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Synaptic boojums: Lewis Carroll, linguistic nonsense, and cyberpunk

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SYNAPTIC BOOJUMS:
LEWIS CARROLL, LINGUISTIC NONSENSE, AND CYBERPUNK

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Abstract

    Tracing a line from Lewis Carroll to 20th-century science fiction and cyberpunk, this project establishes an alternate genealogy based on the use of linguistic nonsense. Science fiction, rather than being merely a genre defined by specific narrative devices or character traits, is instead a language in and of itself. And like any language, it must be learned in order to be understood.

    Carroll used nonsense as a means of subverting conventional 19th-century opinions of language and, and by extension, society. Carroll was so successful at this that in 1937 American psychiatrist Paul Schilder discussed the dangers to a child's mind inherent in Carroll's work. For Schilder, Carroll's writing, through the violence he commits on language, mirrors a physical violence found in the actions of the characters in Carroll's works. The linguistic violence that Schilder points out is subtle in Carroll's works, but is made more overt in science fiction. But before jumping into science fiction, one must acknowledge James Joyce's contribution to the genre. Joyce borrows heavily from Carroll in <u>Finnegan's Wake</u> while he adds to the English language a multiplicity of words, phrases, and voices from outside the English language, creating a complex linguistic matrix. It is Anthony Burgess' <u>A Clockwork Orange</u> that merges Carroll's nonsense with Schilder's feared violence. As cyberpunk burst onto the scene in the 1980's, with William Gibson's <u>Neuromancer</u>, nonsense took on new levels as technology-driven language blended with multi-cultural phrases in the fluid environment of cyberspace. The fluid environment of cyberspace, and its language, is explored through the works of Pat Cadigan and through Neal Stephenson's <u>Snow Crash</u>.

Introduction: The Question

In an 1864 letter to the editor of *Punch* magazine, Lewis Carroll described his work, tentatively titled "Alice's Adventures Underground," with the following words:

> The heroine spends an hour underground, and meets various birds, beasts, etc (no fairies), endowed with speech. The whole thing is a dream, but that I don't want revealed till the end. (Cohen, 29)

From this simple description, it is hard to imagine that Carroll's work was going to be an enduring classic. And yet, nearly one hundred and fifty years later, there are very few who are not familiar with <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</u> and <u>Through the Looking Glass</u>. So ubiquitous are these works, in fact, that popular culture teems with references from the Alice books, but perhaps nowhere as often as in science fiction.

What does 20th-century cyberpunk literature have to do with a mild mannered 19th-century British don who hid his shyness behind the façade of a children's writer? This is the question this dissertation hopes to answer. At first glance, it seems as though the two have absolutely nothing in common. But, when one realizes the don in question is none other than the Reverend Charles Dodgson, better known to the world as Lewis Carroll, author of such classics as <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</u> and <u>Alice's Adventures Through the Looking Glass</u>, the connection becomes slightly more focused. There is no doubting that Carroll's creatures continually appear in popular culture from music videos to video games to works of science fiction. What is in question is why. Why do Carroll's characters figure in science fiction? Is it just the oddness and the bizarre quality of his works that cause popular culture to reach back to them? Or, is it possible that Carroll's influence penetrates deeper than just his psychedelic characters and surreal plot twists? The goal of this dissertation is to find an answer that goes beyond the superficial weirdness of Carroll's worlds.

Lewis Carroll created an intellectual paradigm involving the mutability of meaning that continues to shape the way 20th-century science fiction works are constructed. In letters Carroll commented on the arbitrary nature of language and its meaning as evident in a letter to Edith Rex:

> "My view of life is, that it's next to impossible to convince anybody of anything" because "one of the hardest things in the world is to convey a meaning accurately from one mind to another." (qtd in Blake 68)

Language is the medium through which nonsense (non-meaning), memory, and dream (reality and alternate realities) are interpreted and communicated from one individual to another. We are always in a state of interpretation and transmission, and it is through language that we are able to somewhat accurately broadcast our information. So that there is a common ground, language is devised of rules that govern its structure and use. These rules are known and understood, although the underlying social and political mechanisms that also help construct language may not be. Despite language's seeming adherence to logic, ambiguities exist in the actual meanings of words and how they are used. These ambiguities are what Lewis Carroll explored, manipulated, and exploited. Carroll's most important contribution to the genre of science fiction is what he accomplished through the linguistic game of nonsense.

Science fiction draws from Carroll in three key ways that help to create a reading experience that differs significantly from other genres. First off, science fiction authors often engage in nonsense languages. Secondly, science fiction exploits the tenuous connection between memory and language and simultaneously exploits the political and social linguistic meanings that lie below the surface of words. And, finally, Carroll's dream sequence creation can be seen in current cyberpunk authors whose narratives often slip between alternate realities. "Language discloses our world—not our environmental scientific world or universe, but our

lifeworld," explains Richard E. Palmer in Hermeneutics. It is through language we communicate our experiences, but because language is already an interpretation of events there is room for play in how those experiences are understood. There is not enough time to discuss all three of these aspects of science fiction language. There is time to focus on the most important of Carroll's contributions, that of nonsense.

By using Carroll's paradigms of nonsense language science fiction is able to create what Darko Suvin termed "cognitive estrangement" that is, a mode of literature that at once sets the reader in an alien environment while simultaneously making that environment seem scientifically plausible. This seemingly contradictory situation is not remedied merely through detailed descriptions of scientific terms, but is accomplished through the very use of language what Samuel Delany calls "the subjunctive." In "About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-Five Words" he defines the subjunctive as ". . .the tension on the thread of meaning that runs between word and object" (61). Science fiction's subjunctivity limits the corrective process readers use as they move between words, but, at the same time, it gives greater freedom of word choice ("About, 62). Before the connection between science fiction and Carroll can be made it is important to examine Carroll in the linguistic and philosophic context of his own time.

Because there has not been much work done that connects Carroll to science fiction, this effort has been one of quilting disparate bodies of criticism into a cohesive argument. On one hand, the body of criticism on Carroll is extensive and spans over one hundred years. On the other hand, cyberpunk criticism has evolved in only a few decades, but the volume and various veins of that scholarship are also vast. To try to tie Carroll to cyberpunk, it was necessary to introduce some interdisciplinary perspectives. There is not a straight line from the 19th-century children's literature to the cyberpunk literature of the present. One consistency, however, is the

vein of aggression that runs from Carroll to cyberpunk. In Carroll, this aggression manifests in the actions of the characters, but is most prominently displayed in his linguistic acrobatics. Cyberpunk takes Carroll's overt linguistic violence and partners it with multi-national, mutliculturalism that aggressively challenges convention.

The first chapter of this project, "That Damn Egg!", will position Lewis Carroll within the 19th-century linguistic environment. Part of this positioning entails looking at the works of various philologists and philosophers that were in Carroll's library upon his death. Another part of this positioning is to look at the debates that were raging around linguistic and language usage issues at the time and to see how Carroll might have fit in. A third component required looking at Carroll's diaries, letters, and non fiction works and piecing together his views on language. From there, I examine how his language concerns and views play out in his fictional works. This lays the essential groundwork for the next chapter's focus, which is nonsense.

Using Carroll's two poetic nonsense masterpieces, "Jabberwocky" and "The Hunting of the Snark" as the centerpieces, the second chapter, "Paper Worlds and Ink Seas," will fully explore nonsense. The first part of the chapter sets out to answer the question "What is nonsense?" Drawing from a myriad of nonsense scholars, nonsense is established as a word game between reader and writer. Crucial to the game is understanding that nonsense is a linguistic system that is contrasted with a pre-existing system. It is in the area between the two systems that language's ambiguity is highlighted. In order to survive, the character, along with the reader, must be able to crack the nonsense system and obtain the meaning hidden within. Carroll's masterful use of nonsense is, in part, why his works are still popular and influential into the 21st century.

The third chapter, "What Lies Beneath: Freud, Joyce, and Burgess," begins the chronological move from the 19th-century into the 20th-century. Freud is the first building block in this chapter because it is Freud who first argues that the nonsense of dreams is not accidental or alien to the human experience. It was during his examination of dreams and dream contents that Freud noticed that all dream material comes from aspects of the waking world. James Joyce, perhaps the most influential author of the 20th-century, was inspired by Freud's work to the extent that Joyce mocked Freud (and Jung) throughout <u>Finnegan's Wake</u>. Another figure who appears in the pages of Joyce's novel is Lewis Carroll, both as a character and as the language phenomenon of nonsense. Joyce's novel paves the way for Anthony Burgess' <u>A Clockwork Orange</u>. Burgess, who was a Joyce scholar as well as a fiction writer, takes nonsense and introduces it to science fiction in an unforgettable blend of dystopian literature and linguistic free play that takes Carroll's latent violence and pushes it into the heart of the narrative structure. His novel <u>A Clockwork Orange</u> is a clear predecessor for cyberpunk, which is the focus of the fourth and final chapter of this work.

Cyberpunk is the focal point of the fourth chapter, "Dilating Doors and Estranged Readers," but before launching into cyberpunk, I first establish (using Darko Suvin and Samuel Delany) that science fiction uses a different language than realist fiction and that, to successfully read science fiction, one must be trained in how to read science fiction. From this larger scope of science fiction, I examine the subgenre of cyberpunk. Much like its parent genre, cyberpunk is difficult to define concretely, as it is often thought of as a way of life, an ideology, and a literature all in one. One aspect of cyberpunk that sets it apart from its parent genre is its authors extensive use of nonsense. This nonsense language serves to highlight the lack of depth in the worlds depicted in cyberpunk fiction, to dissolve national and individual identities, and to

separate the youth from the adults. These separations are not benign or simple, and aggression becomes a major component of the cyberpunk narrative. The exploration of cyberpunk culminates in a discussion of the works of Pat Cadigan and a close analysis of Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash.

Lewis Carroll's language games don't end with cyberpunk. In the conclusion, "Alice's Latest Adventures," three authors who blend the language games of Carroll with the spirit of science fiction are examined in detail. The first of these authors is Frank Beddor, whose first novel The Looking Glass Wars has already spawned a cult following. Wonderland in this novel is a technologically advanced world that is in the throes of a civil war. Beddor asserts that his version of Wonderland and the adventures of Alyss Heart is the true version of Wonderland, while Carroll's watered down and tame version is nothing but a lie. Jeff Noon's Automated Alice claims to be the third installment of the Alice adventures, the book that Carroll never had time to write. Noon's Alice falls through a clock and winds up in a science fictional 1998 Manchester where she in thrust into a murder investigation. Like his predecessor Carroll, Noon engages in language games to an almost annoying extent. The third author, Jasper Fforde, strikes a balance between the pure science fiction of Beddor and the linguistic acrobatics of Noon. Fforde's "Thursday Next" series follow a literary detective as she literally hops in and out of manuscripts solving crimes. Fforde keeps several of Carroll's characters around, and, in the spirit of Carroll, puns and word play abound.

By the end of the conclusion, it should be clear that Lewis Carroll provided a linguistic paradigm for science fiction in general, and cyberpunk in particular, that is based on nonsense. As we move from Carroll and the 19th century to cyberpunk and the 20th century, we will see a movement from latent, subtle aggression expressed through words, to an aggression that is more

prominent, although no less linguistic. Through nonsense, writers are able to establish alternate

worlds, draw the readers in, and heighten the reading experience.

Chapter One: That Damn Egg!

"Modern linguistics has made very little headway in convincing those who have
not made a special study of language that language is a living thing, our possession and
servant rather than an ideal toward which we should hopelessly aspire."
(Pyles and Algeo 177)

Lewis Carroll, author of childhood favorites Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,

Alice's Adventures Through the Looking-Glass, and "The Hunting of the Snark*,"* was

aware that language is a living thing. As a matter of fact, it is for his word play that

Carroll is most remembered, particularly as an influence on writers such as James Joyce,

William Faulkner, and even John Lennon of the Beatles. Many individuals can quote the

opening passage of "Jabberwocky*,"* whether they have read it or not. One genre that

draws heavily from Lewis Carroll is science fiction. In particular, cyberpunk exhibits the

linguistic acrobatics that Carroll introduced in his Alice books.

In order to understand Carroll's contribution to genres such as cyberpunk, it is

first necessary to understand the linguistic climate in which Carroll was writing.

Throughout his writings, Carroll leaves many clues pointing to how he feels about

language, but rarely does he explicitly address his concerns. In the few instances where

he does, his views of language are clear. One enlightening example of Carroll's interest

in language comes from an August 1867 diary entry. Carroll and a friend are in

Kronstadt, and neither man speaks Russian nor do the employees at the hotel speak

English. Carroll writes:

> A happy thought occurred to me, and I hastily drew a sketch representing
> Liddon, with one coat on, receiving a second and larger one from the
> hands of a benignant Russian peasant. The language of hieroglyphics
> succeeded where all other means had failed, and we returned to St.
> Petersburg with the humiliating knowledge that our standard of

civilization was now reduced to the level of ancient Nineveh. (qtd in Collingwood, 48)

In snippets of letters and diary entries Carroll hints that he is interested in the instability of language. In a letter to an American friend following the 1876 publication of "The Hunting of the Snark" Carroll writes:

Still, you know, words mean more than we mean to express when we use them; so a whole book ought to mean a great deal more than the writer means. (qtd in Collingwood 64)

Carroll's prolific writing of treatises reveal his desire to make language as concrete as possible. "To avoid all possible misconceptions, the author fully explained his views in a pamphlet on 'The Profits of Authorship,'" Collingwood writes, but Collingwood could be referencing any number of Carroll's pamphlets. With titles such as "The Principals of Parliamentary Representation," "Some Popular Fallacies About Vivisection," and "Eight or Nine Wise Words About Letter Writing," it is easy to see that Carroll's interests were varied, but that no matter what the subject matter, his main concern was on making sure that what he intended to say is exactly what the reader gathered from his writings. Carroll's works are not only composed of words, but they are about words and the endless exchanges of words between characters (Sewell 268).

Much work has been done on the linguistic aspect of Carroll; the most comprehensive is Donald Sutherland's <u>Language and Lewis Carroll</u> (1970). Sutherland's work, in his own words, is "an inductive method[1]" of analyzing Carroll's linguistic scholarship and aspirations because so little hard evidence exists. What Sutherland did not have access to is Charlie Lovett's <u>Lewis Carroll Among His Books: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Private Library of Charles L. Dodgson</u> (2005). Thanks to Lovett's

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[1] While Sutherland calls this type of research inductive on page 15 of his work, it is clearly a deductive approach that he takes to the body of evidence that Carroll has left behind.

painstaking research, we now know which texts of which authors were in Carroll's possession at the time of his death. Lovett is not the first to have indexed Carroll's library because the Lewis Carroll Society of North America published Lewis Carroll's Library in 1981. That work, however, was just a collection of auction house ledgers and facsimiles that indicated only the titles and possibly the authors of each text. Where Lovett advances our knowledge of Carroll's library is in his inclusion of brief summaries of each work, including any marginalia that Carroll may have written. While owning a book in no way guarantees that one has read it, it does give insight into whose works Carroll was aware of during his lifetime.

Relying on diary entries and letters, Sutherland argues that it is impossible to credit Carroll with having read philologists such as John Horne Tooke, Richard Trench, or philosophers like John Stuart Mill, so he only briefly discusses their works, mostly pointing out the similarities between Carroll and the authors. The purpose of this chapter is to revise Sutherland's work by arguing that Carroll was not simply accepting the linguists at their word. In his various works, Carroll engages in his own examination of the principles espoused by such eminent 19th-century linguists as Tooke, Trench, and Mill. As a result of his own explorations, Carroll devises new ways to use language that both affirm and challenge the norms of 19th-century linguistics in two ways. Carroll challenges the notion that language is a divine system of communication, and he also challenges his contemporaries by demonstrating that language cannot be free of social or political commentary.

The field of linguistics was beginning to expand during the late 19th-century, opening up an entire world of linguistic possibilities for one who wanted to explore or

manipulate the boundaries of morphology and syntax. Contemporaries of Carroll's, such as Oscar Wilde, Edward Lear, and Sigmund Freud, were all exploring language's nuances. In order to fully understand what Carroll was doing with language in <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</u> (1865), <u>Alice's Adventures Through the Looking-Glass</u> (1871),[2] "The Hunting of the Snark" (1883),[3] <u>Sylvie and Bruno</u> (1889), and <u>Sylvie and Bruno Concluded</u> (1893),[4] I will examine the works in their historical, as well as linguistic contexts, to see precisely how Carroll not only challenged conventional constructs of literary language, but also how he created new model that writers to this day draw from.

Part of what Carroll and other 19th-century writers were responding to were the edicts of the 18th-century grammarians such as Bishop Robert Lowth (1710-1787). Many 18th-century thinkers believed that English could be reduced to a system of rules. Lowth also believed there was a universal grammar.[5] Thomas Pyles and John Algeo in their work, <u>The Origins and Development of the English Language</u> (2004), argue that

> Despite the tremendous advances of linguistics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, popular attitudes have actually changed very little since Bishop Lowth and Lindley Murray were laying down the law. Their precepts were largely based on what they supposed to be logic and reason, for they believed that the laws of language were rooted in the natural order, and this was of course "reasonable." (177)

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[2] For citations from the Alice books, I am using Martin Gardner's <u>The Annotated Alice, The Definitive Edition</u> (2000).

[3] For citations from <u>The Hunting of the Snark,</u> I am using Martin Gardner's <u>The Annotated Hunting of the Snark</u> (2006).

[4] For citations from these works, I am using <u>The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll</u>. They will be denoted by "Works" in the citation.

[5] Universal grammar is the idea that there are "innate principles and properties that pertain to the grammars of all human languages" (Fromkin 598).

Lindley Murray (1745-1826), the most famous of Lowth's protégées, was an American

Quaker who viewed language usage in terms of being morally right or wrong[6] (Pyles and

Algeo 176). During his life, Murray was nearly as famous and popular as Noah Webster

himself. His English Grammar (1795) was the first standard English grammar book and

sold well on both sides of the Atlantic. The two men supported prescriptive grammar,[7]

the belief that "English was 'easily reducible to a system of rules'" (Pyles and Algeo

176). One flaw with Lowth's and Murray's theory regarding English, according to Pyles

and Algeo, was that they wanted English to have a set of laws as clearly defined as Latin

(176).

Lowth and Murray were responsible for the outlawing of double negatives "on the

grounds stated by Lowth that 'two Negatives in English destroy one another, or are

equivalent to an Affirmative'" (Pyles and Algeo 177). In this assertion, Lowth was

drawing from grammatical rules which were already long outdated in Latin (Fromkin 15).

The men also pushed forward the notion that ending sentences with prepositions was

absolutely inappropriate in formal writing. Despite their best efforts, Lowth and Murray

leave behind a somewhat futile legacy. Language is neither stable nor a limited system,

and cannot be minimized into simple universal rules, as the debates over proper usage

that waged in the mid-19th century illustrate.

In the 1850-1860's, a battle raged over the standards of English usage between

conservative purists versus permissive students of style.[8] Carroll was aware of the

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[6] The "morality" of language is an idea that will be discussed later in this chapter when examining the writings of Robert Trench.

[7] Prescriptive grammar is an attempt to legislate what a language's grammatical rules should be, rather than studying what they are (Fromkin 592).

debate, but does not address it directly in his writings, so we have no conclusive evidence

as to which side he aligned himself with. Robert D. Sutherland, in his extensive work

Language and Lewis Carroll, hazards the following guess:

> He was conservative with regard to usage (as may be seen in his frequent
> admonitions to his child-friends to be 'correct' in their grammar), but he
> also shows in his own writing a certain freedom in handling conventional
> syntax: loosely-structured periodic sentences, for example, with
> independent clauses joined by colons. (47-48)

Sutherland eventually decides that, despite his penchant for freedom with syntax, Carroll

was conservative when it came to language usage. Elizabeth Sewell, in her 1952 work

The Field of Nonsense, also argues in favor of Carroll's conservative usage when she

points out that he demanded his printers use the formal "ca'n't," "wo'n't," and "sha'n't"

over the more relaxed and accepted forms "can't," "won't," and "shan't" (38).[9] Carroll

appears to confirm Sutherland and Sewell's assertions with the following statement in the

preface of Sylvie and Bruno Concluded (1893): "I can only plead my firm conviction

that the popular usage is *wrong*" ("Works" 509). Another example of Carroll's stringent

views on usage comes from an 1886 letter to his friend Miss Edith Rix:

> Now I come to your letter dated December 22nd, and must scold you for
> saying that my solution of the problem was 'quite different *to* all common
> ways of doing it': if *you* think that's good English, well and good; but *I*
> must beg to differ to you, and to hope you will *never* write me a sentence
> similar from this again. (qtd in Collingwood 97)

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[8] The combatants in this battle were Henry Alford, Dean of Canterbury, on the side of the formal "Queen's English" and George Washington Moon, who advocated a more descriptive stance on grammar. The battle was waged in the pages of Good Words and in numerous publications in 1864. By 1880, Alford's book was on its fifth printing, and, in 1878, Moon's tome reached its eleventh edition (Sutherland 47).

[9] According to British linguist Michael Quinion, these more formal forms of shan't, won't, and can't were encouraged in the 18th century by formalists who found it correct to include an apostrophe in the space between, for example, shall and not as well as where the "o" would be. It is actually quite proper for there to be two apostrophes, but, because it looks awkward, the first apostrophe was eventually phased out (www.worldwidewords.org).

Carroll not only highlights his friend's grammatical sloppiness, he also takes great pains

to make similar errors in the remainder of his admonition on her writing. He

purposefully misuses the prepositions "to" and "from" to make his point.

While Carroll may have been conservative when it came to grammar, his writing

time and time again demonstrates that he did not believe that language could be reduced

to any sort of stable system without gaps where various interpretations could coexist.

Whether as an intentional investigation into regional semantics, or merely a foil for

humor, Carroll exploited folk etymology in the form of local color writing, which became

popular in both 19th-century England and America.[10] The most extensively used variant

of local color writing in Carroll's works is the "baby talk" of <u>Sylvie and Bruno</u>. By the

1880's, baby talk was not only an accepted, but also an expected convention to be used

when writing about childhood.[11] Carroll does not passively use the baby talk; he makes

the most of its possibilities for humor and represents a young mind struggling with adult

rules of usage (Sutherland 53-4). Nowhere does Carroll make the struggle between adult

language rules and a child's mind more apparent than in <u>Sylvie and Bruno</u>, as the

following passage illustrates:

> "Don't you know that's revenge? And revenge is a wicked, cruel,
> dangerous thing!"

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[10] Sutherland argues that Carroll's deployment of local color writing was merely for humor and had no intellectual value as a linguistic exploration: "His literary use of speech dialects, like his use of etymology, served the cause of humor. He did not possess the modern linguist's interest in them as objects of scientific study, but merely observed the speech habits of those around him, read the dialect representations of many English and American authors, and reproduced in his own work the conventional representations of 'Irish,' 'Cockney,' 'Scottish,' 'Northern,' and non-localized uneducated 'substandard'" (Sutherland 55).

[11] This argument comes from Roger Lancelyn Green's <u>Lewis Carroll</u> (1962). Green calls dialect "an extraordinary disease" in late Victorian literature on both sides of the Atlantic pointing to authors such as Leland (<u>Breitmann Ballads</u>), Twain (<u>Huckleberry Finn</u>), Kipling (<u>Barrack Room Ballads</u>), Edith Nesbit, Grahame, and the author of the <u>Uncle Remus</u> tales.

> "River-edge?" said Bruno. "What a funny word! I suppose oo call it cruel and dangerous 'cause if oo wented too far and tumbleded in, oo'd get drowned."

> "No, not river-edge," I explained: "revenge." ("Works" 359)

The above interaction shows Bruno's attempts at proper English with the double-meaning of the words "went" and "tumble." It also shows Bruno's unfamiliarity with the word "revenge", instead he substitutes the word with the phonetically similar "river's-edge" and thinks he understands why the narrator finds it a dangerous thing. The above passage also demonstrates how trying it is to read the preciousness of Bruno's baby-talk for very long. Sutherland concludes "Had Dodgson used baby talk in <u>Alice</u>, he would not be remembered today" (53). Knowing that different speech habits and conventions can create communication errors and difficulties, Carroll applied the peculiarities of various dialects to fashion moments of misunderstanding and non-understanding (Sutherland 55).

A final example of Carroll's use of baby talk from <u>Sylvie and Bruno</u>:

> "Doos oo know, that was my river-edge, Sylvie?" Bruno solemnly began. Sylvie laughed merrily. "What *do* you mean?" she said. . .

> Bruno drew in a long breath, and made up his mouth for a great effort, "I mean re—venge," he said: "now oo under'tand.". . .(369-370).

This passage illustrates the frustrating use of baby talk, as well as demonstrates how Carroll can use dialects to create situations in which communication fails. Bruno has quite clearly said that he has enacted his revenge, but it is expressed first as "river-edge." Sylvie doesn't understand what Bruno is saying and, even after he clarifies the narrator is left doubting Sylvie's comprehension: "I rather think Sylvie didn't 'under'tand' at all" ("Works" 370). These are just a few examples of the way Carroll effectively uses language as an unstable system of expression.

For example, in the 1850 poem "Ye Fatalle Chayse," Carroll employs a Scottish dialect and lexical changes to hide the violence of his subject matter (a fox hunt). The first stanza of the poem reads:

> Ytte wes a mirke an dreiry cave,
> Weet scroggis owr ytte creepe.
> Gurgles withyn ye flowan wave
> Throw channel braid and deep. . .("Works" 707).[12]

This is markedly different from the 1856 poem "Ye Carpette Knyghte," which merely uses archaic spellings.

> "I have a horse—a ryghte good horse--
> Ne doe I envye those
> Who scoure ye playne yn headye course
> Tyll soddayne on theyre nose
> They lyghte with unexpected force
> Yt ys--a horse of clothes" ("Works" 768).[13]

The second of these poems is much simpler to read, as only the typological aspects of words that are changed. "Ye Fatalle Chayse" requires more effort on the part of the reader, but if one reads it aloud, the words become quite clear. These two poems serve to illustrate how Carroll makes use of "localized" dialects in his writing, for both humor, and as a means to deal with dark subject matter.

Not only is Carroll illustrating language's instability, he is also challenging the ideas put forth by two 19th-century linguists: John Horne Tooke (1736-1812) and

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[12] The translated version reads, "It was a murky and dreary cave,
Wee scroggies over it creep.
Gurgles within the flow and wave
Through channel broad and deep."

[13] Translated, it reads "I have a horse—a right good horse--
No do I envy those
Who scour the plain and heady course
Till sodden on their nose
They light with unexpected force
It is—a horse of clothes."

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Richard Chenevix Trench (1807-1886). Both of these men published works that were

extremely popular during Carroll's lifetime. Carroll owned Tooke's influential

Diversions of Purley (1786-1805), which was an attempt to understand language

scientifically. In this work, Tooke endeavors to show how philologists that came before

him (such as Locke, Harris, and Junius) made errors in their systemization of the English

language. Writing in dialogue form between himself and a friend, Tooke lays out his

hypothesis immediately:

> You mean to say that the errors of Grammarians have arisen from
> supposing all words to be immediately either the signs of things or the
> signs of ideas; whereas in fact many words are merely abbreviations
> employed for dispatch, and are the signs of other words. (14)

Tooke is taking particular issue with the idea that words can have no inherent meaning, or

that a word could be pure abstraction without a referent. Taking James Harris' definition

of word, "First he defines a *Word* to be a '*sound significant,*'" Tooke illustrates that

Harris' definition fails because on two separate occasions Harris has to define a particular

part of speech as being "devoid of signification" (59). For Harris, the words that are

lacking in signification are conjunctions and prepositions. Tooke argues that if Harris'

definition of word is to stand logically, then all words must signify something; thus, he

posits that words, like conjunctions and prepositions, must be the signs of other words.

What follows is an elaborate discussion of the etymologies of nearly every conjunction,

preposition, adverb, and adjective known to the English language, which leads Tooke to

conclude:

> It is the lot of man, as of all other animals, to have few different ideas (and
> there is a good physical reason for it), though we have many words: and
> yet, even of them by no means so many as we are supposed to have. (422)

Diversions of Purley is a surprisingly funny book. Tooke displays a caustic wit as he skewers the shortcomings of such eminent grammarians as Ben Johnson and John Locke. If anything is to be learned from Tooke's work, it is that language is never static and is constantly evolving, despite the best attempts to scientifically categorize its components.

By looking at Carroll's works, specifically the Alice books, it would seem that Carroll agrees that language is an ever advancing, never static system. In her 1974 book Play, Games and Sport: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll, Kathleen Blake says this of Carroll:

> For Carroll, language itself is incorrigibly tricky. He is ultra-cautious, for instance, in letter to the grown-up Alice, Mrs. Haregreaves: "If your husband is here he would be (most) very welcome. (I crossed out most because it is ambiguous--most words are, I fear.)' Carroll recognizes the problematical nature of any attempt to define and fix once and for all the shifting muddle of possible mental universes. (73)

One of Carroll's frustrations was that his beloved Mathematics was not as stable a system as he wished, as is demonstrated in Curiosa Mathematica (1888), in which he admits that there are certain theorems which are only approximately true (Blake 66). Language, unfortunately, falls into the same category.

Carroll's unease with mathematics' mercurial nature is demonstrated early in Wonderland when Alice is trying to confirm her identity: "Let me see: four times five is twelve, and four times six is thirteen, and four times seven is—oh dear! I shall never get to twenty at that rate! However, the Multiplication-Table doesn't signify" (23). One interpretation of the passage comes from Martin Gardner's The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition (2000), where he points out that some mathematicians have argued a mathematical system exists in which Alice's multiplications would be correct; however, it is unlikely this is what Carroll had in mind (23). In her analysis of Carroll's Curiosa

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<u>Mathematica</u>, Blake draws the following conclusion regarding Carroll's dismay with math and language alike:

> If mathematics itself, the language of numbers, is so little reliable for the construction of a flawless mental world which is dependable for communication, how much less so that language of words, even in its most formally controlled aspect, logic. (69)

Indeed Carroll's desire for a stable communication system runs throughout much of his writing.

In a rare diary entry dated February 20, 1890, that addresses language Carroll writes, "My view of life is, that it's next to impossible to convince *anybody* of *anything*." (Cohen). He repeats this point of view again in an 1895 letter to Miss Dora Abdy: "One of the hardest things in the world is to convey a meaning accurately from one mind to another" (qtd in Collingwood 130). This view of Carroll's is articulated more explicitly in "Eight or Nine Wise Words About Letter Writing" (1890), in which his preoccupation is with making sure one's meanings and intentions are absolutely clear in one's written communication. He marks with painstaking detail how to "*quote the exact words*, and not give a summary of them in *your* words" when responding to a letter received ("Works" 1094). Carroll advises that one keep a copy of the letter one plans on sending so that, if there are ever any questions about intention, the copy can be referenced.

Even regarding jokes, Carroll explains exactly how the humor should be handled: "My seventh Rule is, if it should ever occur to you to write jestingly, in *dispraise* of your friend, be sure you exaggerate enough to make the jesting *obvious*: a word spoken in *jest*, but taken as earnest, may lead to very serious consequences" ("Works" 1096). In this small work, Carroll demonstrates that he is aware that misunderstandings are an unavoidable part of communication, especially in written communication in which subtle

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meanings and nuances can be misinterpreted. He wants to educate his readers to keep misunderstandings from happening because he firmly believes that "No word has a meaning inseparably attached to it; a word means what the speaker intends by it, and what the hearer understands by it, and that is all" (qtd in Blake 75). Carroll is reiterating that one must have absolute control over one's writing or else there is the possibility of some unintentional meaning sneaking into the communication.

Carroll's concerns point to two interesting aspects of language: its semantic mutability and its social aspect. Carroll's view of language as unstable and something that must be used very carefully is an ideal with which some current linguists agree. Two such linguists, John Algeo and Thomas Pyles, write:

> It is a great pity that language cannot be the exact, finely attuned instrument that deep thinkers wish it to be. But the facts are, as we have seen, that the meaning of practically any word is susceptible to change of one sort or another, and some words have so many individual meanings that we cannot really hope to be absolutely certain of the sum of these meanings. (243)

Carroll seems to examine the instability of language, rather than to rue its nature. Carroll shared with 19th-century English linguists and philosophers an increasing interest in the morphology and evolution of words.[14] Alongside this interest was a growing curiosity about etymology, the historical development of languages, semantic shifts, and the "theoretical study of the nature and functions of language in general" (Sutherland 48). This interest in understanding the origins and histories of words is one that continues in linguistics to this day.

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[14] Tooke, in his <u>Diversions of Purley,</u> spends approximately three quarters of the 500-page work breaking down the etymologies of common words. He does this mostly to show where philologists such as Locke, Junius, Bacon, and Harris made errors in their works. Trench's <u>On the Origin of Words</u>, is a slim work devoted to the etymology of religious phrases. Carroll was familiar with Sir William Scott's works, including the <u>New English Dictionary on Historical Principles</u> (1858).

Thomas Pyles and John Algeo describe language as a living entity, and they also explore the causes of misunderstandings in written and oral communication. A key cause of communication gaps is the lack of fixed meanings in words. After giving several examples of words whose meanings have changed dramatically over time, they observe, "it must be obvious that we cannot ascribe anything like 'fixed' meanings to words. What we actually encounter much of the time are meanings that are variable and that may have wandered from what their etymologies suggest" (229). For Algeo and Pyles, such fluidity of language is bound to have an effect on our daily activities and habits of thought. What Algeo and Pyles are saying here sounds remarkably similar to the sentiments expressed by 19th-century philologist Richard Chevenix Trench, whom Carroll, in a March 13, 1855 diary entry, claimed that he intended to read. In order to understand what influence Trench may have had on Carroll, it is important to know what Trench's position on language was.

Trench takes a different and less scientific view of language than that of Tooke. In On the Study of Words (1852), Trench argues that "God gave man language, just as He gave him reason[. . .]He gave it to him because he could not be man, that is, a social being without it" (17). One page later Trench says, "Man makes his own language, but he makes it as the bee makes the cell, as the bird its nest" (18). Unlike bees, who can't help but make perfect cells or die, man can survive imperfection in his use of language. In Trench's opinion, when God gave man language it was perfect, but man ruined language with sloth and sin (21). Carroll's alter ego, Charles Dodgson, was a religious man, and he owned several of Trench's religious works, but it is hard to see Lewis

Carroll the writer (particularly in "Jabberwocky") agreeing with Trench when Trench says:

> Now if we could believe in any merely arbitrary words, such, that is, as stood in connexion with nothing but the mere lawless caprice of some inventor, the impossibility of tracing their derivations would be nothing strange[. . .] But there is no such thing; there is no word which is not, as the Spanish gentleman loves to call himself, an "hidalgo," the son of somebody. (91)

Trench includes extensive etymologies of many common words as he attempts to demonstrate that no word can be completely new to any given language. As a matter of fact, Trench argues that any word that does not readily lend itself to its origin "can be regarded in no other light but as a riddle which no one has succeeded in solving[. . .]but still a riddle which has a solution" (92). Trench firmly believes that new words cannot be generated by man. They must come from God and God alone.

In his famous nonsense poem, "Jabberwocky",[15] it appears that Carroll seeks to disprove Trench's assertion. The opening stanza to "Jabberwocky" reads:

> `Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
> Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
> All mimsy were the borogoves,
> And the mome raths outgrabe.

While now it is possible to find Carroll's words, with definitions and attempted etymologies, in the Oxford English Dictionary, at the time the poem was written, the words did not exist in the English language. It probably would delight Carroll to know that words he coined, such as "chortle," "galumphing," and "slithy" are now contained in a work whose purpose is to keep people speaking properly. This might be Carroll's ultimate rebellion, to become so relevant as to not be ignored by those who make up the

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[15] "Jabberwocky" will be explored with full attention in chapter 2: Nonsense. Here, I examine only the first stanza.

rules of language. In some cases in "Jabberwocky", Carroll meshes two words into one, a creation he calls "portmanteau words." Other words are pure invention, morphologically sound but without any obvious clues to their origin. In other words, Carroll does not establish a linguistic history for his nonsense words. Only Carroll knows the origins, and only Carroll knows the definitions.

Carroll is not only proving wrong Trench's argument that new words cannot be made by man, he is also mocking Tooke's argument that when a word is known to more than one language:

> The circumstance—Its meaning—shall decide. The word is always sufficiently original for me in that language where its meaning, which is the cause of its application, can be found. And seeking only meaning, when I have found it, there I stop. (454)

Trench admits that his interest in unfamiliar words only goes so far. If a word has morphed into a new meaning, Trench has no interest in going back to the origins of that word's meaning. In doing so, Trench is showing an awareness in his linguistic vision that language is a socially constructed system of communication. Despite his best attempts to convince his readers that language is a divine system, Trench cannot escape what Victoria Fromkin argues in her acclaimed work An Introduction to Language (2002):

> Learning a language includes learning the agreed-upon meanings of certain strings of sounds and learning how to combine these meaningful units into larger units that also convey meaning. We are not free to change the meanings of these words at will, if we did we would not be able to communicate with anyone. (174)

Carroll best demonstrates Fromkin's argument when he has Alice interact with Humpty Dumpty in Through the Looking Glass. While Humpty and Alice are speaking the same language, insofar as they are both speaking English, it is quite clear from the interaction

that follows below that they are not speaking the same language. Humpty's semantics introduce Alice to a language in which he, and only he, decides the meaning of the words.

> "And only *one* for birthday presents, you know. There's glory for you!"
>
> "I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said.
>
> Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't—till I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"
>
> "But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument,'" Alice objected.
>
> "When *I* use a word," Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less." (213)

In the 1951 article "Logic and the Humor of Lewis Carroll," Peter Alexander discusses the way that Humpty Dumpty wants ordinary words to mean whatever the speaker wants them to mean, while proper names are supposed to demonstrate a general significance.

> "My *name* is Alice, but—"
>
> "It's a stupid name enough!" Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently.
>
> "What does it mean?"
>
> "*Must* a name mean something?" Alice asked doubtfully.
>
> "Of course it must," Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh: "*my* name means the shape I am—and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost." (212)

Humpty's claim that names in some way signify the defining trait of an individual is opposite the language rules of Alice's above-ground world. In Alice's world proper names only refer to the individual and don't have a larger, general meaning. Carroll not only manipulates the signs present in the text, but also plays with the traces and expectations of the signs not present, what are known as intersentential ellipses (Marello

177). Alice's expectations of the word "glory" do not match up with the author's

(Humpty's) intent; thus Alice is left with an incomplete understanding of Humpty's

utterance. Carroll is expanding the intersentential ellipses present in the text until

language is rendered nonsense. Humpty has to fill in the blanks for her, and since

Humpty is her only source of information, she has to accept his definition of the word

glory.

Luciano Vitacolonna in "Aspects of Coherence in Alice" (1994), addresses the

hermeneutic issues that arise out of scenarios like the Humpty Dumpty one above:

> Carroll not only points out these hermeneutical and exegetical
> difficulties, but goes as far as to state that in a text. . .someone is able to
> 'see' a meaning, whereas someone else is not. (95)

Vitacolonna's concern is that despite an author's best attempts to fully understand the

text he or she has created, there will always be gaps that the author is unable to fully

explain. In other words, not only are there gaps between reader and author and reader

and text, but also inherent gaps between author and text. Carroll most famously

addressed this issue when discussing "The Hunting of the Snark", which he "always

protested[. . .]had no meaning at all" (Collingwood 64). These gaps give rise to what

Vitacolonna terms "hermeneutical anxiety." Carroll seems to exhibit a keen concern over

what may be a gap between his intent and his product in the long (and apologetic) preface

to Sylvie and Bruno:

> Perhaps the hardest thing in all literature—at least *I* have found it so: by
> no voluntary effort can I accomplish it: I have to take it as it comes—is to
> write anything *original*. And perhaps the easiest is, when once an original
> line has been struck out, to follow it up, and to write any amount more to
> the same tune. I do not know if "Alice in Wonderland" was an *original*
> story—I was, at least, no *conscious* imitator in writing it[. . .]Hence it is
> that, in "Sylvie and Bruno," I have striven—with I know not what
> success—to strike out yet another new path. ("Works" 257)

It is clear that given the success of Alice, Carroll finds himself aware of how easy it would be for him to take the easy path and just re-write his most famous of works. It is equally clear that Carroll is challenging himself to write something different and, as he puts it, "original." We can see that he is aware there may be a void between what he has intended, an entertaining work of love, and what exists on paper.[16] In typical Carrollean fashion, he is attempting to fill that void and to prevent any misunderstandings.

Tooke and Trench agree that language comes through man and in some fashion is determined by man. The degree to which society plays a role, however, varies. Tooke argues that each civilization determines the meanings of its words. By taking a scientific approach, Tooke attempts to remove any supernatural power of words, but he does concede that those words that are truer to their Latin or Greek roots are somehow purer. Trench, on the other hand, says that God alone gave man the ability to name and create words therefore words in some way must be instructive and moral. The degrading of the meaning of words mirrors the savagery of the civilization; "How many words men have dragged downward with themselves, and made partakers more or less of their own fall" (27). In either case, man has a hand in determining the meaning of a word, whether by retaining its original meaning or by some sort of integration into a new symbolic system. In other words, "the community has created the sign by fiat, with no justification beyond its own will.," but oddly enough, society cannot change the sign at will (Blake 76). In his 1969 work Hermeneutics Richard E. Palmer asserts "Human existence is conceivable without language. . .but not without mutual comprehension of one man by another—i.e. not without interpretation" (9). It is in the interpretation, the communication of one mind

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[16] Indeed, Carroll says, "It is written, not for money, and not for fame, but in the hope of supplying for the children whom I love, some thoughts that may suit those hours of innocent merriment which are the very life of Childhood" (257).

with another, that language opens itself up to misunderstandings and exploitation.

A key component of a community is language, and the manipulation of language is one of the most dynamic ways to create change or establish boundaries between insiders and outsiders. In the introduction to <u>A Social History of English</u> (1997), Dick Leith says that there is no one English language that one can point to and say "That is the English language," but rather that English is a continuum, constantly evolving over time. The rules and protocols of a language are established by the speaking community; thus, "It is up to us, as social animals to decide where to draw the lines; and the chances are that our choices will be governed by social and political considerations rather than linguistic ones" (2). But, because those social relations are not stable, the meanings of words are in flux, creating a game that is difficult enough for those born into the discourse but seemingly impossible for an outsider to participate in the discourse.

Carroll's most famous works exhibit the social aspects of language to perfection. For Alice, the extreme demands for consistency in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land undermine her ability to grasp the world around her. Language plays a vital role in creating societies and determining how individuals work within a society. It is here that Carroll works his magic, that he continually erodes not only Alice's worldly assumptions, but also the reader's narrative assumptions. As Amy Mandelker's "The Mushroom and the Egg: Lewis Carroll's Alice as an Otherworldly Introduction to Semiotics" (1988) explains:

> The games and puzzles in Alice and the numerous examples of communication failure articulate the three primary areas of semiotic investigation: paradigmatics, or the nature of signs and referentially; syntagmatics, or the manner in which signs combine to produce utterances; and pragmatics, or the relationships between sign systems and the users of sign systems. (102)

Alongside the reader, Alice experiences communication failures. Any linguistic advantage the reader may bring to the text is undermined by the language games within the text. Carroll's works are not only in words, but they are also about words and the endless exchanges of words between characters (Sewell 268). And at every level, Carroll manages to undermine linguistic assumptions about verbal exchanges and the meanings of words.

In her confrontation with the White Queen, Alice helps the disheveled chess piece put herself back together by straightening her shawl and combing her hair. The Queen interprets this as Alice offering herself to be a maid and so the Queen offers her the payment plan of "Twopence a week and jam every other day" (196). Alice explains she doesn't want to be hired and she doesn't want any jam today, to which the Queen replies: "You couldn't have it if you did want it[. . .]The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday--but never jam to-day" (196). Alice points out that eventually it will come to jam today, but the Queen is resolute with "It's jam every other day: to-day isn't any other day, you know" (196). This, of course, confuses Alice, and the Queen tells her that confusion is normal when living backward. She also claims that living backward results in one's mind working both ways, so that one can remember things before they happen. Alice cannot grasp this since her mind works in only one way. The Queen replies "It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards" (196).

As the reader watches Alice work through this convoluted logic, it becomes quite clear that the characters she meets are undermining Alice's naturalistic customs. Her unwillingness, or inability, to accept what is around her leaves her frustrated. On top of this, in this foreign world the normal rules of language obviously don't apply. The

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communication of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land assails both logic and specificity because every word is ambiguous since every word contains a multiplicity of meanings. The creatures Alice meets on her journeys "cannot accept language on its own grounds" because they want language to be self-sufficient and logical, two things language can never be (Rackin 43). The illogical qualities of language are something that Carroll was aware of and exploited.

As Alice travels through Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land, she attempts to deal with absurdities and impossible situations using the fundamental operations of the world above ground, even as the reader doubts Alice's logic because it is all too clear to the reader that the normal operations don't apply (Rackin 39). Alice needs to rethink what she knows and find a new way to think about herself in conjunction with what she knows about the world around her. When she is asked to recite school poems, the words come out wrong. When she attempts to rationalize with the Mad Hatter or Humpty Dumpty, she is left looking foolish and inept with her own language. Alice experiences this time and time again as she attempts communication with those around her, which leads her to nothing but frustration.

At first, it seems that the creatures are rejecting human linguistic conventions and constructs in order to play with language; however, they actually use those constructs to ask language to be unambiguous (Rackin 43-4). Because language is inherently ambiguous and in a state of free play, however, what the creatures ask is impossible. Examples of this sort of miscommunication run through the Alice books, but here I want to use an example from the Mad Tea party:

"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.

"I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least--at least I mean what I say--that's the same thing, you know."

"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "You might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see.'" (95)

Here, the Hare and the Hatter ask Alice to be precise and her language to be stable, and she can't accommodate them. Oddly enough in this exchange, the creatures demonstrate that they know more about "the relations between meaning and saying" than Alice does (Rackin 17).

In Wonderland, Alice comes across the Duchess and her baby. At one point the Duchess throws the baby at Alice who finds it to be ". . .a queer-shaped little creature. . . .'just like a starfish. . .'" (63). The baby morphs into a pig and runs off into the woods. Here the play is on the words fig and pig, but the real play occurs between the words baby and pig. When the infant is a baby, Alice treats it very differently than when it is a pig. After she leaves the Duchess, she runs into the Chesire Cat and tells it about the pig baby, to which the Cat asks "Did you say pig or fig?" Clearly, the change in one word changes the entire situation.

S. Petrilli and A. Ponzio use the Cheshire Cat to focus on the social aspect of language, in the article "Exchange in Alice's World" (1994) They argue that, "Language is social work and languages are the result of the sedimentation of the products of such work, and are in turn used as the material, instruments, and models for further processing" (78). In the Alice books, Carroll shows the reader how it is one learns that one is situated in a linguistically mediated world. The clearest example of this comes in the scene with the Cheshire Cat.

From his dissolving body to his annoyingly direct answers to Alice's questions, the Cat is the ultimate symbol of language's mercurial nature. Not only does the Cat shift word meanings, but he also literally slips in and out of the conversation. Gilles Deleuze argues in The Logic of Sense (1969) that "What renders language possible is that which separates sounds from bodies and organizes them into propositions, freeing them from expressive function. It is always a mouth which speaks; but the sound is no longer the noise of a body. . ." (181). The Chesire Cat highlights the separation of body and language. At points, he is speaking but he has no body and at other point he has a body and is not speaking. His physical intangibility mirrors the discussions he has with Alice. When Alice first happens upon the Cat she asks:

> "Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?"
>
> "That depends a good deal on where you want to go," said the Cat.
>
> "I don't much care where—" said Alice.
>
> "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.
>
> "—so long as I get *somewhere*," Alice added as an explanation.
>
> "Oh, you're sure to do that," said the Cat, "If you only walk long enough." (65)

In this exchange, the Cat answers Alice's questions with infuriating precision. Until Alice knows exactly where she wants to go, the Cat can't help her. As the conversation continues, the Cat continues to adhere to the logic of its language.

> "But I don't want to go among mad people," Alice remarked.
>
> "Oh, you ca'n't [sic] help that," said the Cat, "we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad."
>
> "How do you know I'm mad?" said Alice.

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

Alice didn't think that proved it at all. . .(66)

Ironically, for an animal that demands its language be constantly ordered, the Chesire

Cat's ability to literally dissolve in segments demonstrates language's knack for

dissolving its own meanings (Fig. 1.1).

Fig 1.1. Cheshire Cat in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865)

Alice experiences a communication where the creatures demand that the semantic

levels of communication be acknowledged as something stable and consistent, therefore

making the communication unconventional because the context of a word does not affect

the meaning of the word.[17] Alice is at the whim of the creatures' language until the end

of both Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. Alice's continual belief she can

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[17] Philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) refers to this type of communication as monologic, a one way transmission of information where the listener is not able to participate (Bakhtin.lec 1). Carroll's writing is heteroglossic, but the language of the creatures strives to be monologic. Alice's adventures take place in the vacillation of the worlds' monologism and language's inherent heteroglossia. Because Wonderland operates as monologic.

participate in a dialogue within Wonderland leaves her open to the manipulations of

Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land's monologic discourse.

> "And I wish you wouldn't keep appearing and vanishing so suddenly: you make one quite giddy!"
>
> "All right," said the Cat; and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone.
>
> "Well! I've often seen a cat without a grin," thought Alice; "but a grin without a cat! It's the most curious thing I ever saw in my life!" (67)

In its disappearing act, the Cat has demonstrated that one of the aspects of language that

we take to be indestructible—the bond between subject and attribute—can easily be

destabilized.

Another example of this comes from the Disney adaptation of *Alice in

Wonderland* (1951) (Fig. 1.2). When Alice talks to the Caterpillar it communicates not

only through spoken words but also through smoke signals.

Fig 1.2. Caterpillar Smoke Signals *Alice in Wonderland* © Disney (1951)

The visual representation highlights the tenuous connection between sign and signified.

In the scene above the Caterpillar asks Alice "Who are you?" represented by an O for

"who," an R for "are," and an ephemeral U for "you."[18] While all the Caterpillar's

smoke words evaporate, it is significant that the U is never fully formed. This lack of

concrete signal represents Alice's own uncertainty of her identity. By invoking her

name, she remains unable to answer the Caterpillar's question with any satisfaction.

Alice simply means nothing in Wonderland.

In Game of Logic (1896) Carroll writes about how the physical representations of

words are less important than the idea behind the word when he is working on a

Syllogism in which he is comparing dragons to Scotsmen:

> Remember, I don't guarantee the Premises to be *facts*. In the first place, I
> never even saw a Dragon: and, in the second place, it isn't of the slightest
> consequence to us, as *Logicians*, whether our Premises are true or false:
> all *we* have to do is to make out whether they *lead logically to the
> Conclusion*, so that, if *they* were true, *it* would be true also. (25)

Because the book is aimed at introducing children to logic, Carroll has chosen a fantastic

creature to use in his syllogism. Carroll realizes that logic is not a means with which to

understand the material world but that logic is an exercise of the mind. It is irrelevant

whether there are dragons in the problem. To dwell on the word dragon is to miss the

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[18] Interestingly enough, this same distillation of words into one symbol is one seen regularly amongst those who spend a great deal of time text messaging and amongst the group of internet hackers who consider themselves "Elite" (often spelled l33t). As the internet evolves into a world wide community, it is not surprising that it would spawn its own languages. Many of the languages employed by those on the web involve coding. HTML, XML, Java, etc are all languages that were created by and used on the internet. The most prevalent internet language in use is L33t Sp34k or "Elite Speak." The accepted history of l33t is that it was created as a dynamic cipher on the Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) of the 1990's as a way to keep newcomers out of the conversation and to identify oneself as an 3l1t3 h4x0r (elite hacker). (BBC 1) Alternate histories have to do with the fact that the BBS were slow and participants were not skilled typists, thus they began to shorten words to get their words out faster. (wikipedia 1) Once online gaming and First Person Shooter (FPS) games became popular, l33t was used as a means of further demeaning opponents. (Van de Velde and Meuleman 5) Recently l33t has fallen into disfavor as its exclusivity has waned in the wake of mass participants using the language. Common l33t words are "pwnage" (meaning to own one), "lol" (indicating laughing out loud)," w00t" (a declaration of triumph), "h4x0r" (hacker), and "pr0n" (pornography). (wikipedia 5-7) Many of the words are derived from common typing errors (teh for the or intranet for internet).

point of the exercise in particular and of logic in general. The exercise is to determine whether the relation of the word dragon to the words around is logical or not.

For Carroll reality is not material but is found in the intellect. This premise unnerves Carroll, as is evident by the example given early in Wonderland where Alice is attempting to establish her reality by reciting facts: "London is the capital of Paris, and Paris is the capital of Rome, and Rome—no, *that's* all wrong, I'm certain! I must have been changed for Mabel!" (23) Because Alice can't establish her reality to her satisfaction, she assumes she must not be herself any longer. Julian Wolfreys writes of the connection between Alice's identity and her surroundings in "Alice: An Architect of Knowledge" (1997). As her surroundings become stranger, Alice finds herself unable to identify herself with any certainty: "Her involvement with estranging architectures always renders Alice's identity as other than it is[. . .]Also her knowledge is revealed as having limits, which are the limits of the frame, the limits of a projected identity" (40-41).

Alice does not know herself; neither does she readily recognize those she meets in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. Likewise, the characters of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land do not recognize her. This mutual non-recognition firmly establishes her as not belonging, and thus inconsequential to the workings of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. Alice constantly suffers from a lack of recognition by those she meets throughout her adventures. In Wonderland, the bird fails to recognize her as a human and instead accuses her of being a serpent. The White Rabbit confuses Alice with his maid Mary Ann. The Caterpillar demands she define herself. The flowers in the garden of Looking-Glass Land mistake Alice for another flower and then critique her on

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her petals and stems. Humpty Dumpty dismisses her as looking like all humans and as having nothing remarkable about her. Carroll exploits Alice's discomfort in her own self-certainty, particularly in the scene with the Caterpillar in which Alice cannot answer the simple question "Who are you?" Alice's inability to answer is obvious because self-certainty ". . . cannot be expressed in language at all, because sense-certainty is knowledge of the pure particular, while language always involves bringing something under mere general or universal label" (Singer 71). Because Alice is relying on language to confirm her reality, she shows that she understands her identity to be a social construct and not something inherent in herself. Her answers to the Caterpillar's questions "can be read as a sign of her growing awareness that she (herself) is completely contingent on the discursive world in which she finds herself" (Rackin 46).

For Bernard Bosanquet[19] (1843-1923), a British philosopher who was known as a key player in the British Idealist movement, a crucial component of one's identity is the social community in which one lives (Sweet 5). In order for an individual to fully realize him/herself, recognition from the society is necessary. Again Deleuze provides some insight into this issue:

> The loss of a proper name is the adventure which is repeated throughout all of Alice's adventures. For the proper or singular name is guaranteed by the permanence of *savoir*. The latter is embodied in general names designated pauses and rests, in substantives and adjectives, with which the proper name maintains a constant connection. Thus the personal self requires God and the world in general. But when the substantives and adjectives begin to dissolve, when the names of pause and rest are carried away by the verbs of pure becoming and slide into the language of events, all identity disappears from the self, the world, and God. (3)

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[19] Carroll owned his Logic, Or the Morphology of Knowledge (1888). Many of the essays had been published prior to the volume's publication date, but in all likelihood, the essays were published following the publication date of Alice's Adventures Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There (1871).

Humpty Dumpty provides the most disturbing case of non-recognition. To him all

humans look the same:

> "Good-bye, till we meet again!" she said as cheerfully as she could.
>
> "I shouldn't know you again if we *did* meet," Humpty Dumpty replied in a discontented tone, giving her one of his fingers to shake: "you're so exactly like other people."
>
> "The face is what one goes by, generally," Alice remarked in a thoughtful tone.
>
> "That's just what I complain of," said Humpty Dumpty. "Your face is the same as everybody has—the two eyes, so—"(marking their places in the air with his thumb) "nose in the middle, mouth under. It's always the same. Now if you had the two eyes the same side of the nose, for instance—or the mouth at the top—that would be *some* help." (219)

Here we see Alice's individuality negated by Humpty's observation that all human faces

look alike, i.e. have the same features in the same configuration and, therefore, he

wouldn't recognize her if he were to see her again.

In the garden of live flowers, Alice experiences similar treatment by the flowers.

Instead of fearing her for being able to pick them (which would be the normal natural

ordering) the flowers are openly hostile:

> "It's *my* opinion that you never think *at all*," the Rose said, in a rather severe tone.
>
> "I never saw anybody that looked stupider," a Violet said. . .(159)

Once again, Alice's name is not important to the flowers that refer to her and the Red

Queen both as "flower[s] that can move about." The only notable difference between the

two females is that the Red Queen is "more bushy than you are" (160). Alice is so

excited by the knowledge that there is another human nearby that she ignores the flowers'

continuing insults of "she has the same awkward shape as you" and "You're beginning to

fade, you know—and then one ca'n't help one's petals getting a little untidy" (160). To introduce herself with her above-world identity, "Alice," simply does not register with the denizens of these worlds. Martin Jay writes in Cultural Semantics (1998):

> Cultural semantics must, therefore, be sensitive to the ways in which language partakes in and contributes to the larger processes of identity formation through inclusion, exclusion, and even abjection--to highlight one of the terms to be discussed below--in society as a whole. (3)

Because "Alice" is not a name common in Wonderland or Looking-Glass Land, the word has no meaning to the creatures she meets. Victoria Fromkin writes that proper nouns are significantly different from other words in a language because "they refer to a specific object or entity, but usually have little meaning, or sense, beyond the power of referral" (186). Her name means nothing to them, as it does not have any referent that they can draw upon. Alice is an abstraction.

For Bosanquet humans live in a community in which the social order enables members to "learn language, acquire knowledge of moral principles, come to think and to judge—not to mention learn the nature of content and reality" (Sweet 2). Carroll plays with how a social structure affects an individual throughout the Alices. Alice is simply not a member of either Wonderland or Looking-Glass Land, nor will she ever be despite being crowned queen at the end of her Looking-Glass adventure. Bosanquet argues that the individual receives support from the community "only so far as they are 'recognized' by others" (Sweet 2). If, as Bosanquet says, "'every mind is a mirror[. . .]of the whole community from its own peculiar point of view,'" then Alice is certainly in trouble because not only is she not recognizable to the worlds she visits, but they aren't recognizable to her (Sweet 2).

The mirror figures prominently in both of the Alice books. Throughout Wonderland, the reader sees Alice "mirroring" the behaviors of those around her. For example, at the tea party, Alice attempts to play by the unknowable rules of the March Hare and the Mad Hatter. Alice tries to play croquet the Queen's way even though the game is clearly stacked against her. In both of these attempts, Alice falls short of fitting in to Wonderland. Carroll even uses Alice's size in Wonderland as a means of "reversing" her status within the society. As a shrunken Alice, she is on the same level as mice, birds, insects, and other vermin. When she is larger than her normal size, she is accused of being brutal, violent, and dangerous (a role she cherishes in the Queen of Heart's court). Even when Alice is her right size, she is mocked, ridiculed, and generally treated with suspicion. No matter her size or her mannerisms, Alice cannot mirror Wonderland and, as a result, she cannot be accepted into Wonderland as an equal. This scenario plays out again in Through the Looking-Glass.

The physical mirror of Looking-Glass sets the events of the second adventure into motion. Alice literally crosses through the mirror into a world that is supposed to be the reverse of her own. This is demonstrated by the reverse written "Jabberwocky" Alice encounters in the first chapter (Fig 1.3).
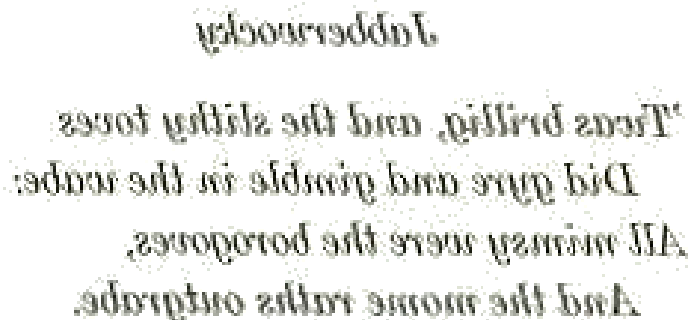
Fig 1.3. *"Jabberwocky"*

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At first Alice, is stumped by the script, but she soon figures out that "It's a Looking-glass book, of course! And, if I hold it up to a glass, the words will all go the right way again" (148). Unfortunately, Carroll is inconsistent with his reversals, and later when Alice encounters the Tweedles, the words on their collars are not reversed. There is further evidence that perhaps Alice is not mirror-reflected and thus unable to fit into the Looking-Glass society the same way she was unable to find a place within Wonderland.

If one looks closely at the John Tenniel's illustrations throughout <u>Through the Looking-Glass</u> one thing is immediately clear. Despite having gone through the mirror Alice remains un-mirrored. In <u>Wonderland</u>, Tenniel draws Alice right-handed. This is best seen in the garden when Alice is attempting to play croquet with her flamingo mallet (Fig 1.4).

Fig 1.4. Alice and her "mallet" in <u>Wonderland.</u>

In Through the Looking-Glass Tenniel continues to draw Alice right-handed, as in the picture of Alice holding her scepter (Fig 1.5).

Fig 1.5. Alice with the queens in Through the Looking-Glass.

Martin Gardner discusses this phenomenon in his The Annotated Alice, and he ultimately concludes that "neither Tenniel nor Carroll was consistent about who or what was mirror-reflected behind the looking-glass" (148). But perhaps it is not so easy to dismiss this seeming inconsistency in author and artist.

Bosanquet asserts that in order for an individual to belong to a society, two things must take place. The first thing is that the individual must be recognized by the society, and the second is that the mind must be a mirror of the society, albeit a uniquely individual mirror. In Wonderland, Alice attempts to mimic her surroundings and find someone who can help her home. At each turn, she is greeted by hostility, insanity, and danger. For her to successfully escape, Alice must embrace these Wonderland elements and turn them against the Queen of Hearts and her court. Looking-Glass Land provides a different sort of challenge for Alice. She crosses the mirror only to remain unaffected by

her crossing. After crossing, it is not as though Alice speaks backwards, walks backwards, or thinks backwards. By all accounts, she crosses unchanged and is easily confused by those she encounters. This, of course, prevents her from fitting in to the Looking-Glass society despite the fact that she is successfully Queened.   Alice is once again pushed to violence, only this time (after pulling all the food, drinks, and dishes off the banquet table) she literally picks up the Red Queen and begins to shake her. While the Looking-Glass world isn't as overtly hostile as the Wonderland society, it is clear that Alice cannot belong to either world.

While the mirroring helps to establish that Alice will always remain an outsider, it is when discussing her name that Alice's status is made crystal clear. Naming is clearly a central concern for Carroll. In both the Alice books, Carroll exposes the absurdity of proper names. Turning again to Bosanquet in Logic, he says this of the act of naming: "To give a name is for civilized thought the first step in knowledge. It at once depends upon, and in a sense creates a recognizable arrangement of things, qualities, and relatives" (7). Clearly, naming is a powerful tool for society. In Language and Lewis Carroll, Donald Sutherland devotes an entire chapter to Carroll's manipulations of the act of the naming. Where Sutherland draws from a wealth of 20th-century linguistic knowledge, Carroll draws from 19th-century philosophers whose views on language and meaning are very similar to those that Sutherland discusses.

John Stuart Mill, in his 1852 work A System of Logic, posits that proper names are essentially meaningless because they have no universal referent: "Proper names are not connotative: they denote the individuals who are called by them; but they do not indicate or imply any attributes as belonging to those individuals" (33). Bosanquet also

volunteers a similar perspective with "Meaning, or the use of names, is never mere distinction; though proper names are used for the sake of mere distinction, and so with no care for positive meaning except as subservient to that end" (Bosanquet 25). In the Alices proper names seem to be a surface world concern only, since the majority of the characters that Alice meets have names that are built of antonomasia: for instance mouse becomes "The Mouse." This conversion from a general to a specific requires speech: "but another element takes part in this naming process: when a character begins to speak, this makes it anthropomorphosis and so this depersonalizes its proper name" (Boldrini, Nocentinie, Ricci 47).

We see this in Wonderland in the Pool of Tears when Alice is debating with herself over whether she should talk to the mouse she sees swimming by:

> "Would it be of any use, now," thought Alice, "to speak to this mouse? Everything is so out-of-the-way down here, that I should think it very likely it can talk: at any rate, there's no harm in trying." So she began: "O Mouse, do you know the way out of this pool? I am very tired of swimming about here, O Mouse!" (25)

When she directly addresses the mouse, the lower case "m" becomes a capital "m." This seemingly small typographic move on the part of the author completely changes Alice's perspective. The mouse goes from being a small rodent to something that she can speak with and it carries with it the proper name of Mouse. In this context, "Mouse" is the same as "Alice," the referent is no longer a universal. "Mouse" refers specifically to the mouse Alice is talking to and does not belong to a second mouse. Turning again to Mill:

> We put a mark, not indeed upon the object itself, but, so to speak, upon the idea of the object. A proper name is but an unmeaning mark which we connect in our minds with the idea of the object, in order that whenever the mark meets our eyes or occurs to our thoughts, we may think of that individual object. (35)

Alice shows that she has forgotten the universal referent for mouse when she asks the mouse in French where her cat is.

> The Mouse gave a sudden leap out of the water, and seemed to quiver all over with fright. "Oh, I beg your pardon!" cried Alice hastily, afraid that she had hurt the poor creatures feelings. "I quite forgot you didn't like cats." (26)

Alice has now effectively exchanged the universality of "mouse" for the virtually non-referential "Mouse." This occurs throughout the Alice books where the only creatures that have "proper" proper names are Alice, Dinah, and nursery rhyme characters such as Humpty Dumpty. Otherwise the characters' names are all versions of the Mouse. This is what Petrilli and Ponzio discuss when they say:

> Word play in the Alice books and in general are exchange games, or rather, games which make fun of equal exchange, which ridicule the logic of equal exchange between signifier and signified in the single sign. . . (76)

The examples they give are "horse" versus "hoarse" as homophones and "comb" and "comb" as variable meaning depending upon context.

Carroll demonstrates this premise again at the end of Looking-Glass when the White and Red Queens debate whether Alice deserves her crown:

> "Do you know Languages? What's the French for fiddle-de-dee?"
>
> "Fiddle-de-dee's not English," Alice replied gravely.
>
> "Who ever said it was?" said the Red Queen.
>
> Alice thought she saw a way out of the difficulty, this time. "If you'll tell me what language 'fiddle-de-dee' is, I'll tell you the French for it!" she exclaimed triumphantly.
>
> But the Red Queen drew herself up rather stiffly, and said, "Queens never make bargains." (255)

The above interaction confirms what Elizabeth Sewell says about the nature of communication: "Relations between words and minds, and between mind and mind through the medium of words, are frequently complex and irrational" (98). As Alice is talking with the Queens, the reader sees the irrationality not only of the words they are using, but also the irrationality that can exist between two minds.

Although Alice has completed the Looking-Glass challenge and made it to the end of the chessboard, that is not enough to firmly establish her status as a queen. This is evident in the way the door is marked in such an ambiguous manner. In Looking-Glass Land, even though she is ultimately crowned, she is still not a member of the society as her frustration prior to her coronation meal proves:

> She was standing before an arched doorway, over which were the worlds "QUEEN ALICE" in large letters, and on each side of the arch there was a bell-handle; one was marked "Visitors' Bell," and the other "Servants' Bell."
>
> "I'll wait till the song's over," thought Alice, "and then I'll ring—the—the—*which* bell must I ring?" she went on, very much puzzled by the names. "I'm not a visitor, and I'm not a servant. There *ought* to be one marked 'Queen,' you know—" (258)

Alice cannot know which bell to pull because she is simply not a part of the Looking-Glass Land society. No matter which bell she pulls, she will be wrong because, as she asserts, she is neither a visitor nor a servant. Her role in Looking-Glass Land is suspect and she seemingly falls through the cracks of the existing social structure.

Alice's very queen-hood is also in doubt because she is willing to make a bargain in order to get out of what, to her, is a very silly conversation. The Queens use her bargain-making as the basis for differentiating themselves from her. If Alice is prepared to offer a bargain by changing the rules on them, then she is simply not a queen. Of

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course, there is no reason for Alice not to be crowned she has successfully completed her journey. The Queens are simultaneously establishing their reality and their control over that reality by questioning Alice's representation of their reality. The exchange between Alice and the Queens illustrates not only the immateriality of reality, but another premise that was of great import to Carroll: the idea that language is a social creation.

Time and time again Alice thinks she is mirroring the society only to find that she is not, as the scene with the Queens illustrates. Another example of Alice's attempts to outwardly match the world she's in comes in Wonderland, at the Mad Tea Party.

> "Have some wine," the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.
>
> Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. "I don't see any wine," she remarked.
>
> "There isn't any," said the March Hare.
>
> "Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it," said Alice angrily.
>
> "It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited," said the March Hare.
>
> "I didn't know it was *your* table," said Alice: "It's laid for a great many more than three."
>
> "Your hair wants cutting," said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his fist speech.
>
> "You should learn not to make personal remarks," Alice said with some severity: "it's very rude." (69-70)

Here, Alice assumes that because they're having tea, the rules that she is used to in her above ground world must apply. Of course they don't, but that doesn't stop Alice from trying to play the adult and educate the Hare and Hatter on proper etiquette. "Alice submits to (and fails at) all the tests of common sense. . ." Deleuze argues (79). In the

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end, it is Alice who receives an education, as she is told that saying what one means is *not* the same thing as meaning what one says.

Alice's age plays an important role in her linguistic interaction and subsequent identity undermining because, as Donald Rackin says in <u>Nonsense, Sense and Meaning</u> (1991), "For Alice, as for most seven-year-olds, Wonderland's confusing breakdown of the "rules" and of the premises of her sense of order is no laughing matter. . ." (109). Blake agrees with Rackin: "Language for Alice is to some extent a way of impressing others. . .on the other hand, she reflects that a lack of knowledge of a word would put her at a psychological disadvantage" (106-7). When one does not know, or cannot know, the rules of communication or engagement, one has a distinct weakness in interaction. As seen in the Alice, she is constantly one step behind Wonderland's and Looking-Glass Land's logic, and, when she does begin to catch up (as is evidenced in the conversation with the Queens, the rules shift, leaving her far behind.

Carroll uses the White Knight to expose the game of exchange between words. The Knight offers to sing Alice a song that he says is called "Haddocks' Eyes." When Alice responds with "Oh, that's the name of the song, is it?" she enters into an unequal game of exchange with the Knight.

> "No, you don't understand" the Knight said, looking a little vexed.
>
> "That's what the name is *called*. The name really is *'The Aged Aged Man.'*"
>
> "Then I ought to have said 'That's what the *song* is called'?" Alice corrected herself.
>
> "No, you oughtn't: that's quite another thing! The *song* is called '*Ways and Means'* but that's only what it's *called*, you know!"

> "Well, what *is* the song, then?" said Alice, who was by this time completely bewildered.
>
> "I was coming to that," the Knight said. "The song really is *"A-sitting on a Gate"*: and the tune's my own invention." (243)

This exchange's humor lies in the subtle differences in meaning that the Knight is aware of but Alice is not. The meta-language demonstrated in this exchange is the name of things versus the names of names of things (Gardner 243). What the song is ("A-Sitting on a Gate") is not the same as what it is named ("The Aged Aged Man") and this is distinctly different from what the name of the song is called ("Haddocks' Eyes").

In a rare candid letter, Carroll explains that "Sitting on a Gate" is a parody of Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," a poem that Carroll found highly amusing despite the fact that it is not a comic poem. What amused Carroll specifically was "the absurd way in which the poet goes on questioning the poor old leech-gatherer, making him tell his history over and over again, and never attending to what he says. Wordsworth ends with a moral—an example I have *not* followed" (quoted in Gardner 246). Once again Carroll displays a disdain for doing things according to convention. He mocks contemporary children's tales, pokes fun at social etiquette, and even satirizes great poets.

The "Sitting on a Gate" scene also exploits what Per Aage Brandt calls "meta-belief." Meta-belief occurs in all works of fiction because all fictions either build-up or break-down the reader's beliefs about the represented world, ". . .and therefore it must operate on the level of *belief in belief*, or meta-belief. . ." (26). Meta-belief controls the reader's self-confidence towards the text (i.e. how much authority we give our beliefs and how much we rely on those beliefs). The meta-activity of a text is only significant when

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it is able to disrupt the text's natural predisposition "to establish invariant interpretive cognitive criteria for probably occurrences of objects and events, a satisfactory world framing. . ." (Brandt 27). Meta-belief also provides a bridge between the previous linguistic discussion and the philosophical discussion which follows.

> Meta-belief controls the hermeneutic attitude of a subject, it is a highly affective factor, and it is susceptible to emotional modification. It is always at stake in effective communication. (Brandt 27)

In <u>Symbolic Logic</u> (1897), Carroll discuss how easy it is for an author to disturb the reader's meta-belief in a text:

> . . .I maintain that any writer of a book is fully authorized in attaching any meaning he likes to any word or phrase he intends to use. If I find an author saying, at the beginning of his book, "Let it be understood that by the world '*black*' I shall always mean '*white*', and that by the word *'white'* I shall always mean '*black*'," I meekly accept his ruling, however injudicious I may think it is. (166)

The reader is at the mercy of the author for clues as to how to read the text. By making Alice a seven year old, Carroll is able to explore how odd, random, and even frightening the adult world can be. Not only are adult mannerisms seemingly arbitrary but the very rules that govern language are up for grabs within Wonderland and Looking-glass Land.

Alice only contains Wonderland and frees herself from its anarchy at the trial of the Knave of Hearts when she says: "You're nothing but a pack of cards!" (161). By naming the cards as cards, which is exactly what they are, and, because of Wonderland's strenuous demands for the stability of language, Alice is able to open up the monologic discourse into a dialogic discourse. The cards cannot deny that they are nothing but a pack of cards. She, in essence, turns the monologue into a dialogue and reverses any arbitrariness with regards to the meaning of the cards. She establishes the margins in which they exist.

As the above scenario illustrates, Carroll was concerned with the gaps that exist between meaning, reality, conveyance of meaning, the malleable connotations of words, and the hilarity that ensues when misunderstandings take place. 18th-century and 19th-century linguists and grammarians attempted to reduce the flexibility and ambiguity of language by establishing prescriptive grammar rules. Rather than passively accepting these rules, Carroll challenged prescriptive grammar rules and by doing so, he established new linguistic paradigms that are continually put to use by popular culture. At the heart of Carroll's envelope pushing is linguistic nonsense. As the next chapter discusses, nonsense allows Carroll, in his two major nonsense works, "The Jabberwocky" and "The Hunting of the Snark", to create situations in which violence acts are only referred to rather than acted out. This linguistic violence serves as a means of critiquing social conventions and mechanisms, while highlighting the absurdity of prescriptive grammar. Carroll also uses nonsense to establish the boundaries between various social groups. In Through the Looking-Glass, the boundary lies between Alice and the inhabitants of Looking-Glass Land. In "The Hunting of the Snark", Carroll draws the line between both the participants in the hunt and between the humans and the monster they seek.

Chapter Two: Paper Worlds and Ink Seas

Lewis Carroll was able to subvert the standard rules and conventions that dominated 19th-century linguistic thought by challenging the prevailing linguistic authorities. Through the use of portmanteau words, local color writing, and neologisms, Carroll defied those who those who tried to make English follow the rules of Latin, those who attempted to scientifically map language, and those who believed that language was first a divine system of communication and only second a social system. Carroll's works continue to do this even in current times, whether challenging philologists, philosophers, and linguists, or dominant language theorists. Carroll's most effective means of challenging dominant linguistic and semantic theory is through the use of nonsense. This chapter sets out to show that nonsense increases the stakes of survival for the characters within the nonsense text.

Before attempting to define nonsense, we will first look at some current thoughts on how language mediates an individual's position within a society and serves to define not only members of a society, but also to define those individuals who lie outside the linguistic boundaries. In the introduction to A Social History of English (1997), Dick Leith says that there is no single English language that one can point to and say "That is the English language," but rather that English is a continuum, constantly evolving over time (2). The rules and protocols of a language are established by the speaking community; thus, "It is up to us, as social animals to decide where to draw the lines; and the chances are that our choices will be governed by social and political considerations rather than linguistic ones" (2). But because those social relations are not stable, the

meanings of words are in flux, creating a game that is difficult enough for those born into the discourse but seemingly impossible for an outsider to participate in.

As discussed earlier, language is a system of signs that is governed by the agreed upon rules of a society. To be a part of that society means that one is capable of unlocking the code of that discourse. An outsider is necessarily unfamiliar with the rules, even if the language spoken is the same, as can be seen in the Alice books. Often, when an outsider comes into contact with an unfamiliar community, one of the most difficult and important things the outsider must overcome is the language barrier. That is why verbal games are a popular way to undermine readers' and characters' assumptions, because they establish the parameters of an existing community and the ways in which an outsider must adapt to be included in that community. A key component to one's identity is the social community in which one lives (Sweet 5). In order for an individual to fully realize his/herself, recognition from the society is necessary. Humans live in a community in which the social order enables members to "learn language, acquire knowledge of moral principles, come to think and to judge—not to mention learn the nature of content and reality" (Sweet 2).

Mary Louise Pratt in "Linguistic Utopias" discusses the desire to create linguistic utopias—societies where all participants are unified by linguistic structure, cohesive meaning, and lexical system. Integral to a utopia is the concept that all participants will be equal and that there will not be a hierarchy within the discourse. Pratt finds this sought-after utopia problematic because with language, there will always be someone, or a collective, determining the rules of usage as well as the meaning of words. A community where language is cleansed of ideology and power simply does not exist.

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The sites of discourse that Pratt examines (because these are the sites where she argues the drive for utopian societies is the strongest) are classrooms, medical settings, and general conversations. She argues that in each of these dynamics the prevailing academic analysis is lopsidedly in one direction: "Teacher-pupil language, for instance, tends to be described almost entirely from the teacher's point of view" (51). Even when the participants are speaking the same language, the meanings of utterances are widely diverse as there is a hierarchy of power within any given community (56). Further arguing Pratt's point is David Bell, who states in his work An Introduction to Cybercultures (2004):

> So, language names us (or gives names to the things we are: teacher, middle-aged, homosexual), and this naming occurs through the ways we address one another, and accept the way we are addressed by others. However, this is not a once-and-for-all process, since our identities are multiple (so a middle-aged, homosexual teacher is also a son, a lover, a taxpayer). The role of discourse here is to produce certain subject positions and to naturalize them—in an effort to facilitated the domination of the subject. (83)

Martin Jay refers to this as cultural semantics in Cultural Semantics: Key Words of Our Time (1998). Cultural semantics refers to the way in which words are altered by cultural trends, ideologies, and concepts.

> Cultural semantics must, therefore, be sensitive to the ways in which language partakes in and contributes to the larger processes of identity formation through inclusion, exclusion, and even abjection. . .in society as a whole. (3)

Here Martin acknowledges the way in which a language cannot only include and exclude speaking members, but also how language can be used as a means of rejecting undesirable members from a speaking collective. Since identity within a social or cultural organization is dependent upon language, language (and those who determine its

rules of usage) wields an incredible amount of power on the individual. Inevitably, there will be a struggle for power and control within a societal configuration as individuals strive to maintain their identity as well as the cultural ideologies inherent in the language.

The struggle between the dominated and the dominant within a given society can clearly be seen in Carroll's works. One simple example is in the Disney movie when Alice tells the Cheshire Cat "I want to go home! But I can't find my way," she learns "Naturally. That's because you have no way. All ways here you see, are the queen's ways." The Queen of Hearts controls not only the movements of Alice, but even the way she asks for help. By asserting that she is looking for *her* way home, Alice has unknowingly crossed the authority of the Queen of Hearts. In the above-ground world, to ask for one's way home is an understood linguistic quirk. Clearly the individual isn't looking for a way home that only he or she owns, it is a figure of speech referring to a general path. For the Queen of Hearts, however, Alice should have said "But I can't find the *Queen's* way." Semantically this makes no sense to the reader or to Alice, but to Wonderland it is the *only* phrasing that makes sense. The Cat understands Alice's sentence, but the meaning is lost on him which is, as he explains, why she can't find her way out of Wonderland. In Looking-Glass Land, even though Alice has reached the end of the board and is technically a Queen, she can't participate in her coronation because she doesn't know which bell to ring to enter her own party.

Despite carrying the name of an authority figure, in this case Queen, Alice remains very much under the control of others because she doesn't understand the language being used. This is one form of nonsense, in which the words are familiar but the semantics are completely foreign. Another form of nonsense that Carroll engages in

involves creating words that are alien to a reader. One example that is directly tied to this chapter is Alice's encounter with "Jabberwocky." Alice does not understand the poem at all until she encounters Humpty Dumpty and he gives her the meanings of the nonsense words because he, and he alone, knows the meaning.

What exactly is nonsense? A simple definition is provided by Victoria Fromkin: "A permissible phonological form without meaning." Most people view nonsense as simply being not-sense. Elizabeth Sewell in 1952 published the seminal work on nonsense entitled The Field of Nonsense.[20] Sewell argues against the idea that nonsense is simply not-sense because this view insinuates that any attempt to systematically understand nonsense will somehow destroy the fragile pleasure it gives to the reader. Here she aligns nonsense to poetry, arguing that neither poetry nor nonsense will "collapse at the touch of logic" (5). Later, however, she points out that nonsense is too rational to be poetry and too logical to be dream (23). Ultimately Sewell's thesis is that nonsense is a game between reader and writer that constructs its own world, is controlled by reason, and is subject to its own laws (5).

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[20] Sewell's book has remained the definitive voice on the subject of nonsense with contemporary theorists merely modifying Sewell's initial arguments. Lisa S. Ede agrees in "An Introduction to the Nonsense Literature of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll" (1987). Picking up where Sewell left off, Ede posits that:

> . . .nonsense is, in a unique and special way, a world of words come to life, a world whose insistently self-defied reality is almost completely linguistics. In nonsense, words often exercise a creative power similar to that granted to language in some primitive cultures. (51)

Here, Ede invokes the magical aspect of language. In the first chapter, I discuss how Richard Trench, drawing from his biblical education, endowed the naming process a supernatural quality, calling it divine and the will of God. Lewis Carroll's own nonsense writing seems to confirm Ede's hypothesis, as Alice is often at the whim of the nonsensical words that the characters around her utter.

In The Field of Nonsense, Sewell limits her examination of nonsense to the exploration of the works of two 19th-century authors: Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll.[21] These two authors, more than any other, epitomize for her the genre of nonsense. Other critics agree. Wim Tiggers, for example, argues that nonsense was popular in the 19th century because it provided an escape for both the writer and the reader. He points to the cloying sentimentality of mainstream 19th-century literature and the burgeoning capitalistic philosophy as two key ingredients that fueled the desire to escape (43). Nonsense literature offered new worlds, new characters, and new words that removed the reader from the drudgery of reality.

Sewell sets out to rescue nonsense from its childish roots by pointing out that "In logic, nonsense takes the form of contradiction, the breaking of the rules of the game. This game is a purely intellectual and abstract one. . ." (2). Sewell does not directly define what nonsense is, rather she spends time proving what it is not. She refutes that nonsense is a lack of sense, a form of poetry, magic, or akin to dream. One of the best (and most concrete) definitions of nonsense comes from Michael Holquist's "What is a Boojum?: Nonsense and Modernism" (1999):

> Nonsense is play with order only. It achieves its effects not from contrasting order and confusing, but rather by contrasting one system of order against another system of order, each of which is logical in itself, but which cannot find a place in the other. (106)

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[21] Lear is not discussed at length in this project because his brand of nonsense lacks the sophistication and novelty of Carroll's. John Lehmann argues in Edward Lear and His World (1977) that Carroll's "brand of nonsense is undoubtedly more intellectual" than Lear's because in Lear's nonsense there was "a vein of tender and often melancholic feeling that is nowhere to be found in Carroll's *Alice* books ." (50). Even Sewell spends far more time discussing Carroll than she does discussing Lear. She even points out that Lear saw words "simply as a means of communication with another mind" and that Carroll spent "much of his time watching the language process himself." (18) This is not to belittle Lear's contribution to either the field of nonsense or to children's literature but rather to point out that scholars find Carroll's nonsense to be more cerebral.

Holquist sees nonsense as a field of language that is closed in such a way so that the meaning of any given component is reliant upon its connection "to the system of the other constituents" (104). Nonsense is not gibberish. There is an underlying logic that must be discovered by the reader. Fromkin's definition for nonsense seems to agree with Holquist's assertion that nonsense requires a component of logic. In order for nonsense to be successful, it must be phonologically possible. Stringing together random morphemes does not make nonsense unless it is phonologically sound within a linguistic structure.

For Sewell nonsense is a game, ". . .a structure held together by valid mental relations" (4). Sewell is specifically interested in what happens between the word and the mind during the creation of nonsense. The only limiting factor in nonsense is what goes on inside the mind (17). This means that one must approach nonsense as though it were a logic problem because "logic has this great advantage over psychology, that the mind's processes in logic are not a matter of controversy" (6). Gilles Deleuze writes in The Logic of Sense (1969) that "The logic of sense is necessarily determined to posit between sense and nonsense an original type of intrinsic relation, a mode of co-presence" (68). In other words, for nonsense to be successful, its counterpart, containing sense, must be simultaneously present. Only when the two are present will nonsense be successful. The example Deleuze uses to illustrate this point is Carroll's word "frumious" of which Deleuze says:

> The necessary disjunction is not between fuming and furious, for one may indeed be both at once; rather it is between fuming-and-furious on one hand and furious-and-fuming on the other. (46)

In order to understand Deleuze's argument, one must first be familiar with Carroll's own explanation of the word frumious from the preface to The Hunting of the Snark:

> For instance, take the two words "fuming" and "furious." Make up your mind that you will say both words, but leave it unsettled which you will say first. Now open your mouth and speak. If your thoughts incline ever so little towards 'fuming,' you will say 'fuming-furious;' if they turn, but even a hair's breadth, towards 'furious,' you will say 'furious-fuming;' but if you have that rarest of gifts, a perfectly balanced mind, you will say 'frumious.' (10)

Carroll says that "frumious" is a state of mind that can only be accurately expressed by someone with a "perfectly balanced mind" who has decided that he or she will be both "furious" and "fuming" in equal parts. "Frumious," for Carroll, depends on the coexistence of two states of mind that are similarly related, that of being fuming and furious. Deleuze is arguing that "frumious" is verbalized because of the two mental conditions (fuming and furious) existing simultaneously, but that the nonsense of the phrase is achieved by the tension between not being able to be both "fuming-furious" and "furious-fuming." The existence of such a word relies on the context in which it is embedded. The fact that Carroll was a logician as well as a writer underscores the shared characteristics of logic and nonsense.

Carroll was not merely interested in the matter and meanings of words but was also interested in the system of language as a whole. Lisa S. Ede argues in "An Introduction to the Nonsense Literature of Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll" (1987) that Carroll was interested in how language can actually trap a reader or character in its webs of intentions, ideologies, and hierarchies. This, for Ede, mirrors Carroll's larger concerns about language in the real world:

> in both Lear's and Carroll's nonsense language exerts an influence over events quite outside the bounds of normal usage[. . .]Both Lear and Carroll

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reveal an acute awareness of the way in which language as a system can trap man, while at the same time allowing him to deceive himself that he is free and in control of his own life. (Ede 52)

Carroll, as is well known, was adamant on proper usage of language, adhering to outdated formations of conjunctions. It does not make sense to assume that Carroll engaged in a language phenomenon that acted with abject randomness on either the reader or the structure of a text. Antony Christie argues in "Making with Words: A Practical Approach to Creativity" (1972):

> Equally important as far as word-awareness is concerned, and an extension of insight into the processes of sense and sound, is word construction. Lewis Carroll's "Twas brillig and the slithy toves" is a good example of the power of nonsense words, and also shows more clearly than any other nonsense extract the structuring necessary to make nonsense appear legitimate language. (247)

As Sewell says, "There is only one aspect of language which nonsense can be said to disorder, and that is also the reference, the effect produced by a word or a group of words in the mind" (38). Kathleen Blake argues in Play, Games and Sport: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll (1974) that nonsense disrupts the referent since a word's definition is "basically a matter of social agreement" (138).[22] Michael Holquist writes:

> Nonsense is a system in which, at its purest, words mean only one thing, and they get that meaning through divergence from the system of nonsense itself, as well as divergence from an external language. (105)

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[22] It is not unusual for people to argue the role society plays in a word's meaning. John Algeo and Thomas Pyles point out in The Origins and Development of the English Language (2004) that a word's meaning can change due to a variety of pressures, but that the most common involves a change in the association of ideas with either the literal referent or the abstract association of the word. (232-237) Dick Leith argues in A Social History of English (1997) that the standardization of language and meaning comes from some sort of political or academic authority who decides rules and conventional meaning. "Groups who occupy a subordinate or oppressed position in society invariably suffer from linguistic disparagement." (76)

This adds a new dimension to the game of nonsense. Sewell says nonsense is a game between the reader and writer, but, if nonsense disrupts the referents of words, then the game can also be between characters within a given work.

As I demonstrated in the first chapter, Carroll enjoyed playing with the referents of words by both creating new words and rendering familiar words foreign by manipulating the context in which they were uttered. Science fiction writer and language scholar Samuel Delany writes in "Shadows" (1974) that:

> . . . meaning *is* interaction of the process into which the ear-drum/aural-nerve translates the air vibrations that *are* the word, with the chemo-electric process that is the interpretative context of the brain. Meaning may be something else as well—as mental occurrences *may* be something else as well as brain-processes. (63)

Delany argues from a biological standpoint that in actuality a word is only the sounds that come from the body. What Delany reacts to is the Cartesian idea of the separation of body and mind. Words and meaning have bodily origins the same as tears and hunger.[23] Meaning, however, is not so simple to find and define because meaning is fluid and originates from outside the body. This separation from the body is why original word meanings become abstracted over time. Nonsense seeks out these separations of meaning and concrete referent, of body and mind, and exploits the context in order to subvert meaning. This separation is at the heart of nonsense and is the game that Carroll enjoyed playing with his readers.

For Robin Lakoff in the article "Lewis Carroll: Subversive Pragmatist" (1993), the nature of games is that they offer a world in which "rules are made explicit at the start, and typically are rigid and non-negotiable; 'winning' and 'losing' are only intra-

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[23] Freud argues similarly in The Interpretation of Dreams that words at one point had very concrete and pictorial meanings but that those meanings have become increasingly abstract over time (442).

game and are explicitly noted, yet not of 'real' consequence; people are not 'sincere' in their actions in the same way" (379). In Carroll's worlds, however, one cannot distinguish games from reality because the residents of his world believe they are in reality. Only the outsider sees the whole picture and can see Alice's adventures as games (379).

Deleuze takes a different approach to Carroll's games, seeing them as idealized games that are full of contradiction, contain an abundance of movement, have no precise rules, and can determine no winners or losers (58-9). The Queen's croquet match certainly seems to have no concrete rules outside of the requirement that the Queen win, and even Looking-Glass's chess game is fraught with contradiction. Martin Gardner points out that the red and white teams do not alternate moves properly, ". . .and some of the 'moves' listed by Carroll are not represented by actual movements of the pieces on the board (for example, Alice's first, third, ninth, and tenth 'moves' and the 'castling' of the queens" (133). And finally the Caucus Race of Wonderland never declares an actual winner; the Dodo instead declares everyone a winner and asks Alice to provide prizes. Alice resigns herself to each of the bizarre games described above. During the croquet match she attempts to play by the Queen's rules. As Alice wanders in Looking-Glass Land she is helped along by the actions of others, the Red Queen, the White Knight, the White Queen, etc. Rather than arguing with the Dodo, Alice acquiesces and finds comfits to spread amongst the "winners." In this case Alice spends more time reacting to what goes on around her than she does actively seeking her exit or Queening.

Alice's passivity throughout the Alice books is what incites Hélène Cixous to argue, in "Introduction to Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking-Glass and 'The Hunting

of the Snark,'" that, while the creatures seem in control, Alice is actually able to undermine them. Cixous reads Alice's meeting with Humpty Dumpty as a subversive encounter that discredits Humpty. Despite his best attempts and posturing, Humpty is not the master of the words he speaks because, in the very act of speaking, meaning dissolves and it is only because someone is writing the conversation down that the words and meanings can be frozen at the moment of speaking (235-6).

Cixous also argues that Alice is ultimately in control during this scene with Humpty Dumpty because Alice and the reader know how his nursery rhyme ends. Alice shows concern for Humpty at the outset, asking him if he wouldn't feel safer on the ground. Humpty's reaction sets the tone for the rest of the encounter:

> "What tremendously easy riddles you ask!" Humpty Dumpty growled out. "Of course I don't think so! Why if ever I *did* fall off—which there's no chance of—but *if* I did—" Here he pursed up his lips, and looked so solemn and grand that Alice could hardly help laughing. "*If* I *did* fall," he went on, "*the King has promised me*—ah, you may turn pale, if you like! You didn't think I was going to say that, did you? *The King has promised me—with his very own mouth*—to—to—" (209)

Humpty remains blissfully unaware of the fact that the very words that he makes work twice as hard will in the end bring about his demise. He believes that the King's words are enough to save him. Humpty relies on the fact that he has met a King who has promised to "fix" him should anything happen. And yet, Humpty is equally proud of himself for not being humble enough to shake hands with Alice, who is a mere commoner. Martin Gardner points out that Humpty's conversation with Alice is liberally sprinkled with the word "proud," which Gardner asserts "reveal[s] the pride that goeth before his fall" (209). Alice leaves Humpty feeling dissatisfied with the conversation:

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"Of all the unsatisfactory people I *ever* met—" She never finished the sentence, for at this moment a heavy crash shook the forest from end to end. (220)

The crash is, of course, Humpty meeting the fate that had been written out for him by an unseen hand. Despite his prowess with words, his belief that he has control over them, and his trust in the King's words to him, Humpty is unable to escape his great fall. Carroll's language game ends with Humpty's inescapable fate, a fate that is bound by the words of the nursery rhyme.

Nonsense, or that which is not immediately familiar, is a game between the reader and the author. Sewell argues that nonsense is a game and as such, it must have a logically coherent structure in order to function properly. Drawing heavily from Johan Huizinga's Homo Ludens (1955), in which he sets out to define play, Sewell follows the structure of Huizinga's argument about the status of play in civilization in order to rescue nonsense from the realm of mere children's writing.[24] Sewell postulates that nonsense is an integral part of play, "a way into the first world, the reasonable side of play" that introduces the mind to the irrational side of play, where dream, mystery and magic exist (193). Children, for both Huizinga and Sewell, are naturals for play and nonsense because their minds are open to embracing the logical and irrational as one and the same, what Huizinga calls the holy play (43) and what Sewell refers to as the location where the "poet and savage are all at home" (193). These sentiments reflect Deleuze's earlier

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[24] Huizinga argues that language provides not only the means with which to discuss play but is the ultimate mode of play in itself because, "In the making of speech and language the spirit is continually 'sparking' between matter and mind, as it were, playing with this wondrous nominative faculty. Behind every abstract expression there lie the boldest of metaphors, and every metaphor is a play upon words. Thus in giving expression to life man creates a second, poetic world alongside the world of nature." (4) Play is often thought of in its simplest terms of not being serious much the same way Nonsense is thought of as not being sense. In this way of thinking sense and seriousness are privileged over nonsense and play. Huizinga and Sewell set out to change the scope of thinking in their respective fields by showing how sense cannot exist without nonsense, and, without play, there would be no serious.

comment on the necessity of the co-presences of both sense and nonsense if nonsense is to be effective. Alice herself explains the effect of "Jabberwocky" as: "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas—only I don't know exactly what they are!" (150) This seems to sum up perfectly Sewell, Huizinga, and Deleuze.

Katherine Blake is writing to argue against Sewell's tendency to judge Carroll for not going beyond mere play and for staying in the safe realm of fantasy. [25] In order to do take Carroll beyond fantasy Blake points out that Carroll makes a distinction between play and game on the basis that games require rules in order to discern a winner and play does not necessarily have such rules (62).[26] As Deleuze has argued, however, it is possible that Carroll's games are idealized versions of conventional games. As idealized versions, there are no clear boundaries between play and game, fantasy and reality, or winner and loser. They are, in fact, identical in Carroll's world.

However, what Sewell does not acknowledge about Huizinga's work is that Huizinga's concept of play relies heavily on mechanisms of machismo and competition. Huizinga is concerned with contest, struggle, and victory as societal instruments that play incorporates; thus, play is tantamount for teaching survival skills; "The point is for us

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[25] Blake's distinction separates Carroll's works into those of game (chess in Looking-Glass) and light-hearted play in which there are no winners (the games of Sylvie and Bruno) although even she has to admit "Carroll's conception of play as basically games with rules of a higher competitive character inevitably give a certain sharp edge to even the play of Sylvie and Bruno." (164) In other words, the games of Carroll are not so innocent and play is not easily delineated from the more competitive games of Carroll's worlds.

[26] This is not a discussion on the inherent savagery that exists in the works of Lewis Carroll, but at the same time it is important to acknowledge that Sewell seems to underestimate the dark current that runs through the works of Carroll, particularly the Alice books. The seemingly innocent croquet match is set between two bouts of the Queen of Hearts proclaiming the beheading of playing cards and the Knave of Hearts. Earlier, at the Duchess' house, Alice learns that she could be in very real danger. This is clearly seen in the way Alice reacts to the Duchess' decree "Chop off her head!" "Alice glanced rather anxiously at the cook, to see if she meant to take the hint." (62) These dangers give the games that Alice plays throughout her adventures a serious edge, one that cannot be ignored and yet Sewell refuses to see this aspect of Carroll's nonsense.

that all these contests, even when fantastically depicted (in legend and story) as mortal

and titanic combats with all their peculiarities still belong to the domain of play" (55).

Brian Sutton-Smith argues in The Ambiguity of Play (1997) that Huizinga simplified the

relationship between play and culture (24).[27] Part of Sutton-Smith's argument against

Huizinga is that Huizinga privileges male-oriented, male-dominated rhetoric about

contests over less combative forms of play such as poetry, drama, and music (80).

Huizinga, however, simply sees all play as tantamount to survival.[28]

Whatever one's feelings about Huizinga's male-centric reading of play, it is hard

to deny that survival seems a key element in the nonsense works of Carroll. Certainly

one of the main themes of "Jabberwocky" is that of a boy facing an adversary (the

Jabberwock) and surviving the confrontation. "The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!/He

left it dead, and with its head/He went galumphing back" (18-20). The way John Tenniel

draws the Jabberwock heightens the theme of survival and the air of violence that hovers

around the veiled meaning of the poem (Fig 2.1). The boy appears small and girlish with

long curly locks while the monster towers over him, its large teeth bared. Certainly Alice

is mystified by the poem's meaning and actions.

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[27] There is a great deal of contention and controversy surrounding notions of play and society. For further discussions see (among others) Sutton-Smith's The Ambiguity of Play, Mihail Spariosu's Dionysus Reborn (1989), and J.W. Loy and G. Kenyon's Sport, Culture, Society (1969)

[28] The crux of Huzinga's thesis is that early civilization relied on play for its establishment of societal structure and code. He sees the ritualistic in everything from political speeches to professional sports to the theatre as residuals of the original survival-based ancient contests that helped decide how civilization would develop. "Every victory *represents*, that is, realized for the victor the triumph of the good powers over the bad, and at the same time the salvation of the group that effects it." (56)

Fig 2.1. The Jabberwock as drawn by Tenniel.

There are several ways to read the poem but two readings seem the most popular. The first is that the boy is being sent on a quest, possibly by a living father figure who warns the boy "Beware the Jabberwock, my son!" (line 5) at the beginning and at the end declares "Come to my arms, my beamish boy!" (line 27). The boy is victorious and vanquishes his foe, the intimidating Jabberwock, a serpentine winged monster as drawn by Tenniel. A second reading is that the boy is avenging his father's death, and he hears his father from inside his own head. Again, the boy is victorious, defeating the monster. Why the boy goes after the Jabberwock remains open to debate. In any case, there lurks behind the nonsense verse of Carroll's poems a serious threat to the boy. If he can avoid Jabberwock, there still remain the Jubjub bird and the Bandersnatch with which to contend. To kill a monster is not a simple task assigned to this particular boy. And, since no descriptions are given (outside of claws, jaws, and temperament), it is nigh impossible for one to know what it is he or she is encountering. Again, the nebulous description of the monsters seems to be exactly what Alice is responding to when she declares that the

poem is putting ideas into her head but she doesn't know what they are. Or, as Alice says, "However, *somebody* killed *something*: that's clear at any rate. . ." (150).

But many of the critics who examine "*Jabberwocky*" think that classifying the poem as nonsense is somewhat dismissive, and instead, they try to reclaim nonsense from the realm of children's literature where it has been relegated.[29] One such author is Karen Alkalay-Gut who writes in "Carroll's JABBERWOCKY" (1987) that

> The first thing to strike the reader about the poem is not its senselessness but its grammatical and structural coherence. "Jabberwocky" follows known patterns. Not only can some sense be comprehended concerning the action from the grammatical logic, there is also a structural coherence in the poem, a structure that is made salient by the identity of the first and last verses of the poem. (27)

 "Jabberwocky" has an identifiable structure, that of a ballad; and coherent narrative structure with obvious movement from the reception of a quest, to the search for the monster, to the confrontation between boy and monster, and then to the final victory; which prevents it from being purely nonsensical, even if the actual language does not make sense. The language is bled of meaning, according to Akalay-Gut, so that the events of the poem can "have their full significance" (29).

Hélène Cixous's article "Introduction to Lewis Carroll's <u>Through the Looking-Glass</u> and 'The Hunting of the Snark'" attempts to "pursue what escapes between sense and nonsense and between nonsense and appearance" (231). Cixous finds that one of the

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[29] Adam Rose agrees that "*Jabberwocky*" should not be dismissed as simple nonsense, but he is arguing from the level of the word. In "Lewis Carroll's 'Jabberwocky': non-sense not nonsense" (1995) he says that "The Jabberwocky's" relegation to mere nonsense "reflects the poem's apparent non-referentiality when set against traditional folk views of language that see unambiguous reference as the sole (or at least, unmarked) goal of language." (1) If one approaches language from a more "semiotically and pragmatically" informed point of view, one sees that "The Jabberwocky" makes sense on two distinct levels, "detontational (as relatively de-contextualized text), and other interactional (as relatively contextualized discourse)." (3)

best ways to capture the meaning that exists between sense and nonsense is to focus on

the aural aspects of Carroll's poems:

> The rhymes, echoes and redundancies attract the words and deposit them in phonic layers where meaning attaches itself here and there by accident. It's the sonorous site of that Nonsense which the English language produces, less an 'absurdity' than a system of sounds whose laws or hidden structures one could probably deduce. (232)

Perhaps through an aural exercise, one could figure out what exactly *Jabberwocky* is

"about" on one's own; however, what Carroll's words actually mean is still open to

debate.

When Carroll first wrote the opening stanza of J*abberwocky* in 1855 in one of

his own periodicals named *Misch-Masch*, Carroll also published definitions to the bizarre

words that appear in the poem.[30]

> 'Twas brillig and the slithy toves
>   Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
> All mimsy were the borogoves,
>   And the mome raths outgrabe.

In *Misch-Masch*, Carroll defines "brillig," "slithy," "toves," "gyre," "gimble," "mimsy,"

"borogoves," "mome," "raths," and "outgrabe" (148). Using Carroll's original

definitions, the first stanza of Jabberwocky translates to something like:

> It was the time of broiling dinner and the smooth and active badgers
> Did scratch and screw holes in the side of a hill.
> All unhappy were the Parrots,
> And the graveturtles shriek.

Even with familiar words in the place of Carroll's original words, the meaning of the

stanza is not immediately clear. The poem is further obscured by the fact that Carroll

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[30] All definitions in this discussion come from Martin Gardner's <u>The Definitive Edition of the Annotated Alice</u> (2000), including those attributed to the <u>Oxford English Dictionary</u>.

does not provide definitions for words that appear outside the opening stanza. The lack of definitions is one reason, as Sewell argued, the nonsense has survived critical analysis.

After Carroll, the Oxford English Dictionary attempted to define the words of the poem. The OED defines "slithy" as a variant of the obsolete word "sleathy," which was a word for slovenly. "Gyre" is a 15th-century word meaning to twirl. "Gimble" is a spelling variant of "gimbal," or a pivoted ring. The OED defines "mimsey" (versus Carroll's spelling "mimsy") as a 19th-century word meaning prim or prudish. And finally "beamish" is defined as a 16th-century variant of the word beaming (152-54). While these two sources (*Misch Masch* and the Oxford English Dictionary) are interesting to look at, it is likely that readers are most familiar with the definitions that Carroll provides in Looking-Glass Land through the character Humpty Dumpty.

Humpty Dumpty provides definitions for "brillig," "slithy," "gyre," "gimble," "mome," "rath," and "outgrabe." The problem with Humpty is that he can make a word mean whatever he wants. Humpty can take so-called public words and give them private meanings and then pass off those privately defined words as public vernacular. This immediately undermines Humpty's credibility with the reader, but not with Alice, who asks him to translate "Jabberwocky." Humpty's definition of "brillig" coincides with Carroll's original definition. "Slithy" also matches Carroll's definition. Humpty further describes the "toves" as "something like badgers--they're something like lizards--and they're something like corkscrews" (215). Humpty, however, defines "gyre" as going round like a gyroscope and "wabe" as the grass around the sundial. "Mimsy" is on par with Carroll, as is Humpty's definition of "borogove." But Humpty defines a "rath" as a green pig and does not know a clear definition of "mome," which he says he thinks is

"short for 'from home'--meaning that they'd lost their way" (216). "Outgrabe," according to Humpty, is "something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle" (216). Using these definitions, Humpty's opening stanza reads:

> It was the time of broiling dinner and the smooth corkscrew lizard badgers
> Did twirl and make holes in the grass around a sundial
> All unhappy were the parrots
> And the green pigs who had lost their way home bellowingly whistled.

No matter whose definitions are plugged in, what we are left with is a setting in which strange animals dig in the earth at the time of dinner while unhappy parrots shriek and lost green pigs cry out. With no one to contradict Humpty, Alice has to treat Humpty as though he were the expert on the poem, and the readers, unless they are aware of Carroll's original definitions, are also obliged to believe Humpty, even if against the reader's better judgment. What we have in reality is a system of logic that is seemingly impenetrable.

Without knowing the definitions provided by either Carroll or the OED, the reader has no choice but to go along with Humpty's translation. Without placing Humpty Dumpty into a social context, it is impossible to know whether his definitions are accurate. It is entirely possible that Humpty is merely toying with Alice. It is also possible that Humpty is unable to provide proper definitions because he doesn't know the meanings of the words. Humpty's definitions are always going to be suspicious to the reader because there is no larger context in which to put them.

Because Carroll borrows some of "The Hunting of the Snark's" key words from his earlier "Jabberwocky," "Snark" cannot be viewed as an entirely stand-alone work precisely because Humpty's voice (as well as Carroll's) is present in the repetition of the eight words. Carroll himself even says in the preface to "Snark" that "this poem is to some extent connected to the lay of the Jabberwock. . ." (Annotated Snark 10). Carroll

then takes the time to explain the proper pronunciation of "slithy toves" and "borogroves," neither of which appear within "Snark."

The eight words he brings to "Snark" are not the same words that Humpty attempts to define. "Mimsy," "outgrabe," and "beamish" reappear within Snark as do the Jubjub bird and the Bandersnatch. Words that readers of "The Jabberwock" would be familiar with, but for which no definitions have been provided are "galumphing," "frumious," and "uffish." According to the <u>Oxford English Dictionary</u>, "galumphing" is pure Carrollean meaning to gallop off in triumph (154). "Frumious," as discussed earlier in this chapter, is a state of mind in which one is both furious and fuming. And finally, "uffish" is defined by Carroll as being "a state of mind when the voice is gruffish, the manner roughish, and temper huffish" (quoted in Gardner 153).

Hélène Cixous's "Introduction to Lewis Carroll <u>Through the Looking Glass</u> and 'The Hunting of the Snark'" promises to discuss two works, Looking-Glass and "The Hunting of the Snark," but her discussion of Snark is woefully brief—a mere seven paragraphs in a 20 page article. What she focuses on is an in-depth analysis of the last line of the poem: "For the Snark is a Boojum you see." She discusses how the Snark disappears at the very moment of its production. The moment it is defined as a Boojum, the Boojum replaces the Snark, effectively removing the Snark from the work entirely (236). For Cixous this is another example of nonsense where the reader must figure out the supporting structure of the statement, and, until the reader does, there is no resolution to the poem.

In other words, what Carroll has done here is devise an elaborate logic problem.

In his Game of Logic, Carroll starts by introducing the child reader to the world of logic

by defining key concepts such as Things and Attributes in order to say:

> You may put "is" or "are" between the names of two *Things* (for example, 'some Pigs are fat Animals'), or between the names of two *Attributes* (for example, 'pink is light-red'), and in each case it will make good sense. But, if you put 'is' or 'are' between the name of a *Thing* and the name of an *Attribute* (for example, 'some Pigs are Pink'), you do *not* make good sense (for how can a Thing *be* an Attribute?) unless you have an understanding with the person to whom you are speaking. (2-3)

By Carroll's parameters of logic, *is* falls between Snark and Boojum so they must both be

things or attributes of things. But we know that they are both things because a Snark is

given attributes that identify it. True, these attributes are somewhat vague and suspect,

but all the participants in the poem seem to agree that there are five ways to identify a

Snark.

In "Fit the Second: The Bellman's Speech," the identifying characteristics of a

Snark are outlined. The first is taste, "the flavor of the Will-o-the-wisp." Getting up late

is the second mark of a Snark: "it frequently breakfasts at five-o'clock tea,/

And dines on the following day" (lines 155-6). The third characteristic is "slowness

when taking a jest" (line 158). A fondness for bathing-machines is the fourth

characteristic of a Snark. And the last mark of a Snark is ambition; "It next will be

right/To describe each particular batch:/Distinguishing those that have feathers, and

bite,/And those that have whiskers and scratch" (lines 165-168). There are two subsets

of Snarks—those that have the ambition to bite and those that have the ambition to

scratch. Neither of these, however, describes the variety of Snark that is actually a

Boojum. A Boojum is only identified after one has encountered it and disappeared never to be seen again.

Earlier in this discussion, Cixous argued that, the minute the line, "For the Snark *was* a Boojum you see," is uttered, the Snark is effectively erased, leaving behind only the Boojum. But since the reader does not know what a Boojum is, the poem remains inconclusive. Carroll intended this ambiguity. In "Fit the Eighth: The Vanishing," the crew is hot on the trail of a Snark with the Baker leading the way. As the others attempt to track down the Baker and the Snark they hear the Baker cry out in line 553 "It's a Snark!," followed by "It's a Boo—" in line 556. Here is another point of ambiguity. Some of the hunters think they hear the word end in "—jum!," but others insist that they heard only a breeze. What happened to the Baker? Was it a Snark or a Boojum? Or, was there another creature (or person) present who killed the Baker? A highly popular reading began with Larry Shaw's "The Baker Murder Case" (1956) in which he argues that the last sentence really says "It's a Boots!" referring to Boots as the murderer of the Baker.

The poem ends with the assertion that the murderer was a Boojum because of the fact that the Baker vanished away; but in reality, there is no resolution to the fate of the Baker. The reader is left wondering: What exactly is a Snark? What exactly is a Boojum? And what really happened to the Baker? This is Sewell's game of nonsense. There is a logic and a structure underlying the poem, but the writer has not given the reader all the clues and rules needed to win the game. Martin Gardner, among others, has argued that "The Hunting of the Snark" is an existential poem that reaches beyond the

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dread of death, beyond the agony of the unknown. In this reading the Boojum "is the end of all searching. It is final, absolute extinction. . ." (xxxix).

To say that the Boojum is literally nothing doesn't seem to flow seamlessly with the complete title of the poem. "The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits" hints at something far more physical and visceral than existential angst. Gardner tells us that "agony" is used "in the old sense of a struggle that involves great anguish, bodily pain, or death" (12). Fit refers to convulsions as well as referring to a canto. Within the title we see the words "hunting," "agony," and "fits." Alone, these words may not carry much import, but when pieced together the title implies some sort of struggle for survival that is neither to be painless nor easy.

Carroll's own answer to "What is a Snark" was frustratingly (and expectedly) noncommittal. His answers ranged from "I don't know" to "What do *you* think it is?" Martin Gardner writes in his preface to The Centennial Edition of the Hunting of the Snark that "Nonsense writing is a peculiarly rich medium for both types of 'unintended' meaning" (xxxiii). Carroll is referring to latent meaning hidden deep within the writer's mind and to accidental meaning that is given to the words by the reader. Carroll didn't want to enforce his own notions onto his readers, so he remained ignorant of latent meaning in favor of allowing accidental meaning to run rampant.

The Boojum and the Jabberwock remain nightmarish images invoked time and time again throughout popular culture. Whatever Carroll's intent (which he would be the last to divulge) there is something about his nonsense creations that sticks in the mind as sinister. Hendrik van Leeuwen offers up an explanation in "The Liaison of Visual and Written Nonsense" (1987):

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Alice enters and leaves both Wonderland and the looking-glass world as a world of dreams, the unknown nightside of existence. Through a looking-glass Alice enters and leaves a veritable hall of mirrors: a world where the illusive fetters of speculative reason are made to look foolish by means of literary distorting mirrors. The maker of nonsense is conscious of the fact that reason can only be sabotaged by means of paradox: reverberating ambiguity. Humor, as Sewell already stated, is no necessary component of nonsense, and loneliness is its only permitted emotion. Nonsense is a stubborn attack upon the coercive pattern of reason. (74-5)

In this quotation, van Leeuwen invokes the combative element of play, and he also seems to be intimating that nonsense is not about fun, play, or game. He positions nonsense as a lonely battle between reader and writer and not as an enterprise of whimsy or education.

Nonsense is about power. Whoever has the power to make words mean what he or she wants is in the position of preventing others from having access to those meanings. Carroll uses nonsense in his poems to try to disguise the violence that takes place when the boy faces off against the Jabberwock and when the Baker meets his demise at the claws of the Boojum. Delightfully ambiguous and pleasing to read, these poems give very little to the reader that allows for the deeper meanings to be cracked. Humpty Dumpty, upon learning that Alice needs his help understanding "Jabberwock" uses his position of power to make words mean whatever he wants. While this may seem unfair to Alice one is quickly reminded that Alice knows Humpty's fate as it is written and locked in time through a child's nursery rhyme[31]. Despite this small victory Alice

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[31] The connection between children's literature and nonsense is one that is well documented. It is precisely this connection that Sewell tries to rupture in her work. Carroll, however, embraced the inherent nonsense of nursery rhymes in order to subvert politics, education, family-life, and the morality-driven children's literature market. When Carroll was writing, nursery rhymes were entering their second century of popularity after returning from relative obscuring during the 18th-century (Harris, 1). Two of the most famous that Carroll mocks are "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" and, of course, "Humpty Dumpy."

Written in the early 19th-century by Anne and Jane Taylor, "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" was used to teach children how to use their imagination and vocabulary to paint pictures (Alchin, 1) The success of this nursery rhyme hinges on the simile comparing a star to a diamond. Carroll's version uses the comparison of a bat to a tea-tray, a connection that is not at all obvious. According to Gardner Carroll's poem was an inside joke aimed at his good friend, Bartholomew Price who "was known among his students

remains the ultimate outsider in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land because she can't adapt to the extreme demands for linguistic consistency in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. By not having the same amount of access to the language around her, she is undermined her attempts to grasp the world around her.

In his most famous nonsense works, "The Jabberwocky" and "The Hunting of the Snark," Carroll demonstrates how nonsense is able to establish boundaries between social groups. Carroll also uses nonsense to discuss violent scenes in such a way that the violence is never directly seen by the reader, it is only suggested. This latent violence becomes more and more prominent in the nonsense writers of the 20th-century and beyond. Through the psychoanalytic work of Sigmund Freud nonsense gains credibility as a natural, if not fully understood, function of the human subconscious. Repressed violence also becomes easier to see through both actions and words. Nonsense as a game can have violence as a component, but after Carroll, writers raise the stake of this particular linguistic game. Modernist writers such as James Joyce push the English language to the point of breaking through nonsense, engaging in a linguistic violence similar to that of Carroll. And perhaps most importantly for this project, Anthony Burgess' A Clockwork Orange ushers in an age of science fiction-fueled nonsense in

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by the nickname 'The Bat'" (74). Price was a mathematics professor whose lectures tended to go far above his students' knowledge. Both bats and tea-trays were common items on the grounds of Oxford and no doubt Carroll was poking fun at his colleagues' conversations. Carroll often felt that adults treated children too simply and didn't appreciate the intelligence and creativity of the child's mind. Perhaps this poem is one that children would readily understand and leave adults confused.

The nursery rhyme "Humpty Dumpty" has a violent and historical-based foundation. During the English Civil War (1642-1649), a large cannon named Humpty Dumpty was positioned at the Royalist stronghold, St. Mary's Church, in order to defend it from Parlementarians. Instead, the attackers simply destroyed the wall under Humpty Dumpty, rendering it useless (Alchin, 27). Due to its massive weight, the cannon couldn't be moved thus signaling an end to the war and a victory for the Parlementarians. Carroll's Humpty is pompous, grandiose, and rude. He is convinced that he is untouchable and protected by the King. Humpty insults Alice and patronizes her. The ultimate irony, in this case, is that Alice knows that Humpty will eventually fall and that no one, not even the King or the King's men, will be able to rebuild him. Carroll is mocking those who are in power and think they know best.

which violence is no longer merely spoke about, but actually committed through nonsense. The next chapter will discuss these pivotal writers who bridge the childhood stories of Carroll and the urban nightmares of cyberpunk.

Chapter Three: What Lies Beneath: Freud, Joyce, and Burgess

Perhaps it is no coincidence that Carroll's need to exploit the multiplicity of meanings within words would have an influence on science fiction. Samuel Delany argues in "*Dictung Und* Science Fiction" that the enrichment of languages comes from "the release of new meanings in existing words and syntax. . ." (170). The language game of nonsense does just that—it alters the meanings of existing words and challenges syntax by creating entirely new words. Nonsense was Carroll's keenest weapon against the edicts of prescriptive and universal grammarians. But there exists a large gap between the writings of Lewis Carroll, which span 1865 to 1893, and the cyberpunk authors that burst onto the science fiction scene in 1983 led by William Gibson's Neuromancer. This chapter will trace the genealogy from Carroll's nonsense to the nonsense of late 20th-century cyberpunk science fiction. The three key steps in this alternate lineage will be Sigmund Freud, whose work on language cannot be ignored, James Joyce, who pushed language to its absolute limits in terms of composition and semantics, and Anthony Burgess, whose dystopian A Clockwork Orange is often considered a forerunner to the cyberpunk nightmares that were to follow. The general movement from Carroll to Burgess is one of increasing aggression expressed through the language used to construct narratives.

As this project moves from Carroll to the 21st century, the English language will open up with the embedding of multiple languages into one nonsense language. The movement from Victorian England to the 21st century is one of globalization, creating a sense of a very large world even as people find themselves isolated into subcultures. Language becomes a unifying cloak for these subcultures even as it isolates the

subculture from the larger mainstream society. Notions of identity, nationality, and even humanity become less concrete as language fragments, reflecting the technology-driven 21st-century world. The world of cyberpunk is, on one hand, a far cry from the world of Carroll; and yet, on the other hand, we can clearly see the linguistic roots for this fragmentation in Carroll's work.

Elizabeth Sewell argues that nonsense's success hinges on how well the reader is able to decode the structure hidden within it. Successful nonsense gives enough clues to aid the reader, while not giving away the entire scheme. There are striking similarities between dream and nonsense, and, by better understanding dream mechanisms, we will be better able to understand how nonsense works. Sigmund Freud attempts to demystify dream by establishing several key mechanisms that define the context and improve the memory retention of the dreamer. Freud's work in dream, language, and nonsense provides literary techniques which modernist authors and cyberpunk authors alike employ.

Understanding is based on context, and it is the context that nonsense authors play with. Manipulating language changes the reader's perception of the narrative, especially when it removes important contextual clues. In 1972, two psychologists, J.D. Bransford and M.K. Johnson, developed an exercise that demonstrated how detail retention in memory can be improved when the proper context is provided. This exercise is ubiquitous in psychology textbooks, articles, and online learning modules concerned with memory. The exercise reads:

> The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange items into different groups. Of course one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step; otherwise, you are pretty well set. It is

important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. In the short run this may not seem important but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well. At first the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however it will become just another facet of life. It is difficult to forsee any end to the necessity for this task in the immediate future, but then, one never can tell. After the procedure is completed one arranges the materials into different groups again. Then they can be put into their appropriate places. Eventually they will be used once more and the whole cycle will then have to be repeated. However, that is part of life.

Bransford and Johnson's study proved that if the title "Doing Laundry" was given before the passage was read, the retention of the details was greatly improved. Learning the title after reading the passage didn't help with memory retention ("Comprehension," 4). In terms of nonsense literature, the reader's experience is either enhanced (by not knowing key details which puts the onus on the reader to solve the context) or impeded (by too many details that make the context obvious) by the amount or significance of clues given by the author.

Carroll explored firsthand how a lack of context can impede a reader's enjoyment of a work. Carroll set up Through the Looking-Glass to read as though one were playing a chess match. If one skips the opening of the work (and it seems that many did indeed skip the preface), where Carroll lays out Alice's movements, the context of the chess match is too subtle to be noticed (Fig 3.1). The illustration below shows how Carroll intended his book to be read and understood.

White Pawn (Alice) to play, and win in eleven moves.

RED

WHITE
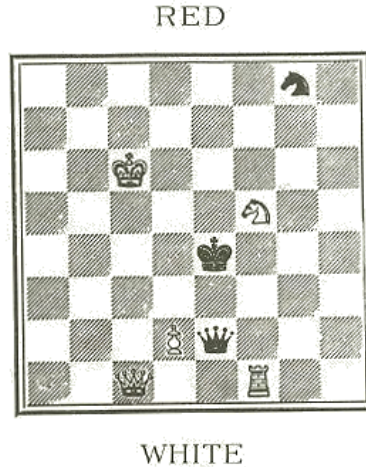
1. Alice meets R. Q.	1. R. Q. to K. R's 4th
2. Alice through Q's 3d (*by railway*) to Q's 4th (*Tweedledum and Tweedledee*)	2. W. Q. to Q. B's 4th (*after shawl*)
3. Alice meets W. Q. (*with shawl*)	3. W. Q. to Q. B's 5th (*becomes sheep*)
4. Alice to Q's 5th (*shop, river, shop*)	4. W. Q. to K. B's 8th (*leaves egg on shelf*)
5. Alice to Q's 6th (*Humpty Dumpty*)	5. W. Q. to Q. B's 8th (*flying from R. Kt.*)
6. Alice to Q's 7th (*forest*)	6. R. Kt. to K's 2nd (ch.)
7. W. Kt. takes R. Kt.	7. W. Kt. to K. B's 5th
8. Alice to Q's 8th (*coronation*)	8. R. Q. to K's sq. (*examination*)
9. Alice becomes Queen	9. Queens castle
10. Alice castles (*feast*)	10. W. Q. to Q. R's 6th (*soup*)
11. Alice takes R. Q. & wins	

Fig 3.1. Prologue to <u>Through the Looking-Glass</u>

The chart above is the original front piece to the first editions, and it maps out the general

actions of Alice as she makes her way through Looking-Glass Land, out of her dream,

and back to her own reality. Unfortunately, Carroll's original idea of the book being a

chess game didn't work as well as he had hoped and many readers skipped the

illustrations. This was so problematic that in the 1896 edition that Carroll further

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elucidated the chess match concept. Editions prior to 1896 simply included the following

chart (Fig 3.2):

(As arranged before commencement of game.)

WHITE		RED	
PIECES	PAWNS	PAWNS	PIECES
Tweedledee	Daisy	Daisy	Humpty Dumpty
Unicorn	Haigha	Messenger	Carpenter
Sheep	Oyster	Oyster	Walrus
W. Queen	"Lily"	Tiger-Lily	R. Queen
W. King	Fawn	Rose	R. King
Aged man	Oyster	Oyster	Crow
W. Knight	Hatta	Frog	R. Knight
Tweedledum	Daisy	Daisy	Lion

Fig. 3.2. "Dramatis Personae" prior to
1896 edition of Through the Looking-Glass

According to Martin Gardner, Carroll replaced the chart above with the more detailed

preface in order to alleviate the confusion of the readers (135).[32] In his 1896 preface,

Carroll points out that "The *alteration* of Red and White is perhaps not so strictly

observed as it might be, and the 'castling' of the three Queens is merely a way of saying

that they entered the palace" (133). Carroll goes on to say that moves 6, 7, and the final

"checkmate" are, to those who understand chess, "strictly in accordance with the laws of

the game" (133). What Carroll has created is a dream that operates as a chess match with

Alice as the primary pawn.

   Carroll's fascination with dream as a mechanism for creating nonsense is one that

was picked up by a man whose influence is felt in popular culture to this day. As the 19th

century drew to a close (Carroll's death was in 1898). Sigmund Freud began his career

with the publication of The Interpretation of Dreams in 1899. Much of what Freud wrote

about regarding language and nonsense seems to reflect Carroll's writings, although

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[32] It is humorous to note that Carroll takes the Preface as an opportunity to correct his readers on the pronunciations of several of the words in "Jabberwocky," most notably, *slithy, gyre, gimble,* and *rath*.

Freud does not specifically mention Carroll. Freud merges language, nonsense, and games in his discussion of dreams, dream content, and dream language.[33]

In The Interpretation of Dreams, Freud attempts to define what a dream is and to outline the psychological mechanisms he thinks are responsible for the creation of dreams. In other words, Freud is providing a schema for dream analysis by creating a context in which dream language and imagery can be better understood. One component to his understanding of dreams is that of language; "the course of linguistic evolution has made things very easy for dreams. For language has a whole number of words at its command which originally had a pictorial and concrete signification, but are used today in a colorless and abstract sense" (442). Freud here is skirting what would become semiotics in the 20th century by pointing out what 19th-century philologists such as Harris, Tooke, and Trench struggled with: that there exist some words that are devoid of signification whether by design or because of continual abstraction of meaning through societal changes. Richard Chevenix Trench and John Horne Tooke both argued that it was impossible for a word to have no meaning (i.e. no referent). A secondary issue that arises from Freud's insight is that meaning is not static and will change through time. This sort of semantic change indicates that language is not stable nor is it easily contained by rules.

> We attach *sense* to a remark and know that logically it cannot have any.
> We discover *truth* in it, which nevertheless, according to the laws of
> experience or our general habits of thoughts, we cannot find in it. We

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[33] Dreams, of course, play a huge role in the Alice books as both Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land are framed by Alice's dreams. Through the Looking-Glass adds another layer of dream in its discussion of everything being the dream of the sleeping White King. This project, however, is not interested in dream as a driving mechanism of a narrative, but is merely interested in dream as a foil for Carroll's language games. By better understanding Freud's dream work, we can better understand the sophistication of Carroll.

grant it logical or practical consequences as soon as we have clearly recognized the nature of the remark. (9)

While there are aspects of language that cannot be controlled, Freud is careful to argue that there is nothing truly unintentional in language. In The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1901) Freud insists that parapraxes, or slips of the tongue, are not coincidences or accidents. They reveal something that has been repressed into the unconscious and can manifest itself through oral or written communication. Two mechanisms are responsible for parapraxes; repression and condensation. Repression occurs in the subconscious and happens when something undesirable is pushed out of the consciousness. This is not a permanent fix, for an unwanted idea, desire, memory, etc. or repressed item can bubble back to the surface in complex and unfamiliar ways (Psychopathology 13-15). Condensation occurs when "Any similarity of objects or of word-presentations between two elements of the unconscious material is taken as a cause for the formation of a third, which is composite or compromise formation" (Psychopathology 76-77). Mistaken speech-substitutions, name forgetting, and parapraxes are all indications that condensation has begun deep in the unconscious and that repressed material may have begun to escape.

Freud argues that only in wit can these leaks of the unconscious be controlled, but the underlying subconscious mechanisms of repression and condensation are still in place. One place that best showcases language's flexible nature is in the realm of humor. In Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (1905), he asserts that nonsense can be humorous as well as disconcerting because nonsense defies our logical faculties due to the mechanism of condensation. Condensation often results in a play on words or parapraxes caused by similarity of sound. When these aspects of condensation are

controlled by, for example a joke teller, the end result is humor, a pleasure derived from the misuse of words. In order for a joke to be successful, however, it depends on the listener's ability to apply logic where logic can't be applied: "Every time we commit a lapse in speaking or writing we may conclude that through mental processes there has come a disturbance which is beyond our intention" (<u>Psychopathology</u> 256). Humor, Freud finds, is well-served by parapraxes: "Favored by chance the speech material often gives origin to examples of speech-blunders which serve to bring an overwhelming revelation of a full comic effect. . ." (<u>Psychopathology</u> 102).

Condensation alone cannot account for nonsensical dream language nor can it account for parapraxes. Displacement is another process that distorts both language and dream imagery. Where condensation takes multiple ideas and blends them into one image or word, displacement occurs when one thought (or wish or fear) is subconsciously replaced by a seemingly unrelated word or image (343). For Freud, displacement is most important when an abstract dream-thought is "transformed into a pictoral language" (375). One of many examples that Freud gives of displacement is:

>*Example* 1.—I thought of having to revise an uneven passage in an essay.
>
>*Symbol*.—I saw myself planing a piece of wood. (380)

It is obvious in Freud's example what is happening to the dreamer. The dreamer has to revise writing and that process takes place on paper, a by-product of timer thus; the dreamers essay becomes a block of word that must physically be planed in order to be useful. In the works of Carroll displacement also occurs, although in more subtle ways.

Carroll uses displacement prominently in one scene in <u>Wonderland</u>, the scene with Alice and Duchess' baby. I've discussed this some in a previous chapter, but I want to revisit this particular passage now in order to examine it in light of Freud's dream

mechanisms. Alice is left with the baby so the Duchess can keep her appointment with the Queen of Hearts. At first Alice exhibits concern for the baby's well-being: "They're sure to kill it in a day or two. Wouldn't it be murder to leave it behind?" (63). Soon, however, she grows tired of holding the baby, feeding the baby, and generally dealing with the baby's unpleasant noises. As she grows annoyed with the baby, she sees its nose and face take on pig-like features, features that Alice doesn't enjoy. She tells the morphing child, "'If you're going to turn into a pig, my dear,' Alice said seriously, 'I'll have nothing more to do with you. Mind you!'" (63). Shortly after telling the child this, it turns into a piglet upon which ". . .she set the little creature down, and felt quite relieved to see it trot away quietly into the wood" (64). This transformation gets her thinking about other children she knows of who might be better off as pigs. In terms of Freud's dream mechanisms, the condensation takes place at the very end of the passage when Alice equates children in general with piglets (despite the fact that she is a child herself).

The displacement is not as obvious as the condensation. Carroll often expressed anxiety at the thought of his child friends advancing in age and becoming women. "[H]e regarded children as grown women and, sometimes, grown women as little girls. There were little girls who ran away, and little girls who betrayed one male admirer with another," writes Donald Thomas in Lewis Carroll: A Portrait with Background (1996). For Carroll, his child friends were temporary, hovering between adulthood and childhood, and moving on once they reached adulthood. To see Alice as a potential mother figure was disconcerting to Carroll, for it was when his friends reached puberty that they necessarily had to leave his circle of childhood friends and assume the roles and

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duties of adulthood (most obviously marriage and child-rearing). Alice herself expresses

ambivalence about growing up in Wonderland when she finds herself trapped in the

White Rabbit's house:

> "There ought to be a book written about me, that there ought! And when I grow up, I'll write one—but I'm grown up now," she added in a sorrowful tone: "at least there's no room to grow up any more *here*."
>
> "But then," thought Alice, "shall I *never* get any older than I am now? That'll be a comfort, one way—never to be an old woman—but then— always to have lessons to learn! Oh, I shouldn't like *that!*" (39-40)

This is the conundrum of Alice and Carroll both. On one hand, Alice likes the thought of

staying a child forever. On the other hand, she looks forward to being an adult who

doesn't have to learn any more lessons. Presumably, however, becoming an adult does

mean the burden of extra responsibility, something Alice shirks in the scene at the

Duchess' house.

Taking on the responsibility of caring for a child would derail Alice's adventures

as she is an independent little girl trying to find her way home. But being a good girl,

Alice cannot simply leave the child unattended in the forest where it will surely die.

Through dream displacement Alice takes the abstract concept of motherhood, represented

by the human baby, and transforms it into the physical referent (the baby) into a piglet

that she can release without guilt.[34] By calling the baby a pig, Alice is able to literally

transform the baby into a creature that she finds repulsive. Because we are in Alice's

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[34] Martin Gardner points out that the gender of the pig baby is of importance as well, as he cites the following poem written by Carroll as a postscript in a letter:
> My best love to yourself,--to your Mother
> My kindest regards—to your small,
> Fat, impertinent, ignorant brother
> My hatred—I think that is all. (64)

Carroll, it seems, had very little to no interest in befriending little boys. When he does write about little boys they are usually represented as unpleasant fat children. If Carroll did befriend a boy it was usually because that boy had sisters whom Carroll wanted to meet.

dream, these literal slips are not jarring, but make perfect sense. Freud argues that, in

dreams and real life alike, one cannot possibly have the strict control over language that

Carroll urges in his readers and yet continually denies Alice. Carroll pushes Alice to the

brink of doubting her own sanity several times in the Alice works.

Freud draws some interesting parallels between the language of dreams and the

language of people suffering from certain mental disorders, namely paranoia and

hysteria. Through the mechanisms of repression and condensation, dream words can

often carry multiple unrelated meanings that can only be unlocked through introspection

(or with the guidance of a qualified psychoanalyst). While Elizabeth Sewell may argue

that "Nonsense sets out to defeat the dream" because in dreams units of thought are

indistinguishable from one another, Freud sees nonsense as a natural process of not only

dreams but also language acquisition in general:

> The verbal malformations in dreams greatly resemble those which are
> familiar in paranoia but which are also present in hysteria and obsession.
> The linguistic tricks performed by children, who sometimes actually treat
> words as though they were objects and moreover invent new language and
> artificial syntactic forms, are the common sources of these things in
> dreams and psycho neurosis alike. (338)

Freud's The Interpretation of Dreams was a groundbreaking undertaking at the time he

wrote it because prior to his publication, most of the focus on dreams had been squarely

on the question: "What do dreams mean?" Freud sought to answer the question: "What

are dreams?" In the quotation above, it is clear that Freud sees the nonsense of dream

language as something inherent in the mind that can be expressed not only in dreams, but

also in the minds of the mentally unsound and children just learning a language. When

one sees that nonsense arises in three seemingly unrelated contexts (dream, mental

illness, and language acquisition), suddenly nonsense becomes incredibly interesting to

study. The symbiotic relationship between dream and nonsense gives language new-found freedom, the ability to change semantics at whim and to create new morpheme strings to express thoughts.

One year after the publication of <u>The Interpretation of Dreams,</u> Freud published the slim volume <u>On Dreams</u> (1900). In response to those who thought that the language of dreams was devoid of meaning and could not be critically analyzed, Freud writes "It deserves to be remarked that well-known philologists have asserted that the most ancient human languages tended in general to express contradictory opposites by the same word" (42). Philologist John Tooke makes a similar point in <u>Diversions of Purley</u> (1860):

> F.--He gives no explanation:--Except of RIGHT hand.
> H.—How does he explain that?
> F.—He says RIGHT hand means—"*Not the Left*."
> H.—You must look then for LEFT hand. What says he there?
> F.—He says—LEFT---"*sinistrous, Not Right*." (303)

While the above exchange was meant to mock Benjamin Johnson's attempts to define the abstract concept of "right," as in "the inalienable rights of man," what it actually illustrated was something that 20th-century philosophers and linguists would make note of: namely that a word contains not only what it *is* but also what it is *not*. This is similar to Gilles Deleuze's argument in <u>The Logic of Sense</u> (1969) that a nonsense word or phrase, in order to be successful, must also have its sensical counterpart present (66-73). Once again, Freud is pointing to nonsense as something historically intrinsic to the human condition.

In a continuing flurry of publishing, Freud published <u>The Psychopathology of Everyday Life</u> (1901) one year after <u>On Dreams</u>. In this work he refines his explanations

of the psychological mechanisms responsible for not only dreams but also slips of the

tongue, or paraphraxes. (71):

> Any similarity of objects or of word-presentations between two elements
> of the unconscious material is taken as a cause for the formation of a third,
> which is composite or compromise formation. . .The formation of
> substitutions and contaminations in speech-mistakes is, therefore, the
> beginning of that work of condensation which we find taking a most active
> part in the construction of the dream. (76-77)

This same mechanism that causes speech errors is also responsible for any sort of errors

that may arise in reading and writing (117). Freud discusses what he calls self-betrayal:

> In other and more cases it is a self-criticism, an internal contradiction
> against one's own utterance, which causes the speech-blunder, and even
> forces a contrasting substitution for the one intended. We then observe
> with surprise how the wording of an assertion removes the purpose of the
> same, and how the error in speech lays bare the inner dishonesty. Here the
> *lapsus linguae* becomes a mimicking form of expression, often, indeed,
> for the expression of what one does not wish to say. It is thus a means of
> self-betrayal. (101)

Throughout Carroll's Alice books, the reader watches as Alice continually

commits this type of self-betrayal. In The Pool of Tears, Alice unwittingly remarks on

the nature of her cat to the Mouse. At first this seems like an honest mistake, but when

Alice tells the Mouse about her neighbor's dog who "kills all the rats," it becomes quite

clear to the reader that Alice does not care for mice at all. Otherwise, why would Alice

discuss mouse killers twice within her conversation with the Mouse? Alice commits a

similar *faux pas* when talking to the mother bird and admitting that she has eaten eggs.

The mother bird has just established that all serpents eat eggs, and, despite Alice's denial,

the fact that Alice admits to eating eggs confirms the mother bird's worst fears—in this

instance, that Alice will eat her children. In each case, Alice does not mean to say what

she says; the words come out before she can think her answers through.

In his defense of Freud in "Paradoxes of Irrationality" (1982), philosopher Donald Davidson asserts that ". . .unconscious mental events do not add to the other problems but are natural companions of them" (152). In light of the Alice scenario above, Alice's entire psychic state is confused because of the events of Wonderland, and Alice's inability to control what she says, according to Davidson, is completely natural considering her mental state. Davidson points to Freud's belief that there is

> . . .no inherent conflict between reason explanations and causal explanations. Since beliefs and desires are causes of the actions for which they are reasons, reason explanations include an essential causal element. (142)

Here Davidson is echoing Freud's stance that there are no "accidental" materials in the dream state. Davidson's analysis also dovetails nicely with Elizabeth Sewell and other nonsense scholars who argue that nonsense is not an accidental structure, but one whose inner workings are hidden from the casual reader. In Alice's case, her *faux pas* may not be intentional (admitting to eating eggs, speaking of killing mice, insulting the Caterpillar's height, etc.), but they are not purely accidental. Alice's statements come from somewhere deep inside her psyche and reveal feelings of anger, frustration, hostility and hunger during these encounters.

Alice's anger at the animals manifests itself at the White Rabbit's house. When she rushes in to help the White Rabbit find his gloves, she comes upon a bottle. This time she drinks it with no concern about poison, only stopping to think: "I do hope it'll make me grow large again, for really I'm quite tired of being such a tiny little thing!" (38). When Alice reaches her final height, she thinks: "'It was much pleasanter at home,'[. . .]'when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits.'" (39). Her final burst of anger aimed at the animals that keep

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bossing her around comes when the White Rabbit decides that the only way to get the full-grown Alice out of his house is to set the house on fire. Upon hearing that plan Alice shouts: "If you do, I'll set Dinah at you!" (43). In each case the reader sees just how hostile Alice is toward the animals. She doesn't like being their size, she doesn't like taking orders from the animals, and finally, she threatens them with physical harm at the paws and claws of Dinah.

Alice's words reveal more than she realizes, and she finds that it is not easy to undo her words once she speaks them. Freud argues that nothing can be suppressed forever, and eventually, through speech or writing, suppressed thoughts and/or feelings will surface:

> Linguistic usage hits the mark in speaking of the 'suppression' [i.e. the 'pressing down'] of these impulses. The psychical arrangements that make it possible for such impulses to force their way to realization remain in being and in working order. (Freud, 269)

Here Freud demonstrates that the mechanisms that create verbal slips are the same mechanisms that create disturbing dream content. In the context of dreams, Freud argues that linguistic slips such as Alice's often represent a repressed wish surfacing in the dream environment (589-90).[35]

Carroll absolves Alice of all her guilt by having her wake up from the nightmare and realize that it was all a "wonderful dream." Also, because Alice is a young child she easily forgiven for her outbursts. Donald Rackin argues in <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass: Nonsense, Sense, and Meaning </u>(1991):

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[35] There are four scenarios in which wish fulfillment manifests in dreams. The first is that during waking hours the wish arose and was unsatisfied. A second scenario is that the dream arose during waking hours and was rejected. Freud's third scenario is that the wish is one that is so suppressed into the subconscious that it can only manifest in dream. And finally, Freud posits that wishes that arise in dreams may be the result of wish impulses that the dreamer experiences during the night (589-90).

> For many apparently nonsensical elements of *Alice*, like timelessness, spacelessness, and the fusion of discrete entities, are, as modern psychology has demonstrated, what lie just below the surface of rational, organized consciousness and what we experience every night in dreams. (66)

Carroll, according to Rackin, reveals what is just below the surface of consciousness, and Freud seems to agree that there are no accidents or mistakes in dreams. He further argues through his many examples, that things that appear irrelevant, foreign, or even fantastical in dreams are actually the results of the complex yet natural mental processes of condensation and repression. Through his dream work, Freud lays the groundwork for understanding how nonsense need not be seen as something alien to the human experience. Rather Freud proves that nonsense, as a function of dream, is perhaps one of the most intrinsic of human languages.

Freud is not alone in this thought, however, and Anthony Burgess argues in "Nonsense" (1987) that dream and nonsense function in the same way. "Dreams function by combining disparate images or experiences, and dream-words function by signifying more than one thing" (20). For Burgess this allows the brain full liberation to free-associate between images and words.[36] In ReJoyce (1965), Burgess makes the following statement:

> Genuine dream-stuff is, before *Finnegan's Wake*, to be found perhaps only in *Alice*, Clarence's big speech in *Richard III*, Kafka (though he presents less dream than sick hallucination), Dostoevsky, and the Bible. (264)

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[36] The main point of difference between Burgess' analysis of nonsense and Sewell's is that Burgess argues that dream and nonsense are more closely related than Sewell is willing to allow. Burgess also argues that surrealism and nonsense are kindred spirits, both aiming to liberate the imagination and mind from logical structures. The free association of the brain when in the dream state between images allows, for Burgess, a multiplicity of meanings, intentions, and significations that can also add up to nothing (20). Sewell vehemently disagrees with Burgess' premise that nonsense and dream function the same way because to her nonsense is ultimately concerned with logic, structure, and coherence albeit on different terms than non-nonsense texts. Dreams do not allow for logical, rational thought because "in the dream system it is impossible to distinguish units of thought" (49). Later Sewell argues that nonsense actually sets out to defeat the dream (111).

In the above quotation, Burgess aligns Carroll's works with not only Shakespeare's

masterpiece, but also with the pinnacle of Modernist literature in Joyce and the absurdist

writings of Kafka.[37] Joyce serves as the perfect middle link in the chain from Carroll to

cyberpunk because Joyce not only pays homage to Carroll through the use of nonsense

(and in some cases indirect referencing) but also because Joyce derides Freud several

times in <u>Finnegan's Wake</u>, proving that Freud was important to his novel's construction.

And finally, Joyce's linguistic acrobatics were a huge influence on Burgess' <u>A

Clockwork Orange</u> (1962).[38] My goal is not to embark into a study of James Joyce's

<u>Finnegan's Wake</u>. Rather, my interest lies in how Joyce forms a bridge between the

nonsense of Lewis Carroll and the nonsense of late 20th-century cyberpunk. Anthony

Burgess' <u>A Clockwork Orange</u> is considered by some to be an ancestor to the genre of

cyberpunk.

One obvious way that Carroll and Freud are woven into <u>Finnegan's Wake</u> is

through writerly texts that write across pre-existing texts.[39] A text, according to Roland

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[37] The difference, for Burgess, is that "Alice is the centre of her dreams, but she originates none of the action: she is the driven, not the driver" (193). Alice's dreams are closer to the mechanism of condensation that Freud outlines in <u>On the Interpretation of Dreams</u>.

[38] Joyce was so important to Burgess that in 1982, Burgess completed his nine-year pet project "Bloom's Dublin," a two-act musical based on Joyce's <u>Ulysses</u> (Phillips, 2)

[39] How does this sort of plasticity affect the reader? One argument that is compelling for the discussion of Lewis Carroll, nonsense, and cyberpunk is that authors who master the plasticity of language create texts that readers can interact with in ways that elude realist fiction. This can be considered an influx of mind, an irrational entrance into a text, a writerly text. French philosopher Roland Barthes defines a writerly text in <u>S/Z</u> (1974) as:

> The writerly text is a perpetual present, upon which no *consequent* language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed; the writerly text is *ourselves writing*, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages. (5)

Barthes, cuts across other texts weaving a cloth of quotations and does not have one source or origin because ". . . the quotations a text is made of are anonymous, irrecoverable, and yet already read: they are quotations without quotation marks" ("From" 60). These quotations are the result of a myriad of cultural headwaters merging and diverging in the text ("Death" 53). It is easy to see that a text is neither stable nor absolute. "To represent a dream convincingly, one needs a plastic language, a language in which two objects or persons can subsist in one and the same word," Burgess argues (ReJoyce 188). Like language, in a text there is a play at work, a continual slipping of the present into the future. Of Joyce's writings, Burgess asserts that, despite the apparent mangling of English, that "English is never abused, never given exotic flavouring; the compressions, re-orderings of the sentence, compound coinages, alliterations are native to the language" (ReJoyce 21). It is in Joyce that we begin to see multiple languages woven into one nonsense narrative. Jean-Francois Lyotard writes in "The Postmodern" about Joyce's use of language:

> Joyce allows the unpresentable to become perceptible in his writing itself,
> in the signifier. . .The grammar and vocabulary of literary language are no
> longer accepted as given; rather, they appear as academic forms, as rituals

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Barthes acknowledges that this is an idealized text, one that is difficult to produce. But certain texts seem immune to the plasticization of ideology, genus, and criticism. These are texts that find new audiences in every generation and allow reader after reader to write into the text. Lewis Carroll's Alice books, which have never gone out of print or popularity, are one example of a writerly text. James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake (1939), as Burgess opines, is another example of a writerly text: ". . .Joyce may be within his rights in turning language into one of the *characters of Ulysses* (perhaps in *Finnegan's Wake* the only character)" (22). In The Pleasure of the Text, Roland Barthes says: "The pleasure of the text is that moment when my body pursues its own ideas--for my body does not have the same ideas I do" (17).

Science fiction writer Jeff Noon says this of Carroll and his own aspirations in a 1996 interview with Caroline Griffin: "Lewis Carroll put himself in both books as well. So he was very aware that you can actually step into a book." (2-3) Mikhail Bakhtin praises works that can put the reader and author alongside the characters in ". . .an active creation of the truth in the consciousnesses of the author, the characters, and the readers, in which all participants are equal" (Zappen 2). Bakhtin calls this a polyphonic novel. Roland Barthes refers to texts that let the reader in as writerly texts. There may be no more polyphonic novel than Joyce's Finnegan's Wake.

originating in piety (as Nietzsche said) which prevent the unpresentable from being put forward. (261)

John Atherton in Books at the Wake: A Study of Literary Allusions in James Joyce's Finnegan's Wake (1974) points to Carroll as a previously unacknowledged predecessor to Joyce. Atherton also discusses how Joyce uses the devices that Freud asserts are typical of dreams (38). Condensation is the most obvious of the psychological devices. It is Freud who says: "There is no need to be astonished at the part played by words in dream-formation. Words, since they are the nodal points of numerous ideas, may be regarded as predestined to ambiguity. . ." (Dreams 315).

Joyce didn't go into his writing with Carroll in mind, but, after publishing some of his stories, he found that his writing reminded people of Lewis Carroll. In a letter to a friend he writes: "Another (or rather many) says he [Joyce] is imitating Lewis Carroll. I never read him till Mrs. Nutting gave me a book, not *Alice*, a few weeks ago—though, of course I heard bits and scraps" (qtd in Atherton 127). Atherton continues "When his attention had been drawn to Carroll's work he began to study the Alice books. . ." (127). While Joyce may have been disappointed to find that his word-play wasn't entirely new, he recognized in Carroll the perfection of linguistic devices through which dream could be represented (Atherton 129).

To Atherton, the most important of Joyce's borrowings from Carroll is portmanteau-words (126). Humpty Dumpty continually appears in Finnegan's Wake, usually in conjunction with Dublin, as it the second verse of Joyce's *Anna Livia Plurabelle*: "Humpty Dump Dublin squeaks through his norse" (qtd in Atherton 126).[40]

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[40] Of course, Humpty Dumpty was not Carroll's creation but a character in a 17th-century nursery rhyme that commemorated the English Civil War of 1642 – 1649. (http://www.famousquotes.me.uk/nursery_rhymes/humpty_dumpty.htm) Humpty Dumpty referred to a

Through his nonsense writing, Joyce pays homage to Lewis Carroll. "All old Dadgerson's dodges one conning one's copying and that's what Wonderland's wanderlad'll flaunt to the fair" (124). Atherton argues that in this passage, Old Dadgerson in a sentence with wonderland can only refer to Lewis Carroll, the Reverend Charles Dodgson (124).

Without knowing Joyce's intended context, that of Charles Dodgson, the name means nothing to the reader. Here we are in the territory of Humpty Dumpty once again. As I discussed in chapter one, Carroll makes a game out of Alice's name and the lack of recognition that goes along with it by reversing the rules that govern proper names. Proper names by nature, are individual specific and lack a universal referent. When Alice first lands in Wonderland, she immediately experiences an identity crisis because she feels different upon landing at the bottom of the rabbit hole. The way she discerns her identity is through physical characteristics that belong to others and not to herself: "I'm sure I'm not Ada," she said, "for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all. . ." (23) Alice demonstrates that to be an Ada is to have long ringlets, whereas an Alice doesn't have that characteristic. Unfortunately these physical traits are not universal nor are they readily understood from the names "Ada" and "Alice." This is why Humpty and flowers do not consider the word "Alice" as having any meaning. Likewise, as a human, Alice looks like all other humans, so the White Rabbit in Wonderland mistakes her for MaryAnn, his maid and the flowers of Looking-Glass confuse her for being just another Queen in the garden. Humans and their names, are interchangeable in the worlds Carroll creates.

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cannon that was used during the war to protect the Royalist stronghold. The cannon was destroyed by a Parliamentary cannon and this caused the stronghold to fall. It is entirely possible that Joyce is using Humpty Dumpty in part as an homage to Carroll's wordplay as well as satirizing English history.

Joyce extends this game by distorting the real-life Dodgson's name to the point that it is almost unrecognizable, but he does include the large contextual clue "Wonderland" in the sentence. Using Stuart Dodgson Collingwood's (Charles Dodgson's nephew) <u>The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll</u> (1898) Joyce not only makes use of Carroll's original looking-glass girl creation Alice (who is a copy of a real girl, Alice Liddell), but he also calls upon the name of Carroll's stage Alice, Isa Bowman: "Onzel grootvatter Lodewijk is onangonamed. . .and his twy Isas Boldmans is met the blueyballs near Dandeliond" (131). The use of the word "blueyballs" is one that can be taken as a sexual reference, indicating that Joyce was aware of the odd nature of Carroll's relationship with Miss Bowman.[41] Another example from <u>Finnegan's Wake</u> is "Poor Isa sits a glooming so gleaming in the gloaming. . ." (361). Isa becomes the symbol of Carroll's unfulfilled wish for a lifetime companion. The second sentence also displays the one word game that Joyce didn't rediscover before reading Carroll, the Word Ladder. (Atherton, 133).

In 1879, Carroll published an article in *Vanity Fair* titled "A New Puzzle." The article introduces a new game to the magazine's readers, that of "Doublets." The rules of the game are simple: "Two words are proposed, of the same length; and the puzzle consists in linking together by interposing other words, each of which shall differ from the next word *in one letter only*" ("Collected," 1149). As with most of Carroll's games, this one was designed to while away time on rainy days. Where Carroll's "Doublet"

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[41] Carroll's fascination with Miss Bowman was well-documented and further fueled suspicions that Carroll had improper interest in the young women with whom he surrounded himself. Outside of Alice Liddell, Isa Bowman was the most important young woman in Carroll's life. Carroll hand picked her to play Alice on stage, he paid for her acting lessons, she and often travelled with Carroll. Isa Bowman vacationed with her "Uncle" Carroll in 1887, 1888, 1889, and 1890 (Thomas, 256). She often called him "Goosie" in private, but never in public for fear of reproach from the prudish Dodgson (Thomas, 270).

examples consist of phrases such as "Turn HARE to SOUP" or "Evolve MAN from

APE" and other humorous word pairings, Joyce's example from <u>Wake</u> takes the word

"glooming" and turns it into "gloaming." Joyce's doublet highlights the linguistic

aggression with which he attacks his narrative in the dark nature of the words he chooses.

Joyce is breaking any and all language rules he comes across, even those that have

already been broken by Carroll before him.

While much has been said about Joyce's use (or misuse, depending on the view)

of the English language, our interest lies in the linguistic overlap between Joyce and

Carroll.   Burgess says of Joyce's pre-published publicity poem for <u>Finnegan's Wake:</u>

> What was it all but a more sophisticated 'Jabberwocky?' The derivation
> from *Alice* was pointed by the identification of the hero of *Haveth
> Childers Everwhere* with, though without his talent for semantic exegesis,
> Humpty Dumpty himself. (186)

A great difference between Carroll's nonsense poem and Joyce's nonsense poem for

Burgess lies in the way they use portmanteau-words. According to Burgess, Carroll's

portmanteau-words "played fair," meaning they were easily resolved into simple English.

Joyce, knowing more languages than Carroll, pushed English to its very brink by creating

not only portmanteau-words of meaning, but also of various languages.

> Joyce wrung the English language nearly dry in *Ulysses* and, in
> *Finnegan's Wake*, had to devise a new medium--a composite tongue, a
> kind of pan-European, in which the vocabulary was drawn from all the
> languages Joyce knew—a very considerable number. (Burgess 29)

Joyce's works must be more than irreverent word play, Burgess argues, or there would be no point to his exercise. But what frustrates readers most is the inability to crack Joyce's nonsense structure.[42]

Donald Davidson includes a chapter titled "James Joyce and Humpty Dumpty" in Truth, Language, and History (2005). His focus in this chapter is on Joyce and Carroll's shared fascination with language's ambiguities. Davidson anchors the chapter with Carroll's Humpty Dumpty because, "he is the pure example of the hopeful innovator" (143). Humpty is ever optimistic that he can bend language to his, and only his, will. Joyce is juxtaposed with Humpty because Davidson sees in Joyce an aesthetic that strove to be free, to escape "settled meanings, established styles and tastes, 'correct' spellings" (147). According to Davidson, Joyce's creative drive required freedom from linguistic convention. And, as a result, Joyce's use of language in Finnegan's Wake strips the reader of all reference points:

> Joyce takes us back to the foundations and origins of communication; he puts us in the situation of the jungle linguist trying to get the hang of a new language and a novel culture. . . (157)

It is true that few authors have taken nonsense to the extreme that Joyce did in Finnegan's Wake. "[I]t shows man in relation to the whole cosmos, and the whole cosmos appears in his work symbolized in the whole of language," Burgess exalts in ReJoyce (23).

Burgess was not only a Joyce scholar, but a fan of Joyce's work. Joyce's influence followed Burgess throughout his life. In "Anthony Burgess on the Short Story" (1984), Burgess discussed how Joyce influenced the young short-story-writing Burgess:

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[42] This is in part due to the education systems in American and Britain, according to Burgess who argues: "Our educational tradition, both in Britain and America, has conditioned us to look on words as mere counters which, given a particular context, mean one thing and one thing only. . .When a word is ambiguous, we are uneasy. . ." (266).

"We were all under the Joycean influence in those days, even though we weren't legally allowed to read *Ulysses*. . ." (1). Burgess goes on to discuss an early short story of his that hearkens back to Joyce:

> All that happens in that story really was that when the fireworks were let off, with this great pyrotechnical display, the language itself broke down. This was the point of the story: the language itself started to break down. Instead of having straightforward syntax, straightforward words, the words themselves were distorted. It was a very Joycean effort *Finnegan's Wake* a type of brief experiment form. (2)

Burgess' most Joycean work would also be the work that makes a distinct move away from modernism and into the later 20th century. Few science fiction works take nonsense to the extent that Burgess does in <u>A Clockwork Orange</u>.

Joyce's modernist masterpiece, while pushing language to the point of violence, does not feel as though there is a danger in it. Carroll puts Alice in positions of danger throughout both of his works, and, in "The Hunting of the Snark" the entire poem is focused on the dangers of running into a Boojum. The key to dreams is that, when in a dream, one does not know one is in a dream and this adds to the heightened nonsensical language that appears. Nonsense as a literary device is a game between reader and writer, between character and reader, and between character and writer. But, if nothing is at stake, then it is not a game worth playing. In science fiction, to not understand a language can have dire consequences for the characters. Anthony Burgess takes violence, applies it to both language and to his character's actions, setting the stage for the cyberpunk that was to follow.

For those who doubt that Carroll's works have an undercurrent of violence, we need to look no further than early 20th-century America. In a 1937 address to the American Psychoanalytic Society, American psychiatrist Paul Schilder warned that the

unconscious and primitive material contained within Lewis Carroll's Alice books posed a serious threat to the psyches of children and that children should not be allowed to read the texts. Schilder in his 1938 article "Pscyhoanalytical Remarks on Lewis Carroll" goes so far as to say: "Carroll appears to the writer of this essay as a particularly destructive writer. I do not mean this in the sense of a literary criticism. . .We may merely ask whether such a literature might not increase destructive attitudes in children beyond the measure which is desirable" (167). Schilder is not merely referring to the physical violence that is hinted at throughout the works, but he is also referring to the linguistic violence prominently displayed throughout Carroll's works. Linguistic violence takes center stage in the fiction of the late 20th-century, especially in works of science fiction, and no one work demonstrates this violence better than A Clockwork Orange's youthful language, Nadsat.

Anthony Burgess' Nadsat, for example, can be seen as a language in which the dominated are trying to subvert the dominant mainstream culture while simultaneously maintaining dominance within their Nadsat culture. While nonsense may seem an unlikely linguistic device for a genre like science fiction, in reality nonsense provides the perfect mechanism for linguistic rebellion from within a dominant (and usually tyrannical) society.

Anthony Burgess' A Clockwork Orange puts the reader in a similar situation as Carroll's "Jabberwocky." When Alice first sees the poem she doesn't immediately understand *"Jabberwocky"* except for the fact that someone kills something. At first it seems that Alice, like a typical seven-and-a-half year old, is going to dismiss the poem since she can't really grasp its meaning. But the fact that she asks Humpty to translate it

for her reveals the impact that poem did have on her. The poem also serves to separate Alice from the denizens of Looking-Glass Land, who, presumably, would understand the poem upon viewing it. Using Nadsat, a language of the youth, Burgess not only disorientates the reader, but he also uses Nadsat to separate the youth from the older establishment. In much the same way that Carroll uses semantics to keep Alice isolated within the societies of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land, Burgess uses language to draw boundaries between various social groups. This move by Burgess foreshadows the social disintegration that cyberpunk authors will rely on to examine the alienation an individual experiences in the modern world. Consider the following excerpt from Burgess:

> Our pockets were full of deng, so there was no real need from the point of view of crasting any more pretty polly to tolchock some old veck in an alley and viddy him swim in his blood while we counted the takings and divided by four, nor to do the ultra-violent on some shivering skinny grey-haired ptitsa in a shop and go smecking off with the till's guts. (4)

At a first glance, this passage is nearly incomprehensible. This slows the reader down, disorients him or her, and requires that the reader glean the meaning of the Nadsat words through the context of the text. And, unlike Alice with the "Jabberwocky," there is no translator on hand to help the reader along (although Alex provides a few definitions early on). There is only the text itself. After a careful reading of the above passage, one begins to see the following interpretation:

> Our pockets were full of money, so there was no real need from the point of view of stealing any more money to knock some old man in an alley and watch him swim in his blood while we counted the takings and divided by four, nor to beat some shivering skinny grey-haired woman in a shop and go laughing off with the till's guts. (4)

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Nadsat is made up of a combination of childish words, Russian, invented British slang, Malay, German, French, Arabic, and Gypsy. Some examples of Nadsat words used by Alex and his *droogs,* 'comrades' are *grahzny bratchny*, 'dirty bastard;' *crark,* 'to yowl;' *cutter,* 'money;' *tolchock,* 'hit;' *litso*, 'face;' *krovvy*, 'blood;' *sarky*, 'sarcastic;' and *appy polly loggy*, 'apology.'   But, many words represent the same concept, as with *cutter*, *pretty polly*, and *deng,* which all represent 'money.' Just when the reader is confident he or she has grasped the text, the replacing of one word for another throws the reader off balance, never giving the reader a firm grounding. Again, this replicates the multi-lingual approach taken by Joyce in <u>Finnegan's Wake</u>, while setting up the multi-national, multi-lingual world of cyberpunk. Burgess' world is one that is ruled by the youth for the youth.

The protagonist, Alex, demonstrates his youthfulness in the immature way he refers to authority figures. Alex mocks the Minister of the Interior by using the term Minister of the Inferior.[43] Alex also uses "civilized" and "syphilised" interchangeably. The exchange of "syphilised" for civilized also reaches back to Freud's concept of condensation and repression. Alex sees the adult world as diseased and adult authority as corrupt, hence, he uses syphilis as a way of referring to the adult world. The word syphilis carries with it a connotation of sexual decadence as well as the eventual degradation of the brain and heart as the disease advances. These juvenile wordings also serve to remind the reader that the narrator is really just an adolescent (14 at the beginning of the novel and 19 at the end).

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[43]This technique is also used by Jeff Noon in the <u>Automated Alice</u> (1996) where the Civil Servants are quite literally Civil Serpents.

In a similar fashion, Carroll uses language to establish both social order and the rebellion of youth at the Caucus-Race. The Dodo, after the Mouse's failed attempt at drying the group with history, declares; "'In that case,' said the Dodo solemnly, rising to its feet, 'I move that the meeting adjourn, for the immediate adoption of energetic remedies—'" (31). At this point the Dodo is interrupted by an Eaglet who argues, "'Speak English!' said the Eaglet. 'I don't know the meaning of half those long words, and, what's more, I don't believe you do either!'" (31). The Dodo has proclaimed himself the leader of the group, a designation that is symbolized by the dense language he uses. It takes a younger participant, the Eaglet, to call him out on his elitist language. In essence, the Eaglet is rebelling against the order of the Dodo. The Eaglet's insolence gives rise to another small rebellion. After the Mouse runs off in a huff the following exchange occurs:

> And an old Crab took the opportunity of saying to her daughter "Ah, my dear! Let this be a lesson to you never to lose *your* temper!" "Hold your tongue, Ma!" said the young Crab, a little snappishly. "You're enough to try the patience of an oyster!" (35)

Aside from the humor in all the punning in the quick exchange, there is something very serious happening between the Crab and her daughter. It isn't very often that Alice encounters children who speak to their parents and elders in the manner of both the Eaglet and the small Crab. The way the youth use the language (accusing an elder of not knowing what words mean, sassing back to a parent-figure, and then calling that parent irritating) is to mark themselves as not-adult. The youth in this case have become their own subculture, albeit loosely defined. As we will see, Burgess draws on such language-defined social groups to create his Nadsats.

Burgess' neologisms, spoken through the 14-year-old Little Alex, do come from other words and familiar morphemes, however, one would have to have a background in several Eastern European languages, as well as English, in order to immediately recognize the words. Alex provides sporadic interpretation of his Nadsat words, but the words he chooses to define are ones that are often obvious from the context. "[A]nd poor old Dim had a very hound-and-horny one of a clown's litso (face, that is). . ." (2). Despite this, there is a logical and governing syntactical structure in Nadsat that doesn't completely alienate the reader.

In her "A Language of the Future" (2000) Veronica Hollinger argues that Burgess' Nadsat is a powerful defamiliarizing agent by using a gloss that is radically different from English (82). One aspect of this defamiliarization is that excessive violence is a defining feature and a response to the world not contained within the language (85). Hollinger continues that Burgess produces not a futuristic language but an anti-English, "representing the social, class, and generation splintering" of his future. Burgess himself seems to see Nadsat as a "dialogue of the tribe" (A Clockwork Orange 114).[44]

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[44] This suggests a multiplicity of languages that Hollinger does not acknowledge. Hollinger writes as though there are only two dialogues spoken in the novel, mainstream and Nadsat. This is simply not true. On occasion Alex raises the reader's awareness about how there are multiple youth dialects. An example of this is when Alex seduces the two young girls at a record store: "But they went oh oh oh and said, 'Swoony' and 'Hilly' and other weird slovos that were the height of fashion in that youth group" (45). Alex doesn't tell us any more about the girls such as whether they are of a higher class than he is. What we know about them is that they, like Alex, have skipped school to spend the day in a record store and that they, like Alex, have a specific language that defines their youth culture.

     Nadsat, we learn, isn't the sole language of the criminal element. When Alex is in prison he tells the reader about Zophar, a seemingly (it is hard to tell since Alex is only 15 and anyone older than himself is seen as ancient) older man who spoke mostly to himself.

> What he was saying now like to nobody was 'And at that time you couldn't get hold of a poggy' (whatever that was, brother), 'not if you was to hand over ten million archibalds, so what do I do eh, I goes down to Turkey's and says I've got this sproog on that morrow, see, and what can he do?' It was all this very old-time real criminal's slang he spoke. (84-5)

This echoes the situation that Carroll puts Alice into in both Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. The characters she meets are clearly speaking English, but the semantics of what is being said is often foreign to her. From the Mad Tea Party to her conversations with the Cheshire Cat to the infamous scene with Humpty Dumpty, Alice is stymied at every turn by her inability to understand what is being said to her. Nowhere is this communication breakdown made more obvious than in the courtroom scene at the end of Wonderland. As Alice waits for the trial to begin, she is happy to note that she can readily identify the major participants due to books that she has read. "'That's the judge,' she said to herself, 'because of his great wig'" (111). All familiarity ends there, however, as the court is called to session and the King immediately asks for the jury's verdict. The insanity continues when the Knave of Hearts' poem turns up in the court:

> "If you didn't sign it," said the King, "that only makes the matter worse. You *must* have meant some mischief, or else you'd have signed your name like an honest man."
>
> There was a general clapping of hands at this: it was the first really clever thing the King had said that day.
>
> "That *proves* his guilt, of course," said the Queen: "so, off with--."
>
> "That *proves* nothing of the sort!" Alice said. "Why, you don't even know what they're about!" (121)

The key here is that Alex recognizes Zophar's lingo as marking him as a "real" criminal. Since Alex doesn't speak that way, he presumes himself to not be a "real" criminal despite the fact that he is now a murderer.

Little Alex is surely not well-off, but neither is he destitute. He has two parents whose greatest crime is their passivity toward his violent outbursts. His parents do not speak "gentlemen's goloss," nor do they speak Nadsat, but they understand both. In terms of a social or class analysis, unless Hollinger defines Little Alex's class and society as that of the youth and only the youth, her assessment falls short. Hollinger posits Little Alex as "the perfectly alienated subject of modernism" (85). But Alex, like his parents, is not linguistically isolated. He understands mainstream perfectly well (certainly enough to speak it). He can use his "gentlemen's goloss" when he needs to, understands it when it is spoken to him, and is only stymied by the other youth languages he encounters.

Unfortunately for Alice, reading the verses doesn't help clarify anything as she declares that there is no meaning in the poem. The King is pleased with this saying: "If there's no meaning in it . . . that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we don't needn't try to find any" (123). Alice sees no logic in anything that is going on in the courtroom and grows increasingly frustrated with the proceedings until she utters the lines that free her from Wonderland: "'Who cares for *you?'* said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!' (124). It is Alice's declaration and the joining of word and object that frees her from her fear of Wonderland.

Her words incite a riot in the courtroom as the cards physically attack her. Luckily she wakes up and escapes unscathed. But it is impossible to ignore that it is Alice's violence, when pushed to her breaking point, that ultimately frees her. Tenniel's drawing (Fig 3.3) doesn't really depict the violent climax that takes place in the courtroom.
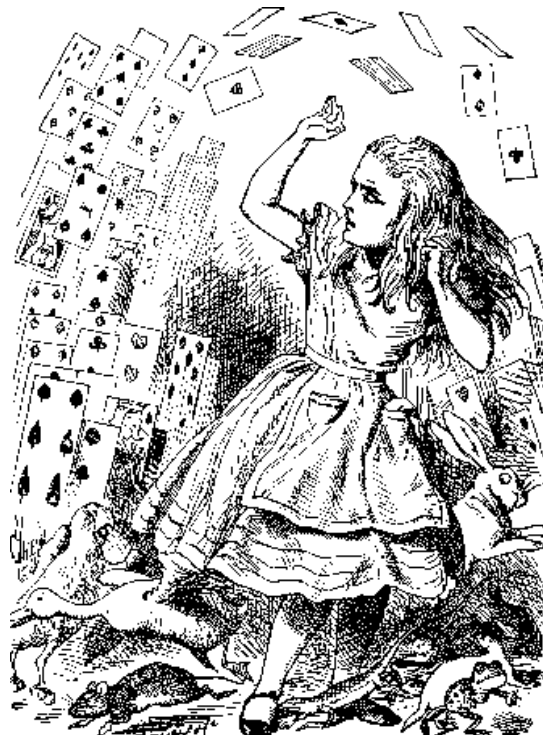

Fig 3.3. Alice in the Courtroom.

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In Tenniel's drawing, it is clear that Alice is being attacked by the cards. This is evident from both the expression of anger on Alice's face and from her arm thrown up to protect herself from the onslaught. The Disney movie "Alice in Wonderland" from 1951 brings the violence of this scene to the forefront (Fig 3.4).

Fig 3.4. Alice in Courtroom. ©Disney, 1951.

Here we see Alice literally being swarmed by playing cards that are approximately the same size she is and have retained their human characteristics, as opposed to the previous figure in which the cards are smaller than Alice and lack any definite features. Disney's Alice is on the witness stand and not standing defiantly to face the obvious smaller cards, as Tenniel's Alice is. The second Alice is withdrawing, pulling herself down to hide from the onslaught of the cards. For the reader, however, neither of Alice's liberations seem anything but humorous. The entire time Alice experiences her frustration, the reader remains removed from the situation and enjoys the humor of Alice's predicament.

Burgess removes this comfort from the reader. In her further analysis of the novel, Hollinger points out that Little Alex's use of Nadsat also draws the reader in,

making him or her complicit in the devilish goings-on of Little Alex and his droogs; "Not for nothing does Alex continually draw us in by addressing his readers as 'O my brothers,' making it as difficult as possible for us to remain distanced from the events he recounts and the values he represents, which, he implies, are our own values as well" (87)

This is true. Throughout the novel Alex talks to the reader in Nadsat and Nadsat only. It is only when addressing authority figures that Alex uses his "gentlemen's goloss" to cover up his Nadsat affiliation. But Alex does allow the reader some separation from his Nadsat culture, at least early on. By defining random words as the novel begins, Alex is acknowledging that his readers are not Nadsats. By the end of the novel, it is assumed that the reader knows Nadsat well enough to no longer need explanations, or that the reader is a droog.

There is a direct link between Alex's violent tendencies and his use of Nadsat. Robbie H. B. Goh discusses the onomatopoetic aspects of the words that Alex uses during acts of violence in "'Clockwork' Language Reconsidered: Iconicity and Narrative in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* " (2000):

> The focus is not the actual sound made by the victim, but rather the abrupt change in speech pattern and sound production (compared to his earlier righteous indignation and high moral tone) as a result of the change in the conditions governing that production. Alex's act of brutality forces the victim (and, vicariously, the reader) to discover or at least dwell on the ineluctably physical basis of words, a basis which Alex's narrative then recreates and lingers on with evident fascination. (268)

Alex's violence is encapsulated and contained not only in his actions but also in his words, as well. This mirrors what Carroll does in "Jabberwocky," particularly in stanzas 4 and 5:

> And, as in uffish thought he stood,
> The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame

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> Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
>> And burbled as it came!
>
> One, two! One, two! And through and through
>> The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
> He left it dead, and with its head
>> He went galumphing back. (149-50)

In the fourth stanza, the Jabberwock is not merely described, but fleshed out. One can imagine the monster huffing and puffing its way through the forest, gurgling as it sniffs the air in search of its prey. Nothing about Carroll's description of the monster leads to any conclusion other than this monster is large and dangerous. The boy is not meekly waiting, but sitting gruffly hoping to set a trap for the Jabberwock. The violence of the boy's actions is mirrored in the violence of the language in the 5th stanza. The blade is vorpal, a word that is still undefined, but one imagines that it is the sound the blade makes as it slices through the air and into its intended target. Then there is the actual slaughter of the beast, "snicker-snack," the snapping of bones, the severing of tendons, and gush of blood that allows the boy to grab the monster's head and triumphantly gallop back to the older man. Goh finds a correlation between Lewis Carroll and Burgess in this, ". . .it is a 'violence' in language such as is manifested in the linguistic pathologies and aberrant discourses of writers like Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, and Aidan Higgins. . ." (271). Booker likewise argues that Nadsat "is invested with a lust for violence" (97). This is a clear indication of the shortcomings of the rehabilitation progress.

Hollinger asserts that the Ludovico Technique fails and that it leaves virtually no mark on Little Alex. I argue that is too simplistic a conclusion. Much like those who argue that Alice returns from Wonderland unscathed, Hollinger fails to see that the Technique has left a mark on Alex. The rehabilitation, as it is so generously labeled, is actually the violent reprogramming of Alex. This technique consists of forcing him to

watch acts of violence ranging from murder to rape to bestiality. The Ludovico Technique is designed to create an unpleasant physical reaction (such as nausea, dizziness, dry mouth) whenever the reprogrammed thinks about or attempts to commit an act of violence. It works to a great extent on Alex and eradicates his violent actions. It does not, however, remove his violent desires and there are some serious unforeseen consequences of the technique.

During his time as a "normal" member of society, Alex is betrayed by his friends, assaulted by strangers, and turned out by his parents. Alex is unable to protect himself from the violence of these others, which marks him as decidedly not normal. Most debilitating for Alex is that he can no longer listen to the music that the loves. "It was that these doctor bracthnies had so fixed things that any music that was like for the emotions would make me sick just like viddying or wanting to do violence. . .And now here was lovely Mozart made horrible" (139). It is precisely this unforeseen side effect to the technique that Alex returns to the only life that he has known, that of a violent criminal. And by the end of the novel the reader finds Alex contemplating a change in his life as he is growing too old to continue in this reckless fashion.

As he undergoes the technique, Alex becomes even more devoted to his use of Nadsat. When he first enters the rehabilitation program Alex attempts to relate to his doctors by using his gentleman's language. As he becomes more comfortable in his surroundings and begins to think that he is in control, he drops all pretenses. In the last stage of the process as he is scared and unsure of his situation, Alex begins to use Nadsat exclusively and heavily. It culminates in his final "exam" in front of the authorities. Alex is placed in a room with a beautiful woman. His first reaction is to think about rape

but as the violent physical reaction takes over, he begins to think of love. The result is this speech:

> O most beautiful and beauteous of devotchkas, I throw like my heart at your feet for you to like trample all over. If I had a rose I would give it to you. If it was all rainy and cally now on the ground you could have my platties to walk on so as not to cover your dainty nogas with filth and cal. (128)

Previously, Alex only uses Nadsat with his droogs or with people he intends to intimidate, threaten, or kill. Any time he is confronted with someone from outside those two groups, he switches to mainstream speak. By the end of the technique, Alex does not care who hears him speak Nadsat. It remains his last vestige of security and his last way to maintain his identity.

When Hollinger says "readers are left cheering for a protagonist who has overcome the forces of repressive conservatism and managed to maintain his own strongly individual identity," she is romanticizing Alex. Yes, he has maintained his individuality, but at what cost? By the end, his friends are either dead or moved on, he has no schooling, and continues to rob, drink, and rape with his friends who remain teenagers while he continues to age. It is time and time only that raises Alex's awareness to the point that maybe the Nadsat life is best left to the youth. But Alex isn't approaching a new life with bounding optimism. Much like the love speech he is forced to give a woman he really wants to rape, Alex undermines the reader's assumptions that he is going to straighten out his life in the last passage of the novel.

> Tomorrow is all like sweet flowers and the turning vonny earth and the stars and the old Luna up there and your old droog Alex on his oddy knocky seeking like a mate. And all that cal. A terrible grahzny vonny world, really, Oh my brothers. And so farewell from your little droog. And to all others this story profound shooms of lip music brrrrrr. And

> they can kiss my sherries. But you, O my brothers remember sometimes
> thy little Alex that was. Amen. And all that cal. (191-2)

The repeated use of the word 'cal,' or shit, undermines the seeming positive moments in the passage. There is no future for Alex. All he can ask the reader to do is to remember the Alex of times past, the murdering, raping, thieving, lying, bullying Alex that Hollinger says readers champion. The Alex of now has nothing but his Nadsat way of life. He's 18, ancient in his own mind, and used up by the very society that is supposed to fight against the mainstream society. At 18 Alex can either give up and join the mainstream or he can be destroyed by the Nadsats.

Burgess isn't championing one life over the other, he paints them both as having destructive elements and creating cycles difficult to escape. Alex's treatment of his friends early in the novel is no different than the repressive conservative society's treatment of the Nadsats. Alex verbally and physically abuses Dim, Georgie, and Pete and forces them to his way of thinking and acting. Alex's parents are simultaneously bullied by Alex and by a government that tells them what television programs to watch.

> Tonight was what they called a worldcast, meaning that the same
> programme was being viddied by everybody in the world that wanted to,
> that being mostly middle-aged middle-class lewdies. (17)

As Alex is forced to go to school and to answer to the government (both in the form of truant officers and the police), he reacts by being the sole voice of control within his band until his friends purposefully set him up at the robbery of the old woman. This betrayal is what sends him into the penal system and down the path he is asked/forced to take.

The reader is not the only one undermined by Burgess' language in <u>A Clockwork Orange</u>. Nadsat, as stated before, is the language of the youth. M. Keith Booker in <u>Dystopian Literature: A Theory and Research Guide</u> (1994) argues that

Nadsat serves to isolate the speakers while simultaneously insulating the Nadsats from mainstream society. Booker finds the Nadsats alienated youth, at the same time marginalizing them as other while they victimize the mainstream. (97) Booker does not seem to see that to speak Nadsat is a form of survival. To not speak Nadsat is to be at the mercy of those who do. In the novel, it is the older and those who are not Nadsats who are attacked, raped, robbed, and otherwise victimized by Alex and his gang. Age is not a deciding factor as much as whether one is in Alex's world or not. Only droogs of Alex are seemingly safe, but as the knife fights with Pete and Dim show us, the reality is that no one is safe from Alex. As a matter of fact, Alex's suspicions are raised by Georgie's use of the phrase "big big big money." "And what will you do," I said, "with the big big big deng or money as you so highfaluting call it?" (52). For Alex the use of the mainstream word "money" is a challenge to both his authority and the Nadsat life. The word money marks Georgie as different from Alex, a threat that must be dealt with.

It is the lack of power to influence the mainstream that Booker sees as the isolating factor for the Nadsats. "Using their own language may increase the marginalization of the Nadsats to the society in which they live but it does not make them entirely dependent upon that society" (97). Alex, however, is mercurial. He can speak Nadsat with expertise as well as the language of the mainstream society. What Booker doesn't discuss is how Alex's mainstream speak, the "gentlemen's goloss" is highly affected and does not at all disguise him. When speaking to his truancy officer, P. R. Deltoid he explains his absence from school: "'A rather intolerable pain in the head, brother, sir,' I said in my gentlemen's goloss. 'I think it should clear by this afternoon'" (37). Brother is a Nadsat term indicating alliance, much the way droog does. It is a small

slip, and yet it does point to Alex's overestimation of his ability to speak mainstream. While this does not undermine Alex, it does undermine other characters in the novel who are not familiar with Nadsat, i.e. the older establishment.

Goh questions the authenticity of Little Alex's situation and argues how Nadsat reflects the suspect authority structure: "Burgess's use of language in this novel makes a statement about the individual's struggle (with varying degrees of sincerity and effectiveness) for authenticity under dystopian conditions of social norms" (Goh, 264). This shows up in the way Little Alex is able to switch between Nadsat and conventional English while maintaining sarcasm and irony. The establishment pretends to understand Alex, but when it comes down to punishing Alex, their ignorance of Nadsat is made clear. Had they truly understood Nadsat and its position in Alex's culture, they would have been more effective at rehabilitating him.

When he comes through the rehabilitation he is unable to defend himself, to enjoy his favorite music, Beethoven, to think about sex or violence, and yet his Nadsat vocabulary remains. There is a direct link between his violent tendencies and his use of Nadsat. Alex's violent pre-disposition is not cured or removed so much as it is repressed by an even more violent physical reaction when confronted with violence. The rehabilitation fails to do render Alex harmless. Alex reverts to his former self and eventually makes the conscious choice to change his ways.

Throughout A Clockwork Orange, the reader witness incredible acts of violence perpetrated by Alex and on Alex by other characters within the novel. Perhaps this is why Alex's grand realization at the end of the novel is all the more shocking, because it comes about not out of violence but out of reason. This is opposite Alice's experience in

Wonderland, where she carries herself with reason and logic throughout only to have to resort to violence in order to escape. Disney takes the violence even further and has the cards, the King, the Queen of Hearts, and the White Rabbit chase her through a maze threatening "Off with her head!" all the while. Instead of merely waking up on the riverbank, as in Carroll's ending, Disney forces Alice to relive her time in the Pool of Tears and to confront the locked door that resulted in her drinking the shrinking potion at the beginning of her adventure. So where Burgess' story ends with Alex pondering the direction of his life and deciding, rather mildly, that it's time to grow up, Alice is thrust into an orgy of violence and fear before she wakes up. Alex and Alice are two sides to the same coin, reason and violence, but both are pushed to very different ends.

A Clockwork Orange sets the tone for the cyberpunk that was to burst onto the science fiction scene in the mid-1980's with the 1983 publication of William Gibson's Neuromancer. Burgess not only created a prototype youth culture that was to be repeated and elaborated in the writings of Gibson, Cadigan, Noon, and Stephenson but he also used language specifically to establish that youth culture as something entirely separate from the mainstream "adult" culture that surrounded the youth. Through the creation of Nadsat Burgess was able to cultivate an air of danger in his sinister, charismatic, and woefully young (14 at the start of the novel) Little Alex. Nadsat defined the boundaries of not only the young and the old, but also of the lawful and the lawless, the complacent and the rebellious.

Burgess furthered the indirect violence and the importance of language in establishing social groups that Carroll started in the 19th century. As though reflecting the violence of cyberpunk's youth cultures, nonsense becomes more aggressive in its

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unwillingness to adhere to grammatical, syntactical, and lexical conventions. As

nonsense resists convention, it becomes more poetic, fractured, and in some ways,

shallow. Where before Carroll hid his violence in linguistic games of misdirection and

misinterpretation, cyberpunk pushes violence to the forefront as violence becomes

language.

Chapter Four: Dilating Doors and Estranged Readers

"There are very few 'ideas' in science fiction.
The resonance between an idea and a landscape is what it's all about."
--Samuel Delany

"Assembled word cyberspace from small and readily available components of
language. Neologic spasm: the primal act of pop poetics.
Preceded any concept whatever. Slick and hollow—awaiting received meanings.
All I did: folded words as taught. Now other words accrete in the instertices."
--William Gibson, *Academy Leader*

The previous chapters explored the linguistic paradigms that Lewis Carroll

experimented with, and this chapter will demonstrate how Carroll created a template of

cognitive estrangement that science fiction uses to this day.[45] This is not to suggest that

the Alice books are science fiction, but rather to argue that science fiction as a genre

shares some fundamental linguistic concerns with Carroll. This endeavor, of tying

science fiction to Carroll, is a large undertaking and this chapter reflects that.

First, I will analyze how science fiction uses language to set itself apart from

mainstream, realist, and other genre fiction. Next, I will define cyberpunk, its relation to

its parent genre, and how cyberpunk uses linguistic nonsense to reflect the fractured 20th-

century world it is situated in. Finally, I will examine cyberpunk authors who embody

cyberpunk's language play and aesthetic. These authors are Pat Cadigan and Neal

Stephenson, with some discussion of William Gibson as the founding figure of the genre.

In "Science fiction and the Novum" Darko Suvin argues that the "novum or

cognitive innovation is a totalizing phenomenon or relationship deviating from the

author's and implied reader's norm of reality" (64). Later Suvin discusses the experience

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[45] Suvin established that "cognitive estrangement" sets science fiction apart form other genres. All readers
of all genres experience estrangement to some extent, but, for Suvin, what sets science fiction apart is that
this estrangement is believed to be scientifically plausible, in other words cognitive.

of the reader as an oscillation between the reader's known world and the science fiction

reality which "displaces" the reader's reality by means of narrative mechanisms (71).

Those narrative mechanisms are constructed of words.

> In language meaning develops during the process of reading, step by step.
> A sentence is a string of words, a story is a string of sentences. Language
> reveals as it were from hand to mouth, and can if desired lure the reader
> into a trap. . . (van Leeuwen 62)

By reversing ground rules, the science fiction writer is able to harmonize or contrast his

created world against the real world and the story's characters (Delany, "Some" 49-50).[46]

Reversed ground rules are a key element of both science fiction works and the

Alice books because without them, there would be no way to create multiple frames. In

the Alice books, the most obvious reversed ground rule of reality is that everything in

Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land can speak. This reversal drives Alice's adventures.

If not for everything speaking, then there would be no challenges to Alice's social mores

and logic, since these challenges come from normally non-speaking (human languages, at

least) items such as flowers, eggs, cats, and rabbits. While there are other reversed

ground rules in the Alice books, such as Alice's size changes, the one that truly sets

Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land apart from real life is that all creatures can speak.

Worlds are created by the way a science fiction text is organized— writers create

worlds that are freely harmonized with, contrasted with, or played against not only the

story's character, but also the given world (Rabkin 146). The science fiction parallel

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[46]The first frame, the reader's frame, outside the book is created by science fiction's subjunctive language where the second frame, that of the world inside a science fiction text, is created by reversing at least one ground rule of the world outside the science fiction text. (Rabkin, "Science Fiction" 170). Science fiction texts have the distinction of serving as a multiple frame even before the text is opened for reading because it is understood that the world inside the text is already a parallel to the world outside the text. For example, in Robert Heinlein's The Moon is a Harsh Mistress, the reversed ground rule is that the Earth's moon is a former penal colony itching for autonomy. At one point the moon actually attacks the Earth using a giant catapult masterminded by a computer that exhibits human emotion.

world is usually plausible from the standpoint of modern scientific knowledge, but these worlds are inhabited by alien forms with their own customs and ways of life (Hillegas 276). This is the main component of the science fiction narrative style, that the science fiction narrative world is different from the real world and that against a backdrop of organized thinking, that difference must be apparent (Rabkin, "Fantastic" 119).

Science fiction writer Gwyneth Jones writes about language in "Kairos: The Enchanted Loom" (1997): "Language itself, I learned is a covering, an outer dress. It has hooks at the back: one can take it off" (2). While Jones is addressing what she sees as the ability to uncover what ideologies language is hiding, she is also aligning herself with science fiction writer and critic Samuel Delany who argues that the effects of both science fiction writing and Carroll's writing on the mind are actually closer to that of poetry than drama or realist fiction:[47]

> The vision (sense of wonder, if you will) that science fiction tries for seems to me very close to the vision of poetry, particularly as it concerned the nineteenth century Symbolists. No matter how disciplined its creation, to move into an 'unreal' world demands a brush with mysticism. ("About" 64)

Jones' metaphor of language as a dress highlights that aspect of poetry that Elizabeth Sewell comments on in The Field of Nonsense as something people fear won't hold up to criticism and that "undressing" a poem will somehow unravel it: "Poetry, for instance, does not collapse at the touch of logic, and there is no reason Nonsense should do so either" (5). Peeling back the layers of meaning will not destroy the text, rather it should help transport the reader to the world of the text. In other words, Delany's mysticism and reference to poetry have more to do with how science fiction's words affect the readers'

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[47] Several of Delany's works will be referenced in this chapter. They will be denoted by the first word in the title in the endnotes.

minds than with actual word use and textual structure. As Jean-Francois Lyotard says in

"The Postmodern (*from* The Postmodern Condition)" (1979):

> Finally, it must be clear that it is our business not to supply reality but to invent allusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented. And it is not to be expected that this task will effect the last reconciliation between language games. . .and that only the transcendental illusion. . .can hope to totalize them into a real unity (261).

Many science fiction scholars seem to agree with this premise. For example, Brooks

Landon in "The Culture of Science Fiction—The Rationalization of Genre" (1997)

claims that

> . . .it may be useful to think of science fiction as a language that must be learned as a mode of writing, as distinctive as poetry, complete with its reading protocols quite different from those used for reading other kinds of fiction. (7)

This sentiment is echoed by Delany in "Some Presumptuous Approaches to Science

Fiction" (1984) in which he calls science fiction a "fascinating language phenomenon"

with intricate differences that set it apart from traditional modes of literature (54).

Delany approaches this topic again in when he says "The conventions of poetry or

drama or mundane fiction –or science fiction—are in themselves separate languages"

(53). In "About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-five Words. . . " (1977)

Delany speaks of this phenomenon in another way:

> Around the meaning of any word is a certain margin in which to correct the image of the object we arrive at (in grammatical terms, to modify).
> I say: dog
> And an image jumps in your mind, but because I have not put it in a formal relation with anything else, you have no way to know whether the specific image in your mind has anything to do with what I want to communicate. (56)

Delany calls this process correcting, and correcting begins from the very first word in the

text, much the way van Leeuwen argues above. Each word builds, or corrects, the image

in the reader's mind as he or she follows the text. My dog is certainly going to look different than some else's dog, which is probably going to differ from the dog implied by Delany. Delany is demonstrating a principle of semiotics, that the link between sign and object is not concrete and allows for great creative input on the part of the reader.

Ferdinand de Saussure is often credited as the father of 20th-century semiotics. He argued that the bond between a signifier and the signified was arbitrary and determined by convention. If we continue with Delany's dog from above, we would say that Saussure argued that the signified, the mental concept of a dog, depends on what the written or spoken word "dog" brings to the mind of the hearer or reader. The reason that this is arbitrary is because in other languages, other sound sets ("perro" in Spanish or "hund" in German for example) still evoke the signified; "There is no natural reason why the signifier 'dog' should engender the signified" (Cobley and Jansz 13). Delany argues in "*Dichtung Und* Science Fiction" (1984) that the enrichment of language comes from "the release of new meanings in existing words and syntax. . ." (170). Delany further elaborates that "Science fiction *is in dialogue with the* present. . .It is one of dialogic, contestatory, agonistic, creativity" (176).

To illustrate both Saussure's and Delany's points it is necessary to turn to two science fiction critics who make very similar points about science fiction language. In Victorian Science Fiction in the UK (1983) Darko Suvin used the famous science fiction line "The door dilated" as a means of introducing the necessity for studying presuppositions contained within a text. For example, the sentence indicates that this is a world on which there are dwellings that require doors. So far this is no different than the real world. However, on the textual world the doors don't swing open and shut, they

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dilate. And in that one simple word "dilate," cognitive estrangement occurs. Nonsense

also makes an appearance at this point. Dilate is a perfectly acceptable word, but, in the

context of a door dilating, it strikes the reader as nonsense. Suvin's concern is not at the

level of the word but rather in the concepts that work to estrange the reader.

Samuel Delany does a similar close reading of the sentence fragment "monopole

magnet mining operations in the outer asteroid belt of Delta Cygni" in "Some

Presumptuous Approaches to Science Fiction." Delany breaks the fragment into smaller

units and dissects how the reader must approach such a sentence. The obvious contextual

clue is the phrase "outer asteroid belt," which clearly indicates a reality in which the

reader is no longer on Earth. Beginning with "monopole magnet," he demonstrates that

the very notion of a monopole magnet is contrary to current magnetic theory. This means

that this sentence is introducing the reader to a planet (or reality) where monopole

magnets have been discovered, which implies an entirely different world with entirely

different technologies. Delany does this to show how science fiction is a learned

language and, if the reader is unfamiliar with the language of science fiction, he or she

may easily misinterpret or completely miss the nuances of the text (54).[48]

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[48] In theory when a reader reads or hears a sign, he or she first recognizes the actual object depicted by the
sound set and then he or she goes on to interpret the cultural, social, and/or emotional meaning of the word.
In actuality, this process happens so quickly that very little analysis on the part of the reader/hearer occurs.
This is why Roland Barthes spent time analyzing the deeper social and cultural meanings of everyday
symbols in Mythologies (1972). In this work Barthes sets out to expose common cultural mythologies as
images, stories, and referents that are subtly coded so to not make the reader aware of the underlying
ideologies and messages contained in the myth. For example Barthes examines toys. His argument is that
the "toys *literally* prefigure the world of adult functions obviously cannot but prepare the child to accept
them all" (53) He then lists all the adult functions that toys introduce children to, such as the military, baby
dolls with a wide-range of bodily functions, and household toys that begin to form little girls into proper
women. But Barthes is quick to point out that these toys don't actually prepare the child, they only
fantasize adult functions.

For Barthes such myths are semiological systems, and, for Barthes semiology is a science of
forms. "This is the case with mythology; it is a part both of semiology inasmuch as it is a formal science,
and of ideology inasmuch as it is an historical science: It studies ideas-in-form" (112). Barthes ultimately
dismisses mythology as readerly texts which keep the reader at arm's length and hide cultural codes and

Carroll and science fiction set themselves apart from other literary genres at a linguistic level, a level that has free play as a component. Not only are there endless exchanges of words, but also of meaning. These ambiguities in language form what Jacques Derrida refers to as free play:

> The meaning—and reference—is a function of the difference, of the distance or the "spacing" between the traces, what is called, in a perfectly serious way, the "play" of differences or traces. (Caputo 100)

The traces Jacques Derrida refers to are the repeatable marks of code that build up to create meaning. These traces contain spaces within which meaning can be made or altered. In other words, the meaning of a word is not static, but changes relative to the meaning of the words around it (Caputo 100). The present meaning of a word or a text has come from a prior configuration of meaning and will dissolve into a future configuration of meaning (Powell 29). This is free play, a continual de-centering and reconfiguring of meaning. Derrida finds free play in all texts, regardless of genre; but combine free play with Delany's subjunctive and one sees that science fiction allows for a greater freedom of word choice and this freedom helps to set science fiction apart from other literary modes.

Richard E. Palmer discusses in Hermeneutics (1969), "Rather, world and language both are transpersonal matters, and language is made to fit the world, and therefore it is ordered to the world rather than to our subjectivity. In this sense (but not in the scientific sense) language is objective. . ." (205). When language is made to fit our subjectivity (á la Humpty Dumpty in Through the Looking-Glass) rather than the world

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ideologies (132-33). Science fiction strives to not become mythologized because it demands its readers not passively accept the words on the page. Cognitive estrangement demands critical reading on the part of the audience.

(conventional language), this is when Derrida's "free play" explodes with possibility. The margins of words are made even more porous than before, as the subjectivity of the individual determines the meaning of words.[49] This is pure nonsense.

Science fiction, in other words, has its own subjunctive level. Subjunctive is Delany's term, and he defines it in "About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-Five Words" as ". . . the tension on the thread of meaning that runs between word and object" (61). Delany is referring to the fact that, when a word is uttered, each reader or listener immediately conjures up his or her own image to go with the word. There is tension because the speaker/writer may mean one thing, but the listener/reader has control over what he or she sees in the mind; thus, there is an astounding amount of play in the context of the narrative. The subjunctive allows the reader to color a blank canvas, but the text determines the size of that canvas. Science fiction's subjunctivity limits the corrective process readers use as they move between words, but, at the same time, it gives greater freedom of word choice ("About" 62). This freedom of word choice is what may

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[49] The religion of Scientology, founded by science fiction author L. Ron Hubbard is a prime example of a language that is defined by the subjectivity of the individual. Take for example the word "beingness," as defined on "The Official Scientology and Dianetics Glossary." It means "the assumption or choosing of a category of identity. Beingness is assumed by oneself or given to oneself or is attained. Examples of beingness would be one's own name, one's profession, one's physical characteristics, one's role in a game- each and all of these could be called one's beingness" (http://www.scientology.org/gloss.htm). The Oxford English Dictionary defines "beingness" as "The quality of existing, entity, actuality" (http://dictionary.oed.com). The difference is seemingly subtle yet actually quite profound. According to Hubbard's definition "beingness" is not simply a matter of existing, it is an identity that is chosen by an individual, given to an individual by another, or attained (presumably through the practices of Scientology) that can easily be changed or altered.

Another example is the word "sonic." Scientology defines sonic as, "the recall of something heard, so that it is heard again in the mind in full tone and strength" (http://www.scientology.org/gloss.htm).   The OED defines sonic as "employing or operated by sound waves; used esp. with reference to devices and techniques which make use of the reflected echo of a sound pulse" or "of or pertaining to sound or sound waves, esp. within the audible range." Sonic, according the OED, is an adjective defining the quality of something. Scientology considers sonic a verb, an action that an individual can take. The Scientology Glossary is full of everyday words whose meanings and grammatical definition have been changed in order to fit the vision of its founder, Hubbard. There are also numerous words that have been created by Hubbard, but in most cases these are simply verbs with –ness added ("doingness" or "isness"), reversing a word's meaning by adding mis- or un- ("misemotion" or "unmock"), and shortening a word ("ruds" for rudiments) (http://www.scientology.org/gloss.htm).

truly set science fiction apart from other literary modes because it creates its own language.

This new language of science fiction forces readers to think in new ways and to see in new ways by slowing the reader down, disorienting them, and pulling them into the text. As the reader is pulled in to the text, the tension between the reader and his or her expectations and values and the otherness of the science fiction novum is heightened (Suvin 64). Ultimately, the subjunctive nature of science fiction works gives greater freedom to create unreal worlds.[50]

In "The Necessity of Tomorrows" (1984) Delany argues that science fiction, unlike other genres of literature, is a tool to help the reader think about the present, a present that he says "is always changing, a present in which change itself assures there is always a range of options for actions . . . It presents alternative possible images of futures, and presents them in a way that allows you to question them as you read. . ." (34). Referring to Theodore Sturgeon, Delany concludes that science fiction encourages the reader to ask the *next* question.[51]

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[50] To Suvin's cognitive estrangement I want to add Samuel Delany's definition from "About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-Five Words. . ." of science fiction as being concerned with "have not happened" in all its manifestations:

> Science fiction is defined by have not happened, which includes events that might happen, will not happen, and also have not happened yet. Events that have not happened include past events which compose the parallel world. (62)

Using "have not happened" allows the writer to give the reader different perspectives on the contemporary world and of contemporary life.

[51] In an interview with Dave Duncan Sturgeon, when answering a question about his trademark (a Q with an arrow pointing to the right), he explains: It means "Ask the next question." Ask the next question, and the one that follows that, and the one that follows that. It's the symbol of everything humanity has ever created, and is the reason it has been created. This guy is sitting in a cave and he says, "Why can't man fly?" Well, that's the question. The answer may not help him, but the question now has been asked. The next question is what? How? And so all through the ages, people have been trying to find out the answer to that question. We've found the answer, and we do fly. This is true of every accomplishment, whether it's

For some, the next question is centered on the burgeoning cyber world and the

language that has developed surrounding cyber cultures. Larry McCaffery's famous "An

Interview with William Gibson," (1988) highlights some of the linguistic games that

Gibson was playing when he composed Neuromancer (1983). Part of what Gibson was

doing was incorporating slang from multiple cultures and subcultures. When asked about

specific terms such as "flatlining" and "virus program" Gibson responds with:

> They're poetry! "Flatlining," for example, is ambulance driver slang for
> "death." I heard it in a bar maybe twenty years ago and it stuck with me[.
> . .]I use a lot of phrases that seem exotic to everyone but the people who
> use them. (269-70)

Gibson's explanations of his word origins on one level seem pedestrian—words he's

picked up just by listening. On another level, Gibson reveals an aspect of cyberpunk that

appeals to so many readers—its heterogeneity. Bryan McHale writes of Gibson in

"POSTcyberMODERNpunkISM" (1991):

> Gibson's fiction functions at every level, even down to the 'micro'
> structures of phrases and neologisms, on the principle of incongruous
> juxtaposition—juxtapositions of American culture with Japanese culture,
> of high technology with the subcultures of the 'street' and the underworld,
> and so on." (309-310)

Notice how McHale refers to Gibson's fiction as "incongruous juxtaposition." This can

be seen as an updated version of nonsense. Rather than making up words or altering the

semantics of a given word, Gibson and cyberpunk engage in nonsense by mixing up the

reader's expected contexts for a given word. Darko Suvin, in "On Gibson and

Cyberpunk SF" (1989), finds that the linguistic accomplishments of Gibson are signs of a

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technology or literature, poetry, political systems or anything else. That is it. Ask the next question. And
the one after that" (Duncan 1).

new human relationships developed through new vocabulary (359). Despite its gritty and

dark origins, Suvin argues that in Gibson's cyberpunk:

> An abstract logic and cultural ecstasy is hidden beneath this hard-boiled
> technical vocabulary, a yearning to get out of the dinginess and filth of
> everyday life that can, in Gibson's most wooly-minded, easily branch off
> into heterodox religion. (355)

The opening line of Neuromancer is perhaps the most quoted line in all of cyberpunk

fiction: "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel" (1).

Using Suvin and Delany's technique of analysis to break down the sentence we see that

we are in a new world. This line creates the tone of the novel, while simultaneously

putting the reader on edge. Immediately the word "port" is called into question. Are we

at a sea port, a space port, or something entirely new? Everyone has seen a dead

television channel, but how and when and where would the sky look like that? The

words in Gibson's opening are perfectly acceptable English but the reader is disoriented

by the hidden meanings and foreign context. Again, it is the heterogeneity of Gibson's

fiction that appeals to so many and this aspect of cyberpunk is one that continues today.

The heteroglossic aspect of cyberpunk is one that may set it apart from

mainstream science fiction, but it is by no means a new concept. Mikhail Bakhtin also

points to the multiple meanings hidden within words, but, for him, it is a multiplicity of

voices, languages, cultural ideas, and intentions that dictate meaning. Bakhtin's concern

with language is that of dialogue. In a dialogue there is a speaker, a respondent, and the

relation that exists between the two ("Bakhtin" 1). From dialogue comes heteroglossia or

"the collection of all the forms of social speech, or rhetorical modes, that people use in

the course of their daily lives" ("Bakhtin" 2). Heteroglossia is the complex mixing of

language and worldviews, the meaning of which lies at a point between speaker and

listener or writer and reader. Heteroglossia, through its variety of modes of speaking, including vocabulary and strategy, pushes language toward multiplicity. This multiplicity can become carnivalesque, another of Bakhtin's terms.

Carnivalesque, when applied to language, is best understood as language liberated "from norms of etiquette and decency" (Rabelais 151). Or, to put it another way, carnivalesque language is endowed with ". . . a general tone of laughter, this carnivalesque language is an expression of freedom from official norms and as such stands in binary opposition to the authority of church and state" (Zappen 3). The carnivalesque and heteroglossia demonstrate that language is always changing. For example, the words I'm writing now are not solely my own but are inhabited with my intent and after writing these words, they will be populated by another's intentions, and so on (Zappen 2).

The carnivalesque, Bakhtin's term, is both a linguistic and a social phenomenon. As a social phenomenon, it is a device to explore societal conditions, reverse ground rules, and establish multiple frames. Bakhtin defines the carnivalesque as:

> . . .a sociolinguistic fun fair where, as in the medieval festival of Carnival, rulers and ruled mixed on equal terms in a parodic route devoted to ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities. . . (quoted in Richter 725)

Rather than a fun fair, in science fiction and Carroll's books, the carnivalesque manifests itself as odd and bizarre worlds and customs. In return the unfamiliar create "feelings of insecurity in the face of both nature and social order" for their characters (Pennington 73). Science fiction uses the carnivalesque to inspire change. Wendy E. Erisman in "Inverting the Ideal World: Carnival and the Carnivalesque in Contemporary Science fiction" (1995) explains:

By symbolically destroying and then rebuilding society, carnival both subverts and affirms the values of the community, providing a moment of contradiction within which change is imaginable. (2)

A key component of a community is language, and the manipulation of language is one of the most dynamic ways to create change or establish boundaries between insiders and outsiders. "It is up to us, as social animals, to decide where to draw the lines; and the chances are that our choices will be governed by social and political considerations rather than linguistic ones" (Leith 2). But, because those social relations are not stable, the meanings of words are in flux, creating a game that is difficult enough for those born into the discourse, but seemingly impossible for an outsider to participate in the discourse.

Carroll demonstrates the carnivalesque multiple times throughout his Alice books, but it is in the scene with Red Queen in Through the Looking-Glass that the reader really sees the carnivalesque's ability to distort social conventions. Upon meeting the Queen, Alice is immediately subjected to the whims of the monarch. The second thing the Queen says to Alice is: "Look up, speak nicely, and don't twiddle your fingers all the time" (161). When Alice remarks that she is looking to find her way to the next square, the Queen points out that "all ways belong to *me*—" (161). The absurdity of this statement mirrors the arrogance of the Red Queen. It is impossible for her to possess all ways, after all a way isn't an object to be owned, but that doesn't stop her from proclaiming that Alice is incorrect in trying to find her own way. Throughout their conversation, the Queen demands that Alice curtsey while thinking, open her mouth wider, to always say "Your Majesty," and use French when English fails her. When Alice does try to follow the rules, she is met by the Queen's arrogance again:

"I only wanted to see what the garden was like, Your Majesty—"

"That's right," said the Queen, patting her on the head, which Alice didn't like at all: "though, when you say 'garden'—*I've* seen gardens, compared with which this would be a wilderness."

Alice didn't dare to argue the point, but went on: "—and I thought I'd try and find my way to the top of that hill—"

"When you say 'hill,'" the Queen interrupted, "I could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd call that a valley."

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

The Red Queen shook her head. "You may call it 'nonsense' if you like," she said, "but *I've* heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary." (161-2)

In the above exchange, Carroll is mocking not only tradition and etiquette, but he's also mocking the notion that monarchs are somehow the parental figures of the general population. The Queen's egocentric remarks reveal her desire to be seen as worldly, knowledgeable, and more qualified than Alice to be a queen. While this is not the bawdy carnivalesque carrying on that Bakhtin discusses, it is still a subversion of social order through language. Alice's responses to the Queen reveal the absurdity and lack of knowledge that the Queen possesses while showing that Alice, a commoner and a mere child, is the more sensible of the two.

Cyberpunk, with its emphasis on youth culture and eschewing convention, best demonstrates Carroll's linguistic manipulations. This genre is most often defined in terms of ideology and technological fetishizing rather than in ways that concretely define the genre.[52] Some basic facts about cyberpunk are that it is a sub-genre of sf that developed in the 1980's. William Gibson's Neuromancer (1984) is considered the

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[52] On top of the usual gender, class, and race issues, cyberpunk also broaches issues regarding our increasing reliance on technology, the blurring of the line between psychology and technology, society's need for quick fixes which often take the form of technological physical enhancements, the uncharted and ungoverned spaces of the internet, and the battle between science/technology and religion.

flagship novel of the genre, even though the term was coined by Bruce Bethke's short story "Cyberpunk" a year before Gibson's novel was published.

From its inception, cyberpunk has been a genre of contention rejected by the vanguard of the science fiction community as an abandonment of the science fiction story in favor of embracing a noir-styled narrative "clearly not directed towards the explicating or illuminating the revolutions in the routines of individual and corporate life that were transforming the daylight hours first of the industrialized world, and soon afterwards the world entire" (Clute 67). Rather than attempting to harness and tame the information explosion of the 1980's, cyberpunk allowed the explosion to run wild into a future where the fragmentation of day-to-day life is so exaggerated as to seem devoid of a center. While cyberpunk is aesthetically different from mainstream or "hard" science fiction, it is clearly an off-shoot of the larger genre as Kathryn Cramer argues in "Hard Science Fiction" (2003):

> In the US, 'radical hard SF' was an early name for the movement later christened 'cyberpunk'. . .characterized by a particular attitude, specialized literary furniture, and a fetish for new technology. . .(194)

Cyberpunk also faced contention from within its own community. Gibson often denied the label of cyberpunk and many other authors ducked the label entirely. Bruce Sterling attempted to present a unified cyberpunk vision (Gene Wolfe calls it manifesto-like) in the anthology Mirrorshades (1986). By the advent of the 1990's, however, most of the high profile cyberpunk authors had moved away from cyberpunk (Gibson, Pat Cadigan, and Greg Bear for example).

Frederic Jameson writes the following of cyberpunk in Archaeologies of the Future (2006):

> . . .while so-called cyberpunk, for all its energies and qualities, can historically be interpreted as SF's doomed attempt at a counteroffensive, and a final effort to reconquer a readership alienated by the difficulties of contemporary science, increasingly hostile ideologically to the radicalism of more social SF (now generationally distanced by the youth culture), and frustrated by the diminishing production of new yet formulaic easy reading in the SF area. (68)

Jameson is addressing the recent surge in the numbers of readers who are turning to works of fantasy and away from science fiction because most science fiction has become, in Jameson's words, "unreadable," due to dense hard science driven narratives. Veronica Hollinger agrees with Jameson that mainstream science fiction is suffering from a general malaise in its narrow narrative devices. She posits this opinion in "Cybernetics Deconstructions: Cyberpunk and Postmodernism" (1991):

> Genre SF thrives within an epistemology that privileges the logic of cause-and-effect narrative development and it usually demonstrates a rather optimistic belief in the progress of human knowledge. . .genre SF can claim the realist novel as its closes narrative relative; both developed in an atmosphere on nineteenth-century scientific positivism and both rely to a great extent on the mimetic transparence as a 'window' through which to provide views of a relatively uncomplicated human reality. (204)

Hollinger continues to argue that, even though mainstream science fiction "problematizes the oppositions between the natural and artificial, the human and the machine, it generally sustains them in such a way that the human remains securely ensconced in its privileged place at the center of things" (204-5). Other critics are not as pessimistic in their assessment of cyberpunk's position in the canon of science fiction.

Thomas Foster argues in The Souls of Cyberfolk (2005) that cyberpunk's success is demonstrated in its ability to cross genres, mediums of expression, and cultures while simultaneously recombining already-existing tropes in science fiction (xvi). And, despite Jameson's bleak tone in the quotation above, he does not entirely dismissing cyberpunk as a legitimate heir to the tarnished throne of science fiction:

. . .cyberpunk constitutes a kind of laboratory experiment in which the geographical-cultural light spectrum and band-widths of the new system are registered. It is a literature of the new stereotypes thrown up by a system in full expansion, which, like the explosion of a nova, sends out a variety of uncharted signals and signs of new communities and new and artificially differentiated *ethnies*. (385)

Cyberpunk is used as a term that incorporates not only the literature but a lifestyle and even entire subculture (Bell, 24).[53] This subculture is often global, eschewing the geopolitical boundaries that the "real world" is comfortable existing within. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay explains in "Cyberpunk and Neuromanticism" (1991):

Expansive SF was based on historical analogies of colonialism and social Darwinism, the power struggles of the old against the new, the ancient against the scientific. . .Implosive science fiction finds the scene of SF problematic not in imperial adventures among the stars, but in the body-physical/body-social and a drastic ambivalence about the body's traditional—and terrifyingly uncertain—integrity. (188)

Hollinger writes in "Apocalypse Coma" (2002), that the terrifying uncertainty Csicsery-Ronay is describing was made cool by cyberpunk and the way cyberpunk embraced apocalyptic political, economic, and environmental collapses. This acceptance

. . .not only challenged the deep-seated apocalyptic tendencies of genre sf as a whole but, as the official end of the millennium approached, served as a continuing site of resistance to the growing tide of eschatological sentiment in both genre fiction and mainstream cultural analysis. (165)

Cyberpunk was beginning to break away from conventional millennial paranoia by dissolving the boundaries surrounding outdated concepts of nation, identity, and the

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[53] David Bell, in <u>An Introduction to Cybercultures</u> (2001), asserts that cyberspace evolved in large part due to the literature that cyberpunk writers were generating. With the advent of such cyber features as Virtual Reality Markup Language, which enables "navigable, 3-D hyper-linked spaces to be created in cyberspace," Bell concludes "These kinds of developments might, therefore, be seen to be moving us ever closer to the cyberspace imagined in cyberspace." (15)

Bell defines cyberpunk as: "The term 'cyberpunk' has—as we can see in the preceding paragraph come—come to refer not only to a genre of fiction, but also to the characters depicted in the work, and subsequently as a term to describe assorted subcultural formations clustering around cyberculture." (24)

physical body.[54] In another essay titled "Dis-Imagined Communities" (2002) Csicsery-Ronay explains that affiliation with a specific nation comes in large part from the language that one is born into (219). Cyberpunk seeks to sever these ties between nation and individual, body and mind, reality and virtual reality through linguistic exploitation that nearly defies substance, meaning, or traditional narratives.

Cyberpunk relies on a linguistic proliferation that, in the words of George Slusser in "Literary MTV" (1991), creates a narrative that is "a matrix of images that is more glitterspace, images no longer capable of connecting to form the figurative space of mythos or story" (334) Veronica Hollinger puts it more bluntly in "Cybernetic Deconstructions:"

> I find it significant that the 'average' cyberpunk landscape tends to be choked with the debris of both language and objects; as a sign-system, it is overdetermined by a proliferation of surface detail which emphasizes the 'outside' over the 'inside.' (212)

Cyberpunk focuses on the superficial in order to question the depth of everything around us, like Carroll's creatures who use language on a strictly superficial level in order to show the lack of consistency in language.

Not everyone accepts cyberpunk's linguistic prowess at face value. Darko Suvin asks in "On Gibson and Cyberpunk SF": "Is cyberpunk the diagnostician of or the parasite of a disease?" (364). Suvin is questioning whether the linguistic acrobatics of

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[54] In cyberpunk the fractured geo-political boundaries are exploited in ways that make the US seem irrelevant, as in Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash in which we learn that the US is only good at computer programming and pizza delivery. "In cyberpunk, especially, the concept of a nation, with its implication of some historical heterogeneity through time, has been made obsolete by the dramatic heterogeneity of human, primarily urban, society." (225) Csisery-Ronay goes on to elaborate in "Dis-Imagined Communities:" "In the world system dear to cyberpunk and technoir the powers of the state have been usurped by profit-driven corporations, while the functions of communal solidarity have been reduced to the level of weak local and professional groups—gangs, squatters, hackers, black-marketeers, indentured laborers, and so on." (225)

cyberpunk are truly an art form or merely a wallowing in the superficiality of popular culture. Whatever the answer, the fact that cyberpunk makes the reader ask questions about meaning, representation, and existence is what Timothy Leary embraces in "The Individual as Reality Pilot" that

> *Cyberpunk* is, admittedly, a risky term. Like all linguistic innovations, it must be used with a tolerant sense of high-tech humor. It's a stop gap, transitional meaning-grenade thrown over the language barricades to describe the resourceful, skillful individual who accesses and steers knowledge/communication technology towards his/her own private goals. (253)

The very concept of cyberpunk comes into question, as Leary argues that cyberpunk does not merely refer to a genre of literature or even a lifestyle, but that it encompasses all communication and communication tools such as linguistics, philosophy, semantics, and semiotics (258). Language and cyberpunk are inextricably tied to another much the way language and nonsense are inseparable.

Cyberpunk further marks itself as different from even mainstream science fiction through its language, as David Porush argues in "Frothing at the Synaptic Bath" (1991):

> Cyberpunk is a fascinating and new expression of an ancient heritage, *a consequence of the human nervous system itself; the impulse to invent a hyperreality and then live there is hardwired into our cognitive habits by the genetic code.* One early symptom of this inherited disease is language itself, the enduring human ability to re-present, to re-call, to lie, to abstract, to act As If: to say the thing which is not, to think in negatives, to summon absences, to have chicken on your plate and yearn for beef. (331)

It is this complexity perhaps that causes Delany to argue in "Science Fiction and 'Literature:' Or, the Conscience of the King" that science fiction and conventional literature must be thought of as entirely different texts, with different values, ways to respond, ways to make sense of the text, and two different ways of reading (87). While

Delany is not speaking about cyberpunk specifically, his observations apply to cyberpunk. As a matter of fact, we can take Delany's delineation and use it to further differentiate cyberpunk from mainstream science fiction.

Thomas Foster wants to position cyberpunk as a type of vernacular theory, a means of understanding, "questioning contexts that cyberpunk is able to combine proximity or immersion and critical distance and commentary. . .cyberpunk fiction can be read as a rescripting of key concepts within postmodern theory" (xix). As Foster argues, "One of the enduring legacies of cyberpunk fiction is its use of the term 'hardwiring' to represent forms of embodiment and cognition that occupy this third space, between natural and social or cultural determination" (23). Carroll used the dream state to represent the third space that exists between nature and society/culture and as a means of deconstructing the conventions of the waking world. Through his mockery of tradition (tea party, court proceedings, and coronations), Carroll set up the eventual move that cyberpunk takes from the alternate reality of dream to the alternate reality of the cyber world. The brain as computer is seen throughout cyberpunk, most notably in the works of Pat Cadigan.

It is nearly impossible to choose just one of Cadigan's novels on which to focus. More than any other cyberpunk author, Cadigan creates works that build on and feed into each other thematically. From her earliest novel Mindplayers (1987) to her most recent Dervish is Digital (2000), Cadigan explores the desire to escape the physical body, and, while her main characters rarely make the jump to purely digital lifestyles, they are always affected by another's decision to "leave the meat."

Cadigan, like Carroll in his Alice books, uses words familiar to the reader but changes the semantics behind the words. In Mindplayers, the reader is introduced to a completely new vocabulary that is centered on the concept of "mindplaying," the act of literally entering the mind of another and experiencing direct mind-to-mind contact. This interaction goes beyond mere mind reading or lurking in the memories of another. Mindplayers are professionals who specialize in going into others' minds for a fee. Cadigan's novel predates the internet, much like Neuromancer, but, unlike Gibson's world, Cadigan's characters don't use computers to access the virtual world. Access is through the eyes of the individual which has given rise to an industry focusing on "biogems," or prosthetic eyes. The mind and the machine merge in a realm that exists only inside one's head.

Mindplayers come in a variety of specialties such as dreamfeeders (who introduce dream elements into the mind and analyze the content of dreams), thrillseekers (who seek out thrills hidden in the mind), belljarrers (who can completely isolate one's mind for recuperative reasons), pathosfinders (who seek out the root of emotional hang-ups, creative blocks, etc), neurosis peddlers (put people in neurotic states, induce hallucinations), and reality affixers (who adjust an individual's perception of reality, usually after a traumatic event). In Cadigan's world everything is for sale and nothing is permanent. People franchise personalities to live as rock stars, movie stars, royalty, gangsters, etc. Psychoses and neuroses can be found bootlegged on the street corner and if one has a bad experience, one can go to have his or her mind dry-cleaned. Those who can't afford a mindplayer can buy a street version called a mindcap that causes neural hallucinations. A typical passage from Cadigan reads:

> "I don't mindplay." A pair of onionheads linked together by a three-food chain gave us a wide berth, ignoring us as hard as they could. Onionhead marriage is about as wired as you can get without drugs. (11)

Using the technique of Suvin and Delany, we are faced with a scenario similar to that of Gibson's opening sentence. The words are familiar English, even those that are blends like "mindplay" and "onionheads." Nothing is remarkably nonsensical about the passage until we look closer. What is mindplay? What are onionheads? Why are they chained together? What does marriage mean in this world? Cadigan writes with a fluidity that reflects the worlds she creates. Identities, personalities, even minds themselves are easily altered, exchanged, and abandoned for the promise of virtual lives.

In Mindplayers, we follow Deadpan Allie, a pathosfinder who chooses her career when faced with jail time. Her career path and nickname reflect what makes her successful: she rarely reveals any emotions of her own and yet has a knack for getting others to admit theirs. Allie's most interesting client is the musician Jord Coor who is trying to move on with his life after he and his musical partner/lover Revien Lam have gone their separate ways. It turns out the two men can't live without one another and through Allie, they literally join two minds into one.

> A million images spewed from the bridge, scenes from their respective pasts, now juxtaposed, double exposures. I pulled back even further. There was just one figure on the bridge now; it kept shimmering and changing. Sometimes it was all Coor, then all Lam, then various mixtures of the two. Lam dominant, Coor dominant, both equal. Shimmer. Melt. Change. (265)

After her experience with Lam and Coor, Allie has to have her reality affixed so that her mind doesn't become as fractured as those of the people she's hired to help. By using familiar words in the unfamiliar context of the psyche, Cadigan subtly slows the reader down with her nonsense.

In terms of language, Cadigan's <u>Tea From an Empty Cup</u> (1998) feels like a blend of Gibson and Burgess, with its detective story pacing and mystery centered on a virtual serial killer whose victims die in reality. Infused with Japanese words, the novel presents a virtual world where real life semantics seem not to apply. The virtual world is referred to as Post-Apocalyptic Noo Yawk Sitty. This phrase, when glanced at, seems like nonsense until one sounds out the words and then it becomes quite clear what city is at the center of the virtual world. Like the dream world of <u>Mindplayers</u>, <u>Tea</u>'s virtual world incorporates a fluidity that undermines all convention.

> "You're a walking ad."
>
> "*Icon*," the Schick insisted. He twirled the knife one-handed, passing it through his fingers with a dexterity that was no doubt part of the package. If the right advertiser got ahold of you, you could do pretty well in AR. Although they only approached you if you were already pretty good anyway. *Potentiate*. She remembered that from an old course on jargon. Got to be a good *potentiator*. "Someday you could check in here and find the Nick the Schick icon is the one everyone wants for their cat. (115)

Cadigan doesn't draw merely from Gibson in this work, however. Nick the Schick's mention of the cat in the passage above illustrates that Carroll is at work here, too. The entity that leads people through the virtual world is called the Icon Cat. And, like Carroll's disappearing feline in <u>Wonderland</u>, this virtual cat has a hard time keeping its form:

> "Icon cat?" she asked.
>
> The cat jumped into her arms and became the book. (154)

Cadigan's lead character, Konstantin experiences nonsense conversations with individuals who, unlike Carroll's creatures, don't want their words to mean anything at all.

> "All I want to do is find this Body Sativa and ask her some questions."

> "What *kinda* questions?" the night manager asked suspiciously.

> Now Konstantin felt as if she had fallen through a rabbit hole in time that had sent her back to the beginning of the situation, which she would have to explain all over again. (91)

And later in the novel when another character goes sleuthing for answers regarding her friend's death, we get a reference to the proverbial looking-glass:

> "Tom Iguchi is missing and presumed dead. In here."

> "But not in *here*, not through the old looking-glass." The image gestured behind him. "And for that matter, not where you are, either. *You're* Tom now." (123)

This passage, more than any other, also echoes the loss of identity that Alice experienced through the Alice books, particularly in the chapters where her name was challenged by the bird, the flowers, and Humpty Dumpty.

One other scene from Carroll that is appropriate in this discussion of fluid identity is Alice's encounter with the Gnat in Through the Looking-Glass. The two are discussing the names of insects:

> "But I can tell you the names of some of them.

> "Of course they answer to their names?" the Gnat remarked carelessly.

> "I never knew them to do it."

> "What's the use of their having names," the Gnat said, "if they wo'n't answer to them?" (173)

This passage seems like familiar Carrollean ground, as it once again highlights that Alice's expectations of what a name means differ greatly from that of the world of Looking-Glass Land. Just the very fact that the Gnat is capitalized indicates that this is not just any gnat, but the Gnat, a very specific name for only this particular gnat. The

implication is that, if Alice were to meet any other gnat, it would also be named the Gnat, thus complicating Alice's conception of the previous Gnat. Luckily for her, Alice never meets a second gnat.

As their conversation continues, the Gnat asks Alice if she would like to lose her name. Alice responds that she would most definitely like to keep her name. The Gnat muses:

> "And yet I don't know," the Gnat went on in a careless tone: "only think how convenient it would be if you could manage to go home without it! For instance, if the governess wanted to call you to your lessons, she would call out, 'Come here---,' and there she would have to leave off, because there wouldn't be any name for her to call, and of course you wouldn't have to go, you know."
>
> "That would never do, I'm sure," said Alice: "the governess would never think of excusing me lessons for that. If she couldn't remember my name, she'd call me 'Miss,' as the servants do."
>
> "Well, if she said 'Miss,' and didn't say anything more," the Gnat remarked, "of course you'd miss your lessons. That's a joke." (175-76)

Alice has missed the point of the Gnat's hypothetical situation. The Gnat is not speaking about someone forgetting Alice's name, it is discussing the possibility of Alice altogether losing her proper name, and by extension, her identity. If she were no longer identified as Alice, then she would no longer be responsible for her lessons. Those lessons would presumably be the responsibility of someone else, someone else who has Alice's name and identity. Alice's cluelessness is indicated by the Gnat's punning on the words "Miss" and "miss." The capitalizing of the proper noun Alice is using to connote any female means nothing to the Gnat, whose capitalization signifies nothing more than that this is the gnat that Alice is speaking to at this time. Carroll has exposed identity as something fluid and even transferrable from individual to individual.

Individuality constantly comes into question in cyberpunk works as the world becomes more digital, more virtual, and increasingly fractured. In her 1986 short story "Pretty Boy Crossover" Cadigan first broaches the fragility of the identity, the porous quality of names, and the desire to leave the body. Her protagonist, a 16-year-old Pretty Boy, is offered the chance to "cross over" and become completely digital:

> "You don't have to die any more," Bobby says silkily,. Music bounces under his words. "It's beautiful in here. The dreams can be as real as you want them to be. And if you want to be, you can be with me." (132)

By virtue of his name, Pretty Boy, the tenuous hold that her main character has on his popularity and his identity is established. As long as he is young, he is pretty, and, as long as he is pretty, he is desirable. Crossing over gives the Pretty Boy the chance to never grow old, never die, and never go out of fashion. Ultimately Cadigan's Pretty Boy chooses a mundane life of growing old and eventually dying over the emptiness of a virtual life. He recognizes that, as a virtual entity, he will not be in control of his own "programming" and will be at the whim of those with the know-how to make him perform. This rejection of the purely digital for the physical is a common theme with Cadigan's main characters.

Synners (1991), the novel that won Cadigan major acclaim, contains several pivotal characters, so trying to define one as the "main" character is problematic. Synners evolved out of an earlier short story "Rock On" (1984). In this early incarnation "synner" is spelled the conventional "sinner," but the meaning is entirely different.

> "That's a take, righteously. We'll rush it into distribution. Where in *hell* did you find that sinner?"
> "Synthesizer," I muttered, already asleep. "The actual word, my boy, is synthesizer." (62)

The pun in the exchange above hinges on the word "sinner" and the question "Where in *hell,*" when asking where Gina has come from. Synners are people who have the unique ability to plug in to music and synthesize it through their mind. Gina, the central figure of "Rock On," has sockets in her head that are used to physically hook her into the source of music. By Cadigan's 1991 version, sinners cannot only synthesize music but actually produce video. It is this ability to live entirely inside one's mind that causes Cadigan's character to leave the flesh behind.

Only one of the characters chooses to "leave the meat," and that is Visual Mark. Visual Mark has made a name for himself by producing high quality videos and unique music arrangements. When not producing, Mark spends his time wandering "toxed", or intoxicated, to the gills on any and every drug, synth, and alcohol known to man. Gina reappears from "Rock On" as Mark's lover/partner/caretaker. She knows that reality is becoming less and less attractive to Mark, but no one is quite prepared for the decision that Mark makes. He chooses to "stroke out" and enter the net as a digital blip. In this form he merges with another AI, Art Fish (in a move reminiscent of Gibson's two AI entities Wintermute and Rio), and chooses to exist solely within virtual reality.[55]

> So, out the one-way door then. What did he have to lose? Only the meat, and he already knew he didn't miss that. He didn't. He *wouldn't*. Even if the meat missed him.
>
> It sent out feeble signals, dumb animal semaphore: come back to the nest, little Sheba. (253)

Cadigan's books center on this desire to "go digital." That is to exist in a post-human world free of the flesh.

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[55] In <u>Neuromancer</u> the AI Wintermute brings together various humans who can assist it in its quest to merge with another AI program named Rio to become the unified force, Neuromancer.

Perhaps no single cyberpunk novel better reflects the dissolving of national identity, the cool apocalyptic approach, the linguistic maneuverings, and the pure joy of nonsense than Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash (1992). In Snow Crash, a nonsense language is used to attack the already repressed members of a society. Our two protagonists are themselves exercises in linguistic gaming. Throughout the novel we follow Hiro Protagonist and his sidekick, Y.T. Hiro is a half-Asian half-African American sword fighting computer hacker and Y.T. is his 15 year-old white female assistant. Snow Crash takes place in a futuristic America, but Stephenson's America is broken up into corporate franchises called Burbclaves, also known as Franchise-Organized Quasi-national Entities (FOQNE's), each of which has their own rules, customs, and security. They have names like Metazania, New South Africa, Narcolombia, and Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong (45). This is simple defamiliarization--renaming things familiar to readers in order to disorient them, but Stephenson goes even farther than just renaming parts of America, he defamiliarizes language itself.

Snow Crash is also the name of a meta-virus that attacks through both biological and linguistic means. People are infected in two ways: one is via the real world and the other is via the Metaverse, or internet.[56] Early in the novel, Stephenson explains the term snow crash:

> But 'snow crash' is computer lingo. It means a system crash—a bug—at such a fundamental level that it frags the part of the computer that controls the electron beam in the monitor, making it spray wildly across the screen, turning the perfect gridwork of pixels into a gyrating blizzard. (42)

[56] Actually, the Metaverse resembles today's Second Life. From the Second Life website: " Second Life is a 3-D virtual world entirely built and owned by its residents" (http://secondlife.com/whatis/). People own property, can sell wares, date, mingle, and even hold virtual on-line parties. Second Life has its own currency, the Linden Dollar which can be converted in real life to the US dollar. Any and all sims created in Second Life are owned exclusively by the designer. It is more than a game, it is a way of life, and it seems to have sprung directly from Stephenson's text.

Of course the explanation above foreshadows the parallels between the computer system

and the human brain. In the real world, people are infected through street drugs made

from the blood infected hackers, by ingesting the drug in drinks dispensed by various

churches, or by being exposed to religious mantras.

> The worshipper is not half a dozen steps into the place before she thuds down on her knees in the middle of the aisle and begins to speak in tongues: "ar ia ari ar isa ve na a mir ia i sa, ve na a mir ia a sar ia. . ." (196)

The second way Snow Crash spreads is by infecting computer hackers through the

Metaverse. An agent of the virus displays the virus on a scroll. The scroll seemingly just

contains program code, but intertwined with that data is the virus.

> Instead of Da5id, there is just a jittering cloud of bad digital karma. It's so bright and fast and meaningless that it hurts to look at. It flashes back and forth from color to black and white, and when it's in color, it rolls wildly around the color wheel. . .It is not so much an organized body as it is a centrifugal cloud of lines and polygons whose center cannot hold. . .(76)

Two things happen at this point, the first is that the hacker's computer crashes and the

screen displays the familiar 'snowy' pattern. The second is that the virus is directly

transferred to the victim's mind, breaking down their language into simple babbling

syllables. "Hi," she says. "ba ma zu na la amu pa go lu ne me a ba du" (180).

The biological spread of Snow Crash can be handled with modern medicine, but

the linguistic aspect proves to be a problem. The meta-virus causes all infected

individuals to speak the same language. It sounds like speaking in tongues. If left

unchecked, the virus creates "mental stagnation and general intellectual malaise" ("Snow

Crash," 2). The infected repeat the same morphemes over and over "fa la ba la," thus,

they become known as the "Falabala's." While Stephenson aligns the virus snow crash

with technology, it turns out that Snow Crash is not a new virus. It has roots deep in history and myth.

According to the novel, humans have two languages wired into their brains-- acquired language, or the spoken language, and a linguistic infrastructure that can be accessed at only the right time. It manifests itself as glossolalia. This second type of language bypasses acquired languages. Snow Crash bypasses the brain as it is absorbed through the eyes or ears, and it is able to tie directly into the infrastructure of the human brain and pass the higher modes of language:

> In terms of the computer metaphor, language begins as software, as information recorded and stored in our memories, and becomes hardware, a permanent part of our brain structure. (Foster 234)

The infected begins to babble in a new language without really knowing why, and only those also infected can understand the babble. This infected state allows for mind control:

> "You're a hacker. That means you have deep structures to worry about, too."
>
> "Deep structures?"
>
> "Neurolinguistic pathways in your brain. Remember the first time you learned binary code?"
>
> "Sure."
>
> "You were forming pathways in the brain. Deep structures. Your nerves grown new connections as you use them—the axons split and push their way between the dividing glial cells—your biosware self-modifies—the software becomes part of the hardware. So now you're vulnerable. . ." (126)

He who controls the virus can have direct access to the higher brain functions and. thereby, control the mind.

Carroll manipulates Alice in a similar fashion in <u>Through the Looking-Glass</u>. As has been discussed before, Alice's second adventure takes place on a chess board. Alice is not listed in the Dramatis Personae at the beginning of <u>Looking-Glass</u>, but the reader learns, after Alice's encounter with the Red Queen, that Alice is, indeed, a pawn. By making Alice a pawn, Carroll essentially removes Alice's ability to decide for herself when and where she will move. Early in chapter three, Alice jumps six little brooks as she makes her way to the train that is the only way to the next square. Martin Gardner explains Alice's movements as such:

> The six little brooks are the six horizontal lines separating Alice from the eighth square on which she is to be queened. Each time she crosses a line, the crossing is marked in the text by three rows of dots. Her first move, P-Q4, is a move of two squares, the only long "journey" permitted a pawn. Here she leaps into the third square, then the train carries her on to the fourth. (169)

Once Alice crosses the mirror in her house she abandons control over her actions. Her moves can only take place within the structure of the chess game, and her goal is predetermined for her. Instead of, as in <u>Wonderland</u>, trying to get home, Alice seeks to be queened. While Alice moves as though she is in control, the reality is that all her moves are decided for her by someone else. She moves as though she is in a dream (which, of course she is), in a semiconscious state, much the way the victims of Snow Crash live their lives.

Katherine Hayles argues, in "The Posthuman Body: Inscription and Incorporation in *Galatea 2.2* and *Snow Crash*" (1997), that the semiconscious state brought on by the Snow Crash infection in essence hijacks the higher levels of brain functioning, rendering then inoperable (10). Thus an infected person acts as an automaton, as one programmed to merely act and not to think. Drawing from David Porush, Hayle argues that the human

brain is somewhat similar to a computer hard drive, save for the main exception that the

human brain does not perceive the world, rather it creates the world through

nonrepresentational processes (12). The thrust of Hayles's article is that Stephenson's

Snow Crash suggests that "we are all potential posthumans because the posthuman lies

coiled around the brainstem and cannot be removed without killing the patient" (13). The

virus Snow Crash taps into this posthuman element that lies dormant in the human brain

and activates the posthuman element, causing it to override the human element. Hayles'

disappointment with Snow Crash's message is that rationalism and skepticism can

inoculate the mind against posthumanism, even as it simultaneously acknowledges that

we are always posthuman.   Hayles sees posthumanism not as a rejection of the human

element but as an acceptance of the limits of the state of being human.

Carroll plays with the state of being human in both of his Alice books. Not only

does he anthropomorphize creatures in order to mock human behavior, he undermines

Alice's sense of humanity on several occasions. The most notable occurrence of this

takes place in Through the Looking-Glass in the forest of No-Names. While in the forest

Alice meets a Fawn. Instead of being frightened by her, the Fawn strikes up a

conversation. The conversation goes absolutely nowhere, as the two participants can't

remember who they are. They decide to take the conversation outside of the forest, with

Alice holding the Fawn around its neck:

> . . .they came out into another open field, and here the Fawn gave a sudden
> bound into the air, and shook itself free from Alice's arm. "I'm a Fawn!"
> It cried out in a voice of delight. "And, dear me! you're a human child!"
> A sudden look of alarm came into its beautiful brown eyes, and in another
> moment it had darted away at full speed. (177-78)

In the above scene, Carroll is playing with language as a human construct. The Fawn

speaks a human language, which would normally identify it as human and able to

participate in human functions. However, this state can only exist within the boundaries

of a forest in which names, and meanings, don't exist. This highlights Carroll's ongoing

exploration of the power of naming. Presumably, there is no reason Alice and the Fawn

can't be friends, except for the fact that in the natural world, humans and fawns aren't

friends. By removing the names of "human" and "fawn" from their discussion, Carroll

nicely calls into question the very notion of what it is to be human.

At Alice's coronation dinner, Carroll plays a similar trick on Alice. It is Looking-

Glass Land protocol that the food be introduced to the diners; but, upon being introduced,

it is improper to actually eat the food. Alice, pushed to her limits by her journey, decides

to break this convention and to cut into the Pudding. The Pudding takes offense saying:

"I wonder how you'd like it, if I were to cut a slice out of *you*, you creature!" (263). The

scene is humorous because it is a talking food item that insults Alice, the human, by

calling her a "creature." Carroll undermines the notion of human through the endowment

of speech to an inanimate object, which is also supposed to be a food source for the

human. The natural order of things is reversed in this exchange. Gardner points out that

in Victorian times the phrase "to cut" meant to ignore someone (262). So is Alice

ignoring the Pudding's humanity by cutting it, which may be the pun that Carroll

intended, or is she merely hungry and her humanity overrides the talking Pudding's lack

of humanity?   The banquet scene ends in Alice throwing a temper tantrum that not only

sends the food flying, but also results in her grabbing the Red Queen and violently

shaking her into a kitten. Once again, Alice has resorted to the tactics of the denizens of

the dream world in order to escape, and, once again, escapes repercussions for her violent

actions by waking up from her dream. The ending of Looking-Glass is dissatisfying in

this respect, in much the same way some critics have found <u>Snow Crash</u>'s ending disappointing.

      A slightly different reading of <u>Snow Crash</u> by Sharon Stockton speaks to a similar disappointment with the novel's resolution. Stockton argues, in "'The Self Regained:' Cyberpunk's Retreat to the Imperium" (1995), that she is disappointed with the novel because she sees no marked difference between the supposed fluidity of Stephenson's Metaverse and the real corporate world it tries to avoid. ". . .information is 'free' only around the temporary chiseled out and ever stringently policed edges of cyberspace. 'Snow crash' is thus little more, in theory, than what it attacks" (595). However Stockton does agree <u>Snow Crash</u> seems to fear that which has always been a part of the human condition, a dash of chaos. For Stockton, the virus is aimed at wiping out that which has always existed alongside humanity: "Snow crash becomes the timeless and ultimately disabling face of 'babble' that is pictured as having haunted human history—and the human body itself. . ." (595).

      In keeping with the notion of technology raising awareness about the limits of the human condition, E.L. McCallum writes, in "Mapping the Real in Cyberfiction" (2000), that <u>Snow Crash</u>, like its predecessor <u>Neuromancer,</u> uses technology to open "ontological questions about the limits of being human, the definition of intelligence, and the hybrid promises of the machine-human interface" (353). Of course what is key to it, something that McCallum doesn't focus on, is that language is vital to this interface. Whether human to human or human to machine, the interface relies on some sort of communication, whether it be written, oral, or otherwise.

Speaking words without knowing why is also found in the Alice books. When Alice is speaking with the Caterpillar, it asks her to repeat "You Are Old Father William." She finds it difficult to remember the words. The real first verse of the poem is:

> "You are old, father William," the young man cried,
> "the few locks which are left you are grey;
> You are hale, father William, a hearty old man;
> Now tell me the reason, I pray."

What comes out of Alice's mouth is:

> "You are old, father William," the young man said,
> "And your hair has become very white;
> And yet you incessantly stand on your head
> Do you think, at your age, it is right?" (70).

The entire poem comes out altered like this. Alice is not sure why the words come out wrong because she once knew "You Are Old Father William." It is as though her brain has been reprogrammed without her knowledge, just like those struck down with the Snow Crash virus.

Alice, being a good Victorian girl, enters Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land programmed to act a certain way. She has certain social etiquette and practices that she carries into Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land with her. Her programming is in direct contrast with the programming of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land; from the moment she lands in either land, her programming begins to change to fit in more with the land she's in. This happens without her awareness, and she only realizes when directly asked to remember or recite something previously programmed in her. This is the way Snow Crash works, by insidiously reprogramming the brain of the infected.

Once infected a victim abandons his or her old life and begins congregating with other infected individuals. These loose knit groups gradually grow together into a cult-like organization:

> A couple of dozen people are here. None of them have been taking care of themselves at all. They are all wearing the ragged remains of what used to be pretty decent clothing. Half a dozen of them are kneeling on the pavement with their hands clenched tightly together, mumbling to unseen entities.

The goal of these groups is to eventually join The Raft. The Raft is a giant mass of humanity and boats all lashed together, trying to get the U.S. At its center is *Enterprise*, L. Bob Rife's own former massive ship. Originally sent on a humanitarian mission, the ship has picked up thousands of refugees and is heading to California. Rather than offering the refugees a better life, L. Bob Rife plans on stashing the Falabala's in his own compound and creating a mindless, perfect, workforce on the seas, away from government or corporate legislation. Thomas Foster adds:

> . . .the novel's theory of how language and culture transform and institutionalize themselves as biology is *not* absolutely fixed and unchanging. The novel displays considerable anxiety, if not outright panic, over the interpretation of these deep structures as a threat to human autonomy. (235)

Two programmers, Hiro and Juanita, have figured out how to stop the spread of Snow Crash. By using an ancient language called "me" that was used to transmit simple knowledge, such as how to make bread, they can reprogram the infected. If those who are affected by Snow Crash are subjected to the me, the me will reprogram their infrastructure and release them from the meta-virus. This is, in essence, repeating the Tower of Babel myth.[57] Mary-Luane Ryan argues, in "Stacks, Frames and Boundaries,

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[57] Another science fiction text that plays on the myth of the Tower of Babel is Samuel Delany's <u>Babel-17</u>. At the heart of this novel is an escalating military situation brought on by two races complete inability to

Narrative as Computer Language" (1990), that "In a computer language, the point of calling a subprogram is to modify the semantic environment of the main program" (890). This is precisely the nature of Snow Crash. Snow Crash only affects one parameter, that of the victim's language center. But, because the language center is a high functioning level of the program, Snow Crash has a cascading effect on the victim's entire life.

Snow Crash demonstrates all of the crucial aspects of cyberpunk. National identity is eroded into capitalistic franchised identity, drugs are rampant, technology is king, and religion is emptied of any and all significance. Most importantly, Snow Crash reveals the extent to which nonsense is a part of cyberpunk. Stephenson through mythology and computer science creates a nonsense language that exposes just how vulnerable the human mind is to the languages that surround it. Individuals are controlled through a language that is inherent in the human mind, but must be triggered either through drug use or through a computer virus. The newly surfaced language serves to establish different social communities, those who are infected and those who are not. Hiro, YT, and Juanita must infiltrate the infected society in order to understand and, ultimately, reverse the effects of Snow Crash. YT is exposed to the virus and temporarily falls under its control until her individuality reasserts itself. Juanita disfigures herself by placing a chip in her skull which keeps her from fully falling under the language's grasp. And finally, Hiro, goes the more conventional route by violently inserting himself into the melee in order to expose the insidious plans of L. Bob Rife.

communicate. A poet, Rydra Wong, is brought in by the military to crack Babel-17, the language of a seemingly hostile race. What Rydra learns, by both studying the language and through interactions with a man named Butcher, is that Babel-17 isn't merely a language; it's an entire way of thinking. When one is thinking in Babel-17, they lose control of their actions and memories. Babel-17 is a military invention, a means of creating the perfect killer by removing the concept of individuation. The killer does not seem himself as a separate entity, nor does he recognize his victims as individuals. When Rydra is under the influence of Babel-17 she attempts to sabotage her own ship and puts herself, as well as her shipmates, in grave danger, none of which she remembers doing.

Stephenson, Cadigan, and Gibson take Carroll's language games and push the rules and conventions even farther than Joyce did in <u>Finnegan's Wake</u>. The English language is no longer a homogenous system as foreign words mingle with technological terms to create a new semantic context. The violence of the language is mirrored in the violence of the societies portrayed through the narrative structure. Cyberpunk's new language is the language of the youth, a language that defies convention and the rules of the adult world while establishing its own protocols and customs. Unlike Alice, who found herself at the whims of the language used by the denizens of Looking-Glass Land and Wonderland, the protagonists of cyberpunk are the ones who create, use, and manipulate the language. The conclusion will showcase three authors who, despite their best attempts, unable to successfully capture Carroll's linguistic play with the same ease and effect of cyberpunk authors.

Conclusion: Alice's Latest Adventures

The link between Lewis Carroll and cyberpunk has been thoroughly examined and established; a fitting conclusion is to project is to look at how Carroll's creations are being re-envisioned by current authors. In particular I want to examine three authors who carry on Carroll's spirit in significant ways. I'd like to start with Frank Beddor's The Looking Glass Wars (2006). Beddor gives the Alice adventures a total science fiction treatment. Gone are the language play and the lightheartedness of Carroll's original tales. Instead, Beddor takes us into a Wonderland ruled by a dictatorship headed by Queen Redd. At her disposal is a playing card army, an easily manipulated royal court of the other suits, and her half human-half animal assassin, The Cat. Equally disturbing but better disguised in word play is Jeff Noon's Automated Alice (1996). Noon's work is a faithful retelling of Carroll's Through the Looking Glass. Noon's vision captures the original language play of Lewis Carroll while keeping the original Alice character true to her original rendering. Finally, I want to look at Jasper Fforde's Thursday Next series (2002-2005). Fforde combines science fiction and word play in a way that keeps Carroll's spirit alive and well. Fforde updates familiar Carroll characters such as the Cheshire Cat, the Bellman (from Snark), and the Red Queen.

It seems that the dark aspects of the Alice books serve as much inspiration for 20th and 21st-century science fiction. Frank Beddor, known mostly for producing the film *There's Something About Mary,* published in 2004 The Looking Glass Wars (only available in the US in September of 2006), a young adult book that has already spawned a comic book based on one of the characters, a video game, and a possible movie deal. Every review of the novel remarks that the novel is ". . .a dark and violent tale of murder

and war" (ACHOCKABLOG: Looking Glass Wars) or ". . .Part adventure, part fantasy, part violence and blood. . ." (Horn, IGN.com). No matter what the reviewer may say about Beddor's writing skills or the story itself, the success of the novel comes down to the fact that TLGW is a violent book that only has a superficial relation to the originals that Beddor is drawing from. As a matter of fact, Beddor's inspiration for his work is his own dislike of Carroll's originals. Originally Beddor didn't hold back in his contempt for what he saw as stifling Victorian girls' stories. More recently, however, he has softened his stance:

> Lewis Carroll, his world and what he wrote, is remarkable. As I've said in other interviews, I hated the books growing up. A lot of people have mirrored that thought, in interviews. We come to a point where we're supposed to like them. I respect the wit, writing, and imagination, don't get me wrong, but I didn't enjoy them like I enjoyed *Treasure Island* or "The Hardy Boys" or "Johnny Quest." I didn't think the book was cool, I thought it was a girl's book. (Horn 1)

In an attempt to raise awareness of his book, Beddor has engaged in a mock war with the Lewis Carroll Society (who continually attempt to prevent the release of issues of his comic book, Hatter M) and has built a website that is an elaborate attempt to convince readers that his version of Wonderland and its denizens is the "true" version.

According to Beddor's self-myth, he was visiting the British Museum when he saw a deck of what appeared to be playing cards. These cards contained images from Wonderland. As Beddor watched the cards, they played out the "real" history of Alyss Heart and the wars waged in Wonderland (www.lookingglasswars.com/novel-folder/novel-fs.html). In Beddor's version of Wonderland, Carroll is a doddering old man with a less-than-wholesome interest in an orphaned Alyss. Alyss tells her tale of war and strife to Carroll who promises he will accurately write the story down; what

Carroll actually does is tame the tale into the versions that continue to be popular to this day.

Beddor's plot is this: on her seventh birthday Princess Alyss Heart watches as her evil aunt, Redd, storms the palace and kills just about everyone inside including Alyss' mother; "Redd swung the bolt hard. Genevive's head went one way, her body another, and her crown rolled along the floor like a dropped coin" (66). Before she can be assassinated, Alyss is sent running with royal body guard Hatter Madigan. They jump into the Pool of Tears with Redd's half human, half feline killing machine The Cat hot on their trail. Upon entering the Pool of Tears (a portal between Wonderland and an infinite number of other realities), Madigan and Alyss are separated. She lands in Victorian England, he lands in 19th-century Paris. The next thirteen years pass as Alyss learns to forget her family, her blood-line, her entire life and assimilate into middle-class Victorian England after she is adopted by the Liddell family. She eventually becomes engaged to Prince Leopold, much to the delight of her adoptive parents. On her wedding day, The Cat shows up in Buckingham Palace, intent on killing her. She is whisked away by her childhood friend, Dodge Anders, and returned to a much darker Wonderland than Carroll's version.

Queen Redd has all but destroyed what was left of Alyss' world. Here Beddor draws upon such science fiction classics as 1984 and A Clockwork Orange. Redd is a dictator who simply destroys that which blocks her path. Interactive billboards crowd the skyline spouting Redd's mantras such as "My reign thrives on deceit and violence" (142). In true epic form, however, a small group of Wonderland residents who are loyal to Alyss have declared themselves the Alyssians and have been engaging in terrorist activities as

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they try to dethrone Queen Redd. Alyss' victory comes as she faces Redd in the final

battle:

> Unrealistic not to be angry, to never get angry or upset. It's a matter of
> degree. Alyss' anger informed her but it didn't rule her, although she
> seemed willing to beat Redd against the walls until the malicious woman
> died—a rather brutal death. . . (362)

Alyss in this scene must not only overcome her negative association with anger and evil,

but she must also overcome 13 years of living in Victorian England. The key is that, like

the original Alice, Alyss doesn't kill her adversary. Redd instead jumps into a portal and

escapes to an alternate world, keeping future sequels well-alive. As a matter of fact,

Beddor's website www. lookingglasswars.com asserts that he is finishing the second

book of the proposed trilogy, currently titled Seeing Redd.

Despite Beddor's disdain for the original works, Carroll remains integral to the

tale of Alyss. It is through Alice's Adventures in Wonderland that Hatter Madigan is

able to find the adult Alyss by tracking down its author, Lewis Carroll.

> "Where is Princess Alyss?"

> "W-W-Who?"

> "Princess Alyss of Wonderland. I know you've been in contact
> with her. I'm in possession of your book." (173)

It is, perhaps, no surprise that Beddor's Charles Dodgson is weak-willed, easily

frightened, timid, and almost completely unlikeable, given Beddor's feelings for the

original works. But one can't ignore the fact that, without the publishing of Carroll's

book, Madigan would have continued to scour the earth in vain for Alyss. As a matter of

fact, if it weren't for Carroll, Beddor wouldn't have had a source for his idea at all. His

reliance on Carroll is quite evident in the borrowing of characters.

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Certain characters are carried over from the 19th-century tales and into Beddor's decidedly 21st-century tale. Familiar to Carroll readers are Alyss and Queen Redd. Altered to fit Beddor's dark vision are the Mad Hatter (Hatter Madigan), the King of Hearts (the short-lived King Nolan), and the white rabbit (Bibwit, Alyss' tutor). The playing cards (the weak, greedy, and sniveling royal families Diamonds, Hearts, Spades, and Clubs), chess pieces (as miniature warriors), the Jabberwocky (as vicious monsters living on volcanic plains), and the Caterpillars (oracles in the Mushroom Forest) are all updated but still recognizable. The chessboard of Looking-Glass Land exists as a desert that separates Wonderland from its nearest neighbor, Boarderland. Wonderland's capital is a utopian city called Wonderopolis powered by the Heart Crystal and the powers of white (good) imagination. Given all these familiar sign-posts for the reader, there is no denying the ancestor of this work.

Besides the violence and dystopian vision of Wonderland, Beddor differentiates his work from Carroll's by allowing the reader to see an adult Alyss. This Alyss, unlike her childish counterpart, is a take-charge kind of woman and leads an army in a political coup. Alyss also has a love interest, her child-hood friend, Dodge. Most importantly, this Alyss belongs in Wonderland and not in 19th-century Victorian England. Conspicuously missing from The Looking-Glass Wars is the word play of Carroll's classic tales. Beddor's language, as stated before, resembles the language of dystopian works like 1984:

> Wonderland had been a bright, gleaming, incandescent place, filled for the most part with hard-working, law-respecting citizens. Now, everything was covered with grime and soot. Poverty and crime had oozed out of the back alleys and taken over the main streets, and anything bright and luminescent had to hide itself away in the nooks and crannies of the city. (138-9)

Certainly a description like the one above does not exist in Carroll's original tales. Beddor's language could be discussing any setting or scene in any novel. There is nothing in that particular passage that evokes the nonsense of Carroll.

The Looking-Glass Wars has become immensely popular. It first earned critical acclaim in the UK, where it was published in 2004, and now in the US, where it was preceded by the successful comic book (published by Desperado Publishing) Hatter M. There is even a soundtrack to the novel that was released just prior to the US version of the book. There are rumors of movie deals and video game tie-ins circulating, most of them from Beddor's own website. Beddor's fresh take on the Alice saga has given the works a new popular culture caché that shows no signs of slowing down.

Truer to the originals is Jeff Noon's Automated Alice (1996). This British science fiction author declares that his work is the third of Carroll's Alice books. Noon goes on to explain that Automated Alice was written by his alter ego, Zenith O'Clock, the writer of wrongs. This simple description sets the tone for Noon's work. Instead of a mirror, Noon sends Alice through a clock with her doll Celia (who becomes the automated Alice of the title).[58] The two follow her escaped riddle-speaking parrot, Whipoorwill. Alice falls through a time tunnel and she lands in 1998 Manchester, England. Most of the citizens of this Manchester are chimera, spliced human and animals resulting in Spiderboys, Catgirls, Badgermen, Snakewomen, etc.

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[58] Noon enjoys playing with Alice's name in the same way James Joyce does in Finnegan's Wake. Celia is an anagram of Alice in this work. Or, as Celia explains to Alice, "I said twin twister. You see, Alice, when you named me Celia, all you did was twist the letters of your own name around into a new spelling. I'm you're anagrammed sister." (65)

Alice does not land on the streets of Manchester, however. She first finds herself in a much more "organized" setting. The first character Alice meets after entering the clock is an ant. Their exchange could have been written by Carroll himself.

> "I'm Alice," replied Alice, politely.
>
> "You're a *lis*?" the ant said. "What in the earth is a lis?"
>
> "I'm not a *lis*. My name is Alice." Alice spelt her name:
>
> "A-L-I-C-E."
>
> "You're a lice!" the ant cried. "We don't want no lice in this mound." (21)[59]

The next character Alice meets is a termite, a Computermite, to be exact. "I'm a termite that computes. I work out the answers to questions" (24). This sort of word play continues throughout Noon's work, so much in fact that it soon grows tiresome when every encounter turns into an obvious yet elaborate pun. Civil Servants are referred to as Civil Serpents, an artist makes a robot named James Marshall Hentrails (whose insides are indeed, the entrails of hens), and, at one point, Alice has the following conversation with a character:

> "But why are you talking so slow, Mister Snailman?" asked Alice. . ."Aren't you very good at English?"
>
> "I. . .don't. . .speak. . .Anguish. . ."
>
> "I didn't say Anguish, I said English.". . .
>
> "I. . .speak. . .in. . .Languish. . ." the Snailman eventually replied.
>
> "And what is Languish?" asked Alice.

---

[59] Joyce, in <u>Finnegan's Wake</u>, has a similar play on words when he writes "Though Wonderlawn's lost us for ever. Alis, alas, she broke the glass! Liddell Lokker through the leafery, ours is mistery of pain." (270)

<blockquote>"Languish. . .is. . .the. . .lazy. . .language." (119-120)</blockquote>

Clearly this is in the spirit of Carroll, but, as Burgess says of Joyce's attempt at a

"Jabberwocky" poem *Anna Livia Plurabelle,* the attempt isn't of the same caliber as

Carroll's; "It was in an honoured English tradition—puns, portmanteau-words, teasing

mystifications—but there were times when it seemed to go too far" (186). Noon's work

strikes me as one where the word play has "gone too far," bordering on cutesy much like

Bruno's baby talk in Carroll's <u>Sylvie and Bruno</u>.[60]

Soon after landing in the ant hill, Alice learns that there is a mystery that needs to

be solved, that of the Jigsaw Murderer case. Whipoorwill, Alice's renegade parrot spews

riddles that are supposed to help Alice solve this case and find her missing doll Celia

who, it appears, has become an automaton. Unfortunately Whipporwill's riddles seem to

only confuse Alice:

<blockquote>"Why did the Catgirl cross the road?"

Alice felt sure that the parrot was laughing at her, so she didn't even attempt an answer to this latest riddle. (100)</blockquote>

The importance of the riddles remains hidden each time until *after* Alice finds the latest

victim of the murderer.

Also in the spirit of Carroll, Noon has Alice forget things she should know by

heart. For example, Alice tries to recite a lullaby called "Go to Sleep, Little Bear" which

normally goes:

<blockquote>'Go to sleep, little bear.
    Do not peep, little bear.
And when you wake, little bear,
    I will be there, little bear.'</blockquote>

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[60] Sutherland concludes "Had Dodgson used baby talk in <u>Alice</u>, he would not be remembered today." (53)

Instead what comes out of Alice's mouth is:

> 'Go to sleep, little creep.
>   Do not peep, little creep,
> And when you're deep, little creep,
>   I will not weep, little creep.' (67)

Again Noon's renditions are not as clever as Carroll's distortions of nursery rhymes. This version is darker than Carroll's versions with the references to death and creeps (repugnant people who inspire repulsion). There is also a clear lack of remorse or mourning in the poem. What is similar between Noon and Carroll is that in each case, Alice has no control over the words she says. Noon's Alice, unlike Carroll's, finds the new poem better than the poem she originally intended.

There is an element of danger to Noon's tale that may seem more sinister than Carroll's original works. As stated above, Alice finds herself involved in the Case of the Jigsaw Murderer. In Noon's 1998, there are few pure humans; everyone is a hybrid of an animal and human. Much as Carroll's Alice lives in fear of the Queen of Hearts and losing her head, Noon's Alice becomes a suspect in the murders. Unlike Carroll's Alice, this Alice actually sees the victims of the Jigsaw Murderer. The original Alice never actually sees anyone lose their head. Noon includes illustrations that, while black and white, do depict the victims (Fig 5.1).

> Alice had never seen anything dead before, and the sight of such a thing made her go all wobbly. 'I must be a strong young girl!' she was now saying to herself as she got back to her feet. 'I must grow myself up!' Alice forced herself to look at the body. The Catgirl's face was covered in a fine gingery fur from which a pair of startled, human eyes were staring, lifelessly. The head of the Catgirl was melded to the juncture between her furry legs; her whiskers were sprouting from her thighs; her hind paws were growing out of her gingery chest. (137)

And the description goes on. What is significant about the passage above is not just the graphic nature of Noon's description with its latent sexuality, but also the word play in the discussion Alice has with herself. The word play in the passage above hinges on the idea of growing up as a natural process and growing as something that Alice can force

Fig 5.1. "Death of Catgirl." ©Jeff Noon

herself to do. This also echoes Carroll's Alice, who is always giving herself advice such as to be sure to check a bottle to see whether it is marked "poison." Noon chooses to end his novel in the spirit of Carroll, as well. Alice is fleeing the authorities, who are convinced that she is the Jigsaw Murderer, when she finds a jigsaw hole that returns her to her world: "Oh, what a curious dream!" Alice said to herself. "Why, it was almost *real*!" (247) Noon's ending feels more forced than Carroll's, perhaps because Noon's Alice appeared to be in more danger at the end of her adventure than Carroll's Alice did

at the end of <u>Wonderland</u>. Despite the strained moments throughout the book, Noon's adaptation is a faithful update.

Jasper Fforde's "Thursday Next" series stays true to Carroll's originals in a slightly different way than Noon's work.[61] The main character is Thursday Next, a detective who specializes in literary crimes. In order to solve literary crimes, it is necessary for an agent to enter the original manuscript of a text and prevent the crime from happening without altering the text. Some individuals have the innate ability to enter a text: "'I just *can*," she answered simply. "I think hard, speak the lines and, well, here I am'" ("Eyre" 326). For those who don't have the natural ability to enter a text, Thursday's uncle Mycroft has built a machine that allows one to literally walk into a text. "We grasped each other's hand tightly and stepped through the doorway. I staggered slightly as we made the jump: there had been a bright flash and a short blast of static" (317-318). This ability to jump into texts becomes critical as Acheron Hades decides to enter the original manuscripts of two prominent texts, <u>Martin Chuzzlewit</u> and <u>Jane Eyre</u>, and holds characters ransom. As Hades kidnaps and murders characters the texts are forever altered. "On the contrary, I have checked seven different copies and they all read exactly the same. *Mr. Quaverly is no longer with us"* ("Eyre" 203). Where Carroll inserted nursery rhyme figures into his texts (most notably Humpty Dumpty), Fforde has literary characters leaving texts and entering the real world. In the case of poor Mr. Quaverly his dead body is found in the trunk of a car. When Hades' <u>Martin Chuzzlewit</u> game is thwarted by Mycroft, he responds by attacking <u>Jane Eyre</u> and literally throwing the title character of her work into reality. Thursday saves the day and, in the second

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[61] Several of Fforde's books are going to be used in this discussion. They will indicated in the end notes by the first word of the title.

book, <u>Lost in a Good Book,</u> is asked to join Jurisfiction, a branch of jurisprudence that exists within all of literature.

Jurisfiction exists in the Great Library, a library that contains not only every text every written, but also every unpublished text and every fragment of literature no matter how small or how poorly written. The central nervous system of this library is a character familiar to Carroll's fans, the Cheshire Cat (renamed the Unitary Authority of Warrington Cat due to shifting county boundaries). The head of the Jurisifiction agents (an elected position) is known as the Bellman, in honor of <u>The Hunting of the Snark</u>. Upon meeting the Cat the following exchange occurs with Thursday Next:

> "Oh, and welcome to Jurisifiction. You'll like it here; everyone is *quite* mad."
>
> "But I don't want to go among mad people," I replied indignantly.
>
> "Oh, you can't help that," said the Cat. "We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad." (179)

It is at this point that Next realizes that she is engaging verbatim in a passage from <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</u>. Her realization breaks up the iteration of the conversation which annoys the Cat, who enjoys such discussions. Much of the introduction of the Cat feels as though Carroll wrote it himself, particularly the exchange regarding night blindness:

> "I suppose you *have* heard of knight blindness, when you can't see any knights?"
>
> "It's *night*, not knight," I corrected him.
>
> "It all sounds the same to *me*." (178)

It is not merely the play with the words night and knight that Fforde captures, but it is the use of italics to emphasize specific words that hearkens back to Carroll. One last example from the Cat is one that is reminiscent of the Tea Party:

> Next: "I. . .I. . .didn't know I could do this."
>
> Cat: "What you mean is that you *did* know that you *couldn't*—it's quite a different thing." (181)

This exchange echoes the famous Tea Party scene where Alice is chastised for not saying what she means:

> "Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.
>
> "I do," Alice hastily replied; "at least--at least I mean what I say--that's the same thing, you know."
>
> "Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "You might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see.'" (95)

Nowhere is Carroll's influence felt more than in the Boojumorial, the memorial that honors all the Jurisfiction agents who have been "Boojumed," mysteriously lost within a book ("Lost" 183).

There is a high level of wordplay and punning, particularly in characters' names. The main character, Thursday Next is a running pun when waiting in line. Literary detectives carry last names such as Analogy, and a corporate shill is named Jack Schitt. Schitt's character is often introduced by the phrase "Oh, so you know Schitt?" This pun is so popular it's repeated in the second book, Lost in a Good Book, when Fforde introduces Jack Schitt's half-brother, Schitt-Hawse.   Noon's computermites are morphed into Fforde's bookworms, worms that eat words and expel everything from alternate meanings to apostrophes to excessive capitalization:

> The bookworms responded by belching out large quantities of unnecessary capitalizations. 'Any'thing That The Hu'man Imag'ination Can Think Up, We Can Reproduce. I Look At The Port'al as Les's Of A Gateway To A Million World's, But More Like A Three Dim'ensional P'hotocopier.' (313)

The worms play an important role in Mycroft's Prose Portal, as it is their consuming of words that tears the fabric between reality and the world of the text. "Without them, words would have one meaning, and meanings would have one word" ("Well" 80). Here, we are coming at Humpty Dumpty from another angle. Where Humpty is infuriating and untrustworthy with his assertion that a word can mean whatever he wants it to mean, Mycroft shows us that, without multiple meanings to words (and multiple words for meanings), there would be no way to create anything but reality. It is language's multiplicity and ambiguity that allows for the creation of alternate worlds, realities, and existences. More than any author discussed thus far, Fforde captures the very essence of Carroll.

In Lost in a Good Book Fforde flexes his Carrollean muscles even further. The word play remains, but Fforde also introduces actual scenes and characters from Carroll's works. Thursday Next finds herself in trouble for committing a Class II literary infraction (for rewriting the ending to Jane Eyre). Her lawyer contacts her in a manner that is similar to Carroll's use of the gnat in Looking-Glass. Only Thursday can hear her lawyer speak, and his dialogue is incorporated as footnotes. This method of communication is called the "footnoterphone." Once Thursday is fully integrated into Jurisfiction she becomes subjected to footnoterphone junk mail which usually takes the form of advertisements and random passages of Anna Karenina.

Fforde's books are, in short, hilarious. Thursday's mentor, Miss Havisham, has a running feud with the Red Queen which erupts at a book sale. When Thursday has to go

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to court for her Class II infraction in <u>Lost in a Good Book</u>, her trial takes place in Kafka's "The Trial." Her second hearing in <u>The Well of Lost Plots</u> happens in the Court of Hearts, fully staffed with all the characters from Wonderland. Alice's lawyer, in this case, happens to be the Gryphon. Every character's name has a double meaning, either as a word pun or as a reference to a literary character. Like Carroll's originals, Fforde provides his readers with sophisticated humor, fast-moving plotlines, and endearing characters (such as Thursday's pet dodo, Pickwick).

Obviously there are more retellings of the Alice books than the three authors I've chosen here, but the authors discussed here bring together the language games of Carroll and the spirit of science fiction.[62] Carroll's works are not entirely innocent and light-hearted children's books. There lurks deep within the linguistic manipulations a sadness and a fear that comes through his seven-year old protagonist. It may be this latent darkness that has inspired science fiction, especially cyberpunk. And even Noon, Beddor, and Fforde cannot escape that which lurks beneath the surface of Carroll's original visions.

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[62] Other works that are not literature that come to mind are American McGee's Alice (2000) a role-playing video game that has inspired a movie starring former *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* star Sarah Michelle Gellar. Marilyn Manson is currently at work on a film called "Phantasmagoria: The Visions of Lewis Carroll." This art-horror flick is scheduled to hit theatres sometime in 2007. Alan Moore published <u>The Lost Girls</u> in 2006 as a three-volume set. Originally these erotica comics, inspired by 19th-century erotica, were published in 1991. In this story, Moore retells the histories of Alice, Dorothy (Wizard of Oz), and Wendy Darling (Peter Pan) in a decidedly "mature" manner. And this brief overview does not take into account non-English forms of Alice that continue to live on in Manga, Anime, and video games.

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Appendix: Science Fiction's 19th-Century Roots

While Lewis Carroll was creating his linguistic paradigms, science fiction was beginning its struggle to find itself. For example, in the year <u>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</u> (1865) was published, only one science fiction work is recorded. In the six years between <u>Wonderland</u> and <u>Looking-Glass</u> (1871), only five science fiction works are noted in publication records (Suvin 13-15). The exact birth date of science fiction is up for debate, but most point to Mary Shelley's Frankenstein published in 1818 (Alkon 1).[63] A first glance at science fiction reveals a paucity of works between Shelley and H.G. Well's first work <u>The Time Machine</u> (1895).[64] In actuality science fiction was being published, but most of the works (outside of Verne) have been forgotten. Indeed this is the very issue that Darko Suvin addresses in <u>Victorian Science Fiction in the UK</u> (1983). Of Victorian science fiction he says:

> But perhaps here is the proper place to repeat that in this book I wanted to identify an almost unknown, and yet historically significant, genre of discourse delimited in space, time, intertextual affinities, and structures of feeling or ideological horizons. (385)

Suvin sets out to catalogue the major science fiction writers and science fiction works of the years 1848-1885. He also engages in a socio-historical analysis of the fledgling genre by examining who was publishing science fiction and what sort of discourse science

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[63] One notable exception to the wide acceptance of <u>Frankenstein</u> as the first science fiction text is Samuel Delany who argues in "*Dichtung Und* Science Fiction" (1981), that Shelley's classic is just the most recent in a long line of attempts to place the beginnings of science fiction and that no one work can possibly be the genesis for the genre.

[64] Jules Verne's first work, <u>Five Weeks in a Balloon</u> appeared in 1863.

fiction was using.[65] Science fiction prior to 1871 is "heterogeneous" and does not

engage its audience until 1871 when a time

> ". . .on the one hand, of still strong self-confidence" of the upper and
> middle classes due to an unbroken economic boom of two decades and ". .
> .on the other hand, it was also a time pregnant with so many old and new
> contradictions. . ." (263)

For Suvin science fiction's ability to focus on the upper and middle classes and what was

in 1871 the beginning of a "longer and deeper crises of confidence" is what kick-started

the genre (263). In order to further analyze the burgeoning genre, Suvin breaks the era

into two sections: "The Phase of Inception, 1848-1873" and "The Phase of Constitution,

1871-1885."

Suvin analyzes economic and publishing data for the period of 1848-1900 and

draws several conclusions about the reading public and science fiction's place within that

context. In the 19th century despite the increased levels of literacy and schooling, mass

book reading had to overcome the obstacles of low living standards, lack of leisure time,

book availability, and high book costs (Altick 81-98). [66] As a result book-length fiction

was usually read by the upper and middle classes while the lower-middle and working

classes mostly read sensationalist serialized fiction, full-length non-fiction, or the rare

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[65] Suvin claims that is neither Wells nor Verne was the most important 19th-century writer but Edgar Alan
Poe. (312) Because Poe made a living writing science fiction Poe's contribution to science fiction,
according to Suvin, is that Poe ". . .observed also that, in cognitive and literacy practice, a novel is valuable
insofar as it is strange and as it excites." (314) Poe is Suvin's lone standout of early 19th century science
fiction, an outsider from the US. (315)

[66] By 1853 a complete book was 8 shilling 4 ½ pennies, a significant decrease from the 1828 price of 16
shillings; however, this was still a great deal of money when one considers the average laborer's weekly
wages varied from 3s 6d for a shipwright to 9s 6d for a cotton factory worker. (Altick 286) Things
improved greatly by the 1890's when lower middle-class families saw their yearly income increase from
£90 in 1850 to £110 by 1881. During this same time the prices of goods fell sharply so that a "family's real
income rose by 70 or 80%." (Altick 306) James Skipper and George P. Landow write, in "Wages and Cost
of Living in the Victorian Era," that in the early part of the century common laborers earned 3s 9d for a
work week, which consisted of 6 10 hour days. (http://www.victorianweb.org/economics/wages2.html 1)

"ideological political" fiction epitomized by Uncle Tom's Cabin.[67] If the lower-middle and working classes read poetry or fiction at all, they usually stayed with the classics. (Suvin 271) Richard Altick in The English Common Reader (1957) does point out that after the mid-point of the century the masses were reading a great deal of not only "culture-at-home periodicals" but also "the relatively inexpensive People's Editions of contemporary authors" (243).

There was also concern about how novels may adversely affect the reader. As Patrick Brantlinger argues in the introduction to The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction (1998), the movement for wholesome literature became militant as the 19th century went on (19). He points to the multiple representations within 19th-century novels of novel reading as "poisonous." (8-9)[68] This poisonous literature culminates, not surprisingly, with Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray. Brantlinger goes on to say: "Given the widespread cultural anxiety aroused by novels and novel-reading no easy case can be made for the novel as merely an ideological or discursive tool for the forging and policing of bourgeois subjectivity" (21). Taste was tied to morality, and, combined they were another obstacle that early science fiction had to overcome in an era when "In print, 'taste' was more overtly applied to sexual propriety. . ." but also included notions of respectability. (Suvin

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[67] Paul K. Alkon argues, in Science Fiction Before 1900: Imagination Discovers Technology, that 19th-century science fiction suffered in the mid part of the century due to the popularity of the three-decker novels that required longer works of fiction. Early science fiction consisted of mostly shorter works, and there weren't many available forums for the shorter texts. (40)

[68] One specific example that Brantlinger provides is Hardy's Jude the Obscure in which Hardy depicts characters (Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead) as victims of their bookishness that directly causes their demise. (193)

273). [69] Carroll himself was keen to observe the importance of maintaining respectability in his leisure reader, as Donald Thomas illustrates in <u>Lewis Carroll: A Portrait with Background</u> (1996): "His comments on contemporaries suggest a rather evangelical sensibility in the judgment of authors." (108).[70] And yet Carroll was a voracious reader, rarely judging a book until he had fully read and digested it.

A text is not an object that can be considered as separate from the context within which it was written, instead a text is ". . . the frozen notation of a producing of meanings, values, and structures of feeling . . . within a given sociohistorical context." (Suvin 299). Science fiction is no different, and, to illustrate this point, Suvin uses the famous science fiction sentence "The door dilated" and breaks down the various presuppositions inherent in the phrase. The deductions range from the hypothesis that there is intelligent life that can see and move to the assumption that there are buildings with doors.[71] The fact that the door dilates is a clue to the reader that they are no longer in their own world. Taking this mini-analysis farther, Suvin demonstrates that it is necessary to analyze the presuppositions a text reveals as the rules for a particular discourse comprised of the cultural and ideological maxims become the building blocks of a text (301). This is of great import for the 19th century. Suvin argues literature ". . .

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[69] In the 1840's reformers began to demand wholesome literature in the face of the wildly popular sensationalistic fictions that usually took the form of true crime, "factual horror," "the poor-man's Gothic," the domestic novels, and the sea story. (Altick 287-290) Altick doesn't specifically mention science fiction in this list but it is easy to see how early titles such as Henry Forrest's <u>A Dream of Reform</u> (1848) or Charles Rowcrafts <u>The Triumph of Woman: A Christmas Story</u> (1848) would fit in with this mass-produced scandalous fiction.

[70] Carroll was also noted for writing letters of protest after watching plays that had objectionable language or subject matter. One example occurred in 1874 at a parody of *Hamlet* in which the word "damn" was used. (Thomas 183) He also made no bones about being offended at Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* because it showed a young woman drugged away by demons.

[71] Later in the chapter, we will see Samuel Delany perform a similar analysis but to illustrate a different point about science fiction language.

took its themes from problems of the day. . ." and that all the literature, regardless of genre was discussing those issues (302). Altick confirms this when he points out that authors of the period often enjoyed large sales when their works dealt with relevant and current problems (243).

Two 19th-century science fiction authors who provide excellent examples of the connection between popularity and relevance are George T. Chesney's The Battle of Dorking (1871) and Richard Jefferies After London; or Wild England (1885). Chesney's work presented England with a near-future in which England's army experience a loss much like France's recent one in the Franco-Prussian war. "Chesney's goal was to mobilize public opinion in favor of better armaments and more up-to-date tactics by portraying England's defeat as the result of inadequate military preparations. He stirred up public debate on this issue. . ." (Alkon 40). Both of these works come from the later part of the century, a time when, Suvin argues, science fiction became more sophisticated.

Suvin divides the 19th century into two eras. The first phase of Victorian science fiction is "The Phase of Inception: 1848-1870" Suvin regards this period as being in the doldrums, as the science fiction produced was heterogeneous and not very interesting. He says that science fiction of this era can be defined as being concerned with the ". . . communication of power versus the communication of knowledge. . ." (323). Science fiction bursts onto the literary spectrum at this point because "It is in the 1870s that the sense of a secure society began to be openly and frequently doubted within the wide upper and middle-class ruling consensus itself" (387). This questioning opened the door for discussions of alternative value-sets and possibilities on both the individual and

societal level. The combination of ideological instability, what seemed to be a loss of

values, and a strong economy made for fertile science fiction ground (389). The main

themes of science fiction of this era are the utopia proper, extraordinary voyage, and

future histories (both short and long range) (394).

The second phase, that of "The Phase of Constitution 1871-1885," is further

divided into three periods denoted by the amount of science fiction published. In 1871-

1875 there was a massive output (nine works in 1871 alone, 26 for the five year span) of

science fiction literature, followed by a lull in the years of 1876-1879 when fewer science

fiction texts were produced (10 for this four year period). And finally there is the period

of 1880-1885, which is marked by a new political urgency that translated into increased

science fiction text production (22 in six years) (Suvin 326-7). The 15 year span begins

with the publication of Bulwer-Lytton's The Coming Race and concludes with the

popularity of Wells.

Overall this period is marked by literature's response to economic depression that

began in 1873 (and wouldn't end until 1896). Robert L. Nelson writes, in "The Price of

Bread: Poverty, Purchasing Power, and The Victorian Laborer's Standard of Living"

(2005), that, by using the 1795 Speenhamland Allowance Scale, one could see that by the

mid-19th-century, workers were indeed feeling an economic pinch:[72]

> By 1865 the purchasing power of even a skilled town laborer working his
> trade had fallen to a level of less than twice that of the Speenhamland
> allowance, putting the great bulk of independent town laborers barely
> above subsistence. Booth estimated that around the turn of the century 31
> percent of the population of London was living in poverty. This estimate

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[72] The Speenhamland Scale Allowance is explained by Nelson as: "When the gallon loaf cost 1s, the
laborer was to have a weekly income of 3s for himself. The per pound cost of bread at 1s/gallon is 12d /
8.6875 pounds or 1.38 d/pound. Weekly wages of 3s are equal to 36p / 7 days or 5.14 d/day. Dividing
wages by the cost of bread gives 5.14 d/day / 1.38 d/pound = 3.72 pounds of bread per day for a single
laborer."

was confirmed by the studies of Rowntree in the City of York, where he found the proportion of the inhabitants in poverty (that is, below subsistence) was 28 percent. (Nelson 1)

It might not seem surprising that stories with an escapist element are popular during this era. Suvin says the stories are more sophisticated versions of the extraordinary voyage, future war, and alternative history (394). From these seemingly feeble roots rose a genre that continues to this day to have a strong and faithful reading base.

Vita

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Jennifer's academic work has been published by *The Leading Edge*, *Carbon*, and *The Journal of Popular Culture*. Her academic interests are popular culture, Lewis Carroll, and science fiction. The next project she is planning is a work examining and analyzing the importance of women's undergound comix of the 1960's and 1970's. She continues to live in Baton Rouge with her husband, Justin, and their two cats, Harlot and Ruttiger. Jennifer teaches English in the Engineering Residential College and is the Digital Portfolio Coordinator in the Engineering Communication Studio.