

The Adult-Child Conflict as found in
Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

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Chapter One: Introduction

Donald J. Gray, editor of Alice in Wonderland: Backgrounds and Essays in Criticism, says that: "His (Lewis Carroll's) first interest -- first in time, and probably first too in his conception of the purpose of the stories -- was to entertain children."¹ Perhaps this is true because Lewis Carroll (pen name of Charles L. Dodgson) always managed to be with children, entertaining them with his extemporaneous fairytale-like stories, of which Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is the most renowned. However, at the time of publication, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was not considered noteworthy, as is indicated by Martin Gardner, in his article "A Child's Garden of Bewilderment,"

If anyone had suggested to a Victorian critic that Alice was great literature, he would have been met with an incredulous snort. Clever and amusing, perhaps, but great literature? Reviews of the first Alice book were mixed. The Athenaeum called it a 'stiff, over wrought story' with 'square, and grim, and uncouth illustrations.' 'Too extravagantly absurd to produce more diversion than disappointment and irritation,' said The Illustrated Times.²

At the time of its writing, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was obviously not renowned for its ingenious origin. However, since Carroll's era, numerous critiques, psychoanalytic interpretations, and scholarly essays have been written in order to unearth the meaning of the Alice books, if it is other than simply entertainment for children.

Discovering the meaning of the adult-child conflict in Victorian Society as presented in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

has been the purpose of this thesis. Three themes found in the text -- time, social standards, and madness -- have been investigated as contributing most to the adult-child conflict. The social standards and madness themes will be dealt with in terms of how the child relates to the adult's implementation of these social standards and involvement in madness. Time per se will be studied as contributing to the style and developing the content of the story. The study of time per se is in contrast to the discussion of punctuality, which is listed under social standards. Punctuality has been listed with the other four social standards of correctness, superiority, acceptance by others, and emotional control in order to show each character's individual relationship to time.

Chapter Three of this thesis deals with "The Mad Tea-Party" Chapter VII of the text, which climaxes the themes of time, social standards, and madness. The main thrust in this chapter is an analysis of the Mad Hatter's physical appearance, personality, and moral character. The emphasis in this chapter is placed on the Mad Hatter because in him the themes of time, social standards, and madness are found in extreme form.

Chapter Four of the thesis, besides dealing with the adult-child conflict in general, focuses in on Alice's acceptance and rejection of the social standards as well as the process of growth taking place within her.

The text of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland best suited for writing about the adult-child relationship is Martin Gard-

ner's, The Annotated Alice. Besides being an authoritative text of the original Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, The Annotated Alice is an excellent source because of its informative notes on various words, ideas, and structures in the original text.

For the sake of convenience, quotations from The Annotated Alice will not be footnoted, but will be cited by page numbers with AA as the abbreviation for The Annotated Alice.

Chapter Two: Setting the Stage for the Adult-Child Conflict

Time per se is an interesting factor in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, where it is not presented as the orderly progression of events, but rather as the seemingly unrelated pieces of a puzzle put together at random to form the puzzle's unity. Carroll simulated a dream state in which time is disjointed, with bits and pieces of sense impressions joined together by the perception of Alice, who is the one constant factor in the sequences of events. Phyllis Greenacre, in "Reconstruction and Interpretation of the Development of Charles L. Dodgson and Lewis Carroll," says that "The spirit of both Alice books is that of an unplanned sight-seeing trip through a marvelously strange country."³ As Alice journeys through this strange country with its disjointed events, she becomes the magnet providing the story with an overall unity. Alice is able, to a limited degree, to bring the helter-skelter of events into an order by her physical presence in all twelve chapters of the story.

From the time Alice falls down the rabbit hole, entering the Wonderland of Lewis Carroll's imagination, until she awakes from her dream, chaos prevails. There are no patterns of life or events, other than the pattern of chaos itself, as Alice makes her way from scene to scene. Chaos is manifested in the language distortions devised by Carroll and in the illogical thinking of the characters found throughout the story. Donald Rackin, in his article "Alice's Journey to the End of Night,"

says that "Practically all pattern, save the consistency of chaos, is annihilated."⁴

The chaotic situation results from Carroll's use of a dream technique. Alexander L. Taylor, in The White Knight, describes this dream technique as it was used in medieval writing:

. . .he (Carroll) used the time-honored dream machinery, that medieval framework for allegory and satire, but he used it with a difference. How long does a dream last? By the clock, Alice's dream lasts hardly any time at all. When it begins Dinah is washing her white kitten and she is still washing it when Alice awakes -- if she has ever been asleep. She has been in some kind of trance, like 'the vision of the prophet Mahommed, in which he saw the whole wonders of heaven and hell, though the jar of water which fell when his ecstasy commenced had not spilled its contents when he returned to ordinary existence.'⁵

Whether Alice was in a dream or a trance seems of minor importance, because in both states the events are sense impressions presented upon the individual's mind in a disjointed fashion without an awareness of the passage of time.

The dream method was a common technique in presenting fairy tales. Donald Gray, in Alice in Wonderlands: Backgrounds and Essays in Criticism, explains Carroll's use and adaptation of the dream technique in Victorian literature:

From the popular forms of Victorian comic writing, Dodgson took over some of their most common practices. The use of parody, for example, of puns, dialect, and other plays on the sounds of words, was frequent in comic journalism. . . So was the creation of a fanciful grotesque -- in the cartoons of comic periodicals, for example. . . in which ordinary objects and contemporary people and events were jumbled together with talking animals, animated playing cards, and creatures from fairy

tale, folklore, and the legendary past of a child's history.⁶

Although it can be stated with certainty that Lewis Carroll employed the dream technique in writing the Alice books, the question remains: "What is the direct relationship of the dream technique with its disjointed events upon the role of Alice, the main character?" Phyllis Greenacre, in "Reconstruction and Interpretation of the Development of Charles L. Dodgson and Lewis Carroll," gives an insight into Carroll's use of the dream technique and its bearing on Alice:

In the content of the Alice books, there is no regular order in time or space. . . behavior is incessantly controlled by the threats of extinction, and morals do not exist except as the sing-song maxims of the little girl observer. All this is about as close a portrayal as can be accomplished in language of that realm in childhood's development when the child is emerging from its primitive state of unreason, to the dawning conception of consequences, order and reason.⁷

This emergence of the child takes on the form of conflict in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland between the strict Victorian social standards and Alice's interest in and yet inability to conform to them. In other words, the conflict stems from the child's comprehension of the adult world of Victorian society. This conflict is found in each chapter of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, reaching a climax in Chapter VII, "The Mad Tea-Party."

Lewis Carroll, through the character of Alice, presents a picture of the adult-child relationship in Victorian society. It is through this child, as Gillian Avery in "Fairy Tales for

Pleasure" states that "The innocence of Alice casts its incisive, but delicately subtle intelligence upon Victorian Society and upon life."⁸ William Empson, in "The Child as Swain," asserts that only the child is able to present a detailed viewpoint of life because "The child has not yet been put wrong by civilization, and all grown-ups have been."⁹ According to Alexander L. Taylor, in The White Knight,

Alice. . . may be regarded as the simple freshman or Everyman, who wanders like a sweet and innocent undergraduate into the Wonderland of Victorian Oxford, where everybody was religious in some way or other.¹⁰

Alice is not only a child living in the Victorian Society. She becomes the characterization of Everyman, a symbol which can speak univerrally to all societies. Carroll, by weaving into the story the traditional character of Everyman, goes beyond the local situation to a universal application of his story.

The Alice books present Victorian life in terms of the adult-child conflict in the person of Alice. As would be expected, there are two sides to this conflict. First, the adult's yearning to return to the simplicity of the uncomplicated world of childhood. Peter Coveney, in "Escape," describes the adult wish to return to the world of childhood:

The purpose and strength of the romantic image of the child had been above all to establish a relationship between childhood and adult consciousness, to assert the continuity, the unity of human experience. . .

In the latter decades of the century, however, we are confronted with something entirely other. . . their interest in childhood serves not to integrate childhood and adult experience, but to create a barrier of nostalgia and regret between childhood and the potential responses of adult life. The child indeed becomes a means of escape from the pressures of adult adjustment, a means of regression towards

the irresponsibility of youth, childhood, infancy, and ultimately nescience itself. . .

It is a regressive escape into the emotional prison of self-indulgent nostalgia. . .

This awareness of childhood is no longer an interest in growth and integration, such as we found in The Prelude, but a means of detachment and retreat from the adult world.¹¹

Although this idea is touched upon in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, the other side of the adult-child conflict is of major interest, since it reflects the struggle of the child attempting to relate to a world made up of and for adults. William Empson, in "The Child as Swain," provides an insight into the child's comprehension of the adult world in terms of Alice's changes in height. He says:

The changes of size are more complex. In Gulliver . . . Swift used it for satire on science or from a horrified interest in it, and to give a sort of scientific authority to his deduction, that men seen as small are spiritually petty and seen as large physically loathsome. And it is the small observer, like the child, who does least to alter what he sees and therefore sees most truly. . . Children like to think of being so small that they could hide from grown-ups and so big that they could control them, and to do this dramatises the great topic of growing up, which both Alices keep to consistently.¹² [sic]

The changes in height operate on several levels in Gulliver's Travels similar to its use in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. First, the child sees more when he is small. The child perhaps does not see the "true" picture of life, but he sees life from a different perspective, for example, in Gulliver's "Voyage to Brobdingnag," Gulliver is of small stature compared to the inhabitants of Brobdingnag. In one episode when confronting the King, Gulliver describes the hair on the King's arm in graphic

terms as monstrous structures. Only someone as small as Gulliver could describe this phenomenon which the inhabitants of Brobdingnag took no notice of. The same is true of Alice who is able, because of her adjustable height, to present a point of view of life which the other characters would never consider. A second level of height change is the desire of every child to be an adult. Alice never remains smaller than the other characters. She desires to be on equal terms with them. When Alice is the same height as the other characters, thus an adult, she is able to defend herself against them. Alice's height change allows her to relate to the other characters like an adult. Another level which the height changes seem to symbolize is that each new situation is a source of growth for Alice to adulthood. Alice is constantly involved in the process of growth throughout the story, and Chapter XII is the highpoint of her growth to adulthood.

In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, Alice is constantly confronted by the Victorian Society in terms of what might be called "strict politeness to social conventions." Alice either rejects or attempts to conform to these standards in five major areas which comprise Victorian social standards: 1) correctness of behavior; 2) superiority; 3) punctuality; 4) acceptance by others; and 5) emotional control.

Correctness, of manners and especially of speech, seems to be a prime concern for the characters in Chapters I-VI. When individuals wish to present themselves properly in the eyes of

others, they tend to be concerned about the proper and correct way of doing things. Several examples of correctness are found in the first six chapters:

. . . she quite forgot how to speak good English.
(AA, p. 35)

'Please would you tell me,' said Alice, a little timidly, for she was not quite sure, whether it was good manners for her to speak first, 'why your cat grins like that?' (AA, p. 83)

'Don't grunt,' said Alice, 'that's not at all a proper way of expressing yourself.' (AA, p. 86)

Alice seems to be reflecting the adult world in these passages, since she advises herself and others on the proper way of acting or speaking.

Correctness is involved in the superiority standard, since social climbers try to be both correct and superior. Superiority comes across as adult bullying of Alice. The adults talk down to the child, but, because she is the same height, Alice is able to defend herself. William Empson, in "The Child as Swain," says that "The most obvious aspect of the complacency is the snobbery."¹³ Carroll's work is filled with examples of snobbery, one of which is the Duchess who bullies Alice in Chapter VI. In Alice's confrontation with the Duchess, she is insulted:

'You don't know much,' said the Duchess; 'and that's a fact.' (AA, p. 83)

'Oh, don't bother me,' said the Duchess. (AA, p. 85)

This insulting treatment of Alice by the other characters reaches a climax in "The Mad Tea-Party" Chapter.

Even though Alice is bullied by the adults, she always manages to gain control, for example, in her dialogue with the Pigeon, she says:

'It matters a good deal to me,' said Alice hastily; 'but I'm not looking for eggs, as it happens; and, if I was, I shouldn't want yours: I don't like them raw. (AA, p. 77)

Gillian Avery, in "Fairy Tales for Pleasure," says that:

One of the best features of the books is that although in the course of her adventures Alice may be bullied and cross questioned by the creatures she meets ('I never was so ordered about before, in all my life, never!'), she always takes final control, overcoming the hostility of the court of the Queen of Hearts with her cry -- 'Who cares for you? . . . You're nothing but a pack of cards!'; and shaking the stiff, dictatorial governing Red Queen in Through the Looking Glass, back to a soft, fat, round, black kitten. It is wish-fulfillment of the most appealing kind.¹⁴

Alice either gains control of the situation verbally or else she gains control over her personal experiences by running away from threatening situations, which is a typically childlike response.

Even though Alice is bullied, she seems to be acting like a child who is trying to become a member of the adult world by her superior feelings and thoughts. In the following example, Alice acts like an adult:

'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!' (AA, p. 87)

William Empson again sheds light on Alice's conformity to social standards in "The Child as Swain":

. . . in part the joke of this stands for the sincerity of the child that criticises the folly of convention, but Alice is very respectful to convention and interested to learn new ones.¹⁵

Alice is outside the world of adults, and yet, at the same time, in order to insure her survival at the threat of extinction, she must, so to speak, learn the rules of the game. She is forced with the inevitable situation of either escaping or becoming an adult.

Anyone who has known children realizes that the farthest thing from a child's mind is to be on time. The child is so engrossed with the thing at hand that he does not concern himself with other things. For the child, there seems to be no ordering of events. Rather, the child takes interest in whatever comes his way. Punctuality is a concern of adults who are more time-conscious and aware of what must be accomplished within a certain amount of time. Punctuality is the first element of the adult world that Alice is confronted with upon falling down the rabbit hole:

. . .nor did Alice think it so very much out of the way to hear the Rabbit say to itself, 'Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!' (AA, pp. 25-26)

'Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!'
(AA, p. 29)

'Oh! the Duchess, the Duchess! Oh! won't she be savage if I've kept her waiting.' (AA, p. 37)

Time after time, Alice is bombarded with people who have to be at a certain place at a specific time, but are usually late anyway. Alice is not personally immersed in punctiliousness or time, for she wanders from scene to scene in her dream state with no place to go in particular and at no specific time:

'Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?'

'That depends a good deal on where you want to go,' said the Cat.

'I don't much care where-----' said Alice.

'Then it doesn't matter which way you go,' said the Cat.

'-----So long as I get somewhere,' Alice added as an explanation. (AA, p. 88)

In Chapters I and II, Carroll contrasts the White Rabbit to Alice, which serves to emphasize the child's non-punctilious manner of living. Martin Gardner, in The Annotated Alice, cites a passage from Lewis Carroll's article, "Alice on the Stage," in which Carroll describes this intended contrast:

And the White Rabbit, what of him? Was he framed on the 'Alice' lines, or meant as a contrast? As a contrast, distinctly. For her 'youth,' 'audacity,' 'vigour,' and 'swift directness of purpose,' read 'elderly,' 'timid,' 'feeble,' and 'nervously shilly-shallying,' and you will get something of what I meant him to be. I think the White Rabbit should wear spectacles. I am sure his voice should quaver, and his knees quiver, and his whole air suggest a total inability to say 'Bo' to a goose! (AA, p. 37)

Although nothing is mentioned in this passage about the element of punctuality being contrasted in the White Rabbit or Alice, several examples from the text will point out the child's attitude towards punctuality in terms of the White Rabbit's behavior.

In Chapter I, Alice is portrayed as trying to follow the Rabbit wherever he goes. Alice, however, is not presented in the text in the sense of being on time with the Rabbit when he meets the Duchess. Rather, Alice pursues the Rabbit out of curiosity: ". . .burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it. . . ." (AA, p. 26). Whenever the Rabbit appears

upset about being late for his rendezvous, Alice is immediately contrasted to him. She is not concerned about getting anywhere at any time; rather her attention is diverted to her new-found situation and the marvels found in it:

. . . Alice. . . was just in time to hear it (Rabbit) say, as it turned a corner, 'Oh my ears and whiskers, how late it's getting!'. . .

There were doors all around the hall, but they were all locked; and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked slowly down the middle wondering how she was ever to get out again. (AA, p. 29)

And:

. . . she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains. . . (AA, p. 30)

Carroll is able to show by using contrast how Alice, representing children, becomes infatuated by the thing at hand and abandons any interest in the Rabbit, who led her to discover Wonderland, and in his punctiliousness.

A fourth element that enlarges the conflict between adults and children is the tendency exhibited by adults of appearing acceptable in the eyes of others. This fourth element will be discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis because an excellent example of acceptance is the relation of the characters to the Queen in Chapter VIII of the story. Chapter Four deals with Chapters VIII-XII of the text.

A final element which is definitely a reflection of the adult world is emotional control. An adult, especially a male, traditionally had complete control over his emotions at all

times in every situation. The child is exactly the opposite -- spontaneous, bursting into emotion whenever it sees fits to do so. The child is carefree and through emotion expresses itself and its needs to the adult world. The child is still an uninhibited member of society, at least until the adults reinforce the idea of emotional control in children. Alice, in several examples, does not reflect a typical child's response to emotion. Instead, she seems to be reflecting upon her emotional release which causes her to demand emotional control of herself, typical of the adult:

'You ought to be ashamed of yourself,' said Alice, 'a great girl like you, to go on crying in this way! Stop this moment, I tell you!' But she went on all the same, shedding gallons of tears. . .
(AA, p. 36)

'Come, there's no use in crying like that!' said Alice to herself, rather sharply. 'I advise you to leave off this minute!' She generally gave herself very good advice, (though she very seldom followed it). . . (AA, p. 32)

Alice seems to be going through a state of growth in regard to emotions because she reflects on them. The process of growth involves reflection. But in the passages quoted there is a conflict within Alice, that is, at the same time that she gives herself advice on acting like an adult (emotional control), she remains a child because "she very seldom followed it." This also points out a conflict in adults who do not practice what they preach.

The relationship and/or conflict between the child's world and the world of adults has been studied to a certain

degree because this is one of the main themes that Carroll seems to stress in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, namely, how the child views the adult world, the stress put on children to conform to the adult worlds, and the loss that the child suffers in conforming to adult standards.

T. E. Kalem, in "Into a Laughing Hell," states an interesting case for the child, especially Carroll's child who likes to play with words:

Words are at the childlike core of Alice in Wonderland. . . Words are a child's grandest toy. They are also his first mystery. Even before he understands them, he puts them together and takes them apart. He pops pieces of them into his mouth, and spits them out in odd shapes. It is a profound form of play, for it is the only tool a child is given with which to comprehend a world in which he coexists without really belonging -- the world of adults.¹⁶

Carroll's masterful linguistic knowledge was employed to give even more light to the adult-child relationship. The entire Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, including the style of writing (Fairy tale, dream-like state), the use of language (nonsense), and the character portrayals, is centered around the child as child and as child in an adult world.

Another lesser theme involved in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is, what might be called, the "madness" theme. This theme of madness or insanity also reaches a climax with the Mad Hatter in Chapter VII. The madness of the book relates to the adult-child conflict in this way: the child who becomes conscious of the adult's world and does not understand it might consider it as "mad" or insane; and, the adult who wishes to

regress back to the irresponsibility of childhood might tend to become insane if this desire goes to an extreme.

The first verbal account of madness is found in Chapter VI with the dialogue between the Cheshire Cat and Alice:

'But I don't want to go among mad people,' Alice remarked.

'Oh, you can't help that,' said the Cat: 'we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.'

'How do you know I'm mad?' said Alice.

'You must be,' said the Cat, 'or you wouldn't have come here.' (AA, p. 89)

Carroll seems to be suggesting that the world of adults is mad, at least maddening in trying to observe all of its conventions, and that anyone who is involved in the adult world is also mad.

Again, Carroll's use of nonsense contributes to this theme of madness. In the words of Elizabeth Sewall, in "The Balance of Brillig,"

. . . although Nonsense plays on the side of order, its aim and method is to defeat disorder with disorder's own weapons. It allows disorder in the mind a certain amount of selected material apparently suitable for dream purposes (images and so on), and in this way draws the disordering faculty into play, but manages never to let it gain control.¹⁷

This contrast between disorder and order is evident throughout the Alice books as the chaotic scenes unfold themselves. But disorder and chaos, although they plague and disturb Alice, are never able to take a hold over her, who in the end flees from Wonderland, its chaos and disorder, back to the child's world of simplicity and concern for little things, such as her cat Dinah.

Chapter Three: "The Mad Tea-Party"

Chapter VII, "The Mad Tea-Party," climaxes the themes of time, social standards, and madness that run throughout the Wonderland adventures. The scene upon which Alice wanders is chaotic and timeless, which are the first and most obvious features of this chapter.

The notion of chaos includes the idea of timelessness, that is, the atmosphere is one of confusion and disorder, with time having no bearing on the amelioration of the chaotic conflict. In chaos, no one looks to the passage of time for the natural easement of a chaotic situation. Time, as it were, runs rampant. This sense of timelessness allows "The Mad Tea-Party" chapter to fit into the theme of the Alice story.

The Mad Tea-Party focuses on time in the sense that the characters do not attend to time in a way that would be considered normal. Donald Rackin describes more accurately how the Tea-Party centers around time:

. . . Alice comes upon a situation that apparently has had no temporal beginning and probably will have no end. . . This question opens a whole series of ridiculous comments on watches and Time. These comments themselves seem pointless; and their complete lack of coherence or sequence intensifies the chapter's pervasive atmosphere of timelessness.¹⁸

The events in this chapter, as in all other chapters, follows no ordered pattern. The Mad Hatter contributes most to the disorder and the effect of timelessness in this chapter because of his eccentric preoccupation with watches and time as well as

with the arrangement and setting of the party.

The Mad Hatter's obsession with time sets the entire chapter in an atmosphere of "frozen time." It is always six o'clock tea-time, and there is little time to wash the cups between time as the Mad Hatter states (AA, p. 99). Martin Gardner describes this phenomenon in an annotation:

This was written before five o'clock tea had become the general custom in England. It was intended to refer to the fact that the Liddell's sometimes served tea at six o'clock, the children's supper-time. Arthur Standley Eddington, as well as less distinguished writers on relativity theory, have compared the Mad Tea-Party, where it is always six o'clock, with that portion of De Sitter's model of the cosmos in which time stands eternally still. (AA, p. 99)

The four characters in Chapter VII -- Alice, the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, and the Dormouse -- are caught up in what might be called "cyclical time" because they move from one place setting to the next until reaching the original seating positions. Then they begin the cycle again. This cyclical time element grows out of the "frozen time" present in Chapter VII. The cyclical time concept seems to be a reference to the routine of the adult world, that is, going to work, coming home from work, retiring at a reasonable hour, the meals are exactly at the same hour each day, and so on. A child does not seem to be a cycle-oriented person as are adults.

(It is interesting to note that there are twenty-six references to "Time, watch, month, day, year, clock, and o'clock" within the eleven pages comprising Chapter VII.)

To gain a better understanding of the Mad Hatter's contri-

bution to the themes, the concepts "mad," "hatter," and "mad hatter" have been investigated as they have developed through the centuries.

The word "mad" has an interesting etymological history as presented in the Old English Dictionary. "Mad" developed from the Old High German (OHG) words "gameit" and "kimeit" meaning "foolish, vain, and boastful." In the Middle High German (MHG), it took on new concepts of "merry, stately, handsome" in the word "gimeit." "Gamaips" was the Gothic development of "mad" with the meaning of "crippled." This word then took on the meaning "to render insane" in the Old English (OE) "ġemædan,"¹⁹ which is still retained today. All of these meanings, in more or less degree, describe the appearance of the Mad Hatter, along with the meaning of "carried away by enthusiasm or desire; wildly excited."²⁰

The word "Hatter," used as a noun, means "a maker of or dealer in hats"; "As mad as a hatter."²¹ The analysis of the "Mad Hatter" as a "maker of or dealer in hats" is a possible explanation of this character. Several other explanations as to Carroll's depiction of the character as the "Mad Hatter" will be discussed in sections to follow. The word "hatter" was also used as a verb at one time, now obsolete, meaning "to bruise with blows; to batter the edge or face of, to erode; to harass; to wear out, to exhaust with fatigue or drudgery."²² Alice, in Chapter VII, falls into the carryings-on of the Mad Hatter which results in Alice's disgust and, in a sense, she is battered men-

tally by the insults which the Tea-Party characters throw at her.

The character "Mad Hatter" could have grown out of several persons known by Lewis Carroll, or Carroll might possibly be referring to "makers of or dealers in hats," or still, since Carroll was a linguist, the character might have grown out of the development of the phrase "mad as a hatter". An attempt will be made to show that all three explanations are possible.

The Oxford Companion to English Literature makes this claim as to the origin of the Mad Hatter:

The illustration of the Mad Hatter is said (by those who remember him) to have been taken from an upholsterer in Oxford High Street, by name Carter.²³

Martin Gardner, in The Annotated Alice, further elaborates on this explanation:

There is good reason to believe that Tenniel adopted a suggestion of Carroll's that he draw the Hatter to resemble one Theophilus Carter, a furniture dealer near Oxford (and no grounds whatever for the widespread belief at the time that the Hatter was a burlesque of Prime Minister Gladstone). Carter was known in the area as the Mad Hatter, partly because he always wore a top hat and partly because of his eccentric ideas. His invention of an "alarm clock bed" that woke the sleeper by tossing him out on the floor. . . may help explain why Carroll's Hatter is so concerned with time as well as with arousing a sleepy Dormouse. (AA, p. 93)

One notes also that items of furniture -- table, arm-chair, writing desk -- are prominent in this episode. (AA, p. 93)

Martin Gardner explains two phrases, "mad as a hatter" and "mad as a March Hare," which were common at the time Carroll wrote:

The phrases 'mad as a hatter' and 'mad as a March Hare' were common at the time Carroll wrote, and of course that was why he created the two characters. 'Mad as a hatter' may have been a corruption of the earlier 'mad as an adder' but more likely owes its origin to the fact that until recently hatters actually did go mad. The mercury used in curing felt (there are now laws against its use in most states and in parts of Europe) was a common cause of mercury poisoning. Victims developed a tremor called 'hatter's shakes,' which affected their eyes and limbs and addled their speech. In advanced stages they developed hallucinations and other psychotic symptoms. (AA, p. 90)

The possibility of mercury poisoning causing the mental illness of the Mad Hatter is further described by Doctors F. Bodin and C. F. Cheinisse, in their book entitled Poisons:

It is the salts of mercury that are dangerous to those handling them regularly, as in the manufacture of mercury vapor rectifiers, mercury piles, and formerly in the treatment of skins and the manufacture of felt.

. . . Mercury poisoning is similar to arsenic poisoning in that nervous disorders are most likely to occur in chronic or sub-acute cases. . . the symptoms may be mental disorders (irritability, anxiety, insomnia), but above all they take the form of trembling . . . tremors occurring while making voluntary gestures, an uncertain step, and general loss of coordination.²⁴

Since liquid mercury was used in smoothing out the felt for making hats (as the above passages assert), employees working in hat factories could have developed a mental illness. The term "Mad Hatter" can easily be applied to such employees.

For the present analysis, the Mad Hatter will be investigated in light of the preceding information on chaos, the derivation and etymological development of the words "mad," "hatter," and "mad hatter," and possible explanations of his origin. More specifically, the Mad Hatter will be analyzed in terms of his physical appearance (there is little presented in the text

itself other than the illustrations), his personality, and his moral character. This investigation will show the influence of the Mad Hatter on the adult-child conflict.

The Mad Hatter's physical appearance is not described with words for the reader in Chapter VII. The one feature that can be presumed is that the Mad Hatter is between nine to twelve inches in height. This can be concluded because Alice in the previous chapters constantly adjusts her height to the height of the other characters and to the limited area in which she finds herself. At the end of Chapter VII, Alice adjusts her height again in order to get through the door in the side of a tree:

Then she set to work to nibble at the mushroom (she had kept a piece of it in her pocket) till she was about a foot high. . . (AA, p. 104)

If Alice's height was less than twelve inches, it can be safely assumed that the other characters gathered around the tea table were of a similar height.

Other physical characteristics of the Mad Hatter can be deduced from the illustrations by John Tenniel. In these sketches, the Mad Hatter appears to be eccentric, wearing a top hat with a label saying "In this style 10/6," a high starched collar, a large bow tie with polka dots; a large nose, and very scraggly hair. His facial features seem to be rather large in Tenniel's drawings. Although the Mad Hatter is depicted as being eccentric in dress and odd in physical features, he exhibits the first social convention of correct behavior when reciting his parody -- "Twinkle, twinkle, little bat." (AA, p. 99)

There are several elements of the Mad Hatter's personality that can be analyzed from Chapter VII: his preoccupation and obsession with time; his riddles and puns; and his rudeness towards Alice. The Mad Hatter's preoccupation with time per se has been discussed earlier in this chapter. Now, the Hatter's personal concern about time as a social convention will be discussed. The Mad Hatter is noted for his unusual watch that does not tell the hour. Rather it seems to tell the day of month:

'What day of the month is it?' he (Mad Hatter) said, turning to Alice: he had taken his watch out of his pocket, and was looking at it uneasily, shaking it every now and then holding it to his ear. . .

'What a funny watch!' she (Alice) remarked. 'It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!' (AA, p. 96)

This image of a watch that operates in such a fashion sheds light on the possibility that the Mad Hatter is the characterization of John Carter, who invented eccentric time pieces and even an "alarm clock bed" that would awaken the sleeper by tossing him onto the floor.

The Mad Hatter is also accused of wasting time by Alice and previously by the Queen of Hearts for telling riddles that cannot be solved.

'Have you guessed the riddle yet?' the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.

'No, I give it up,' Alice replied. 'What's the answer?'

'I haven't the slightest idea,' said the Hatter.

. . . Alice sighed wearily. 'I think you might do something better with the time,' she said, 'than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers.' (AA, p. 97)

Although the Hatter's creation of unsolvable riddles is a good

example of wasting time, his riddles also contribute to the broader theme of madness which will be discussed in a later section of this chapter.

The Mad Hatter refers to another incident that took place between himself and the Queen of Hearts who also accused him of wasting time for reciting his parody of "Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!". The Queen of Hearts accuses the Mad Hatter of such a crime in her customary dramatic manner:

'Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse,' said the Hatter, 'when the Queen bawled out 'He's murdering the time! Off with his head!'' (AA, p. 99)

Apparently the phrase "murdering the time" was common in Carroll's day for the equivalent expression of "wasting time" used today:

The equivalent contemporary expression is 'Killing time'; that is, spending the time in an unprofitable way. Here the phrase also alludes to the Hatter's mangling of the song's meter. (AA, p. 99)

But the Hatter defends his use of time by playing a pun on Alice's accusation. His punning is another characteristic of the Mad Hatter's personality. The Hatter's defense is:

'If you knew Time as well as I do,' said the Hatter, 'you wouldn't talk about wasting it. It's him.'
 . . . 'but I know I have to beat time when I learn music,' said Alice.
 'Ah! That accounts for it,' said the Hatter.
 'He won't stand beating.' (AA, pp. 97-98)

The Hatter's statement that he knows time well might be another reference to John Carter.

The Mad Hatter's wastefulness of time appears to climax this same fault found in the other characters, whom Alice en-

counters during her adventures in Wonderland. Although the characters are obsessively concerned about punctuality, they are usually not present at the appointed time because of some peripheral accident or event that interferes; for example, the White Rabbit in Chapters I and II, who is late for his meeting with the Duchess, becomes diverted because he cannot find his fans and gloves. He, therefore, wastes time because of his non-ordered, chaotic way of living.

Alice is quite the opposite. Although she might be accused of wasting time when her attention is also diverted (for example, her interest in the garden in Chapter II), there is a directness of purpose about her. An example of this is her conversation with the Mad Hatter, during which she tries to get to the heart of the matter while the Hatter merely talks in riddles. It is Alice who must remind the adults about not wasting time. In other words, the child Alice tells the adults to get to the core of their lives and activities, and not to be controlled by chaotic peripheral happenings.

The final personality characteristic exhibited by the Mad Hatter is his rudeness, especially towards Alice. The first comment that the Mad Hatter makes to Alice is considered to be rude by her:

'Your hair wants cutting,' said the Hatter. . .
 'You should learn not to make personal remarks,'
 Alice said with some severity: 'It's very rude.'
 (AA, p. 94)

Throughout the dialogues between Alice and the Mad Hatter, there is a rudeness in the Mad Hatter's comments, for example,

"'Then you shouldn't talk,' said the Hatter" (AA, p. 103).

The rudeness of the Mad Hatter and the absurdity of the present situation provokes Alice to the point where she also becomes rude in her comments to the Mad Hatter. The Mad Hatter, towards the end of Chapter VII, rebukes Alice for being rude:

'Nobody asked your opinion,' said Alice.

'Who's making personal remarks now?' the Hatter asked triumphantly. (AA, p. 101)

The rudeness of Alice's hosts is the cause for her running away from the Tea-Party trio.

The Mad Hatter's rude treatment of Alice is the epitome of adult bullying and superiority displayed by other characters throughout the story. When the Mad Hatter bullies Alice, Alice usually comes back immediately to insult the Hatter. Striking back in this way is a typical child response. By striking back, Alice gains control of the situation. The verbal relationship between Alice and the Mad Hatter gives evidence of little emotional control. The Mad Hatter flagrantly bursts forth in insults expressing his emotions. And Alice, having maintained some control, finally gives way to her emotions and rudely insults the Hatter.

The moral character of the Mad Hatter is made up of two features: a lack of concern for others (not considering his verbal rudeness) and egocentricity. Two examples of the Hatter's lack of concern can be found in the text:

. . . a Dormouse was sitting between them (March Hare and the Mad Hatter), fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. 'Very uncomfortable

for the Dormouse,' thought Alice, 'only, as it's asleep, I suppose it doesn't mind.' (AA, p. 93)

And:

'The Dormouse is asleep again,' said the Hatter, and he poured a little hot tea upon its nose. (AA, p. 97)

Although these seem to be insignificant, they seem to go along with the Mad Hatter's general verbal rudeness which shows a lack of concern for others. Nevertheless, these two examples color the Tea-Party scene and set it in its atmosphere of absurdity and humor, pointing out a general lack of concern.

The Mad Hatter also appears to be egocentric, as pointed out in the lines describing the changing of places at the tea-table:

'I want a clean cup,' interrupted the Hatter: 'Let's all move one place on.'

He moved on as he spoke and the Dormouse followed him. . . The Hatter was the only one who got any advantage from the change. (AA, p. 102)

Again, there is the difficulty of taking one seemingly trivial point and making a general claim such as the Hatter was definitely egocentric. However, the trifle of the Tea-Party seem to reflect the moral character of the individuals, especially the Mad Hatter. The fact that the Mad Hatter seems to exhibit little concern for the other three characters at the Tea-Party would be sufficient reason to say that he is concerned with his own interests. There are usually two options available for an individual who is not concerned about others: apathy or egocentricity. The Mad Hatter opts for the latter.

The Mad Hatter's lack of concern for others and his ego-

centricity contribute to the social standards of superiority and acceptance by others. By taking his own concerns at heart first, the Mad Hatter assumes a superior and dominating position over the other characters. The Mad Hatter, as an egocentric person, needs no acceptance from others. He is contented in his isolated world of selfishness.

Chapter VII climaxes the "madness" theme running throughout the Wonderland adventures. From the beginning paragraph of Chapter VII to the concluding one, absurdity and illogic abound. Alice comes upon the Tea-Party overhearing an absurd comment by the tea group:

The table was a large one, but the three were crowded together at one corner of it. 'No room! No room!' they cried out when they saw Alice coming. (AA, p. 93)

Alice herself admitted that she

. . . felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter's remark seemed to her to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English. (AA, p. 97)

The situation finally becomes so unbearable that Alice leaves the tea-party in disgust claiming: "At any rate I'll never go there again!" (AA, p. 104). The adult world puzzles Alice, and she asserts that she will not get mixed up with it. This is a foreshadowing of Alice's complete rejection of the adult world at the conclusion of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

Lewis Carroll, a master of the English language, used words, twisted them around, and coined new words in writing his Alice story. T. E. Kalem, in his article "Into a Laughing Hell" in Time, says that:

Through puns and transpositions of literal and metaphorical imagery, Carroll transformed English into a kind of jabber-wocky. Language goes beserk; it refuses to associate with reality.²⁵

Language is a reflection of the person's mind, since it flows from a person's thinking; that is, an individual's speech gives others some idea about what is going on within his mind. The language, in riddled and personal comments of the Mad Hatter, is illogical, pointing out that the mind of the Mad Hatter is illogical and incoherent.

In Martin Gardner's explanation of the phrase "Mad as a hatter," he made the statement that in advanced stages of mercury poisoning the individual's speech becomes addled. One of the common meanings of "addled," besides meaning "muddled," is "confused" or "thrown into confusion."²⁶ The Mad Hatter's speech could be considered to be "addled," since it at least throws Alice into confusion. As presented by his illogical riddles and absurd comments, it is possible that the Mad Hatter is suffering from the effects of mercury poisoning.

On a very obvious level, two of the three characters -- the Mad Hatter and the March Hare -- exhibit signs of madness. The Mad Hatter's illogical, incoherent, and chaotic verbalizations reflect his madness. The March Hare, although he does little in this chapter, goes "mad" during March, which is the mating season for rabbits.²⁷ Carroll, with his linguistic knowledge, might have used the character name, "March Hare," for added emphasis on the madness theme. The word "hare," although its use as a verb is now obsolete, at one time meant "to harry; to

worry; to harass; to frighten; to scare."²⁸ All of these meanings connote some form of mental anguish, either harmless or severe. Carroll's depiction of these two characters with their specific names points out the importance of the madness theme in this chapter.

The tea-party scene itself is mad, chaotic, disordered. Alice tries time after time by her remarks to bring a little order to the disarray of the adult world. At least, she attempts to understand the adult world, but is unable. She is also unable to bring any order into the adult world because the Mad Hatter bullies her until she runs away. Literally, this Chapter is maddening for Alice herself. Alice cannot bring any semblance of order or saneness into the world of adults; so she gains control of the situation by running away from it. This again is a foreshadowing of her final, total rejection of the adult's world in Carroll's later books on Alice.

Chapter Four: Reflections on the Adult-Child Conflict with
Emphasis on the Transition from Childhood to
Adulthood

Chapters VIII-XII provide still further reflections on the adult-child conflict. In addition to this, they suggest that Alice is growing into adulthood.

Since the adult-child conflict has been dealt with extensively in the first chapter of this essay, pointing out examples of the conflict will serve a better purpose for showing the consistency of Carroll's theme throughout these last chapters. The process of Alice's growing up, which seems to be of prime importance in Chapter XII, can be dealt with to a considerable degree.

Before discussing the social standards, it is necessary to state that time per se will not be discussed in this chapter. Primarily, the time theme is similar to that found in Chapters Two and Three of this thesis. Therefore, it will need no further discussion here.

The social standards still play a large role in Chapters VIII-XII of the text, especially in terms of Alice's acceptance or rejection of them. An example of the demands of correct and proper behavior is given in Chapter VIII, where a procession passes Alice. Alice, as a growing child, reflects on the behavior surrounding the procession:

Alice was rather doubtful whether she ought to lie down on her face like the three gardeners, but she could not remeber ever having heard of such a rule at processions; 'and besides, what would be the use

of a procession,' thought she, 'if people had all to lie down on their faces, so that they couldn't see it?' So she stood where she was, and waited. (AA, p. 107)

In this scene, Alice is exhibiting a state of growth, namely, questioning the existing order of things, rejecting the absurd elements, and finally abiding by the decision arrived at.

There are several elements of superiority in the adult world which must be discussed because they further point up Alice's questioning and rejection of adult standards. The first element is found in the dialogue between Alice, the King, and the Cheshire Cat in Chapter VIII. Alice rebukes the King, who does not want the Cat to look at him, in these words:

'A Cat may look at a King,' said Alice. 'I've read that in some book, but I don't remember where.'
(AA, p. 114)

Martin Gardner explains this interesting rebuttal:

'A cat may look at a King' is a familiar English proverb meaning that there are things an inferior may do in the presence of a superior. (AA, p. 114)

Alice apparently is going along with the existing social order of protocol, and does not question it at this time.

The use of proverbs is another fascinating aspect of superiority in the adult world which Lewis Carroll satirizes, especially in Chapter IX "The Mock Turtle's Story". In Chapter IX, the Duchess attempts to find morals in everything Alice says, giving advice in the form of proverbs. The Duchess, having attained a certain high position, is a superior figure in the story who tries to state, in her miniscule morals, life experiences which are in themselves verifiable for the sole purpose of

giving Alice, the child, practical knowledge around which she can model her life. The satire is found in the Duchess herself, who is the superior adult giving advice to the child who has not had as full a life as she. And the Duchess makes her experiences known to Alice by several morals:

'Oh, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round!' (AA, p. 120)

'Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves.' (This is a paraphrasing of the English proverb: 'Take care of the pence and the pounds will take care of themselves.') (AA, p. 121)

'Birds of a feather flock together.' (AA, p. 121)

Although these morals are drawn by the superior Duchess, they are again satirized because they are non-sequiturs to the conversation between herself and Alice. The Duchess forms these morals more out of habit than out of concern. The Duchess' moralizing is another specific example of the adult characters speaking down to the child.

Alice, however, gives the Duchess some practical advice when she says: "'Somebody said,' Alice whispered, 'that it's done by everybody minding their own business.'" (AA, pp. 120-121). This was the advice that the Duchess gave Alice in Chapter VI with the satire being that the Duchess herself does not utilize her own moral statements. Alice learned this moral from the adult Duchess, which points out that she has again been influenced by the adult way of thinking.

Another element of satire comes in when Alice rejects the Duchess' advice: "'I make you a present of everything I've said

as yet.' (said the Duchess) 'A cheap sort of present!' thought Alice." (AA, p. 122). Alice rejects the proverbial advice of the Duchess calling it "cheap," because she does not need to form maxims in order to live. She does not have to find a meaning constantly in every activity as does the Duchess and the other adults. Nor does Alice accept the proverbs of the Duchess, of one who does not follow her own adult advice.

The punctuality element in the adult world is evident throughout these chapters in the dramatic presentation of threats of extinction. The Queen demands that her subjects be on time and commands their deaths for being late:

'She's (the Duchess) under sentence of execution.'
'... You see she came rather late, and the Queen said--' (AA, p. 111)

'... the Queen merely remarking that a moment's delay would cost them their lives.' (AA, p. 123)

The Queen typifies the extreme obsession with punctuality typical of the adult world, and Alice recognizes the absurdity of the Queen's demands, and hopes that those under execution will be spared. Again, she begins to question the need for punctuality, an adult phenomenon.

A fourth element that enlarges the gap between adults and children is the tendency exhibited by the adults of appearing acceptable in the eyes of others. Chapter VIII, "The Queen's Croquet-Grounds," points up the difference between adults and children concerning acceptance. The adults are always saying things that others, especially the Queen, expect to hear from them. The adults do not want to lose the Queen's favor. Sev-

eral passages from Chapter VIII will show this tendency:

. . . among them Alice recognized the White Rabbit: it was talking in a hurried, nervous manner, smiling at everything that was said. . . (AA, p. 107)

The three soldiers wandered about for a minute or two, looking for them, and then quietly marched off after the others.

'Are their heads off?' shouted the Queen.

'Their heads are gone, if it please your Majesty!' the soldiers shouted in reply.

'That's right!' shouted the Queen. . . (AA, p. 110)

And:

'Where's the Duchess?' (said Alice)

'Hush! Hush!' said the Rabbit in a low, hurried tone. He looked anxiously over his shoulder as he spoke, and then raised himself upon tiptoe, put his mouth close to her ear, and whispered,

'She's under sentence of execution.' (AA, pp. 110-111)

Alice is exactly the opposite of the soldiers, the White Rabbit, and the other characters who say exactly what the Queen expects to hear, because otherwise their lives and positions would be endangered. Alice, upon encountering the Queen of Hearts for the first time, opposes her:

'How should I know?' said Alice, surprised at her own courage. 'It's no business of mine.'

The Queen turned crimson with fury, and, after glaring at her for a moment like a wild beast, began screaming, 'Off with her head! Off with--'

'Nonsense!' said Alice, very loudly and decidedly, and the Queen was silent. (AA, p. 109)

Alice immediately recognizes the absurdity in the Queen's demands and does not hesitate to tell her, even though the Queen becomes insanely infuriated. This quality of Alice of pointing up the truth undergoes a change towards the end of Chapter VIII.

Towards the end of Chapter VIII, Alice acts exactly like the adults when she is confronted by the Cheshire Cat:

'How do you like the Queen?' said the Cat in a low voice.

'Not at all,' said Alice: 'she's so extremely--' Just then she noticed that the Queen was close behind her, listening: so she went on '--likely to win, that it's hardly worth while finishing the game.'

The Queen smiled and passed on. (AA, p. 114)

Alice's behavior earlier in Chapter VIII has now undergone a complete social change. She has now, as the above passage manifests, exhibited adult behavior, upon being influenced by the adults in her immediate environment. Carroll seems to be saying that a child will eventually lose his honesty when it jeopardizes his position, and will become concerned with appearing acceptable in the eyes of others, as are adults, in order to insure his position and life.

The brashness of Alice reflects a typical childlike response. Earlier in the story, Alice gave herself some advice about controlling her emotions. She was aware of the emphasis put on emotional control by the adults, although she never followed that advice. Alice is so overwhelmed by the madness in Wonderland that in Chapters VIII-XII she can no longer control her emotions. This is a child's response in the face of danger.

Some of the examples cited above show a rejection of social standards, while others point out Alice's acceptance of them. This is a typical response of an individual in the process of growth: rejecting unnecessary conventions and accepting those standards needed for the good of all.

The madness theme is portrayed throughout Chapters VIII-XII in the characters. Madness is found in the Queen's absurdity, in the Duchess' obsession with finding morals in everything, in the nonsense of the trial scene, and in the language distortions of Lewis Carroll. The madness theme in the final chapters of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is consistent with its presentation in the first seven chapters of the text. The madness theme has its source in Alice's relationship to the characters in these chapters. The scenes are mad not only in themselves, but also because of Alice's relationship to them. Alice cannot relate to the adult happenings in these final chapters and, therefore, she immediately concludes that they are absurd and insane. As a child, they are insane to her. Her reaction to the various insane encounters is consistent in that she either condemns them or escapes their immediacy as in Chapters I-VII.

In contrasting adulthood and childhood, Carroll reaches a point in the story where he presents the child as growing up to adulthood. Chapter XII deals with Alice growing up or, at least, the results of Alice's growth. An example, although it deals with her change in height, symbolizes Alice's growth:

'Here!' cried Alice, quite forgetting in the flurry of the moment how large she had grown in the last few minutes, and she jumped up in such a hurry that she tipped over the jury-box with the edge of her skirt, upsetting all the jurymen on to the heads of the crowd below, and there they lay sprawling about, reminding her very much of a globe of gold-fish she had accidentally upset the week before. (AA, p. 153)

Physical change in height, as it has been discussed earlier in this thesis, symbolizes the growth of the child to maturity.

Lewis Carroll also seems to point out what could happen to an individual who disrupts the ordered events of society in the trial scene:

Here one of the guinea pigs cheered, and was immediately suppressed by the officers of the court. (As that is rather a hard word, I will just explain to you how it was done. They had a large canvas bag, which tied up at the mouth with strings: into this they slipped the guinea pig, head first, and then sat upon it.) (AA, pp. 149-150)

The King and Queen, and their court attempt to suppress Alice when she vocally rejects them, but Alice then awakens from her dream.

In the child's growth process, parents and other authority figures cannot understand why their children go through a stage of rebellion and rejection. The average response of an adult, upon confronting rebellious children, is to punish them -- usually in terms of taking away their privileges. In other words, the child must be suppressed.. At this, children usually become even more rebellious, as did Alice, who tried to beat off her suppressors, the cards.

Childhood and adulthood are further contrasted by Carroll's depiction of Alice's sister fantasizing about her Wonderland dream in Chapter XII. Alice's sister reflects on Alice's dream to the point of "the whole place around her became alive with the strange creatures of her little sister's dream" (AA, p. 163). She becomes enraptured by the characters in the dream and finally comes to the realization that it is only a dream after all. The text describes Alice's sister's

reaction in this way:

So she sat on, with closed eyes, and half believed herself in Wonderland, though she knew she had but to open them again, and all would change to dull reality -- the grass would be only rustling in the wind, and the pool rippling to the waving of the reeds -- the rattling tea-cups would change to tinkling sheep-bells, and the Queen's shrill cries to the voice of the shepherd boy -- and the sneeze of the baby, the shriek of the Gryphon, and all other queer noises, would change (she knew) to the confused clamour of the busy farm-yard -- while the lowing of the cattle in the distance would take the place of the Mock Turtle's heavy sobs. (AA, pp. 163-164)

It is at this point in the story where Carroll presents a remarkable contrast between adulthood and childhood, between reality and dream which was Alice's reality. Alice's sister symbolizes those adults who fall into fantasy because reality is "dull." Reality is not as pleasurable as dreaming about reality, for in fantasizing one is able to color his reality as he would like to see it. Yet, for Alice, as for other children, there is no division between reality and dream. Those characters and events that Alice beheld in her dream were reality for her. But, in the process of growth, dreams and reality become even more divided, and the individual is called upon to leave behind him his dream reality. Carroll, as the last paragraphs in Chapter XII suggests, would like for the child to remember the happy times of her childhood, that is, to live both in reality and to continue to dream. In the adult, reality and his dream life should not be at odds with each other.

The final two pages in Chapter XII point out a problem of the growing child, that is, she will indeed probably forget the

happy and carefree days of her childhood. In the words of Alice's sister:

First, she dreamed of little Alice herself, and once again the tiny hands were clasped upon her knee, and the bright eager eyes were looking up into hers. . . . Lastly, she pictured to herself how this same little sister of hers would, in the after-time, be herself a grown woman; and how she would keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of childhood; and how she would gather about her other little children. . . remembering her own child-life and the happy summer days. (AA, pp. 162-164)

This is the desire of most adults for children: that they can be just as happy as adults as they were while they were young. But another problem seems to creep in here, that the children, when they become adults, may tend to use their happy memories as a means of regression from unfavorable situations and escape from the adult world of responsibility as Alice did throughout the Wonderland adventures. Either childhood memories will be used as a means of escape, or they will serve as an integrating force in their lives. Carroll would hope that the happy and carefree memories of childhood would serve as an integrative force, rather than as a means of escape from adulthood.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The one hundredth anniversary of Lewis Carroll's publication of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland took place in 1965. At present, there are approximately thirty-six editions of this text in print.²⁹ Carroll's story fascinates the child as do most fairy tales, and yet, at the same time, the adult can also value this literary work. For the child, it is at most fascination. For the adult, levels of understanding can be unfolded because Alice's Adventures in Wonderland allows the adult to view his adult world through the eyes of a child, Alice. Although this story was written in the Victorian Era, with Victorian overtones and social comments about Victorian Society, there is a timelessness and universality found within its pages. It is a timeless and universal work because in most societies there does exist a gap or a conflict between childhood and adulthood. The emphasis of the initiation theme in literature and various cultural puberty rites bear this out.

Nonsense Literature is the technical literary term applied to Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. Nonsense, with its elements of absurdity and order, is the structure with which Carroll wrote his renowned story. Elizabeth Sewell, in her article "The Balance of Brillig," states how the Nonsense method of writing operates on the reader:

. . .Nonsense words, by the usual Nonsense methods, play against the mind's tendency to oneness, the tendency towards poetry and dream; but they have equally to make sure that the Nonsense words do not create a

nothingness in the mind. Either form of infinity is dangerous to Nonsense, and it is between the two, between 0 and 1 as it were, that Nonsense language has to maintain its balance.³⁰

Carroll is able to present absurdity to the reader's mind in his various character portrayals and, at the same time, he is able to maintain the balance or unity through the main character, Alice.

The method by which Carroll maintains this balance amid absurdity is through the dream technique. The Alice books are picaresque stories. This dream technique of writing is valuable to Lewis Carroll's story because it presents only different ideas, sense impressions, or reflections about the adult world and the child's attitude towards it. The task of linking these ideas together in order to understand Carroll's complete view of adulthood and childhood is the responsibility of the reader. The dream technique allows Carroll to present the conflict between adult and child because each chapter is a dream episode in itself presenting new faces and new ideas to the reader.

Carroll uses the two literary devices of contrast and satire to present the conflict between adulthood and childhood and to insure the unity through Alice. The conflict is manifested and enlarged by contrast because whenever the adult characters in each chapter of the story are described with their insane concern about punctuality, acceptance, and the other social standards, Carroll immediately contrasts the leisurely, care-free, and sane fantasy of the child's world in Alice. The sanity and unity of the child's nature is woven throughout the

adult events and encounters primarily by using contrast. Carroll is able to point up both the uniqueness of each world and the wide differences between each. The use of contrast seems to be the best device for presenting such a conflict in literature and, in terms of Carroll's picaresque dream technique of writing, to maintain a unity between the two worlds through the portrayal of Alice. Contrast both widens the conflict and, because Alice is the one factor in the contrast that does not change, weaves together the two extremes of the conflict.

Satire is another literary device used by Carroll, which usually points up the absurdity of the adult world. Carroll satirizes the adult world, while sympathizing with the child. The satire in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland serves to widen the gap between adulthood and childhood and yet, again through the use of the dream technique, Carroll does not allow the two extremes to become so far separated that there will be no hope of unifying them. He again brings the two extremes together to a certain degree of equilibrium by presenting Alice in each chapter of the story.

A final attribute of Lewis Carroll contributes to the literary workmanship of this story. Carroll's linguistic knowledge must have been valuable to him when writing this story because, as Elizabeth Sewall asserts in "The Balance of Brillig," "Nonsense is a game with words."³¹ Donald Gray, in Alice in Wonderland: Backgrounds and Essays in Criticism, gives some idea as to Carroll's linguistic ability:

As a young man he was an amateur student of the history of language, and his comic writing has become interesting to linguists because in it he plays with words and with some fundamental ideas about the symbolic nature of language itself.³²

Carroll's superb mastery of the English language furthers his Nonsense method of writing because he plays around with words and ideas and, therefore, with the lives of his characters which are manifested by the particular words and ideas that issue from their mouths. The names given to several or possibly all of the adult characters seem to be a result of Carroll's knowledge of the English language. And such names like the "Mad Hatter" and the "March Hare" are a major asset to the literary themes because of their etymological development and linguistic connotations. Carroll apparently knew the English language so well that he is able to submit it to his needs by bending it into shape for each character. A knowledge of language for Carroll was a valuable prerequisite for writing his most famous nonsense story.

On a general or a universal level, the value of researching any literary work is to come to some understanding of the age in which it was written, its people, its history, its philosophical and ethical values, its society. This is so because each work of literature was composed in a certain era with its particular overtones, and it allows others to conceptualize about that particular era. In literature, this social picture is presented artfully from one individual's point-of-view with perhaps some emphasis on only one aspect of a society. Unlike a historical

presentation with its overwhelming data, literature provides society with an atmosphere of a certain age, a climate of its milieu.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland provides the reader with some understanding of the Victorian Society through the stance of Lewis Carroll. The major aspect of Victorian Society, which Carroll emphasizes in his story, is that of the adult-child conflict. This conflict is the thrust of this essay, which has attempted to show how the social criticism about the adult-child conflict has been presented artfully through literary devices and methods. This research has focused in on only one factor of Victorian Society, a factor which is believed to be found in most societies. After viewing the conflict between childhood and adulthood, present in the Victorian Age, the reader is permitted to go from there and to examine the conflict present in his particular society. Proceeding from the specific view to a more universal view that is applicable to any age distinguishes a great literary work. Lewis Carroll's story does provide the reader with a universal application, and thereby, it can be a valuable teaching aid in learning about a child's view of life and society.

FOOTNOTES

¹Donald W. Gray (ed.), Alice in Wonderland: Backgrounds and Essays in Criticism (New York: W. W. Norton and Co. Inc., 1971), p. VI.

²Martin Gardner, "A Child's Garden of Bewilderment," Saturday Review, XLVIII (July 17, 1965), p. 18.

³Phyllis Greenacre, "Reconstruction and Interpretation of the Development of Charles L. Dodgson and Lewis Carroll," (1955), in Gray, p. 420.

⁴Donald Rackin, "Alice's Journey to the End of Night," PMLA, LXXXI (October 1966), p. 313.

⁵Alexander L. Taylor, The White Knight (Philadelphia: Dufour Editions, 1963), p. 95.

⁶Gray, p. VIII.

⁷Greenacre, in Gray, p. 419.

⁸Gillian Avery, "Fairy Tales for Pleasure," (1965), in Gray, p. 334.

⁹William Empson, "The Child as Swain," (1950), in Gray, p. 342.

¹⁰Taylor, p. 48.

¹¹Peter Coveney, "Escape," (1967), in Gray, pp. 330-331.

¹²Empson, in Gray, p. 347.

¹³Empson, in Gray, p. 354.

¹⁴Avery, in Gray, p. 329.

¹⁵Empson, in Gray, p. 355.

¹⁶T. E. Kalem, "Into a Laughing Hell," Time, Vol. 96, No. 17 (October 26, 1970), p. 93.

¹⁷Elizabeth Sewell, "The Balance of Brillig," (1952), in Gray, p. 382.

¹⁸Rackin, p. 320.

¹⁹The Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. VI (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 13.

²⁰OED, VI, p. 14.

²¹OED, V, p. 118.

²²OED, V, p. 118.

²³Paul Harvey (Ed.), The Oxford Companion to English Literature, Fourth edition (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 372.

²⁴F. Bodin and C. F. Chienisse, Poisons (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1970), p. 116.

²⁵Kalem, p. 93.

²⁶Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. and C. Merriam Co., 1963), p. 11.

²⁷OED, V, p. 91.

²⁸OED, V, p. 92.

²⁹Books in Print 1971, Volume 1 (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1971), pp. 411-412.

³⁰Sewell, in Gray, p. 383.

³¹Sewell, in Gray, p. 386.

³²Gray, p. VIII.

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This thesis is dedicated to the Reverend Thomas Ostdick, O.S.B., a man who has inspired me onto success. Father Thomas, saint and scholar, is a very humane person: witty, disgusting, easy-to-get-along-with, lovable, virilont, masculine, muscular, nice, happy, serious, intelligent, hard-working, eager, successful, integrated, holy, funny, gay, dependable, reasonable, smart, sensible, life-giving, pensive, serene, calm, aggressive, monk, priest, man, selfless, helpful, someone to talk to, trusting, worthfull, moving, meaningful, condescending, ascending, rising, thoughtful, quaint, otherwordly, wordly, otiose, heavy, humongous, bursting forth, overflowing, nonsensical, outgoing, outreaching, sparkling, debonair, specific, spectacular, obliging, kind, good, loving, hopeful, joyful, merciful, patient, full of zeal, heroic, believable, critical, buzzing, soupy, bossy, big, thick, chemical, biological, boric, bouncing, bowing, biblical, augmenting, abetting, auspicious, heavenly, angelic, divine, stupendous, palpitating, beating, aromatic, administrative, adjusting, admirable, admissible, admitting, adopting, adoring, adventuring, automatic, caluculating, consuming, committed, demanding, expecting, flunking, experienced, short-haired, clean-shaven, reforming, forgetful, forgiving, forging ahead, major, makeshift, electric, echoing, reverberating, eschatalogical, final, ecumenical, adaptive, edifying, economical, swinger, ecological, violent, polluted, educated, brainy, prompt, promising, walking proof of the small town boy gone good, profound, supportive, plump, organized, modern, ancient, old, young in heart, youthful, mediocre, moderate, temperate, virtuous, just, chaste, molded, moist, non-inhibited, inherent, coherent, mental, spiritual, corporal, ingenious, inhaling, exhaling, ingratiating, doughfaced, naughty, dove-tailed, distinct, extinct, even-tempered, distracting, talkative, long-winded, dictatorial, devastating, messianic, clear, clement, clean, clever, sneekish, sly, crafty, distributive, ecstatic, gross, ridiculous at times, frowning, guaranteeing, grand, amiable, frindly, grandiose, flabby, big-toed, graceful, delicate, weak, feeble, sickly, good-hearted, big eater, gorging, gorgeous, good-natured, glorifying, gloating, sorrowful, worried, glancing, glamarous, gladiatorial, falshing, glazing, gleaming, gleaning, gliding, gauging, garlic, fertile, fustic, frequent, fresh, frictional, fretting, frightened, frigid, freakish, free, artistic, well-balanced, brave, ofrtuitous, well-behaved, confusing, forward, backward, frail, foxy, forgetful, formed, formal, formative, forceful, familiar, fancy, faithful, extravagant, extreme, exacting, exposing, real, alive, exploding, exserting, extending, evident, noticeable, exact, evermore, everlasting, forever, evergreen, enormous, satiating, entire, enticing, enthusiastic, enthralled, enterprising, entrusting, anemic, enduring, energetic, jolting, journalistic, joking, laughing, judging, careful, watchful, enkidling, kingly, monarchical, hierarchical, mad, maimed, tiny, easily maintained, photogenic, happy-go-lucky, schmaltzy, smashing, smoky, subverting, streamlined, strengthening, strenuous, stressful, delightful, striking, stringent, stocky, stiff, steep, static, to him, let it be said "Isn't this absolutely delightful?!"

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