

WONDERLAND: MYTH OR FAIRY-TALE?

by

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## **DEDICATION**

“Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten” (G.K. Chesterton).

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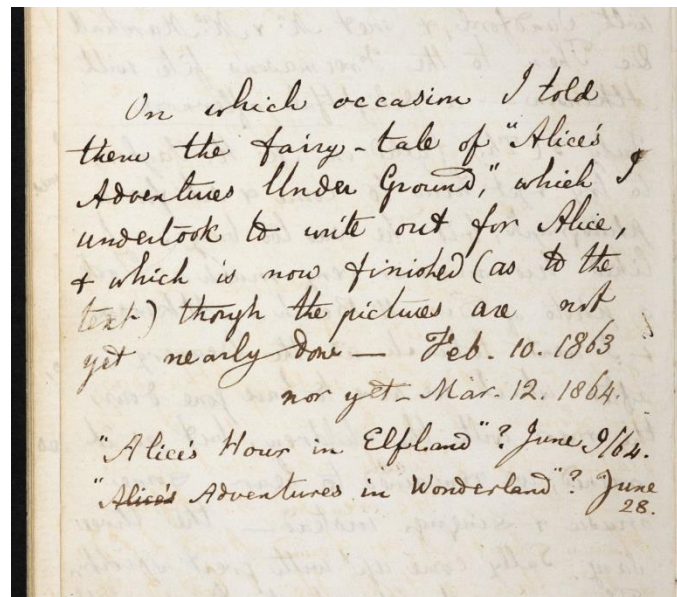
## 1. INTRODUCTION

Lewis Carroll's diaries are full of cataloged days, sketches, and thoughts, each giving curious Carroll fans and critics alike different insights as to how the beloved storybook classic *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) came to be. I argue one of the most vital pages to understanding the origins of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is the following entries made on Feb 10, 1863, and June 9, 1864 (see Figure 1). The entries provided below begin with Carroll explaining the first time he told Alice Liddell of her adventures in Wonderland and ends with ideas for the title of the children's book:

I told them the fairy-tale of "Alice's Adventures Under Ground," which I undertook to write out for Alice, & which is now finished (as to the text) though the pictures are not yet nearly done - Feb. 10. 1863

"Alice's Hour in Elfland"? June 9/64.

"Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"? June 28.



**Figure 1. Diary and Notes of Lewis Carroll.**

Dodgson, Charles. "Lewis Carroll' diary 4." *Diary and notes of Lewis Carroll*, 4 July 1862; 10 February 1863-28 June 1864.



The reason this particular page has caught the attention of a great deal of Carroll scholars is the fact that this is the first time Carroll had written down the title *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Though the title of the work is undeniably a critical milestone in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland's* creation, I am not specifically interested in this page for that reason. This particular page tells Carroll critics a few things: 1) Alice originally only spent an *hour* in Wonderland and 2) Carroll himself refers to the story as a “fairy-tale” and associates the story itself with elves. The hour indicates a lapse in time, and the “fairy-tale”/elf story might indicate a medieval structure that most Victorian Carroll critics overlook. A reason for the oversight mentioned above could be due to the current significant academic conversation that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* implements nonsense as a rhetorical device, and is thus unquestionably part of the nonsense genre. The genre itself is not necessarily the issue. However, the method in which Carroll critics have historically utilized the genre needs to be addressed as it has consequently created a considerable gap in criticism, which I will discuss here at length. In summary, Barbara Simoniti explains in her article “How to Make Nonsense: The Verbalizing Procedures of Nonsense in Lewis Carroll's Alice Books” that the *Alice* books are regarded as part of the nonsense genre. Simoniti states in her abstract:

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* have been regarded as exemplary of nonsense as a genre. The present article is based on a detailed research of how generic nonsense manifests itself on the verbal level of the text. The chosen method of investigation involved a cross-cultural approach since it facilitated an immediate comparison between the effects

of established nonsense-making procedures in the source text (the original) and the changed verbalizations of several target texts (the translations). (Simoniti)

As we can see above, Simoniti does not question the *Alice* books in connection to the “nonsense genre” itself, but rather states *Alice*’s relationship to the genre as fact and uses a cross-cultural approach to her investigation as to how Carroll’s verbal nonsense is typically lost in Slovene translation. Thus, those translations lose the original nonsense discourse/stylemes completely. The argument about, as to Carroll’s rhetorical use of nonsense is one many Carroll critics like Simoniti have accepted, which left most not to question *Alice*’s place in the nonsense genre because the book appears so odd.

This assumption of *Alice* being rhetorical nonsense is also true for critics who analyze it for how nonsensical rhetoric affects cognitive development, such as critic Anna Neill in her essay “Developmental nonsense in the Alice tales.” This essay, in summary, focuses on the argument that the *Alice* stories, as they are considered nonsense literature, have been said to encourage both cultural and mental flexibility in terms of children learning to challenge social norms and exercise their cognitive muscles in new, unaccustomed ways. Neill argues, however, in her abstract that instead:

nonsense stores up representations of the world that the maturing brain rejects as “useless.” It does not therefore constitute an evolutionary “crane,” enhancing the capacity for shared meaning that has enabled humans to enjoy such enormous evolutionary strides. Rather, in the sharing of nonsensical stories, images rejected in neural development are saved and stored in material forms that in turn impact the affective lives of future generations of readers. Shadowing the images that produce more successful versions of reality, the “half beliefs” that nonsense-

reading makes possible suggest that imaginative literary culture does something other than accelerate human adaptive success. (Neill)

Both Neill and Simoniti thus accept that *Alice* is based on nonsense rhetoric and find no reason to look deeper into *Alice* as part of the nonsense genre.

The belief that *Alice* is based in nonsense and fairy-tale has sparked some debate among critics like Josephine Gabelman. Gabelman protests the nonsense belief in her book, *A Theology of Nonsense*, which analyzes the *Alice* books and the dangers of assuming Christian theology in texts as solely nonsensical and disregarding Christian allegory or apostrophe. Gabelman further argues that while nonsense appears in the *Alice* story, it does so in aid of Carroll's religious allegory. She claims *Alice* is an example of the paradox created by myth being related to nonsense. Gabelman makes reference to the need for imagination to create a new space for cognitive freedom (for religious allegory) but overlooks the importance of Fairyland as a tradition, often connecting and reporting Fairyland as "nonsensical"—thus still reporting *Alice* as "nonsense literature" (128).

The issue with approaching the story of *Alice* through solely one framework, in this case, the Christian theology, is that critics like Gabelman miss half of the story entirely. Gabelman makes the crucial error of assuming that parts of the *Alice* story are merely nonsense because they do not fully fit the Christian theology. Claiming that everything in the *Alice* story that does not fit a religious framework must be nonsense overlooks the medieval Fairyland tradition. Richard Firth Green establishes in his book *Elf Queens and Holy Friars Fairy Beliefs and the Medieval Church* that the fairy-tale tradition is connected to the orthodox church, which manipulated Fairyland to create Purgatory, thus mixing fairy-tale and myth as a medieval tradition and form of

propaganda. In other words, just because a religion adopts a fairy-tale does not necessarily make it simply nonsense. A great deal of people alive during the time of fairy-lore believed fairies and Fairyland to be real, as we will discuss later in terms of Green's analysis. I believe that *Alice's* story is not merely crucial for its religious context, but equally so for that of Fairyland, which is far from these critics' assumptions of the nonreligious parts being purely nonsensical. Carroll describing the *Alice* story as a fairy-tale in the previously discussed journal entry, moreover, shows the particular importance of the story being a fairy-tale.

Likewise, critics who see the story only as fairy-tale, such as Alberto Manguel in his article "Return to Wonderland," make the same kind of crucial error. Manguel argues that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) has been justified in terms of rhetorical nonsense, Victorian ideals, ethical symbolism, and Fairyland, but makes an apparent stance against considering religious affiliations to the story like Purgatory. Manguel uses the religious context of Wonderland having narrative attributions exclusive to Purgatory as a vague metaphor instead of a literal setting of the *Alice* novel. Manguel's critical analysis is just as risky as critics like Gabelman, Neill, and Simoniti, because all four assume one of three things: 1) Carroll's rhetoric in the *Alice* story relies mainly on the nonsensical, 2) *Alice* is only based in religious context and therefore should only be read as myth and nonsense, or 3) *Alice* is only based in fairy-tale and therefore has no religious affiliations. To reiterate, there is nothing wrong with nonsense as a genre, and Carroll does use nonsense in his book, but using the nonsense framework in this way is problematic. The idea that Fairyland themes must be nonsensical to help aid in religious theology is problematic because it ignores crucial aspects the story draws on to create

Wonderland. These aspects were clear connections to Fairyland, which, as I have previously stated, is not exclusively nonsensical but has roots in medieval mythology. I will be the first person to marry these two worlds—medieval studies of Purgatory and fairy-tales and Victorian scholarship on Wonderland—to demonstrate that the *Alice* story was neither merely a product of myth, nor merely fairy-tale, but rather a compilation of both within a medieval framework.

This thesis will look at the first unpublished manuscript of Lewis Carroll's "Alice's Adventures Underground" (1864) and the first published book in the *Alice* trilogy, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), through a medieval lens, combining our understanding of Fairyland with a cultural and literary analysis of Purgatory. Whereas many critics of Victorian literature, such as Manguel and Gabelman, have largely discussed *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* within a secular vacuum—as a work of fairy-tale or religious allegory—medievalists, such as Richard Firth Green, have established a close connection between Purgatory and Fairyland, prompting a return to Carroll's work with this medieval connection in mind. These stories, which combine the lore of Fairyland and the myth of Purgatory so that they function as one narrative, become a Fairyland-Purgatory combination, and will be referred to as such in this thesis. As I will show, Carroll draws on representations of Purgatory, and medieval critiques of Christian writers, in his construction of Wonderland. While the assumption that Wonderland is a metaphor, and not a literal location, has informed much of the criticism on this Victorian work, my thesis demonstrates Carroll's allusions to a medieval tradition of Purgatory. Due to the ideological siloing of critical fields, however, Carroll's reference to this tradition is consistently overlooked in both medieval and Victorian scholarship.

It is the purpose of this thesis to explore the possibility that Wonderland is *not*, then, exclusively nonsensical, as critics of Victorian literature have so often interpreted it, but rather the product of myth and fairy-tale, something we can only recognize by looking at this work through the lens of medieval depictions of Purgatory. First, I will explain the medieval tradition of Purgatory. I will then demonstrate the way that Carroll uses medieval descriptions of Fairyland in his characterizations of Wonderland in the *Alice* stories. The original draft will be examined for its nod to Fairyland and the medieval tradition, while the first published *Alice* book will be analyzed in terms of its Purgatorial and Fairyland influence. As I will suggest, we can only understand Carroll's satirical representation of the church, as well as his use of religious allegory and imagery, by first recognizing and then analyzing his many allusions to medieval Purgatory. I will further show how Carroll uses this medieval tradition to change the meaning of the *Alice* story entirely. By bringing the knowledge of Purgatory and Fairyland to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the reader can decipher not only what Lewis Carroll's work is portraying, concerning a Christian worldview, but also the meaning of Alice's journey as a whole.

Chapter Two: "The Demonization of Fairyland, the birth of Purgatory, and Victorian Folklore" provides historical background and focuses primarily on: 1) Victorian history involving fairies, childhood, and societal norms leading to *Alice's* creation and 2) how Fairyland transformed into Purgatory with descriptions of medieval literature, like St. Patrick's Purgatory Narratives, and prominent critics, such as Richard Firth Green, whose work has largely contributed to the making of this thesis. This background information is crucial to this thesis as it explains in-depth how the medieval

tradition of combination Fairyland-Purgatory stories came to be, while also setting up the explanation as to why Carroll combined Fairyland and Purgatory to create Wonderland. The history of the church and the medieval tradition will also provide the reader with clues as to why Carroll added some forms of fairy-tale characteristics while omitting others that eventually became more Purgatorial. The Victorian background will enlighten the reader to how society, childhood, and fairies functioned to create *Alice*.

Chapter Three: “Alice’s Adventures in Fairyland” focuses on fairy-tale traditions and how they impacted the *Alice* story. We will be covering the entrance to Fairyland, the physical appearance of the fairies themselves, heroic fairies, nature fairies, and their assumed hierarchy, changelings, fairy castles, fairy food, the fountain of youth, and the passage of time in Fairyland throughout this chapter. Each segment, of course, being explored in terms of the *Alice* story, provided with textual evidence, as well as pictures of the original manuscript’s illustrations. It is essential to note the reason this thesis only provides images from the original manuscript is because of the immense quarrel and dissatisfaction of Lewis Carroll with the initially published drawings. Carroll and his illustrator John Tenniel often did not see eye to eye, and Carroll repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with Tenniel and his methods. Susan E. Meyer provides an account of Carroll’s exact words as a primary source in her book *A Treasury of the Great Children’s Book Illustrators*: “Mr. Tenniel is the only artist who has drawn for me who resolutely refused to use a model and declared he no more needed one than I should need a multiplication table to work a mathematical problem” (qtd in Meyer 68). Carroll actively stated he disapproved and even refused to pay for said illustrator, who took many

liberties. Therefore, I will be attending to Carroll's vision by only including his original manuscript illustrations.

Chapter Four: "Pride and Purgatory" focuses on many of the same themes Chapter Three did, with variations of how medieval Christian writers changed specific elements of Fairyland to become more Purgatorial. This chapter discusses subtle hints toward the entrance of Purgatory, Fairies becoming demonic angels sent to purge sin, the Bishop Bloodline as Alice's guide through Purgatory, the Fairy Queen's embodiment of sin, and lastly, Religious symbolism, puns, and connections in terms of the *Alice* story and original manuscript illustrations.



## 2. THE DEMONIZATION OF FAIRYLAND, THE BIRTH OF PURGATORY, AND VICTORIAN FOLKLORE

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and "Alice's Adventures Underground" were written during the Victorian time period (1864 and 1865). This chapter will first investigate background information on the Victorian era, specifically in relation to Victorian childhood and Victorian fairy-lore in popular culture. We will then investigate how this information was used as a multilayered platform to critique the Victorians' views on childhood and simultaneously set up Carroll's story with a vehicle to expose Alice's sin of pride (the concept of Alice and her pride will be further explored in Chapter Four). Secondly, this chapter will explain how Fairyland transformed into Purgatory with descriptions of medieval literature, like St. Patrick's Purgatory Narratives, and prominent critics such as Richard Firth Green, whose work has largely contributed to the making of this thesis. This background information is crucial to this thesis as it explains in-depth how the medieval tradition of combination Fairyland-Purgatory stories came to be, while also setting up the explanation as to why Carroll combined Fairyland and Purgatory to create Wonderland. The history of medieval Christian writers who developed the medieval tradition of Fairyland-Purgatory stories will provide readers with clues as to why Carroll includes the physical characteristics found in fairy-lore (i.e. visual attributes of characters and geography), but the functional characteristics found in Purgatory (i.e. the roles played by the characters) when designing Wonderland. Examples of the characteristics mentioned above will be examined in Chapters Three and Four.

Before *Alice* can be analyzed, it is first necessary to understand the Victorian period that aided the creation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and the

metamorphosis of Fairyland itself and how Purgatory came to be. In the Victorian period, as we shall see, English citizens began to have an increased fascination with fairies. *Funk & Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia*'s summary of children's literature describes 19<sup>th</sup> century Victorian children having a vivid response to myth and fairy stories in the 1800s. *Funk & Wagnalls* also states in their encyclopedia entry "Children's Literature" that there was a rise in the nonsense genre and verse, including but not limited to authors Edward Lear and Lewis Carroll. The nonsense genre, as I have discussed in our introduction, is often attributed to Carroll as one of the first founders of the nonsense genre. Countless critics agree on this, including Simoniti, Neill, Manguel, and even Gabelman. In the following abstract, author Anna Barton sums up the current understanding of the nonsense genre in her book *Nonsense Literature*:

"Nonsense" is a literary genre that is difficult to define in absolute terms, and examples of literary nonsense are frequently found in other kinds of text. It is, on the one hand, a fairly recent invention. The Oxford English Dictionary describes Edward Lear as "the parent of modern nonsense writers," and it is certainly the case that "modern nonsense" originates with Lear and Lewis Carroll in the mid-19th century. However, it is equally true that the work of Lear and Carroll also belongs to a much-older literary tradition that might be traced back to 11th-century England or even further, to the literature of classical Antiquity. This broader definition understands nonsense as a kind of literature that is inseparable from the literature of sense, so that, as its name suggests, "non-sense" always exists in relation to, and as a comment on, "sense." T. S. Eliot, whose poetry learns from that of Lear and Carroll...suggests that nonsense is latent in all kinds

of literature, so that nonsense might best be described as a kind of writing that draws attention to and takes advantage of the arbitrary nature of language.

Nonsense is, therefore, literature that complicates or obstructs the relationship between word and world, or word and meaning, rather than using words as a conduit to the world they describe. Nonsense might do this by drawing attention to language as a thing in itself, with its own sonic and visual qualities, or it might use puns, which demonstrate how easily meaning can be turned upside-down by a slip of the tongue. This makes nonsense a near neighbor of poetry, which is also literature that creates meaning out of sound and form. But, as Eliot suggests, it also lends nonsense a kind of anarchic potential because, by making fun of language, nonsense presents a significant challenge to the power language has to name, know, and own the world. For these reasons, nonsense has attracted attention not just from readers of children's literature and Victorian literature, but also from linguists, theorists, and philosophers. (Barton)

Barton's description of the nonsense genre demonstrates that it is difficult to define because the nature of the genre itself is rooted in the nonsensical. Nonsense as a rhetorical device, then, functions much like poetry. While nonsense is a device used by Carroll, many critics read the *Alice* story through a single lens—as though its nonsensicality defines it. They further assume that anything that does not fit into their reading is also nonsensical. I suspect those critics miss crucial details when they write off what does not fit their theory as nonsense. Now, this is not to say that Carroll never uses nonsense as a rhetorical device, but critics use this term as a crutch in relation to the *Alice* stories that allows them to ignore potentially important details. For example, the critics

who we mentioned in our introduction—Manguel, for instance—would often take one aspect of *Alice*'s world they agree with, like Fairyland, and then claim anything that did not align with Fairyland was nonsense. The issue with this assumption is it creates a problem where whenever a critic is proven wrong, or their theory proven to be problematic, they simply just state it is due to the nonsensical nature of the book. This is not entirely inaccurate in all cases. Carroll does, for example, use nonsensical animals like the Mock Turtle, who will be discussed at length in Chapter Four. That being said, this case of the nonsensical in the first *Alice* book and manuscript is far different from what other critics like Manguel and Gabelman have been claiming. Gabelman claims anything that is not myth/religious allegory is nonsense, and Manguel argues anything not fairy-lore/fairy-tale, is nonsense. These interpretations use the nonsense genre as a way to avoid the analysis of potential holes in their own arguments. It is crucial then for critics of the *Alice* stories to recognize that the manuscript and first *Alice* book have multiple layers to them. By only recognizing one lens as the definitive answer, while staking a claim that any opposition of their theory is simply nonsensical, critics ignore and justify a gap within *Alice* scholarship. In order for *Alice* scholars to fully grasp the whole message of the *Alice* story, they must recognize that Carroll layered the manuscript with elements of both Fairyland and Purgatory, and the two frameworks function as a single narrative. Though nonsense rhetoric may play a factor in terms of nonsensical animals, we should not be so quick to assume all things different from our current theories are simply nonsensical.

I will now address the Victorian background necessary for understanding the *Alice* story that critics like Gabelman ignore in their interpretation of the *Alice* book.

First, it is essential to note that the Victorians were enamored with fairy-lore and that Carroll's Wonderland, in many ways, resembles medieval Fairyland, as I will show, and is thus a point that cannot be overemphasized for its importance. We further have the documentation of the many artists, poets, and writers who would sit in places rumored to house fairy folk, and Carroll was by no means an exception, as we know from Carroll's following Diary entry taken from *Lewis Carroll's Dairies*:

July 22. (M). Arthur Hughes came over for the day, and we took a splendid walk together, "Fairy-land," "The Silent Pool," the Irvingite Church, Shere, and so to Dorking and back by train. (Dodgson 225).

Editor Edward Wakeling notes in the footnote of this entry the following information about Carroll's "Fairy-land":

"Fairyland" was the name given to woodland between Merrow and Newland's Corner, a high point on the North Downs overlooking Albury and Chilworth. "The Silent Pool" was fed by springs behind Sherbourne Farm, downhill from Newlands Corner towards Shere. There are two ponds; the upper has a clay bottom and clear water, and it is this that is named "The Silent Pool." Martin Tupper (1810-89) invented a romantic legend about this pool which appealed to the Victorians. The Irvingite Church was Henry Drummond's "Catholic and Apostolic Church" at Albury. Henry Drummond (1786-1860) was Rev. George Portal's uncle...and founder of the Irvingite Church in London, originating from the philosophy and teachings of Edward Irving (1792-1834). After Irving's death, the spiritual centre of this movement came to Albury. (225-226)

The Fairyland location mentioned in said footnote was a place many artists were drawn to precisely because of the fairies. Partly due to Martin Tupper, the romance around Fairyland had attracted many a poet, artist, and child to the pool perchance to catch a glimpse of a fairy and build inspiration for their upcoming works. Carroll even had a work titled “Bruno’s Revenge” published in *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* about how to find fairies because so many Victorians took an interest in them—whether real or fake. Carole Silver explains in her article “On the Origin of Fairies: Victorians, Romantics, and Folk Belief” that throughout Queen Victoria’s reign leading into the Edwardian period there was a vast amount of scientists, historians, theologians, artists, and writers who were advocates and investigators of fairy existence and elfin origins.

In all, in a remarkable “trickle up” of folk belief, a large number of educated Romantics, Victorians, and Edwardians speculated at length on whether fairies did exist or had at least once existed. For the Irish, especially those involved in the Celtic revival, belief in fairies was a political and cultural necessity. (Silver 141)

Silver explains above that fairy-lore began as a type of popular culture among the average populace and then “trickled up” into the upper class, who also began to have a fascination with fairies. In other words, rather than the upper-class influencing the average populace, the average populace influenced the upper-class. The Victorian’s obsession with fairy folk, as well as Carroll’s fascination with them, implies a strong connection between the *Alice* stories and the fairy-tale tradition. The idea that Carroll also could have written said fairy-tale for Alice Liddell, an upper-class child, demonstrates the “trickle up” effect the

Victorians were experiencing in terms of folk-lore. Alice would have very likely known what fairies were, and Carroll would have also been aware of their legendary existence.

Writing fairy-lore also allowed authors to criticize English social norms safely and entertainingly, as Laurence Talairach-Vielmas explains in his article “Beautiful Maidens, Hideous Suitors: Victorian Fairy Tales and the Process of Civilization.” Writers of Victorian England, especially female writers, would use fairy-tales as a way to criticize the patriarchy and bring to light problems in Victorian English society.

Talairach-Vielmas demonstrates this in the following quote:

Interestingly, just as fairy tales were making their way into the nursery, they very quickly became a means to question social, political, and cultural issues. Indeed, though mid-Victorian fairy tales undoubtedly represented middle-class settings, protagonists, and codes of conduct, some of them also debunked the bourgeois ideology. Not all literary fairy tales were subversive, however, and many of them seemed to both affirm and denounce the fairy tale's patriarchal discourse, especially when written - or rewritten - by women. In fact, in order to challenge traditional roles, women had to work within cultural paradigms...the significant aspect of most of them is the transformation and adaptation of the classical fairy tales to the social and cultural environment of mid-Victorian England. (273)

It is quite plausible that Carroll exemplifies what Talairach-Vielmas describes above as “a means to question social, political, and cultural issues,” using *Alice* to critique Victorian society. As we will soon see, moreover, there is evidence that he took issues with the Victorian era's conception of childhood.

In his essay “Lewis Carroll and Victorian Morality,” Morton N. Cohen describes a “cult of childhood innocence which the Victorians inherited from the Romantics” (7). Molly Clark Hillard explains in her article “Dangerous Exchange: Fairy Footsteps, Goblin Economies, and ‘The Old Curiosity Shop,’” that two huge overlapping motifs of the Victorian period’s fairy-tales were that of childhood and folklore, in which folk-lore was a valued sign of the innocent past (68). The interpretation of most Victorian fairy-tales as precious childhood and folk-lore could explain the considerable Carroll criticism of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* as a coming of age story or likened to it. Ren Aihong’s article “Power Struggle between the Adult and Child in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland” explains that her interpretation of the text is one of a child who had been thrown into the adult world and forced into a hard power dynamic between the relationship of child and adult (1659). Aihong’s interpretation of Alice being thrown into an adult world would echo the common themes in much of Victorian fairy-tales of the time. The *Alice* book might also give a bit of a surprise to its viewers because childhood was seen—as Hillard previously stated—as innocent.

In this section, I will explain how the Victorian construct of childhood was used as a medium to illustrate Alice’s sin of pride and critique Victorian society. What makes this tale unique in the Victorian period, I would argue, is Carroll’s radical way of writing his main character for the time. Victorian children were under extreme pressure to act in a way that encouraged children to be seen and not heard, which we have first accounts of through the diaries and letters of Lewis Carroll. These diary entries also provide evidence of Carroll’s strong feelings toward Victorian childhood standards. Cohen’s essay includes a compilation and discussion of his editing history of Carroll’s letters, magazines, poems,



and diaries, as well as some of the original documentation, which I will now quote at length:

The Dodgsons, like other good Victorian families, produced family magazines.

The earliest one is appropriately entitled Useful and Instructive Poetry, and it was composed entirely by the young Lewis Carroll, aged thirteen, especially for a younger brother and sister... The first verse in the magazine is entitled “My Fairy”:

I have a fairy by my side

Which says I must not sleep,

When once in pain I loudly cried

It said, “You must not weep.”

If, full of mirth, I smile and grin,

It says, “You must not laugh,”

When once I wished to drink some gin,

It said “You must not quaff.”

When once a meal I wished to taste

It said “You must not bite,”

When to the wars I went in haste,

It said “You must not fight.”

“What may I do?” At length I cried,

Tired of the painful task,

The fairy quietly replied,

And said “You must not ask.”

Moral: “You mustn't.”

This playful rhyme is an apt comment on Victorian childhood and, by implication, on Victorian parenthood and adulthood. After all, these children who were taught that they mustn't do in time go on to become adults, and they carried the lesson of mustn't to the four corners of the earth. (Cohen 5)

Cohen's interpretation of Carroll's original childhood poem summing up life for a great deal of Victorian childhood helps us understand his portrayal of Alice.

Carroll's outspoken Alice appears to be the antithesis of Victorian childhood ideals. For example, Alice in the following scene watches the Queen of Hearts pass judgment on the Knave before the trial even begins. Instead of sitting quietly, Alice yells in defiance to the Queen:

“Now for the evidence,” said the King, “and then the sentence.”

“No!” said the Queen, “first the sentence, and then the evidence!”

“Nonsense!” cried Alice, so loudly that everybody jumped, “the idea of having the sentence first!”

“Hold your tongue!” said the Queen.

“I won't!” said Alice, “you're nothing but a pack of cards! Who cares for you?” (“Underground” 88)

Alice speaks out in opposition to an authority figure, stands up for herself and others, and is anything but a model of the quiet Victorian child. Childhood during the Victorian period was a time of both sternness but also idealized innocence. The Victorian period, as Hillard explained, was one that associated childhood with innocence, and though the *Alice* story illustrates the idealized innocence of childhood at times, at other times,

Carroll seems to critique Victorian society for its treatment of their children through Alice's character. For example, throughout the story Alice exhibits the Victorian pressures on children to act like mature adults, which can be seen in the beginning of "Alice's Adventures Underground" when Alice makes a mistake and scolds herself: "Come! there's no use in crying!" said Alice to herself rather sharply, 'I advise you to leave off this minute!' (she generally gave herself very good advice, and sometimes scolded herself so severely as to bring tears into her eyes...) ("Underground" 9). Crying is often viewed as a childish behavior, and here we see Alice rebuking her need to cry, which is unlike a child of her age.

However, throughout her journey, she experiences moments in which she is encouraged to embrace her childhood rather than act older than she is, as was the Victorian ideal. The most apparent moment of this encouragement is in Carroll's inclusion of the poem "Old Father William," in "Alice's Adventures Underground":

"You are old, father William," the young man said,  
"And your hair is exceedingly white:  
And yet you incessantly stand on your head-  
Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"In my youth," father William replied to his son,  
"I feared it might injure the brain  
But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,  
Why, I do it again and again." ("Underground" 53)

This poem describes a situation opposite to Alice's need to appear grown-up. Though silly, the poem makes fun of being a certain age but ridiculously pretending to be something else. We are clued in by Old Father William's white hair and name that he is older, but he is depicted doing childish activity such as standing on one's head. Alice, the inverse of the character Old father William, forces herself to act grown-up. She will not let herself be a child, which, as explained by Cohen in Carroll's diary entries, is an essential ideal to Victorian culture during this time. The Victorian sternness toward children was one that Carroll—as suggested by his early poem “My Fairy”—was very much against, hence the critique that it is silly for Alice to pretend she is grown up. Thus, while on the surface, Alice's character appears to conform to the Victorian expectations of how a child *should* act (as an adult), I believe *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is actually a critique on these Victorian expectations. It is these critiques imposed by Carroll that provides a vessel for the Purgatory mythology to function. For the myth of Purgatory to work, the victim of Purgatory must be guilty of a sin worth purging—for Alice, this sin is pride. Because Alice attempts to avoid childlike behavior like crying, as seen in the previous example, it is implied that she will not allow herself to be a child and instead forces herself to behave like a mature adult. The action of scolding herself for crying suggests that Alice is so prideful that she believes in her perfection, and cannot perform human or childlike actions like crying. Carroll breaks away from the more innocent version of childhood by subjecting Alice to painful lessons involving her pride. She shrinks and grows at a rapid pace, abuses herself, and often finds herself scared and confused at the mercy of Wonderland. Alice's pride will be further examined in Chapter Four.

Next, I will discuss a vital background necessary for understanding Carroll's approach to Wonderland through the demonization of Fairyland and the birth of Purgatory. There has been some speculation among critics, such as professor and author Richard Green, that Fairyland is responsible for the birth of Purgatory. Medieval fairy-lore and Purgatory were often combined together in medieval fables to demonize Fairyland and give power back to the church (Green 180-190). The religious practice of combining existing culture with religious connotations is a typical historical occurrence associated with Catholicism and Christianity. Fairyland in medieval scholarship has contributed to many different fables, fairy-tales, and myths throughout its lifetime. Fairyland in the fables of Arthur and Avalon, for example, specifically by Geoffrey of Monmouth, William of Malmesbury, and Layamon, have provided stories of humility among fairy-kind. Such fables mentioned above speak of fairies tending to Arthur's wounds until he is strong enough to return to earth (Green 180-190).

Fables with Arthur and Avalon were often used to demonize Fairyland and encourage belief in Heaven and Hell (Green 180-190). Green discusses the popularity of fairy-lore during the time of Purgatory's creation. The average populace—people not involved with the church as an occupation but rather the people they would like to convert—loved Fairyland fables that spoke of beautiful fairies saving the lives of King Arthur and his troops. However, the issue arose in the church that Fairyland was neither Heaven nor Hell, which meant ultimately that it was not part of the teachings of the orthodox church (Green 180-190). The issue of people believing in Fairyland not only sent people away from what the church was preaching, but it also posed a real problem: that the church may lose power and thus control over the people.

Arthur's Avalon fables provide an exciting insight into why medieval Christian authors began adapting fairy-lore to become more Purgatorial. These stories that once, as previously stated, held beautiful renditions of fairy folk, were so controversial that most people had an opinion on the whereabouts of Arthur himself. Whether or not Arthur is dead and returning has been wildly debated among critics and popular culture alike since the story's arrival. One account of a brawl over the suggestion of Arthur's whereabouts, according to Hermann of Tournai, describes the Cornish town of Bodmin in 1113 being left in utter bloodshed. The fight broke out between some monks visiting from Laon and a local man over Arthur's current state—being living or dead (Green 180-190). The debate on Arthur's whereabouts—living or dead—is a curious topic for people to fight over, especially since it involves local men who believe in the popular culture, as opposed, for example, to religious writings. The idea of Arthur's survival was directly opposed to orthodox belief at that time (Green 180-190). To say Arthur was dead was to say he was in Heaven or Hell, but to say he was alive was to reinforce the concept of Fairyland. Consequentially, speaking about his whereabouts in a public setting, much like the example above, might end in death or a physical fight likened to the one cited previously. Stories about Arthur's Fairyland imagine another world that was neither Heaven nor Hell and therefore was outside of the Christian belief of the afterlife (Green 180-190).

To remedy the power struggle between the church and the people and still cater to the popular culture of the time, medieval Christian authors did what they have historically done to get other religions on board with biblical scripture—adopt the culture and adapt the story to make sense with the Bible. Incorporating cultural belief/popular culture and

religious adoption/adaptation is something seen throughout the spread of Catholicism and Christianity. Examples of popular culture's adaptation to religion can be seen through Fairyland-Purgatory fables (Green 180-190), the combination of Mary/the Lady of Guadalupe/Tonantzin (Rosemary Radford Ruether), and even Christmas traditions that have been adopted from Pagan rituals and the winter solstice (Steven Hijmans).

One reason for medieval Christian authors to approach other cultures in the manner described above is to make their ideas and doctrine more palatable, as well as providing a way to alter stories, rituals, and even deities to fit their religious beliefs without completely throwing out popular culture. These adaptations have taken place throughout biblical history. However, these adaptations were not so kind to fairies as medieval Christian authors did not want sinners believing that Fairyland was an alternative to Heaven. Instead, these stories demonized the underground world, rather than creating a neutral zone. According to popular belief, Fairyland, and its populace, were transformed into demons/neutral angels, and the first layer of Hell now formally referred to as Purgatory. A notable example of a story about Fairyland being explicitly combined with the Christian idea of Purgatory is Peter of Cornwall's Saint Patrick's Purgatory (ca. 1200), referenced by Green in *Elf Queens and Holy Friars Fairy Beliefs and the Medieval Church*, from which I will quote here at length:

One of the earliest and strangest of these ancillary Saint Patrick's Purgatory narratives, Peter of Cornwall's story... of an unnamed knight ... [who] has entered purgatory... this knight comes upon the hall of a huntsman- king called Gulinus, who immediately tenders him the hand of his beautiful daughter. That night in the throes of passion he opens his eyes only to discover that he is

embracing an old withered tree and that his penis is trapped in a fissure in its trunk... One of the king's servants hammers away at it with a spike, tightening the tree's grip and causing him excruciating pain, but when the king offers him the relief of a soothing warm bath, he promptly finds himself being boiled alive; predictably the subsequent offer of a cool bath to refresh him leads to his being plunged into freezing water and being lacerated with shards of ice. Ever trusting, he then accepts an invitation to visit the games room, where he is hung up by his feet and bounced like a ball from one abrasive wall to the next. In the morning the king and his servants have vanished and the knight finds himself alone in the entrance to purgatory... there is plenty of evidence that we are dealing here with a barely Christianized account of the dangerous hospitality of the fairy folk. (qtd in Green 182-183)

The unnamed knight mentioned in the story above was purged of his sin of lust, and the fairies are presented as deceitful and dangerous. Demonization of this sort was meant to cause people to fear Fairyland, influencing them to believe that fairies and elves were deceitful, and that Purgatory was populated with demons. Fairies play at the mouth of Purgatory and cause confusion, frustration, rage, denial, and torment.

Medieval Christian authors had altered the perspective of fairies to turn them into neutral angels who live in Purgatory to perform penance. Purgatory was viewed not as a place of wonderment or oasis, like the aforementioned Fairyland, but as the first layer of Hell itself. Purgatory was a terrifying and confusing place meant to purge unsuspecting visitors of their mortal sins. Fairies, instead of being guiding spirits, became demonic angels sent to purge mortals of their sin. This crucial discovery by Richard Green linked



Purgatory and Fairyland fables as the same place and highlighted the reasons why medieval Christian authors created Purgatory to begin with, despite it never making an appearance in the bible.

This fascinating intermingling of Fairyland fables and Purgatorial narratives has been relatively unexplored in scholarship and literature. As I will argue, Lewis Carroll combined Fairyland and Purgatory in the Victorian age to create his vision of Wonderland.

### 3. ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN FAIRYLAND

To fully understand Carroll's uniting of Fairyland and Purgatory to create Wonderland, we must first illustrate the origins and attributes of Fairyland. This chapter, then, will focus on fairy-tale traditions and how they are developed in the *Alice* story. We will be covering the entrance to Fairyland, the physical appearance of the fairies themselves, royal fairies, nature fairies, changelings, fairy castles, fairy food, the fountain of youth, and the passage of time in Fairyland throughout this chapter. Each segment will be explored in relation to the *Alice* story. Fairyland has been studied in so many different ways that it is difficult to say what concrete evidence belongs to fairy stories. Even critics like Richard Green have explicitly stated that they think it is impossible to know the answers to some questions, such as, are fairies governed by a royal family, are elves the same as fairies, and even what color are fairies (3)? These difficult questions are ones that may very well have been answered in medieval discourse; however, these answers may have been lost to time. Nevertheless, the stories of Fairyland do deliver important information as to essential aspects of Fairyland itself and what typically does not appear in fairy-lore.

By analyzing how medieval authors altered specific stories involving fairy-lore to fit orthodox faith and how it impacted the populace's view on Fairyland, fairy-lore, and fairies themselves, the reader may get a glimpse of what popular culture at the time viewed as foundational to the Fairyland tradition. One critic, for example, who makes a case for the importance of Fairyland's location being underground, not so much specific to a hill or region of some kind, is Howard Patch. Patch explains in his article "Some Elements in Mediæval Descriptions of the Otherworld" that Fairyland, though once

attributed to stories involving a fairy hill of some kind in Celtic mythology, actually holds more importance for the fairy stories to locate Fairyland underground. Thus, the fairy hill is not as important as the physical location of Fairyland being underground (613). The idea of an underground Fairyland is something that has been wildly understood and respected in fairy folklore by a plethora of critics such as Patch, Richard Green, and K. M. Briggs, who will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

Fairyland being underground then connects to Carroll's story's original title "Alice's Adventures Underground." Carroll's inclusion of the word "underground" in his title signals the importance of the story's underground setting. With a fairy-lore lens, one can assume that a story taking place underground has a connection to Fairyland. The entrance to Wonderland has remained the same between the "Alice" manuscript and the first *Alice* book. Alice must crawl/fall into a rabbit hole to reach Wonderland. Carroll's choice to have Alice fall into a rabbit hole originates, I will argue, in fairy-lore. When she falls, she says "I must be getting to the center of the earth...Let me see: that would be 4 thousand miles down, I think—" ("Underground" 3). Alice keeps bringing the reader's attention to the fact she has been falling for quite a long time, implying the actual depth of Fairyland itself: "Down, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end?" ("Underground" 3).

Not only does Alice fall into an underground world like Fairyland, but also Carroll himself even refers to the *Alice* story as a fairy-tale in a poem he wrote to his good friend Marion Terry as cited in *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*:

"Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"

To M. A. B.

The royal MAB, dethroned, discrowned

By rebel fairies wild,

Has found a home on English ground,

And lives an English child.

I know it, Maiden, when I see

A fairy-tale upon your knee,

And note the page that idly lingers

Beneath those still and listless fingers,

And mark those dreamy looks that stray

To brighter visions far away,

Still seeking in the pictured story

The memory of a vanished glory. (Carroll 15)



**Figure 2. The Knave Stands Trial Before the Queen and Court.**

Lewis Carroll. "Alice's Adventures Underground." Original Manuscript, p. 87.

Carroll referring to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a “fairy-tale” with “rebel fairies” confirms the stories’ connections to fairy-lore and leaves the reader plenty of space for interpretation involving medieval Fairyland. Furthermore, Wonderland shows its fairy roots not only from its location but also from its inhabitance. K. M. Briggs categorizes a few fairy types: heroic fairies (i.e., the aristocracy of Fairyland) and nature fairies (“English Fairies” 270), and while there are many other fairy types that can be found in fairy-lore, we will be focusing on these two tropes as examples of these fairy types which can be found in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

According to Briggs, heroic fairies, as aristocracy, typically spend their time in manner of medieval nobility. Typically, they are of human size, although some fairies choose their size and are capable of shapeshifting (Briggs, “English Fairies” 270). Though not portrayed heroically, the Queen of Hearts seems to be a member of the aristocracy, especially when we consider her court games and royal status (see Figures 2 and 3). As seen in Figure 3, the Queen and her noblemen are taking part in courtly entertainment.

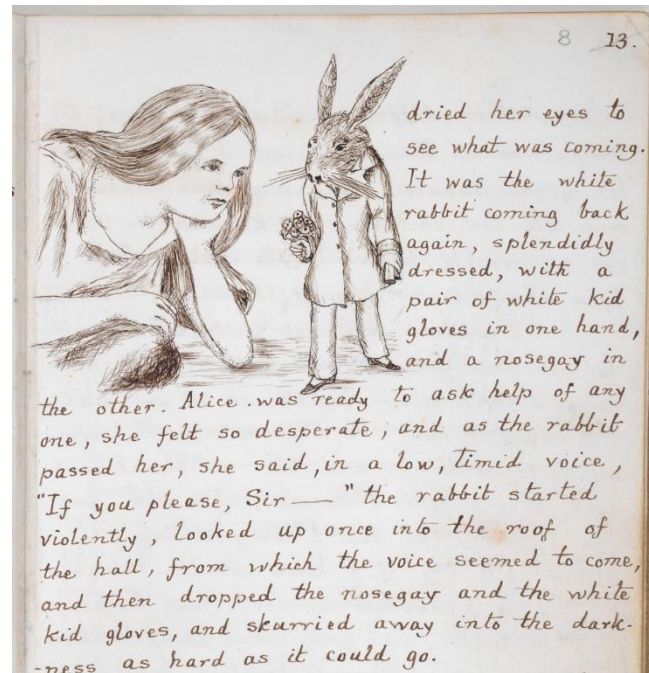


**Figure 3. Alice in the Queen's Garden.**  
Lewis Carroll. “Alice's Adventures Underground.” Original Manuscript, p. 77.

Briggs also mentions nature fairies. Nature fairies are typically fairies who have a connection to nature in some way, may that be in the protection of it, taking the physical image connected to it, or simply where the fairy resides. In other words, critics like Briggs explains that nature fairies may protect trees, plants, unripped seeds, and rivers. They may leave flowers as gifts, or punish unworthy visitors. Briggs also comments that there is a multitude of nature fairies that often take the form of animals that can be a part of the fauna of Fairyland. However, these animals lack the power to shape-shift, so, as Briggs puts it, “they are definitely less spiritual in type” (“English Fairies” 273). This can mean a multitude of things in connection to *Alice*, but one of the most curious and provoking theories we may take from this quote is that *these* fairies may hold the answer as to why Alice meets a series of animals in the story (such as the rabbit for example) while the other characters who have the most power in Wonderland take the form of a human (i.e. the Queen of Hearts). To rephrase, the fairies Alice meets that are animals, like the White Rabbit, Mouse, Puppy, Bill the Gardener, March Hare, Dodo, and Caterpillar, help lure her in and purge her of her sin, but do not have the ability in which to fully cleanse Alice of her sin, nor do they have the authority to let her leave. These fairies are under the complete rule of the Queen, a fairy who does not take the form of an animal. Instead, she takes the form of a human woman and has more authority in Fairyland than any of her royal subjects. She is also the most powerful character in the book.

The nature fairies that Alice encounters, though not as powerful as the Queen, bear great significance and connection to the lore of Fairyland. Upon meeting Alice in the original manuscript, the White Rabbit accidentally drops a nosegay (see Figure 4). This

action gives the reader a clear example of Briggs's description of a nature fairy. Fairy-lore also shares an exciting connection to children in particular. Briggs explains that



**Figure 4. The White Rabbit Drops a Nosegay.**

Lewis Carroll. "Alice's Adventures Underground." Original Manuscript, p. 15.

human babies and children were often stolen away by fairies to either help fairies in their rendering of their own babies, or recruit fairy stock with a "human admixture and to give the substituted changeling a chance of a human nurture" (274). Jan Beveridge explains in her article "Faires" that "One recurring fairy theme is their abduction of either children or attractive, healthy young adults away from their homes and families to live with them" (37). The common fairy trope of child abduction can be seen in *Alice* at the beginning of the story, where Alice is being lured, seemingly, into Wonderland by the White Rabbit. Alice also meets a baby during her encounter with the Duchess. The baby appears to be a shapeshifter of sorts after it suddenly changes in Alice's arms from a human baby to a pig: "'If you're going to turn into a pig, my dear,' said Alice seriously, 'I'll have nothing more to do with you. Mind now!'" (*Wonderland* 64). Shapeshifters and changelings such

as this can be found in much of fairy-lore, further supporting the theory that Carroll's story takes place in Fairyland. I wager, however, that Alice is not brought to Wonderland for the purpose of raising the changeling, nor do I believe she was brought to render offspring for the fairies. I argue that Alice was, in fact, brought to Wonderland to be purged of her sin of pride. Carroll did not merely give his readers Fairyland, then, but Fairyland as Purgatory, where a child or person may be lured (which could be the case with Alice), or accidentally fall, into the realm of magical creatures to be purged of their sin. I will explore Alice's sin of pride in Chapter Four, along with the crucial role shapeshifting plays in her purging.

I will now discuss the physical aspects of Fairyland that appear not only in Fairy folklore but also in the *Alice* stories, such as the castles, fountains, and the one all-important garden. As I will show, Carroll uses these features to build the Fairyland that Alice must navigate through. Beginning with Fairyland, including castles and gardens, Richard Green refers to many medieval stories, including them in his analysis of Fairyland. One story, in particular, is the early 14<sup>th</sup> century *Roman d'Ogier* which Green gives as an example of a castle garden representing Fairyland: "There can be no question that this castle and its adjacent garden represent fairyland" (186). The garden and castles that appear in medieval stories of Fairyland is a crucial link to the *Alice* story because at the very heart of Wonderland rests the Queen's castle and her royal garden. These images play important roles in the settings of Carroll's books, just as they do in fairy-lore, further supporting the theory that Wonderland is, in fact, a representation of Fairyland.

Another recurring image found in fairy-lore is fountains, which Carroll also includes as part of Wonderland. When she enters the Queen's garden, Alice "found



herself in the garden among the bright flowers and cool fountains” (“Underground” 66). I believe these fountains are representations of the fountains of youth of Fairyland, such as the one found in the medieval tale of Dutch Roman Van Walewein, to which Green draws our attention:

In a remarkable scene in the Dutch Roman van Walewein. Walewein (Gawain) rides in quest of a lady called Ysabele, who is being held captive in Endi (India) by her father, King Assentijn; father and daughter reside in a formidable castle that has a pleasure garden containing a fountain of youth whose waters flow from the earthly paradise. When Gawain first spies this castle, it is on the far side of a river whose waters burn like fire and which can be crossed only on a bridge that is sharper than a razor. (189)

This tale exemplifies not only the fountains that exist in fairy-lore, but also the castles and gardens as well. These same images also appear in the *Alice* stories. With characters like the Queen that resembles fairies from Fairyland, the underground setting of both the *Alice* story and fairy-lore, the appearance of the changeling, and the recurring images of castles, fountains, and gardens, Wonderland’s fairy-lore roots become increasingly apparent.

Still, there is one last piece of the puzzle that must be addressed: the moment at the end of the story when Alice wakes up. For years, readers have analyzed the story under the assumption that Alice’s entire journey is simply a dream. Much like dreams, however, Fairyland’s time works differently from that of our linear passage. Howard Patch mentions, for example, that in the medieval tale of Echtra Nera “the hero left his people at a feast and entered a fairy hill: there he took a wife, had a child, and at length

returned to his own people, finding them still engaged in the same feast” (612). It’s not unheard of for victims and even wandering visitors who fall into Fairyland to stay at length and then to return to either an accelerated future or only to find that time has not passed at all, as we see in the tale of Echtra Nera. Here is a man who leaves the real world and enters Fairyland, living out what is implied to be an extended period of time, and then upon returning to the real world, discovers that almost no time has passed. I believe that Alice has experienced a journey similar to Echtra Nera’s: entering Fairyland through the rabbit hole and remaining for a length of time before eventually returning to the real world to find she and her sister on the same bank in which they had only been on for a short while.

There is a reason, however, that so many readers believe that Alice is simply dreaming of Wonderland. The narrator states explicitly at the end of “Alice’s Adventures Underground,” that Alice had woken up from a “wonderful dream” (89). While it is possible that she simply awakens from her sleep at the end of this journey, I believe that due to the story’s unreliable narrator, it is arguable that her journey to Wonderland is a dream at all. The narrator is unreliable because the narrator is, in fact, Alice herself. Throughout the story, the narrator only gives the audience information that Alice already knows, and seems to have a considerable bias toward her, and a limited perspective. At the beginning of the story, for example, Alice is repeatedly referred to as “poor Alice” (“Underground” 6), but later on in the story, it is implied that she is better than her readers (“Underground” 4). All of which fluctuates with her given mood. If she feels she is doing well, the narrator sings her praises, asking the audience/ reader if they could even consider attempting what Alice has done: “do you think you could manage it?” (4).

However, when Alice feels she has done wrong,—i.e. when she is perplexed or insecure—the narrator’s tone then shifts from one of admiration and pride to that of sympathy and pity. She becomes “poor Alice” (6). *Alice’s* narrator appears only to know what Alice knows, and only feels what Alice feels, and therefore is likely Alice herself.

There is, however, a notable separation at the very end of “Alice’s Adventures Underground,” in which the reader gets the perspective of Alice’s sister. However, it can



**Figure 6. Carroll’s Personal Sketch of Alice Liddell.**  
Lewis Carroll. “Alice’s Adventures Underground.” Original Manuscript, p. 90.



**Figure 5. Carroll’s Photograph of Alice Liddell.**  
Carroll, Lewis. “Fascinating Photos Taken by Lewis Carroll Show the Young Girl Who Inspired ‘Alice in Wonderland’.” My Modern Met, Photograph of Alice Liddell, Collected by Kelly Richman-Abdou, 2017, <https://mymodernmet.com/real-life-alice-in-wonderland-lewis-carroll/>.

be argued that here the narrator switches from Alice to Carroll himself since there is a physical mark of separation. Carroll literally draws a line to distinguish these final paragraphs from the rest of Alice's narrative. On the final page of the manuscript, there is also a physical image drawn of Alice Liddell, the young girl who Carroll based his fictional Alice character off of (see Figures 5 and 6), as if to signal that he is addressing Alice Liddell directly. Alice, possibly being the narrator, is essential to the Fairyland framework because Alice then, as a logical child, may have jumped to the obvious conclusion that she fell asleep, rather than the more challenging to process conclusion: that she was in Fairyland.

Another reason I suspect that Alice is the narrator of this story is the moment when the narrator states at the beginning of "Alice's Adventures Underground" that: "this curious child [Alice] was very fond of pretending to be two people" ("Underground" 10). This could suggest that the narrator could, in fact, be Alice telling the story of herself, but as two different people. Given this evidence, there is a case to be made to name Alice as this novel's narrator, which means that our narrator has a limited perspective of what she experiences throughout her journey. Therefore, the reader must approach the narrator referring to her travel through Wonderland as a "dream" with a critical eye and consider attending to the hints and facts given by the story itself to come to one possible conclusion: that Wonderland really happened, and that Alice was just returned to her body when she "woke up."

#### 4. PRIDE AND PURGATORY

The story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* does not fit perfectly into either Fairyland or Purgatory, but this is because Wonderland has likely been built out of a meshing of the two worlds together. This chapter focuses on many of the same themes Chapter Three did, with variations of how medieval Christian writers changed specific elements of Fairyland to become more Purgatorial. This chapter discusses the subtle hints which clue the reader in to the entrance of Purgatory in the novel, fairies becoming demonic angels sent to purge sin, the bishop bloodline as Alice's guide through Purgatory, the Queen's reflection of Alice's sin, and lastly, religious symbolism, puns, and connections in terms of the *Alice* story and original manuscript illustrations.

To begin, let us revisit Alice's initial journey into Wonderland. As discussed in Chapter Three, Alice's journey began with her falling underground. In comparison to Fairyland, the original manuscript is far subtler in depicting a Purgatorial setting. The subtlety comes from Alice referring to a very specific geographical location upon her arrival without explicitly saying out loud why she chose that spot to compare Wonderland too. Nevertheless, Carroll still completes this combination story by hinting that Wonderland does indeed resemble Purgatory by still having Alice fall down the rabbit-hole. Green describes that to get to Purgatory, someone, like the heroes in Arthurian legends, would have to find a type of volcano or mountain that was seen as the mouth of Hell (179-180). The location of Purgatory has been debated among fairy-lore and Purgatory theorists, but as Green explains, fables like the Arthurian legends often mixed the two worlds. Often, the fables would have elements of both Purgatory mountains and underground Fairyland. Mountains were an essential part of Purgatory,

and they were also crucial to Celtic fairy-lore. Celtic traditions brought forth the fairy hill or mountain as one of their most defining Celtic features in the fairy-lore tradition (Patch 613). However, as Patch has discussed, even more important to fairy-lore than the hill or mountain in stories like *Sir Orfeo*, was the fact that the story took place underground. Carroll, thus, to continue the medieval tradition would have to take elements of both legends and combine them in a way that could fit into either fable.

Knowing the medieval tradition of Fairyland-Purgatory, Carroll thrusts Alice down the rabbit hole, a seemingly explicit nod to Fairyland and medieval stories like *Sir Orfeo*, which takes place underground. Simultaneously, Carroll gestures at a geographical location that provides similar geographical features similar to Dante Alighieri's *Purgatorio*, which includes the literal mountain of Purgatory. Green also refers to several Fairyland features in Purgatorial works, such as boiling waters, burning rivers, and volcano-like mountains (179-190). One interesting connection made by Carroll is to these physical descriptions given by his character Alice:

I wonder if I shall fall right through the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downwards... I shall have to ask them what the name of the country is, you know. Please Ma'am, is this New Zealand? ("Underground" 4)

Alice's reference to New Zealand is curious, especially considering the description of Purgatory above, which contains volcanos, burning mountains, and boiling waters. Indeed, New Zealand also has "Boiling Lakes, Steam Holes, Mud Volcanoes, Sulphur Baths, Medicinal Springs, and Burning Mountains" (Chapman). New Zealand, as a geographical location, has all the elements of Purgatory, while Carroll keeps the

connection to fairy-lore by having Alice fall down the rabbit hole descending into Fairyland.

This geographical location thus links the fairy-tale and Purgatory myth together, but the purpose for Alice to be sent to Wonderland is much more Purgatorial than it is Fairyland. As discussed in Chapter Three, Alice comes across what appears to be a changeling along her journey when a baby she is holding suddenly turns into a pig. If this were strictly a fairy-lore story, one might conclude that Alice was sent to care for the changeling; looking at Wonderland as a Fairyland-Purgatory combination, I do not believe this to be the case. Instead, I suggest that Alice falls into a Purgatorial Fairyland to purge her sin of pride. Furthermore, while the characters Alice encounters in the story take on physical attributes of what would be recognized as nature fairies and heroic fairies (mentioned in Chapter Three), they seem to take on the roles of Purgatorial angels who come to assist in performing penance on Alice and purge her sin of pride.

The Purgatorial aspect of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* becomes even more apparent when compared to Saint Patrick's Purgatory narratives, such as Peter of Cornwall's story (ca. 1200), previously explored in the introduction. Peter of Cornwall's Unnamed knight in this work is purged of the sin of lust through the fairies' penance. The act of purging sin can also be seen in "Alice's Adventures Underground." Alice's sin of pride takes her on a perilous journey where she encounters fairies who refuse to allow her arrogance. Throughout the entire story, Alice has everything she is proud to be: her intelligence, her knowledge of the world, even the pride of her being "poor" perfect little Alice all the time—taken from her. The story of the unnamed knight marrying the daughter of King Gulinus for lust was utter chaos. The knight is subject to being frozen,

boiled, and beaten to purge him of the sin of Lust, and cause the sin to have associations with a more demonized memory, much like Alice's size-changing and her consistently unstable environment pushing her to purge this sin of pride. The "fairies" in Purgatory would be the ones to help with the purging of the sin, so creatures like the Caterpillar, who will be discussed at length later, did not pay attention to Alice in the way that allowed her to be prideful could have been the fairies.

Alice's sin of pride is quite evident. Indeed, the characters she meets are fairy angels sent to preform penance through the following examples from the *Alice* stories. First, when Alice initially arrives in Wonderland, everything she begins to say, such as London being the capital of France, is false ("Underground" 14). Alice is aware of her continuous mistakes and is worried because her intelligence is what she prides herself on. Alice is unable to recite famous poetry, perform mathematics, or use proper grammar and thus begins to panic. Alice, at this moment, realizes she is not smart anymore. She is not even Alice anymore, and all this happens before she even stops falling down the rabbit hole. Her realization that her intelligence is gone shows the reader that the purging began the moment she started falling underground and that she is now officially in Purgatory. The reader can make the connection that Alice is indeed in Purgatory now when connected to medieval narratives that combined Fairyland and Purgatory. For example, Peter of Cornwall's unnamed knight, referenced in Chapter Two, illustrates the line in which Fairyland-Purgatory begins, and our human world ends. The knight woke up outside the entrance to Purgatory. This is where the line would be drawn given the moment Alice crossed the threshold (in this case, the entrance to the rabbit hole) when her purging had begun, just as when Peter of Cornwall's unnamed knight crossed the



threshold for the last time his purging was completed. The two stories parallel each other in a plethora of ways, one being this confirmation of the Purgatorial threshold, and the other having the main character display their sin upon entering Purgatory.

To explain further how Alice and Peter of Cornwall's unnamed knight purge their sin, let us examine our unnamed medieval knight a bit closer. Upon entering Purgatory, the knight tries to ravage the king's daughter, and when offered the option of marriage to do so, jumped at the chance, which inevitably leads to his purging of the sin of lust. When we examined the Knight's story in our introduction, we discovered that the punishment, so to speak, fit the crime. The unnamed knight is purged of his sin of lust through painful intercourse, taking the thing he once most desired and using it against him. Our knight was frozen, beaten, boiled, all while having his member contracted into a tree that was once his beautiful fairy bride. This purging took time and multiple lessons in pain and suffering to complete the penance. Likewise, the reader gets a sense of Alice's pride at the beginning of "Alice's Adventures Underground," when the narrator mentions that Alice had curtsied in the air. Yes, even in a small act such as this, Alice showed boastful and prideful responses. The narrator states, "Fancy curtsying as you're falling through the air. Do you think you could manage it?" ("Underground" 4). Alice's pride, when it came to things like insulting others, calling things stupid (what she perceives as lesser than herself), and even bragging, is abundant throughout "Alice's Adventures Underground." However, worse than that, Alice's pride runs deep, which is why, much like Peter of Cornwall's unnamed knight, her purging took a great deal of time and painful lessons.

Another glimpse the reader gets of Alice's prideful tendencies is during her fall. Alice is falling through the air, thinking about where she might appear on the other side. During this moment, Alice is alone in an unknown place, which can be potentially dangerous and could, for all she knows, even end in her death. Even though this lack of knowledge is significant and even dangerous, Alice goes on to say that if she asks someone where she is, then "What an ignorant little girl [they will] think me for asking. No, hopefully I shall see it written up somewhere" ("Underground" 4). Alice is so prideful that she refuses to ask questions even for her safety. She would rather be uninformed and prideful than admit to ignorance. The fact that she is willing to risk her life for pride is a testament to how truly deep this sin runs, and how long the purging will have to last.

Because Alice's pride is so ingrained, she exhibits worse signs of her sin, revealing to the reader how deep-seated her issues are. This depth becomes strikingly apparent before she learns any lessons about her pride as a sin. For example, Alice's pride gradually becomes obvious during the scene where she is unable to reach a key to leave a locked room because she is too small. She blames herself for being less than perfect little Alice. Unable to cope with any concept of failure, Alice scolds herself so severely it brings tears to her eyes. After thinking that the scolding she gave herself was too severe, Alice, as a consequence for her actions, physically abuses herself by boxing her ears ("Underground" 9). By having Alice physically hit her ears as punishment from the previous abuse she had given herself, Carroll provides proof of her inner struggle—Alice's pride is so abundant that she will not allow herself to be fallible, or to make any mistakes. She has made fun of others and boasted about herself, but her physical and

emotional self-abuse illuminates how deep her pride truly goes, as well as how deep the purging of the sin must be in Wonderland. She even goes so far as to compare herself to another little girl named Florence during this time. She panics over the thought of being like her. Florence is impoverished and lives in a little shack with few toys. Alice recognizes that Florence is also unsuccessful in school. She panics at the thought of no longer being perfect Alice and says she cannot be Florence because “I know so much she knows very little” (“Underground” 14). Alice is stating that she must know more, so the thought of her being the same as Florence is improbable. Alice continues to show her pride through how she views others as inferior, even going so far as to refuse to leave until she is convinced she is herself again.

In terms of its severity, Alice’s pride is not limited only to herself. She is also prideful toward others as she judges them under the assumption that she is better than they are. Just as Peter of Cornwall’s unnamed knight pushed his sin of lust onto the fairy princess, Alice pushes her pride onto every fairy that she meets by pridefully insulting and ignoring them. It is safe to say, given our discussion of the nature fairies in Chapter Three, that the animals Alice meets in Wonderland are likely fairies. In any case, Alice goes on to insult every one of these beings she happens upon, starting with the Mouse. She ignores his fears of cats and dogs and consistently insults him throughout their entire interaction. The interaction shows a lack of empathy, and that Alice is too prideful to realize that what she is saying is offensive. Alice even declares she can change the Mouse’s fear: “I think you’d take a liking to cats if you could only see [Dina my cat]” (“Underground” 20). She discounts the Mouse’s feelings and is prideful, thinking that no one could dislike Dina. Then she states that Dina is excellent at killing mice. The

statements above show a blatant disregard for the feelings of others and are so prideful that Alice seems to disregard anything outside of her own perspective. Alice then exclaims: “Have I offended you?” (“Underground” 21) then ignores the Mouse's response immediately instead of apologizing. Alice’s interaction with the Mouse when she directly asks him if she has offended him shows she is not entirely aware of what she is doing. Alice is even quick to change the conversation after the Mouse finally explodes, asking her not to talk to him about cats anymore due to the mass genocide of his family (“Underground” 20-22), which prompts her to bring up dogs then instead. Alice’s pride here is evident. She believes she is all-knowing and, therefore, can change the Mouse’s fears, even after the Mouse had verbalized his trauma of his family’s genocide and complained of Alice’s behavior. Rather than listen to the Mouse, Alice becomes absorbed in her own stories. This interaction is just one of the multiple opportunities Alice has to recognize that she is prideful, yet she remains oblivious and unchanging.

She also appears to create problems for herself through her prideful impulsive ways of thinking. For example, Alice recognizes that something terrible always occurs as a result of eating or drinking food in Wonderland. This unfortunate strain of events can be because no one is supposed to consume food in Fairyland-Purgatory unless they would like to stay there indefinitely (Briggs 275). Alternatively, as Lewis Spence puts it in his book *British Fairy Origins*: “To eat the food of fairies has the same results as when one partakes of the food of the dead...[and that] scores of tales utter warnings as to the danger of such a proceeding [eating fairy food]” (65-80). The dangers of Fairyland-Purgatory food are apparent with anyone consuming any food. One element that stays consistent in these Fairyland-Purgatory fables is the warning not to consume anything, no matter how

hungry that person may be. The Garden of Eden, supposedly located in the middle of Purgatory, was believed to be populated by fairies and the trees bore all kinds of fruit, yet *Elf Queens and Holy Friars Fairy Beliefs and the Medieval Church* states “The fairy world is hedged about with prohibitions against eating and drinking, then, but it is not clear why these same prohibitions should apply to purgatory. Evidently...not rendering purgatory infernal but fairyland purgatorial” (Green 180).

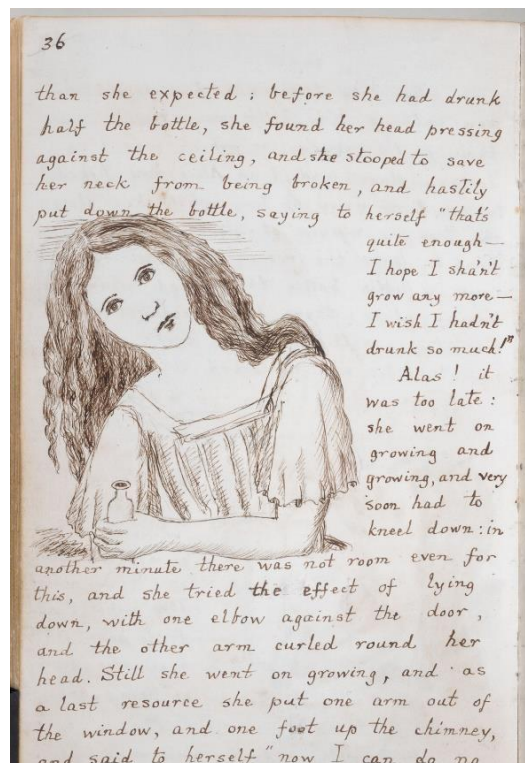
When Alice ate anything, she grew and shrunk, causing her great fear and torment, but it was not just Alice who faced this; it was anyone consuming any food. The Mad Hatter, March Hare, the Knave, and Alice herself all have horrible things happen to them as a direct result of them consuming food. Even though critics suspected the Mad Hatter and the March Hare were insane due to the Mercury on the Mad Hatter’s hat, I argue that their behavior could result from the tea they consume in the novel *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (95). Anyone who ate anything in Wonderland had some misfortune come upon them, including but not limited to Alice herself. Everyone seems lost in a state of confusion. Alice is tormented by shape-shifting every time she eats, and the Knave is scheduled to be beheaded for eating the Queen’s tarts. Clearly, no one should consume anything in Fairyland. The Mad Hatter consuming Tea with the March Hare may be why the Hatter can never leave the Tea Party, because, as Briggs previously stated, those who eat fairy food are doomed to stay in Fairyland indefinitely. Perhaps the pair were even driven mad. As Spence stated, there are lots of warnings about consuming food, not all of which specify what happens in the land of the dead when mortals do consume food.

But what makes Alice's decision to eat fairy food so prideful is that she recognizes that something terrible always happens when she eats in Wonderland. Nevertheless, she continues to do it. She recognizes that eating caused her to grow and shrink to various uncomfortable sizes and had even filled a room full of tears from her previous encounter with Wonderland food. Despite all of this and knowing there are consequences for ingestion in Wonderland, Alice still decides to eat when she goes to run an errand for the White Rabbit. What is worse is that Alice does so merely out of boredom, knowing full-well that eating food will make her change size. Alice, knowing that she will change size, believes she has cracked the code of Wonderland and understands how it works perfectly now. After eating, she predictably grows, but to her unexpected panic and discomfort does not stop until she has engulfed the entire house ("Underground" 35-39). In order to purge her sin of pride, Alice is not allowed to be right in Wonderland. For example, each time she thinks she understands Wonderland—much like Peter of Cornwall's unnamed knight and his rapidly changing environment that refused him any lustful enjoyment—Purgatory creates a new and confusing uproar that shifts her thinking. Shape-shifting and food are some of the most significant driving factors of the purging that Alice endures. In some cases, her head grows, other moments only her neck, and in some instances, she even shrinks.

The incident mentioned above—Alice's body filling an entire house—is the first time Alice recognizes that she does not know everything and that if she does not mature, she will be forced to learn more lessons ("Underground" 39). Because these growth spurts never produce her expected or even desired results, Alice is forced to recognize her ignorance. Not only did the food not cause the experience she had anticipated, but also

now she is stuck in a house. The implication is that Alice assumed she knew everything: she drank half the bottle (discovered in the rabbit's house) out of pure boredom, and much to her horror became foolishly stuck. This disaster echoes the dangers of pretending to know everything and ignoring possible ignorance. Because she was so prideful, this escapade almost, quite literally, killed her, as seen in Figure 7: Alice has moments to adjust to the shrinking house before she nearly breaks her neck ("Underground" 36). This traumatic scene leads Alice to the next step in her purging process by coming face-to-face with a fairy who mirrors her interaction with the Mouse: the Caterpillar.

The Purgatorial effects from the previous encounter become apparent when Alice meets the Caterpillar, who mirrors how she acted toward the Mouse earlier in the story. The Caterpillar asks Alice, "who are you?" to which she replies, "I use to know this morning, but I've changed since then" ("Underground" 49). The Caterpillar's curious



**Figure 7. The Shrinking House.**  
Lewis Carroll. "Alice's Adventures Underground."  
Original Manuscript, p. 36

question evokes the fairy checking in on if the penance (i.e., purging of pride) is successfully working. Alice states that changing different sizes has confused her, referring to the frightening trauma eating has caused. The Caterpillar continues to scold her for her temper, which seems to be hindering her learning (“Underground” 50-51). He also appears to mirror what she did to the Mouse at the beginning of the book, both frustrating and insulting Alice to the point where she storms off—much like the Mouse had—providing her with the other perspective she missed in her interaction with the Mouse (“Underground” 51). However, the Caterpillar calls her back:

“so you think you’re changed, do you?”

“Yes, sir,” said Alice. (“Underground” 51)

The Caterpillar sees she recognizes a difference, though she does not quite understand it yet. Alice thinks it is due to memory loss, though it might be because she is experiencing something Purgatorial during her penance. Alice cannot be correct in Purgatory, and the Caterpillar makes sure she has no reason to be prideful, consistently providing her with remarks and criticism about her temper, rude behavior, and even her ability to recite poetry: “[Your reciting] is wrong from beginning to end” (“Underground” 60). The Caterpillar keeps Alice’s pride in check by not only rejecting Alice’s need for approval through learning, but also calling attention to any time she insults him by bluntly and angrily responding:

“What size do you want to be?” it asked.

“Oh, I’m not particular as to size,” Alice hastily replied, “only one doesn’t like changing so often, you know.”

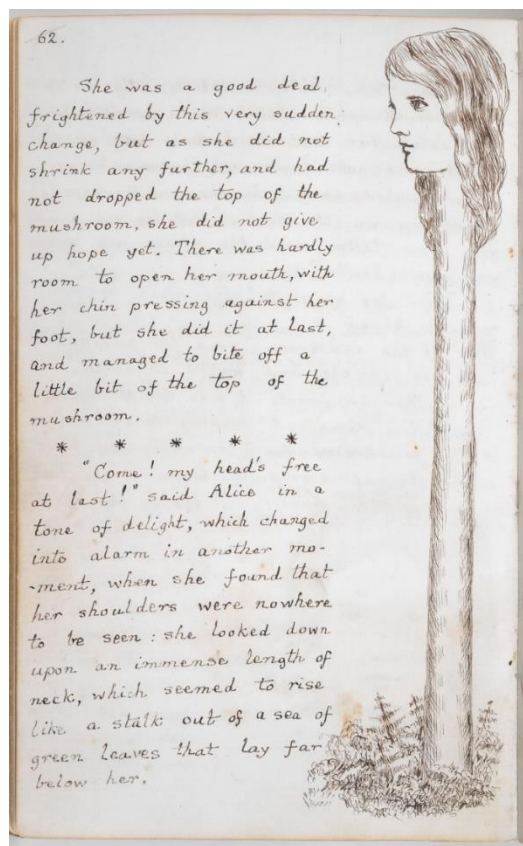
“Are you content now?” said the caterpillar.



“Well, I should like to be a little larger, sir, if you wouldn’t mind,” said Alice, “three inches is such a wretched height to be.”

“It is a very good height indeed!” said the caterpillar loudly and angrily, rearing itself up as it spoke (it was exactly three inches high). (“Underground” 60)

Looking at this interaction, a few key things can be deduced with regard to how Alice is being purged of her sin of pride. Upon the Caterpillar baiting Alice into saying she is unhappy with her height, he then attempts to make it obvious that he is upset without outright telling Alice his feelings. He wants Alice to know that he is mad because of her actions, that she is offending people, be it on purpose or not, which can be seen through his “loud” and “angry” response to which Carroll has brought the readers’ attention, as



**Figure 8. Alice’s Rapidly Growing Neck.**  
Lewis Carroll. “Alice’s Adventures Underground.”  
Original Manuscript, p. 62

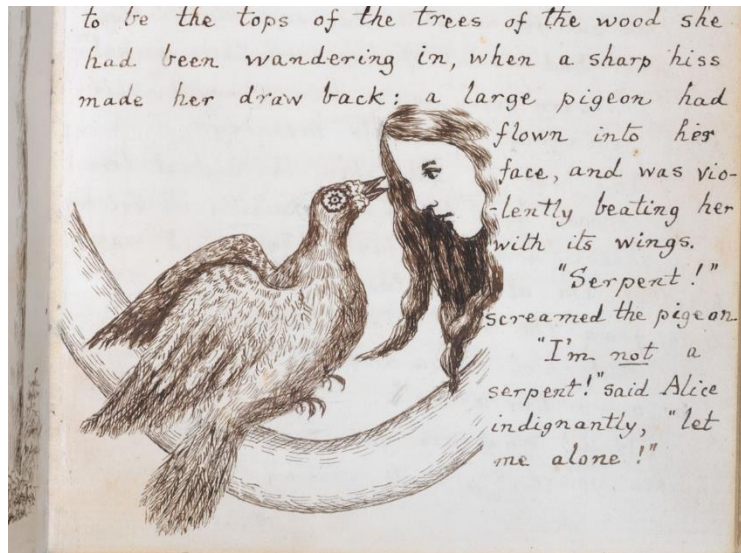
seen above. The Caterpillar is not quietly enduring Alice's insults; he wants her to know he is angry. He is not, however, providing Alice with all the answers. For example, the Caterpillar does not tell Alice he is angry because she has insulted his height but instead stands up to show her he is three inches tall. The reason the Caterpillar does not outright say he is upset, I believe, is that Alice's problem is not the accidental offense in the interaction, but the fact that she is entirely ignorant of the feelings of anyone other than herself. So, to purge Alice of the sin of pride, first, she must recognize her repeated mistake on her own. This interaction is done to force Alice to become introspective and realize in the scenes that follow how her actions have affected the fairies around her. This pinnacle moment is crucial to the *Alice* story because moments after insulting (and being insulted by) the Caterpillar, Alice considers another creature's feelings other than her own while simultaneously nodding to the religious Purgatorial roots of the story.

After she eats a mushroom the Caterpillar offers her, Alice's neck grows (see Figure 8). We find this image in Carroll's sketch, an image that evokes religious and Purgatorial symbolism. One of the most religious symbols that appears in this section is right when Alice gets cocky again. The Caterpillar gives her specific directions on how to consume the mushroom, but Alice does not pay attention, believing she again has outsmarted the beings residing in Wonderland. This moment of pride is evident when Alice's neck begins to grow unexpectedly, and without the rest of her body. A Pigeon appears, referring to Alice as a "serpent" (see Figure 9). The Pigeon says that she has tried leaving her alone, but that there is "no pleasing you serpents," refusing to attend to Alice at all in her current state ("Underground" 64). The religious symbolism of being

compared to a serpent is obvious, as the “serpent” enters the Garden of Eden (Green 180-190). I suggest that this moment likens Alice to the snake in the Garden of Eden.

The bird’s likening of Alice to a serpent could conceal another biblical allusion, perhaps to Adam and Eve (*King James Version*, Genesis 3:6). It is no secret that the Serpent referenced in Genesis has been symbolically linked to temptation and sin. With Wonderland indeed holding a garden (the Queen’s royal garden) at its center, Alice then being referenced as a “serpent” (“Underground” 64) references not only the Garden of Eden itself but also the religious symbolism connected with the Serpent. It has been said the Serpent represents sin, temptation, and even, as Adrian Reimers puts it in their book *Original Sin and the Fall*, the Devil himself (42). Genesis’s serpent furthermore is connected to Alice in yet another significant way, as Reimers suggests: “Satan’s appeal was to [Eve’s] pride” (43). The information above can be taken in a few specific ways: 1) Alice being misinterpreted as a serpent is symbolic of sin and temptation because of both the religious allegory and Alice’s vice of acquiescing to her temptation, be it her pride or food; 2) the Serpent being the Devil and appealing to Eve’s pride, especially, is a logical connection then to Alice because her sin is pride; 3) Alice’s transformation into the Serpent, having the worst shapeshifting trauma yet, and leading to her first real epiphany then is no coincidence. It can then be inferred that Alice had transformed into the symbolic sin of pride. This moment can be seen as the moment that Alice will either be doomed to stay in Purgatory or will be forced to purge her sin in order to return to the real world.

To summarize, at this point, Alice is faced with a bird who has mirrored her previous actions. Enveloped in its own thoughts and opinions, the bird will not listen. Alice figures there is no use in saying anything until the Pigeon has finished talking. This



**Figure 9. Alice the Serpent.**  
Lewis Carroll. "Alice's Adventures Under Ground." Original Manuscript, p. 68.

interaction forces Alice to take a more mature role, and even creates some empathy in her, as she sees the poor bird panicked and squawking about: "I'm very sorry you've been annoyed," said Alice, beginning to see its meaning" ("Underground" 64). This is a critical moment because it represents the first time Alice swallows her pride and apologizes, despite not actually being a serpent. Before, Alice's narrow-mindedness ran so deep that all she would be able to see in conversations, such as this one, is that she is being wronged because the creature is spouting untrue things (i.e., Alice is a serpent). However, Alice is forced to take herself out of the situation, which is extremely difficult given her current state, and to apologize to the Pigeon. The conversation shows real character growth, and that Alice is learning. She not only sees a different perspective for the first time, but also makes the decision to put the bird's feelings before her own, despite being in the terrifying predicament of having her neck grow past the forest while

her body stays the same size. This is the first time the reader sees Alice choose to do something less prideful on her own accord without prompting, and, paired with the religious iconography of the serpent, hints that it should be read as a turning point—Purgatory may actually be working.



**Figure 10. Bill's Wine.**

Lewis Carroll. "Alice's Adventures Underground." Original Manuscript, p. 45

There are also smaller, subtler references to Purgatory in Carroll's *Alice* stories. One curious section of the novel involves our previous discussion about fairy food. The one time someone consumes something and does not have something terrible happen is when a gardener, Bill, consumes something out of what looks to be a wine glass accompanied by a wine bottle. Bill drinking from a chalice is the one account the story gives that does not cause chaos when consumed. Although it is never specified what is in the cup, the chalice is accompanied by a wine bottle. One could argue that it can be perceived and explained as communion due to wine's representation of the blood of Christ (see Figure 10). "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them,

saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (*King James Version*, Matthew 26:27-28).

Thus far, I have attempted to show that Alice’s Wonderland is a combination of medieval Fairyland and Purgatory. She has met fairies carrying flowers, has happened upon a changeling baby, has been compared to a serpent, and is continuing to be purged of the sin of pride. However, to reach the center of Purgatory, an oasis in Purgatory known to hold fairy castles, the Garden of Eden, and the fountain of youth, Alice must be guided by a bishop. This bishop also appears in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* in the most curious way. According to “Lewis Carroll,” a biography written by *Biblio INC*, Carroll’s “great-grandfather, also Charles Dodgson, had risen through the ranks of the church to become a bishop... Young Charles [Carroll] was born in the little parsonage of Daresbury in Warrington, Cheshire.” The idea of the Cheshire Cat might have sprung from here and could also symbolize the bishop bloodline. The bloodline is essential to understanding the Cheshire Cat’s role in the novel. He may be the one that led Alice to Eden because he symbolized the bishop bloodline, and the only way to get to Eden is to have a bishop guide the person there. The Cheshire Cat says unless she knows where she wants to go, it does not matter which way she wanders and mentions that everyone there is “mad” (*Wonderland* 64-65).

The reason this strange segment in the *Alice* book is crucial to note—and telling as to who the Cheshire Cat is—is that when he says unless a person knows where they want to go, it does not matter where they wander (*Wonderland* 64-65), it holds a double meaning. One meaning is that if a person does not want to be purged, if they do not know what they want, how to get better, that is, then the soul will remain lost in Purgatory. The

other meaning is that Alice, as a lost wanderer in Purgatory, cannot physically find her way out unless she is escorted by a bishop who knows precisely where they want to go. If they are in Purgatory, the Bishop's guiding role is confirmed through the Cheshire Cat. Waterhouse explains in their article "St. Patrick's Purgatory: A German Account" that Owen in the St. Patrick's Purgatory has to ask permission from a bishop to enter Purgatory and is even guided away from heaven at the end of the story to return to earth by two archbishops (50). The Cheshire Cat guiding Alice as a bishop is then a subtle hint toward the fact that Alice is not just merely in Fairyland, but Purgatory as well.

The Cheshire Cat proceeds to ask Alice about the garden she has been obsessing over since her first arrival, which is meant to be the Garden of Eden. The Cheshire Cat states the following in connection to the garden where the Queen of Hearts resides:

"...[will you] play croquet with the Queen today?"

"I should like it very much," said Alice, "but I haven't been invited yet."

"You'll see me there," said the Cat, and vanished. (*Wonderland* 66)

The Cheshire Cat is guiding her by reminding her of the garden, and guiding her as the bishop. His words "You'll see me there" imply that Alice will go to the garden as well, even though Alice stated that she was not invited. The Cat, much-like the Caterpillar, is not directly giving Alice the answers, rather he is guiding her toward the end of her purging, and, eventually, her exit from Purgatory.

Carroll also hints that the Cheshire Cat is different from any other character the readers encounter in Wonderland. The Cat is the only character who holds the ability to actively navigate Fairyland-Purgatory (i.e., Wonderland) of his own volition, unlike the other characters, who are only seen in specific places unless they are summoned or

following orders given by the Queen. He is also as knowledgeable as the other characters/fairies in Wonderland, if not more so. Consequently, he fits into neither the trope of the forlorn Purgatory wanderer, nor the fairy under the Queen's control, which supports the idea that he is a visitor of Purgatory (Bishop) rather than a resident (fairy) or victim (wanderer). To rephrase, he is not a victim of Purgatory like the Mad Hatter or Alice, because he has the knowledge the fairies possess. He is also not a fairy under the Queen's control because he can move throughout Wonderland as he pleases. The Cat is the only character we see in multiple places without orders/summons from the Queen. Furthermore, we see an example of the knowledge the Cat shares with the other fairies in Wonderland in the following scene. Here Alice encounters the Dutchess and her changeling baby, and the Dutchess makes it known that the baby is a pig:

“...and that's why. Pig!”

She said the last word with such sudden violence that Alice quite jumped; but she saw in another moment that it was addressed to the baby, and not to her...

(*Wonderland* 60)

The reader can assume from this segment of the text that the fairies know that the baby is a pig long before its transformation occurs. Consequently, it comes as no shock then, when the baby turns into a pig, that the Cheshire Cat does not remark on the current state of the once infant child given his knowledge of Wonderland (*Wonderland* 64).

This shapeshifting theme also appears in Peter of Cornwall's aforementioned unnamed knight, when he sees his shapeshifting bride turn into a tree to purge him of the sin of lust. Alice, too, finds shapeshifting fairies in the previously discussed changeling scene who help purge her of her sin of pride. The baby's transformation into a pig cannot



only be attributed to the fact that it is a changeling, but also may be due to the idea that Alice again can never be right in Purgatory. Even when she is doing noble acts like saving what she believes is a baby (which is actually a changeling who transforms into a pig), Alice is not permitted to be prideful, and once again is proven wrong.

In summary, I have now provided substantial evidence of the following things in the first *Alice* story: the bishop bloodline, the Garden of Eden, fountains of youth, fairy castles, changelings, nature fairies, underground entrances, and most importantly, the fairies in this world sent to perform penance. Wonderland's heart, however, not only holds the fairy castle, fountain of youth, and the Garden of Eden, all of which were hallmarks of this Fairyland-Purgatory, but it also hosts a Fairy Queen who embodies Alice's sin of pride. Previously, in the last chapter, we discussed the Fairy Queen's physical appearance—human—versus that of her subjects denotes a fairy hierarchy. *Alice's* Queen of Hearts is different from Fairyland Queens, however, due to her disgusting display of pride, which is dissimilar from Fairy Queens in Fairyland, who, as Briggs has previously mentioned, are usually beautiful—angelic even. I purpose this is because the Queen in the *Alice* stories does not take on the role usually assigned in Fairytales, but instead fully embodies the fairies in Purgatory's mythology sent to purge sin.

Peter of Cornwall's previously mentioned unnamed knight is a perfect example of this. When he was married to the Fairy King's daughter, he was met with the embodiment of lust gone wrong. The Fairy Princess had transformed to fit the image most necessary to cause the most penance, which was a tree that the unnamed knight could not escape from, having his member caught in a painful embrace of once lustful

desire. *Alice's* Fairy Queen (i.e., the Queen of Hearts) is by no means any different, embodying her pride to its fullest extent. Examples of how genuinely horrible the Queen of Hearts is in terms of her unwavering pride can be seen throughout the *Alice* story. The Queen especially shows her pride in terms of her temper, something Alice herself has also been accused of during her interactions with the Caterpillar. The Queen's pride and temper being astoundingly horrible lends her to order such a vast number of executions daily that the court does not take them seriously anymore ("Underground" 78). Alice, during her time with the Queen of Hearts, had witnessed the Queen commit all of the following atrocities: call a servant an idiot when they did not know who Alice was, insult her subjects regularly and similarly to that of Alice's treatment of the other fairies, be outlandish with her temper, order executions of all who happened to be in the area when she was cross, and overall force Alice to pale in comparison to her pride ("Underground"). For example, in the following section, taken from "Alice's Adventures Underground," the Queen explodes during their game of croquet and begins executing a majority of the subjects present:

[T]he Queen was in a furious passion, and went stamping about and shouting "off with his head!" or "off with her head!" about once in a minute...by the end of half an hour or so, there were no arches left, and all the players, except the King, the Queen, and Alice, were in custody, and under sentence of execution.

("Underground" 77)

The Queen in this passage shows no regard for the other players and allows her temper to control her to the point of demanding everyone there, apart from Alice, the King, and herself, to be executed. These images and mannerisms of the Fairy Queen are taken-on to

provoke the realization that if Alice does not change her ways, this evil self-absorbed Queen could be her one day.

The Queen's interactions with Alice purge her of her sin so efficiently that it leaves Alice acting the least prideful she has been throughout the story, as seen through her dialogue, thinking, and actions. For example, when Alice meets the Mock Turtle, who claims to have once been a real turtle, and the Gryphon, his companion, she displays patience and care toward the two creatures. When Alice first arrives, the Gryphon squawks, and Alice sits still and says nothing, despite clearly being bored and wanting to leave ("Underground" 80-81). Her waiting patiently and giving the Mock Turtle a chance to share his story displays growth in her character and less pride. Alice previously, especially with her interactions with the Mouse, had not cared enough to listen to what anyone had to say, particularly if she found it boring.

It is during Alice's interactions with the Gryphon and Mock Turtle that she realizes the Queen's prideful actions (i.e. the Queen's assumption that she is always right and the unattractive childish behavior that follows her temper) were not as attractive as Alice once perceived them to be in terms of herself. Alice thought that her personal prideful actions in relation to her intelligence and grown-up mannerisms, as we have discussed in Chapter Two, demanded respect and admiration from a Victorian audience. However, Alice is viewed as quite the opposite when the reader considers her pride is rooted in her view of her identity. Alice will not allow herself to be fallible or act her age. The Queen mirrors these issues while exposing the truth that these characteristics do not lead to the results that Alice desires. For example, even though the Queen technically holds the power to execute her subjects, her temper's control over her and her prideful

childish ways of acting mirror Alice's issues with pretending to be grown-up and allowing her temper to control her. Alice sees, even though the Queen thinks she gets her



**Figure 11. The Mock Turtle.**  
Lewis Carroll. "Alice's Adventures Underground."  
Original Manuscript, p. 79

way, all that happens is the other fairies do not take her seriously, and it often has the opposite effect of what Alice is craving when she acts like an adult or allows her pride to control her.

The same theme of change in relation to growing up reappears again in "Alice's Adventures Underground," when the Gryphon explains to Alice that everyone pretends to execute people for the Queen's fancy, and the Mock Turtle is not sad, he chooses to have sorrow because it is his fancy ("Underground" 79).

Alice did not quite like the look of the creature [the Gryphon], but on the whole she thought it quite as safe to stay as to go after that savage Queen: so she waited.

The Gryphon sat up and rubbed its eyes: then it watched the Queen till she was out of sight: then it chuckled, 'What fun!' said the Gryphon, half to itself, half to Alice.

“What is the fun?” said Alice.

“Why, She,” said the Gryphon; “it's all her fancy, that; they never executes nobody, you know: come on!”...

...”what is [the Mock Turtle's] sorrow?” she asked the Gryphon, and the Gryphon answered, very nearly in the same words as before, “it's all its fancy, that: it hasn't got no sorrow, you know: come on!” (“Underground” 78-79)

The Gryphon alludes to quite a bit in this passage, but the most prominent theme is that people choose to act a certain way (as Alice chooses to act overly prideful). They can choose to change if they would like to; however, they fancy being this way, so they never change, and everything is a choice. The Mock Turtle himself symbolizes the choice to change, and we choose our nature, so Alice can choose to change her pride. The Mock Turtle went from this otter-like creature to this fake turtle (see Figure 11), thus transforming who he is, even though he is still physically an otter, which is also seen with Alice and her pride. Much like the otter-like Mock Turtle who chose to change, so did Alice in Wonderland. She chose to denounce pride and began listening to the fairies she interacted with. She may still look like Alice; however, she has changed underneath.

Which brings us to our final point: Alice waking up, which, as mentioned in the previous chapter, holds a great deal of controversy. Was Alice's journey only a nonsensical dream? Was her journey a child's explanation of visiting another world like Fairyland? Alternatively, can it be argued that Alice's journey was both a dream and a

reality likened to Dante Alighieri's *Purgatorio*? Dante's dream visions are visions given to Dante in Purgatory when he is unconscious or asleep—these visions are assisting Dante on his path to purging his sin. Dino S. Cervigni, defines Dante's dream visions in his article "Dante's Poetry of Dreams":

The three oneiric visions in *Purgatorio* IX, XIX, and XXVII emerge, therefore, as a specific form of visio imaginativa or spiritualis - a kind of knowledge which engrossed most theologians and which is traditionally placed in relationship to visio corporalis, or knowledge through physical senses, and visio intellectualis, the highest form of understanding which is acquired directly by the intellect. (25)

A dream vision then allows the mind (intellect), body (physical), and soul (spirit) to coincide in the dream world and be open to prophetic visions and/or epiphanies.

[T]he three dreams constitute a fundamental moment in the Pilgrim's purgatorial ascent. The three oneiric narratives are likewise essential in formulating and understanding Dante's poetics. Heir of the culture of his time, Dante avails himself of dream accounts and holds the imagination as the faculty at work during this form of mental activity. At the same time, he also believes in the possibility for some dreams to be messengers of divine revelations. Within this context dream life rises to a condition of essential importance in the Pilgrim's ascensional journey, which requires purification and enhancement of all human faculties. The dream world is thus incorporated in Dante's vision of the three ultramundane kingdoms, becomes instrumental in God's gradual manifestation of Himself to the Pilgrim, and emphasizes the Poet's concern with representing every aspect of human reality, be it physical, imaginary, or intellectual. (Cervigni 26)

Cervigni's explanation/interpretation of Dante's dream visions, to reiterate, is either one of divine manifestation, messengers of divine epiphanies, or a symptom of the purging itself. As Dante travels up Mount Purgatory on his pilgrimage to find Beatrice and purge himself of all his sin along the way, he faces a great many trials, some which end in a sleep vision before an angel comes in and erases one of the many P's on his forehead so he may continue his climb up Mount Purgatory.

In Purgatory, all senses seem to blur together: the mind (intellect), body (physical), and soul (spirit). For example, in Dante's first dream vision, he experiences an eagle abducting him, only to awaken to find St. Lucia had carried him to the gate of Purgatory (Alighieri 143-145). In this dream state, he feels as if he were burning to death and that the eagle were carrying him off to meet his demise. The first dream vision shows all three—mind, body, and soul—altered in a state of fear, confusion, and divinity. The body is burned and becomes so hot Dante awakens, purging sin through fear and physicality. The soul is portrayed within the dream vision itself, under the assumption that what is not of the body is the soul, which is set free in the dream vision and carried by the eagle who confusingly does not kill him, as Dante remarks that he assumed the eagle perhaps "disdains to carry prey off in its claws from elsewhere" (Alighieri 143). The "mind" I believe to be the most fascinating because it was the one factor of the three that seems to have a grounded understanding of what is happening. Dante says before the dream vision takes place: "when our mind, journeying further from the flesh and less taken by its cares, is almost a diviner in its visions" (Alighieri 143). Dante not only admits dreams are unique because they separate the soul from the body, but likewise, the soul from the mind—from "its cares,"—and thus becomes more divine. A soul wants not,

it just is, and the mind is tamed in terms of accepting the divinity of the dream states messages, which Dante does believe are divine visions and are to be taken seriously.

If Wonderland is, in fact, a dream, then Alice still leaves her body and enters Purgatory. Dante, in *Purgatorio*, has his soul manifest in a dream and is carried off by an eagle. The reason I specify soul rather than the mind, is that the human mind, as Dante reminds us, is taken by its cares, and it cannot be his physical body because that body is carried by St. Lucia in the world of physicality. The mind cares about what is happening to the body, and therefore, focuses on the body and trivial things involving what the mind cares about—sins, the previous life the body and mind lived, loved ones, pain, and other aspects of human life a deity may claim as trivial in comparison to the grand scheme of things. Whereas the soul is not physical, and therefore not the body, but also can analyze messages of the divine in a calm, almost distant way involving its mortal life; therefore, it is also separate from the mind. Dante, for example, when picked up by the eagle, first thought of how the eagle must not like traveling with its food too far in its claws—an interesting aspect of the situation to note, considering Dante might be meeting his demise, therefore, hinting this is Dante's soul in a more divine state less fearful of death than the mind.

Alice's dream vision works similarly to that of Dante's. Alice, in her dream, deals with physicality—like Dante's burning—through her painful experiences with food. She almost kills herself on several occasions, mentioned throughout this paper, because of the necessity to purge her of her sin. She also has the stubbornness of the mind's wants and "cares" as she cares about her intelligence, how others view her, and how she views herself. Alice's mind is the antithesis of Dante's, where her mind is being purged of the



sin of pride to make way for the more divine soul's introspection and interpretation of otherworldly visions. In other words, Alice is being forced to understand the divine message of "do not be prideful" through experiences in a dream vision. It then does not matter if Alice is asleep or awake. If Wonderland is a mixture of Purgatory and Fairyland, then it is inconsequential, because either way, she falls into this medieval depiction/tradition, thus demonstrating that Carroll's "Alice's Adventures Underground" could very well be more than a story of pure nonsense, and in fact, a carefully constructed Fairyland-Purgatory in which Alice learns to repent the sin of pride and return to her human body.

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