve had” – and the book ends as she leaves the river bank.

In between, Effie dreams of a garden “far more extensive and *curious* than any she had ever seen” (*Effie* 8, emphasis added). The garden is varied, but criss-crossed by “clear and straight paths” (*Effie* 9), perhaps calling to mind the organisation of the chess-board. The first flower to be named is a Violet, echoing the Violet in the Garden of Live Flowers, though that flower was surely primarily a reference to Alice Liddell’s younger sister, Violet Liddell. Little later we encounter a Lily — which is also the name of the White Queen’s daughter (*Effie* 10-11).

While the flowers in Effie’s dream are not so talkative as those in the Garden of Live Flowers, they are nevertheless agentive,

for each one had its own set work to do. Some were to take continual care that their flowers were well shaped . . . others to see that each leaf and branch was in its proper place, and kept always fresh and green; and others again were always busy filling their seed-pods or fruit-skins, and holding them

fairly to the Sun, that they might be sweet and ripe, ready for the Gardener's coming. (*Effie* 15)

The flowers preparing the garden ready for the Gardener to visit are reminiscent of the playing cards seeking to prepare the garden for the arrival of the Queen of Hearts (Carroll 78). And indeed, although these flowers do not address Effie, "as she passed along . . . there were whispering voices in among the Trees and Flowers, as if they were talking among themselves" (*Effie* 17-18).

The conversation that Effie does have is with a large Vine: she hears it singing a song of praise to God, and reasons, with Alice-like logic, that "if the Vine can sing so sweetly, surely it can talk to me" (*Effie* 18-19). Her cautious etiquette too echoes Alice's:

"Ah, dear maiden," said the Vine, "know you not our good Gardener?"  
Effie fancied she did, but would not interrupt. (*Effie* 19)

Over the remainder of the narrative, the Vine and other plants educate Effie in the order of the garden, just as Alice is constantly given advice and information by the characters she encounters. Then she awakes, and the story is over.

These superficial similarities between *Effie* and *Alice* are fascinating, but also serve to point up the radical differences between the two books. The most immediately visible difference is in the presentation of the text: while Alice spurns books "without pictures", *Effie* is a book without pictures (save for one at the end advertising a different book). Instead of engaging illustrations, the reader finds copious footnotes, mostly detailing the Bible verses alluded to by the text. These are joined by extracts from the Psalms and the Song of Solomon before the text and copious pages of advertisement for other titles afterward. The entrance to the allegorical section of the book is clearly flagged too (as mentioned in the main text of this thesis), with a stark line, standing alone, promising:

Thus did she dream: —  
She found herself in the midst of a wonderful garden . . . (*Effie* 8)

The overall impression is of a solidly functional book, deliberately constructed and sold for a particular purpose.



This impression is confirmed within the text. As commented above, both Effie and Alice receive information from the inhabitants of the garden; but while Alice receives nonsense, Effie is instructed in principles which are, unsurprisingly, a transparent allegory for Christianity. For example, she is told how the Gardener

never considers any plant common; but if it only tries to do its best, and keep its leaves and branches straight and comely, He loves it and tends it as carefully as the most beautiful Rose, or the richest Vine. (*Effie* 29)

Shortly afterward, she learns about the “other garden”:

For the Gardener’s only Son, who had died, had made this His last request — that all good plants should be admitted into that Garden when their work was done here, if they would only do their best to keep their branches straight, and to get their seeds full and ripe. Not that their doing these things would make them deserve to enter there; since that blessedness had been secured for them by the great love of the good Son alone; but it would show that they were thankful and loving in return for all that He had done for them. (*Effie* 32-3)

Third Party Material excluded from digitised copy.  
Please refer to original text to see this material.

One can imagine that Carroll might, on a creative level, have liked to parody such religious dogma in the advice given to Alice; but of course he would have been prohibited from doing so by his strict insistence on reverence. He focused instead, therefore, on behavioural dogma, as discussed in Chapter 2, having the Duchess present nonsensical principles with as much serene confidence as the Vine educates Effie.

It is perhaps revealing that Effie's dream ends with "a choir of harmonious Bird-songs . . . all united in one triumphant anthem" (*Effie* 35): they sing verses from Psalm 103 in joyful praise of God, which brings Effie's dream to its climax:

While this was singing [sic], a glow of almost celestial happiness spread over the child's sweet countenance; and she raised her arms to embrace the golden glory, whose warm rays seemed to enter into her very soul! The birds sang sweetly, but too loudly . . . for they awoke the dear Effie from her dream. (*Effie* 36)

Just such a dramatic ensemble scene brings both *Alice's Adventures* and *Through the Looking Glass* to a close, and, as in *Effie*, both scenes segue directly into the moment of waking. Yet in *Alice*, the dramatic ensemble is far from "harmonious": both of Alice's dreams end in chaos, in which the inhabitants of the dream land are "united" only in their attack on the heroine. Carroll turns Effie's climax into a collapse: in the words of Jean Gattégno, quoted in Chapter 5, "there is nothing left of the grand inspiration."

In all, the relationship between *Effie* and *Alice* seems almost paradoxical: in terms of the action, *Effie* is so similar to *Alice* that it invites the notion that perhaps it somehow influenced Carroll. Yet at the same time it is, in both its form and content, precisely the type of conventional didactic work that *Alice* seems to utterly reject — to the extent that the final scene of Alice's dream may be seen as, in Frank Seafeld's phrase, a "repetition in travestie" of Effie's experience. Pending further discoveries, the only conclusion that may be safely reached is that the *Alice* books subverted an established and recognisable type of story that had previously been specifically constructed to educate and inform — a target which perhaps made the impact of the subversion all the greater.



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