FANTASTICAL REFLECTIONS: LEWIS CARROLL, GEORGE MACDONALD AND
CHARLES DICKENS

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Abstract

This thesis examines the presence and importance of the fantastical in literature of the Victorian period, a time most frequently associated with rationality. A variety of cultural sources, including popular entertainment, optical technology and the fairy tale, show the extent of the impact the fantastical has on the period and provides further insight into its origins. Lewis Carroll, George MacDonald and Charles Dickens, who each present very different style of writing, provide similar insight into the impact of the fantastical on literature of the period. By examining the similarities and influences that exist between these three authors and other cultural sources of the fantastical a clear pattern can be seen, demonstrating the origins and use of the fantastical in Victorian literature and providing a new stance from which it should be viewed.

Contents

In the 1851 'Preliminary Word' of *Household Words*, Charles Dickens writes of the 'privilege of living in this summer-dawn of time.' In doing so he expresses a sense of being both in the midst of something great and the beginning of something new. This seems an appropriate description of a world in the midst of the Industrial Revolution. Due to the rapid industrialisation that occurred during this period the Victorian era is most commonly associated with the mechanical and rational. Nicola Bown looks at the broad impact of industrialism and argues that 'in the nineteenth century the widespread adoption of extreme forms of rationality, such as utilitarian philosophy, the factory system and laissez-faire economics, brought with them the threat of a deathly lack of feeling and a view of human beings as little more than living machines driven by a finite number of calculable desires.'[1] Ioan Williams, meanwhile, comments that in thinking of mid-Victorian fiction, 'the idea of Realism rises naturally to mind.'[2] However, as Stephen Prickett demonstrates in *Victorian Fantasy*, the fantastical arises frequently in literature of the period, existing 'not in opposition to the prevailing realism, but in addition to it.'[3] I intend to show, through the work of George MacDonald, Lewis Carroll and Charles Dickens, the way elements of the fantastical are embraced by Victorian culture and reflected in literature which, though different in many ways, shares the same origins and intentions. These intentions are well expressed by Dickens in his 'Preliminary Word', where he writes:

> No mere utilitarian spirit, no iron binding of the mind to grim realities,
>
> will give a harsh tone to our Household Words. In the bosoms of the
>
> young and old, of the well-to-do and of the poor, we would tenderly
>
> cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast; which,

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[1] Bown, Nicola, *Fairies in Nineteenth Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.11

[2] Ioan Williams, *The Realist Novel in England: A Study in Development* (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1974), p. x

[3] Stephen Prickett, *Victorian Fantasy* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2005) p.1

according to its nurture, burns with an inspiring flame, or sinks into a

sullen glare, but which (or woe betide that day!) can never be

extinguished. To show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those

which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will

find it out: - to teach the hardest of workers at this whirling wheel of toil,

that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the

sympathetic graces of imagination; to bring the greater and the lesser in

degree, together, upon that wide field, and mutually dispose them to a

better acquaintance and a kinder understanding – is one main object of

our Household Words.[4]

Utilitarianism and the cold, mechanical 'iron binding of the mind' are the negative

components of Dickens' 'summer-dawn', while the 'light of Fancy' is its saviour. Industrial

progress, however, is not portrayed negatively. In the 'Preliminary Word' Dickens continues

to explain that 'the mightier inventions of this age are not, to our thinking, all material, but

have a kind of souls in their stupendous bodies.' This comment suggests the necessity of

balance between the mechanical, rational object and the fantastical imagination. The same

concept returns forcefully in *Hard Times* (1854), where Dickens explores the danger of

losing this balance in favour of 'fact, fact, fact.'[5] The 'light of fancy' also becomes a key

image in the novel, which particularly promotes the concept of 'fancy' being 'inherent in the

human breast' as well as being an essential counterbalance to purely rational fact.[6] Dickens'

defence of 'fancy' is only one example of the presence and importance of the fantastical in

Victorian literature. In comparing Dickens' work with that of Lewis Carroll and George

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[4] Charles Dickens, 'Preliminary Word', *Household Words*, 1 (1851). p.1-2
[5] Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (New York: Norton and Company, 2001) p.9
[6] I will enlarge upon this point in Chapter Four

MacDonald, a great range of fantastical elements can be found - and traced, in many cases, to the same cultural sources.

In order to do this work it is necessary to establish the definition of the fantastic in its Victorian context. Stephen Prickett recognises the prevalence of fantastical elements as he explores 'how the idea of fantasy as an art form developed during the nineteenth century.'[7] He explains how the word fantasy 'from its earliest usages in English […] has been associated with two other related ones, *imagination* and *fancy*- which share the same Greek root as *fantasy*' but goes on to argue that the definitions of these words are divided in the Victorian period, that 'imagination and fantasy has come to stand for two sides of the Victorian psyche: its sacred and profane loves.' The imagination, he writes, 'was the supreme gift of the poet, the creative power of the artist […] a reflection in man of the divine and life giving spirit of God the Creator', while 'Fantasy, by contrast, was the gift of dreams […] it was delightful, alluring, compulsive, disturbing, nightmare and hag ridden. It was akin to madness.' Prickett's fantasy definition well represents the fantastical elements of Dickens, Carroll and MacDonald's writing, particularly in its relation to the dream. However, the Victorian view of imagination, which he describes, is firmly behind the three authors' use of the "fantasy" elements. MacDonald explains this in his essay 'The Fantastic Imagination', writing that

> one difference between God's work and man's is, that, while God's work cannot mean more than he meant, man's must mean more than he meant. […] it is God's things, his embodied thoughts, which alone man has to use, modified and adapted to his own purposes, for the expression of his thoughts […] A man may well himself discover truth in what he wrote;

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[7] Stephen Prickett. *Victorian Fantasy* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2005), p.12, 5, 9

for he was dealing all the time with things that came from thoughts

beyond his own.[8]

 This resonates strongly with Prickett's description of imagination as a 'reflection in man of

the divine.' MacDonald's writing portrays religious views particularly strongly but, as will

be further discussed later, both Carroll and Dickens also display a belief in the great

importance of imagination, associating it with an innocence and morality that also coincides

with Prickett's description of 'divine' reflection. For Dickens this is evident throughout the

'Preliminary Word.' In this article, imagination as a thing inherent to all humans is

considered in a social rather than a theological context. 'Fancy', Dickens suggests, defies

class and age boundaries, belonging inherently to all humans. It is for this reason Dickens

uses elements of the fantastical in his writing, to represent the real world and to address its

social and political concerns in a way which reaches a wide audience on a personal level.

Dickens also believed in the dream in a similar way, as can be seen in another *Household*

Words article 'Lying Awake,'[9] where he writes about the 'equality of sleep.'

> Here, for example, is Her Majesty Queen Victoria in her palace this
>
> present blessed night, and here is Winking Charley, a sturdy vagrant, in
>
> one of Her Majesty's jails. […] Her Majesty in her sleep has opened or
>
> prorogued Parliament, or has held a Drawing Room, attired in some very
>
> scanty dress, the deficiencies and improprieties of which have caused her
>
> great uneasiness. I, in my degree, have suffered unspeakable agitation of
>
> mind from taking the chair at a public dinner at the London Tavern in my

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[8] George MacDonald. 'The Fantastic Imagination' in *Phantastes,* ed. By Nick Page (London: Paternoster, 2008), pp. 275-281 (p. 280)

[9] Dickens, Charles, 'Lying Awake' in *'Gone Astray' and Other Papers from Household Words,* ed. by Michael Slater (London: J.M. Dent, 1998)

night-clothes […] Winking Charley has been repeatedly tried in a worse condition.

The fantastical dream, as shall be seen, is important to the work of both Carroll and MacDonald, though it is particularly associated with Carroll and his dream world Wonderland.

Along with the dream, another symbol particularly associated with Carroll is the mirror or looking glass. In *Through the Looking Glass* Carroll presents his reader with a mirror through which exists a fantastically distorted version of the real world. This distorted mirror world is of course very similar to Wonderland, the distorted dream world of the previous book. MacDonald also uses the mirror in a similar way to the dream in his writing. Both are presented as a point at which the boundary between the real and fantastical is passable and both are mediums through which to view a moral lesson. In *The Mirror: A History*, Sabine Melchior-Bonnet writes that 'the mirror mediates between the dream and the real. It offers a virtual space for the encounter with the other – a fictive space in which an imaginary scenario is played out. […] The frontal encounter is eluded or deferred, while the mirror frees up a margin of interpretation in the face of a truth that cannot be told to the face. It can also be the seductive mirror of catastrophic games; the luminous and reflecting surface tames the strange and transfigures the scene in order to adorn it with a grace and beauty that the real does not have.'[10] The ability of the reflective space to adorn the real appears closely related to Dickens' intention to show that 'in all familiar things […] there is Romance enough, if we will find it out.' In this sense it is appropriate to describe Dickens' work, often strewn with metaphorical monsters and magic, as an example of fantastical mirroring of the real world. The same can be said of MacDonald, and the mirror is an important

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[10] Sabine Melchior-Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History*, trans. By Katharine H. Jewett (London: Routledge, 2002), p.233

symbol in his work, as will be discussed later. The reason behind this mirror association and the use of fantastical reflections is related to Melchior-Bonnet's point on the 'margin of interpretation in the face of a truth that cannot be told face to face.' For all three authors the distorted reflection of the world they provide presents an alternative view of social or moral issues. It becomes a way of discussing familiar issues in a new light, a method which encourages new thought and better understanding on the subjects in question as well as avoiding direct address on subjects which may be considered difficult to discuss, such as mortality or societies effect on childhood. The use of the fantastical for this purpose is wide reaching and will be discussed further in relation to both the fairy tale and optical technology, both of which strongly influence Carroll, Dickens and MacDonald.

Chapter one explores the three key examples of the fantastical in Victorian culture in order to establish the context and influences of the three authors. The first section examines the place and importance of the fairy tale in the Victorian period. This includes not only the rise of the fairy tale as a genre, though this is of great importance, but also the influence of traditional fairy tale motifs on Victorian culture. This involves its broader influence on mediums such as art and theatre as well as the existing interest in the possibility of factual origins of fairies. In relation to the latter in particular I begin to demonstrate the close coexistence of fact and fantasy.

The second section deals with a variety of popular entertainments available during the period and their relationship with the fantastical. This provides further example of the broad cultural influence of the fantastical, exploring its appearance in other forms, such as the circus, which are unrelated to fairy tale motifs. The section will therefore further examine the definition of the fantastical. However, there are still many similarities to be drawn with the fairy tale and the reasons behind these overlapping features will also be considered.

Intention of use, such as the use of the fantastical for the representation of social issues, is one example of such a similarity.

In section three I look into technology, particularly optical technology, and the way it is used to create fantastical illusions or to give the fantastical the appearance of reality. Again this shows a crossing of the boundary between rational and fantastical but in a way that is the opposite of the 'rational' study of fairy ethnography. Whereas the latter attempts to attach rational thought onto something fantastical, the former takes the rational invention and uses it to try to create the fantastical. The presence of the fantastical in this context is particularly interesting because the devices are intended to make the viewer question the reality of their vision. What is truly there, the rational, and what is a fantastical trick of the eye or imagination? This question of knowing what is real and what is not is something Carroll frequently uses. It is another interesting point at which fact and fantasy meet, as Nicola Brown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell point out: 'disembodied voices over the telephone, the superhuman speed of the railway, near-instantaneous communication through telegraph wires: the collapsing of time and distance achieved by modern technologies that were transforming daily life was often felt to be uncanny.'[11] The use of optical technology for entertainment links it not only to the previous section but also to the fairy tale as one of the subjects it uses. Together they show a broad but closely linked pattern of fantastical themes throughout this rational era.

The focus of chapter two is Lewis Carroll who, as both mathematician and creator of Wonderland, is a perfect example of the combination of rational and fantastical. Carroll's use of the fantastical is often centred around the idea of dreaming and therefore the fantastical dream is my emphasis here. It is here that Carroll's interest in the reality

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[11] Nicola Bown, Carolyn Burdett and Pamela Thurschwell. *The Victorian Supernatural*. Ed. Gillian Beer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p.1

boundary emerges. The closely related mirror theme is also discussed further in relation to Carroll's writing, which allows a close comparison of the similarity between fantastical mirror and dream reflections of the world. Carroll's interest in the theatre and the subsequent influence of this and of optical technology on his fiction shall also be considered in terms of both direct influence and more general influence, such as that of the magic lantern on the concept of the reality boundary. This demonstrates that Carroll's use of the fantastical, while itself unique, is drawn from the same cultural sources as have been previously discussed.

Chapter three moves on to George MacDonald. While his relationship with Carroll and the similarities between their work will be considered, the traditional fairy tale is the key influence on MacDonald's writing for my purposes. Although MacDonald wrote his own fairy tales for children it is the two adult fantasies, *Phantastes* and *Lilith*, which I mainly discuss: both encompass the same fairy tale and allegorical elements of the children's stories but these are used with a greater depth and complexity, allowing better understanding of their use and origins. The use of the fantastical for moral and specifically religious instruction is also very different to Carroll's use, which allows for further exploration of the purpose of the fantastical in literature. By comparing this with the purpose of the fantastical in various cultural contexts and in the traditional fairy tale a broader theme is once again clear.

Chapter four, on Charles Dickens, explores another use of the fantastical in literature. The main difference in Dickens writing compared with that of Carroll and MacDonald is of course his use of the real world as setting. However, despite being discussed as a 'realist' author by critics such as C.P. Snow and Ioan Williams,[12] Dickens frequently uses fantastical elements in his writing, as well as openly promoting its benefits, as has already been seen. In

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[12] C.P. Snow, *The Realists* (London: Macmillan, 1978); Williams, Ioan. *The Realist Novel in England* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1974)

Dickens' writing the fantastical is usually linked with childhood. Fairy tale characters are often used metaphorically in association with children or the child's viewpoint and the circus of *Hard Times* will be further discussed in relation to its nostalgic value. Due to Dickens' interest and involvement in social issues there are many examples of his opinions on subjects such as entertainment, allowing a detailed analysis of the cultural presence of the fantastical from the view of an author using their influence in his work.

Together these chapters show that the fantastical is an important and wide reaching theme which directly influences many spheres of Victorian culture, including literature. Directly comparing other influences with those found in the writing of Carroll, Dickens and MacDonald reveals that the use of the fantastical in literature does not come about 'more or less accidentally', as Prickett suggests, but an intentional use of a popular subject. Further evidence is provided by examination of the distinct uses made of the fantastical by the three authors despite the fact that their influences and intentions remain (notably) similar.

<u>Chapter One</u>

Fairy, Fantasy and Rational Enchantment

The rise of the fairy tale in the Victorian era has been explored by many critics[13], with the popularity of fairy tale books by both the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Anderson in the period clear evidence of this phenomenon. However, the popularity of the fairy as a subject was far more deeply rooted in Victorian society than this simple fact suggests. In the foreword to 'Victorian Fairy Painting', Philip Dowson and Stephen Prokopoff note that 'fairies had always been a part of folk culture in Britain and Ireland and permeated the work of Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, but from the late 18th century fairy painting flourished […] in fact it touched all the arts - opera and ballet, literature and pantomime.'[14] This comment is important not only because it demonstrates the extent of fairy popularity across the arts but also because it acknowledges that the fairy was not by any means a Victorian construct, but one which originates from folk and fairy lore established in Britain long before the nineteenth century. It is therefore particularly in the late eighteenth century it begins to flourish, and from that point it becomes firmly rooted in Victorian culture.

One reason for the rise of the literary fairy tale in the Victorian period was its effective use for instruction, particularly moral instruction. This is often attributed to the broad appeal of the fairy tale. Elaine Ostry argues, for example, that 'people of all classes could recognise fairy-tale allusions,'[15] whilst Osama Jarrar points out that 'the disruption of social relationships in figurative representation gives fairy tales aesthetic capacity to reveal the familiar world in a new light.'[16] The genre therefore not only reached a wide audience but also had the ability to present everyday issues in a way that promoted new thought on the

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[13] Such as Jack Zipes and Steven Swann Jones

[14] Philip Dowson and Stephen Prokopoff, 'Foreword', in *Victorian Fairy Painting,* ed. By Jane Martineau (London: Merrell Holberton, 1998), n.p

[15] Elaine Ostry, *Social Dreaming: Dickens and the Fairy Tale* (London: Routledge, 2002), p.xi-xii

[16] Osama Jarrar, 'MacDonald's Fairy Tales and Fantasy Novels as a Critique of Victorian Middle-Class Ideology', *North Wind*, 30 (2011), p.13, pp.13-24

subject. This was certainly a key factor in the popular use of the fairy tale form, as can be seen in Jack Zipes' statement that 'in the period between 1840 and 1880 the general trend among the more prominent fairy-tale writers was to use the fairy-tale form in innovative ways to raise social consciousness about the disparities among the different social classes and the problems faced by the oppressed due to the industrial revolution.'[17] But, as has been mentioned, it is not only the rising literary fairy tale but also the fairy figures of early oral tales and folklore which are important. This importance is most clearly demonstrated by the research into fairy origin and existence in the nineteenth century. In her article 'On the Origin of Fairies: Victorians, Romantics, and Folk Belief', Carole Silver begins by stating that

> In 1846 William John Thomas, who contributed the term "folk-lore" to
>
> the English language, commented in *The Athenaeum* that "belief in
>
> fairies is by no means extinct in England." Thomas was not alone in his
>
> opinion; he merely echoed and endorsed the words of Thomas Knightley,
>
> the author of a popular and influential book, *The Fairy Mythology*.[18]

 The Fairy Mythology had been published nearly twenty years earlier in 1828 and in it Knightley refers to fairies as 'our fellow-inhabitants of earth.'[19] Evidence of fairy belief in the late Victorian period can also be found in Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Coming of the Fairies* (1922), and it is therefore evident that the strength and prevalence of fairy belief allowed the topic to last throughout the entire century.

Many theories on fairy existence arose during the period and all have one striking fact in common: they are notably rational and scientific in their approach. As Silver points out,

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[17] Jack Zipes, 'Introduction', in *Victorian Fairytales*, ed. By Jack Zipes (New York: Routledge, 1987), pp. xiii-xxix (p. xix)

[18] Carole Silver. 'On the Origin of Fairies: Victorians, Romantics, and Folk Belief. *Browning Institute Studies*. 14 (1986) p.141-156, pp.141, 146

[19] Knightley, Thomas, *The Fairy Mythology* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1892), p.4

'believers were not limited to gypsies, fisherfolk, rural cottagers, country parsons, and Irish mystics […] throughout Victoria's reign advocates of fairy existence and investigators of elfin origins included numerous scientists, historians, theologians, artists and writers.'[20] Local beliefs were catalogued by writers such as Anna Bray and Thomas Crofton, and physical 'evidence' collected in the form of "elf-shots" or "fairy bolts" (flint shards or arrows from prehistoric times) as well as "fairy-pipes" – small smoking implements often found near prehistoric monuments."[21] Tracy Davis explains that 'Fairy ethnographies are the products of fieldwork, interviews and collecting of accounts from people who sought out or accidentally came upon fairies and could then describe to researchers their physiology, social organization, customs and celebrations, beliefs and law.'[22] There appears to be a will for the fantastical to become real, or at least to bring it closer to reality by treating it as a scientific subject.

This questioning of boundaries between the rational and fantastical is understandable considering contemporary scientific discoveries. For example, as Prickett describes, 'monsters, more vast and variegated than the most fantastic imagination could dream of, were now suddenly being found under people's very feet.'[23] Prickett is referring to the discovery of dinosaurs, which became a popular cultural image in 1812 when Baron Cuvier announced that a pair of jaws found in 1770 'belonged to an extinct monster of gigantic proportions.' That MacDonald had some interest in the subject can be seen in his description of a beast similar to 'a hairy elephant or a deinotherium.'[24] Evidence of a creature, which would have previously been thought of as fantastical, would surely have made the existence of fairy and

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[20] Silver, p.141
[21] Silver, p.146
[22] Tracy Davis, 'What are Fairies For?', *The Performing Century: nineteenth-century theatre's history*. Ed. By Tracy C. Davis and Peter Holland (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) pp.32-59 (p32)
[23] Stephen Prickett, *Victorian Fantasy,* p.75, 74
[24] 'Lilith' in *The George MacDonald Treasury*, ed. by Glenn Kahley (USA: Kahley House Publishing, 2006), p.508

folk lore creatures seem more possible. An example of this from another area of folklore can be found in the announcement of the discovery of a mermaid in 1822. The announcement reached London, as Jan Bondeson explains, when 'Dr. Philip, the representative of the London Missionary Society in Cape Town and a distinguished man of the church, wrote a long letter to the *London Philanthropic Gazette*, which was later reprinted by the *Gentleman's Magazine* and many daily newspapers.'[25] The object claimed to be a 'dried mermaid', and was bought in Batavia by sea captain Samuel Barrett Eades. The attention the announcement receives from so many different newspapers suggests in itself the excitement created by the possibility of proving the mermaid's existence. Dr Phillip's article must have seemed promising as it 'began with the words: "I have today seen a Mermaid, now exhibiting in this town. I have always treated this creature as fabulous; but my scepticism is now removed."' Bondeson points out that the 'article was an excellent advertisement for Captain Eades, particularly since it was mentioned that the captain was going to London to exhibit the mermaid.'[26] It is particularly relevant that, as with the evidence of fairy existence, the claims of mermaid existence are portrayed as entirely scientific, with Dr Philip describing very factually in his article that 'on the lower part of the body it has it has six fins, one dorsal, two ventrical, two pectoral, and the tail.'[27] It is also interesting that 'to advertise the mermaid further, the famous artist George Cruikshank was hired to draw it for an advertisement,'[28] considering Cruikshank was well known for his fairy tale illustrations, this is another provocative crossover between the real and fantastical. However, the 'dried mermaid' was far from fairy tale perceptions and quickly proved to be fake, with newspaper articles appearing just two months after its announcement questioning its authenticity. There are also articles

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[25] Jan Bondeson, *The Feejee Mermaid and Other Essays in Natural and Unnatural History* (London: Cornell University Press, 1999) p.39
[26] Bondeson, p.39
[27] 'A Mermaid.' *The Morning Post*. 20 July, 1822. n.p
[28] Bondeson, p.40

which, on disproving the 'mermaid,' point out other instances in which the public has been similarly tricked. For example the *Liverpool Mercury* 'recollect to have read an imposition being practised upon the public by a man who exhibited some nondescript monster, which was detected by the celebrated naturalist, Linnaeus.'[29] While Eades' Feejee mermaid gained particular fame, multiple other examples of mermaid 'discoveries' can be found around the same time. Three separate examples occur in *The Morning Post* in 1809, 1810 and 1814, demonstrating that the event in 1822 was not an isolated one.

However, the discovery of incredible new (though extinct) species such as the dinosaur is not solely accountable for this interest in proving the fantastical real, there are other explanations which may also relate to the rise of the literary fairy tale. For example, Davis notes that 'ethnographers observed that fairy folk were fast deserting the British Isles as a consequence of urban expansion, industrial encroachment on the countryside, loss of traditional rural folkways and ecological degradation.'[30] This a contemporary belief also pointed out by Silver, who claims it was a belief shared by Charlotte Brontë, and attributes it to 'nostalgia for a fading British past.'[31] The fairies therefore come to represent something irretrievably lost through the destruction of the countryside for the expansion of the cities. This explanation may also extend to nostalgia for childhood tales, particularly considering the Victorian interest in childhood. In 1853 Dickens himself refers to the fairy tale as the 'one slender track not overgrown with weeds, where we may walk with children, sharing their delights.'[32] Silver also suggests that 'political and nationalist impulses contributed' to the interest in fairies. She claims that in the wake of the popularity of French and German fairy tales, coming from Perrault and the Brothers Grimm, 'there was a sense that fairies – utilized

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[29] 'The Mermaid.' *Liverpool Mercury*. 1 November, 1822
[30] Tracy C. Davis, p.33
[31] Silver, p.142
[32] Charles Dickens, 'A Transcription of Charles Dickens's 'Frauds on Fairies'', ed. Phillip V. Allingham. <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/pva/pva239.html> [accessed 30 Oct. 2013].

by Chaucer and redesigned by Shakespeare - were part of England's precious heritage.' It seems most likely that it was in fact a combination of all these reasons which created the perfect atmosphere for the rise of the fairy, explaining its presence in so many aspects of Victorian life.

The presence of the fairy in a wider context, as a subject in art and entertainment of the Victorian period, is easily traced. In painting, artists such as John Anster Fitzgerald, Noël Paton and Daniel Maclise were using the fairy and fairyland as their subject, with paintings such as 'Fairies in a Bird's Nest', 'The Fairy Raid, Carrying off the Changeling, Midsummer Eve' and 'The Faun and the Fairies', respectively. Perhaps the most striking feature, which appears in the majority of contemporary fairy painting, is the incredible amount of detail provided to give realism to both the fairy figures and the scenery. Maas claims that 'Fairy pictures drew so close to the visible world that to go through and beyond its visible surface, like Alice through the looking glass, seemed perfectly natural.'[33] Nicola Bown notes this same phenomenon in looking specifically at William Turner's fairy painting when she writes that 'Turner painted only one picture of fairies, yet he encapsulated the Romantic conception of fairies and fairyland perfectly in one image: creatures on the border between illusion and reality, and turns them into a 'gorgeous daylight dream.'[34] Again it is about the creation of a world 'on the border between illusion and reality', that is so close to the 'visible' and rational that the boundary becomes blurred. It is undoubtable that authors such as Dickens, Carroll and MacDonald would have seen, and been influenced by, this type of painting, particularly considering specific personal connections with the artists, such as that between Dickens and Maclise and Paton with Carroll and MacDonald, which will be discussed later.

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[33] Jeremy Maas, 'Victorian Fairy Painting', in *Victorian Fairy Painting*, ed. By Jane Martineau (London: Merrell Holberton, 1997) pp.11-21 (p.11)
[34] Nicola Bown, *Fairies in Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) p.8

In theatre the fairy was also popular, and this was an entertainment again praised by all three authors. Davis points out that 'In theatre, the question of intercultural encounter between humans and fairies endured, as fairies continually attracted a broad-based audience.'[35] This popularity extended throughout a range of theatrical performances, for example in pantomime and ballet. Booth argues that the fairy element became stronger in theatre during the mid-eighteen hundreds, writing 'the fact that the pantomime of the forties stressed the fairy element and lengthened the opening to accommodate it was cultural in origin, European as well as English, and by no means an isolated theatrical phenomenon.'[36] Booth also points to the 'fairy extravaganza', where there would be a 'plot concerned with fairy intervention in the human world, a strong element of contemporary social and domestic reference blended in with the fantasy.' Yet again there is a clear exploration of the boundary between rational and fantastical, along with a will to view the fairies in as realistic a light as possible. The use of new visual technologies in theatre are definitive evidence of this desire.

Theatrical Enchantment

In their love of entertainment the Victorians also proved their love of the fantastical and spectacular, rather than simply the rational. Entertainments were gaining popularity, as Booth points out: 'the great increase in urban populations and the intermittent but in the second half of the century steady rise in purchasing power created a whole new market for an entertainment industry of sizeable proportions.'[37] Despite this there were oppositions to the theatre, particularly from religious groups, and entertainment sometimes struggled against restricting laws. Spoken drama, without music, had been banned in performances from all but

[35] Tracy C. Davis, p.34

[36] Michael R Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) p.199, 194

[37] Michael R. Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981) p.4

the two largest theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden, and was only repealed in 1843.[38]

Evidence can also be found in the attempted implementation of the Sunday Observance Bill, which Dickens strongly opposed and which Michael Slater explains would have 'prohibited many of the people's recreations while leaving the wealthier classes unaffected.'[39] Interestingly as Richard Foulkes points out, Lewis Carroll's father was opposed to the theatre on religious grounds and Carroll spent 'his early years under the same roof as his father who was translating one of the most virulent anti-theatrical texts ever written.'[40] The text referred to is by Tertullian, which contains passages and advice such as "Thou hast therefore, in the prohibition of immodesty, the prohibition of the theatre also … tragedies and comedies are originators of crimes and lusts, bloody and lascivious, impious and extravagant."[41] And yet Carroll was an 'inveterate theatregoer.' Both Dickens and MacDonald were similarly fond of theatricals and, in general, the presence of this opposition and the fact it is felt necessary only suggests a strong mainstream consensus in favour of theatregoing. In a House of Commons sitting on the regulation of theatres in 1843, Captain Polhill defends the use of the theatre, stating that he 'regretted that so little encouragement was given to dramatic literature in this country, and that royal patronage and favour was so slightly extended to the national drama. He could not conceive any better school for moral instruction than the seeing one of our best dramas with a good moral.'[42] General popularity can be seen throughout nineteenth-century newspapers, which are full of advertisements describing an array of available entertainments. For example, *Lloyds Weekly London Newspaper* would publish 'Public Amusements for the

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[38] Jill Sullivan. 'Local and Political hits: Allusion and Collusion in the Local Pantomime', *Victorian Pantomime* ed. by Jim Davis (Palgrave Macmillan: Basingstoke, 2010) p.155

[39] Michael Slater. 'Notes' in Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings* ed. Michael Slater (London: Penguin Books, 2003) p.279

[40] Richard Foulkes, *Lewis Carroll and the Victorian Stage: Theatricals in a Quiet Life* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2005) p.7

[41] Tertullian, 'Of public Shows', *Apologetic and Practical Treatises*, Vol.1, trans. By Charles Dodgson (1842) <http://www.tertullian.org/lfc/LFC10-13_de_spectaculis.htm#113>

[42] 'Regulation of Theatres.' HC Deb 04 August 1843 vol 71 cc231-4

Week', which for January 6th 1850 included pantomimes such as 'Harlequin and the Dragon of Wantley', tight-rope walking at Astley's Amphitheatre, 'a powerful romance to be called May Morning', a 'domestic drama', 'Donizetti's opera, The Daughter of the Regiment' followed by 'comic song' and the Rotunda Circus, displaying 'the best horsemanship in England.'[43] These entertainments differ greatly from each other, yet all are tied to the Victorian taste for fantastical escapism. This is directly related to the taste for fairy tale and the fairy subject, which it has already been noted crosses over into popular entertainments of the period and, interestingly, many other similarities can be found between the two.

Nostalgia is not only a reason behind the popularity of the fairy tale and fairy subject, there is an element of the same influence in some of the popular entertainments. The circus is one example, and was also an entertainment which gained much popularity during the period. Alan Delgado explains that while the travelling circus was already popular, 'the more permanent circus was established in Great Britain towards the end of the eighteenth century by Philip Astley and due to his efforts the circus increased in popularity during the Victorian era.'[44] Delgado also describes this early 'permanent circus' where 'In a field on the site of the present Waterloo Station he erected a roped-in ring and with two horses […] gave an equestrian display to whoever cared to stop and watch.' This later developed into 'Astley's Amphitheatre' where the crowd could sit under cover. But it seems that throughout the nineteenth century the basis of the circus performance remained the same and created a childhood nostalgia. This nostalgia is portrayed in an essay by Charles Dickens, where he writes that 'there is no place which recalls so strongly our recollections of childhood as Astley's.'[45] He goes on to explain that 'it was not a 'Royal Amphitheatre' in those days, nor had Ducrow arisen to shed the light of classic taste and portable gas over the sawdust of the

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[43] 'Public Amusements for the Week.' *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*. 6 January, 1850
[44] Alan Delgado, *Victorian Entertainment* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971) p.103
[45] Charles Dickens, 'Astley's', *Charles Dickens on Theatre* (London: Hersperus Press, 2011) p.19

circus; but the whole character of the place was the same; the riding masters were equally grand; the comic performers equally witty; the tragedians equally hoarse; and the 'highly trained chargers' equally spirited.' It should be noted however that nostalgia was by no means the sole attraction of the circus. In *The Circus and Victorian Society*, Brenda Assael points out 'the equestrian who somersaulted on the backs of his bridled steeds, the female acrobat who nimbly tiptoed across a high wire forty feet above the ground unsupported by a net, the gymnastic clown who fell over his own feet, the animal tamer who pacified his wild beasts with a steely look and the tap of his whip, and the sword swallower whose knife edge threatened to puncture his vital organs – all defied the limits of man and nature.' [46] Again this is an interest based around the testing of limits and boundaries, a recurring theme throughout the period. Assael continues to argue that 'all were physical embodiments of that quintessentially Dickensian love of "fancy," an inalienable human desire generated by spontaneity, freedom, release, enjoyment, curiosity, and the wonder of life.' These are appropriate reasons behind the general Victorian love of 'fancy' and can be applied to other contemporary forms of entertainment, such as the pantomime. Nostalgia is also discussed by Jim Davis in relation to pantomime, another entertainment which Dickens was very fond of. Davis quotes Anne Varty's study *Children and Theatre in Victorian England*, where she writes that the "children in the pantomime audience could enter a magical world of infinite possibility, while the adults were invited to escape into a world of anarchy and subversion" and therefore "by appealing to children and 'children of larger growth', she argues, 'age differences were similarly obscured, and the audience was constructed as an ideal body of children."[47] The pantomime is therefore a shared experience between child and adult, through which the adult experiences a sense of nostalgia for their own childhood.

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[46] Brenda Assael, *The Circus and Victorian Society* (London: University of Virginia Press, 2005) p.1
[47] Jim Davis, 'Introduction: Victorian Pantomime' in *Victorian Pantomime: a collection of critical essays*, ed. By Jim Davis (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) pp.1-18 (p. 7,2,1, 1-2)

However, entertainments often also had a more serious purpose than this nostalgic escapism. Another topic approached in the introduction was the ability of the fairy tale to deliver a moral or social message. Jim Davis points out this same ability in pantomime. This form of entertainment was, as Davis points out, 'one of the most successful and commercially viable forms of popular entertainment and a crucial component of Victorian popular culture.' It is worth noting that the pantomime form changed throughout the Victorian period. As Davis explains, 'at the beginning of the Victorian period pantomime was dominated by the Harlequinade, which featured the characters of Clown, Pantaloon, Harlequin and Columbine. The Harlequinade was preceded by an Opening, often based on legend, classical myth, nursery tales, literary classics and sometimes entirely original in content, in the course of which several of the principal characters, usually wearing what were known as 'big heads,' were transformed into the Harlequinade characters.' However the form was influenced by other forms of entertainment and Davis points particularly to the extravaganza and burlesque, creating what he terms 'a hybrid form' of pantomime. However, these entertainments were similar to the pantomime to begin with, with the extravaganza for example 'drawing on classical myths and legends and on fairy tales, written in elegant rhyming couplets and usually staged with spectacular transformation scenes.' And therefore the main elements, such as the theme and intention, clearly remained quite constant. Davis points out other critics' work on eighteenth century pantomime and the way that many of them (Jane Moody, David Mayer and Leigh Hunt, for example) emphasise its political role. He notes that all three believe 'that its independence from spoken language […] is what gives it this political edge.' And he quotes 'the virtual absence of dialogue in pantomime [Leigh Hunt] suggests, offers a form of imaginative, and by implication, satirical freedom.'[48] The continuity in pantomime performances despite the influence of other entertainments shows that this still

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[48] Davis, p.4,5

applies in the nineteenth century. In fact Davis notes that the Victorian pantomime 'assumed a more moral tone as the century progressed.'

It is the wide reaching appeal of entertainments like pantomime which made it such an effective way delivering social and moral views. Russell Jackson agrees with Varty on the obscuring of age boundaries in pantomime and circus but also considers class boundaries in theatre. He writes that 'the range of Victorian theatre was as wide as that of Victorian society, for it was the principle medium of entertainment available to literate and illiterate alike.'[49] This was a factor Dickens recognised and praised in 1850 when he wrote the article 'Amusements of the People' for *Household Words*. In the article he describes the imaginary Joe Whelks, who

> is not much of a reader, has no great store of books, no very commodious
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> room to read in, and no power at all of presenting vividly before his
>
> mind's eye what he reads about. But, put Joe in the gallery of the
>
> Victoria Theatre; show him doors and windows in the scene that will
>
> open and shut, and that people can get in and out of; tell him a story by
>
> these aids, and by the help of live man and women dressed up, confiding
>
> to him their innermost secrets […] and Joe will unravel a story through
>
> all its entanglements, and sit there as long after midnight as you have
>
> anything to show him.[50]

The theatre is therefore a method of delivering a message that surpasses the reach of literature, appealing to all classes and levels of education. Jackson also suggests another reason when he explains that 'patrons of 'high' and 'low' theatre shared a predilection for

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[49] Russell Jackson, *Victorian Theatre* (London: A & C Black, 1989) p.9

[50] Charles Dickens, 'Amusements of the People,' *Charles Dickens on Theatre* (London: Hersperus Press, 2011) p.4

variety and colour in entertainments, and the mish-mash of drama, circus and pantomime available at such establishments as Astley's reflects a love of novelty and brightness that appears to have transcended class barriers.'[51] This appears to be precisely what Michael Booth refers to as 'the Victorian taste for spectacle'[52] in his book *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*. Booth explains that 'a fondness for spectacle was not in origin exclusively East End or West End, working and lower middle class on the one hand, or upper middle class and fashionable on the other. It was a homogenous, a ubiquitous taste that had nothing to do with income levels, employment, living conditions, or class position.' He suggests the pictorial and spectacular in theatre is related to the rise in rationality, stating that 'observers felt that a drama could not succeed by the power of words alone.' He also argues that the incredible amount of detail used in theatrical productions at the time was used for replicating reality, and compares this 'recreation of reality' to the work of the Pre-Raphaelite painters. He notes that 'in pre-Raphaelite painting there is a minutia of external detail and a feeling that the setting is as important as the figures.' Although this is true, Booth only looks at the 'duplication of historical reality' in these paintings, when actually fairy paintings emerging at the same time, such as those by Paton, are equally detailed and certainly cannot be categorised with rational recreations. Similarly Booth points to 'technological change' as part of the progression of spectacle in the era, but focuses on its use to replicate reality. For example he goes into most detail in writing about the panorama and diorama, both backlit paintings of real scenes throughout the world which would either be displayed as a stationary exhibit to walk around (in the case of the panorama) or be displayed to an audience on a slowly moving platform. However, other technologies were being used in theatre to create vivid fantastical scenes. This need for the inclusion of these new technologies is well noted

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[51] Russell Jackson, p.10
[52] Booth, p.1,3,2,13

by Russell Jackson, who writes that 'In 1817, at the end of an essay on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, William Hazlitt remarked on the inadequacy of the theatre's attempts to bring the play's visions to life and concluded: 'The boards of a theatre and the regions of fancy are not the same thing.' The Victorian theatre was devoted to illusion, as though in an attempt to confute Hazlitt's dictum.'[53]

The influence of the fantastical is clear in the majority of popular entertainments and the similarities between the use and influence of fantastical elements here and in contemporary literature is equally striking. The political, social and moral undertones appear in a very similar way to those used in fairy tale and to those used by authors such as Dickens and MacDonald. The nostalgic appeal of the theatre also resonates with the rise of the traditional fairy tale and the longing for the associated pre-industrial countryside discussed previously. While these entertainments were being influenced by the same sources as literature, leading to a very similar use of the fantastical, they also influenced literature themselves. The influence of the theatre on Carroll, particularly in relation to its pushing the illusion or reality boundary is a particularly significant aspect discussed later.

Technologies of Illusion
Victorian technologies of illusion hold an interesting place, clearly crossing the boundary between the rational and fantastic. Methods of creating illusion were born from a very rational area of technological and scientific advancement and yet the products created by this advancement, regardless of original intention, are put to imaginative use.

Both Jonathan Crary and Susan Horton examine the progressive understanding of vision in the nineteenth century, with Horton pointing out that 'from 1820 to 1840 huge

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[53] Jackson, p.1

numbers of experiments were conducted on the physiology of the eye and on the process of vision; the more that was learned about vision, the more unreliable it seemed to be.'[54] In previous sections the questioning of the boundary between rational and fantastical has been mentioned, and this is yet another example. By questioning the difference between what is genuinely seen and what is actually real, the boundary is once again blurred. Crary goes on to note specifically that 'Beginning in the mid-1820s, the experimental study of afterimages led to the invention of a number of related optical devices and techniques. Initially they were for purposes of scientific observation but were quickly converted into forms of popular entertainment.'[55] As an example Crary continues to explain that 'one of the earliest was the thaumotrope (literally 'wonder-turner'), first popularized in London by Dr John Paris in 1825. It was a small circular disc with a drawing on either side and strings attached so that it could be twirled with a spin of the hand. The drawing, for example, of a bird on one side and cage on the other would, when spun, produce the appearance of the bird in the cage.' Therefore the rational, scientific creation becomes an object of 'wonder' and amusement. A very similar example can be found in the phantasmagoria, which Susan Horton points out was 'one of the earliest and most popular forms of illusion-generating devices.'[56] The phantasmagoria was created using a 'magic lantern', which Terry Castle explains, 'consisted of a lantern containing a candle and a concave mirror. A tube with a convex lens at each end was fitted into an opening in the side of the lantern, while a groove in the middle of the tube held a small image painted on glass. When candlelight was reflected by the concave mirror onto the first lens, the lens concentrated the light on the image on the glass slide. The second lens in turn magnified the illuminated image and projected it onto a wall or gauze screen. In

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[54] Susan Horton, 'Were They Having Fun Yet? Victorian Optical Gadgetry, Modernist Selves' in *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination*, ed. by Carroll T. Christ and John O. Jordan (London: University of California Press, 1995) p.3

[55] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the observer: on vision and modernity in the nineteenth century* (London: MIT Press, 1990) p.104, 105

[56] Horton, p.4

darkness, with the screen itself invisible, images could be made to appear like fantastic

luminous shapes, floating inexplicably in the air.'[57] This is how the phantasmagoria show

worked, projecting ghostly images to an audience. The *Encyclopaedia of the Magic Lantern*

describes the Phantasmagoria as being '(from the Greek phantasm + ageirein, 'a gathering of

ghosts'). The term was devised in 1792 by the German/ Brabantine magician Paul Philidor

(Paul de Philipsthal) to describe a 'rational entertainment', presented at the Hôtel des Chartes

in Paris, which promised to expose in a spectacular way the diverse optical and other related

ghost-raising tricks of pretended sorcerers and of secret societies.'[58] These shows would be

'complete with preliminary lectures on the fallacy of ghost-belief and the various cheats

perpetrated by conjurers and necromancers over centuries.'[59] However, the will for fantastical

entertainment soon took over. As Castle continues to explain, 'the pretence of pedagogy

quickly gave way when the phantasmagoria itself began, for clever illusionists were careful

never to reveal exactly how their own bizarre, often frightening apparitions were produced.

Everything was done, quite shamelessly, to intensify the supernatural effect. Plunged into

darkness and assailed by unearthly sounds, spectators were subjected to an eerie, estranging,

and ultimately baffling spectral parade.' These visual illusions clearly appeared uncannily

real to a contemporary audience, even 'apparently so convincing that surprised audience

members sometimes tried to fend off the moving "phantoms" with their hand or fled the room

in terror.' Again an invention with rational intentions is converted into fantastical

entertainment, and this appears to be a theme specifically important to this period, as

although the phantasmagoria existed before the nineteenth century, Horton points out that

'during the nineteenth century, these phantasmagorias experienced a resurgence in popularity,

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[57] Castle, Terry, 'Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie', *Critical Inquiry*, 15 (1998) pp. 21-61, p.31-33

[58] Magic Lantern Society of Great Britain, *Encyclopaedia of the Magic Lantern*, ed. by David Robinson, Stephen Herbert and Richard Crangle (London: Magic Lantern Society, 2001) p.227

[59] Castle, p.30

and the forms in which they existed grew more numerous.'[60] In the case of the phantasmagoria, the focus on making the illusion as realistic as possible is key, and inspired improvements in technology. For example Terry Castle points out that 'the desire for more compelling illusions produced momentous changes in the lantern itself. Lime ball, hydrogen, and magnesium gaslight replaced the candle inside the apparatus, thus giving a more powerful illumination to the phantasmagoric image.'[61] The purpose of increased realism appears to have the intention of creating a depth of immersion for the audience strong enough to make them feel that what they are seeing may be truly supernatural.

The magic lantern was also used for many other purposes. One example can be found in Karen Eifler's research on the use of lantern shows for charitable purposes, particularly 'poor relief.' She notes that 'their huge number […] indicates that lantern shows for charitable purposes around the turn of the nineteenth century were a common – perhaps even mass – phenomenon.'[62] But there is also evidence of the lantern being used for this purpose earlier in the nineteenth century. The *Cheshire Observer and Chester, Birkenhead, Crewe and North Wales Times* notes in 1864 that at the King Charles' Sunday Evening Ragged School 'children were entertained during the evening by Missionary Diagrams and a Magic Lantern kindly lent for the occasion.' And just as the original rational purpose of the lantern was overtaken by its imaginative purpose, Eifler notes that even when used by charity and welfare organisations 'the rational side of the entertainments manifested itself less in the contents of the lantern slides than in their context and programmes. Although they never lost sight of their main purposes, welfare organizations attached much significance to the performances and, often, lantern shows were received as sensations.' Just like the fairy tale

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[60] Horton, p.3

[61] Castle, p.40

[62] Karen Eifler, 'Between Attraction and Instruction: Lantern Shows in British Poor Relief', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, 8.4 (2010), p.363-384 (pp.363-364)

and theatre, visual technology is being used here to simultaneously entertain and instruct. And again it is the entertainment, rather than the instruction which becomes prominent.

Lantern techniques were also being used in theatre throughout the period. 'The first documented use of the magic lantern on the stage (other than featuring in theatrical presentation) was in a private performance of Goethe's Faust at Monbijou in 1819.'[63] A later, and more detailed, example of its use can be found in Carroll's diary in 1855, where he writes about a performance of *Henry VIII* he attended at the Princess's Theatre. The scene he describes is clearly created by lantern technology, where

> sunbeams broke in through the roof and gradually revealed two angel
> forms, floating in front of the carved work on the ceiling: the column of
> sunbeams shone down upon the sleeping queen, and gradually down it
> floated a troop of angelic forms, transparent, and carrying palm branches
> in their hands: they waved these over the sleeping queen with oh! Such a
> sad and solemn grace. – So could I fancy (if the thought be not profane)
> would real angels seem to our mortal vision, though doubtless our
> conception is poor and mean to the reality. She in ecstasy raises her arms
> towards them, and to sweet slow music they vanish as marvellously as
> they came.[64]

Carroll claims 'I never enjoyed anything so much in my life before' and his description of the audience having 'burst at once into a rapture of applause' at the end of the scene indicates that it made a similar impression on the other spectators. Carroll seems to suggest two reasons for his enjoyment in the same entry. The first is in his comment that 'this is the true end and object of acting – to raise the mind above itself, and out of its petty everyday cares.'

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[63]*Encyclopaedia of the Magic Lantern*, p.300

[64] Lewis Carroll, *The Diaries of Lewis Carroll*, ed. by Roger Lancelyn Green, Vol.1 (London: Cassell & Company, 1953) p.54

The floating, transparent angels in the scene make it seem more realistic, and therefore enhance the sense of escapism from the 'everyday.' The second is in his explanation that he 'never felt so inclined to shed tears at anything fictitious, save perhaps that poetical gem of Dickens, the death of Little Paul.' The added realism therefore also created a greater emotional attachment to the story. Carroll's comments provide a wonderful insight into the purpose of magic lantern use as well as into the Victorian theatre's preoccupation with perfecting the realistic. Yet another example of the lanterns use in theatre is provided by Castle, who describes Brewster's '"catadioptrical phantasmagoria" – an apparatus of mirrors and lenses capable of projecting the illuminated image of a living human being.'[65] Castle provides the example that 'in the renowned show of "Pepper's Ghost," exhibited at the Royal Polytechnic Institution in London in the 1860s, just such an apparatus was used to great effect. Wraithlike actors and actresses, reflected from below the stage, mingled with onstage counterparts in a phantasmagorical version of Dickens' "The Haunted Man" on Christmas Eve, 1862.' The ghostly projection of actual actors and actresses is again improving the realism of these techniques from painted slides, or even photographic ones after the mid 1800s.

The invention of photography also reveals an interesting combination of the rational and the imaginative. Helmut Gernsheim states that 'the world's first successful photograph was taken by Nicéphore Niépce on a pewter plate in 1826,'[66] though the process underwent much improvement throughout the nineteenth century, particularly thanks to Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, co-inventor of the Diorama, who Niépce signed a partnership agreement with.[67] Gernsheim claims that 'it is difficult to realize how magical the idea seemed to Daguerre's contemporaries that Nature could be made to produce a picture spontaneously.'

[65] Castle, p.39, 40
[66] Helmut Gernsheim, *Lewis Carroll: Photographer* (New York: Dover Publications, 1969) p. 9, 22, 20
[67] Helmut Gernsheim, *A Concise History of Photography* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971) p.9, 11

This kind of response is relevant because despite being created by improvements in science and technology, photography changes people's view of the possible so dramatically that it seems fantastical in itself. However, as Jennifer Green-Lewis points out, 'built into the idea of photography is the fantasy of perfect representation, a mirroring of the object which surpasses mimesis. A photograph, in theory, can more than replicate appearance. It can duplicate it.'[68] It seems therefore that photography should be the ultimate rational medium, presenting reality exactly as it is. But still photography in the Victorian period is influenced by the imaginative. Helmut Gernsheim writes that 'so ingrained as the Victorian love for this type of subject that even photography – a medium whose sole contribution to art lies in its inimitable realism – was employed to illustrate historical reconstructions and imaginary themes.' A good example of this can actually be found with Lewis Carroll, who was greatly interested in photography and certainly did not limit himself to the rational. For example his photograph titled 'The Dream', with its combination of solid and ghostly figures seems almost to replicate the style of Fitzgerald's dream paintings. But along with this Carroll also used photography to create pictures of fictional characters, including 'an undergraduate at Christ Church, as Dickens's "Artful Dodger."' Carroll also attempts to bring a fairy tale image closer to reality with his photograph of 'Agnes Grace Weld as "Little Red Riding Hood."'[69]

An interesting combination of fairy, theatre and technology comes to light in noting that 'the optical lantern occasionally provided spectacular optical stage effects for pantomime-style entertainments, such as H.L. Childe's dissolvent views in 'Fairy Visions' (1836), dissolving views in G.A. Conquest's 'The Demon Dwarf' (1872), and large-format

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[68] Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (London: Cornell University Press, 1996) p.25

[69] Gernsheim, *Lewis Carroll: Photographer,* plate 10

slides of 'Cinderella' (1863) and 'Aladdin' painted for the Royal Polytechnic Institution.'[70] This is a literal example of the way these elements coexist and influence one another. They are all part of a Victorian culture of imagination which exists and thrives within the rise of rationality. The fantastical worlds of theatre, fairy tale and illusion do not necessarily oppose the rational world of science and technology but they question them and experiment with the loosely defined boundaries that exist between the two. Existing within this culture it is unsurprising that contemporary writers would be greatly influenced by it, as I will demonstrate Carroll, Dickens and MacDonald clearly are. For some, such Arthur Conan Doyle, the rational ultimately takes the main role. While this is particularly prominent in the Sherlock Holmes novels it is also true of novels such as *The Land of Mist* which, despite its supernatural elements, turns that which could be considered fantastical into something which can be defined by science and the rational. But for others, including Dickens, Carroll and MacDonald, the fantastical imagination remains key.

Chapter Two: Lewis Carroll, Wonderland and the Dream

Lewis Carroll is perhaps the perfect example of the coexistence of rational and fantastical in the Victorian period. Often critics speak of Charles Dodgson the mathematician and Lewis Carroll the author as two very different sides of the same person. However, this is not the case. Rather than remaining divided Carroll merged elements of imagination with his rational work and vice versa throughout his career. This can be seen in his love of riddles and puzzles based on mathematics. For example, he writes 'A gentleman (a nobleman let us say, to make it more interesting) had a sitting room with only one window in it – a square window, 3 feet high and 3 feet wide. Now he had weak eyes, and the window gave too much light, *so* (don't

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[70] *Encyclopedia of the Magic Lantern*, p.220

you like *so* in a story?) he sent for the builder, and told him to alter it, so as to give only half the light. Only he was to keep it square – he was to keep it 3 feet high – and he was to keep it 3 feet wide. How did he do it? Remember, he wasn't allowed to use curtains, or shutters, or coloured glass, or anything of that sort.'[71] While the basis of the puzzle is mathematical, the presentation takes the rational element and turns it into a fictional story. The fictional elements, Carroll explains, 'make it more interesting.' The fictional story is therefore being used to explain the factual puzzle and to make it entertaining. This is closely related to the many combinations of fact and the fantastical previously discussed and can also be seen very obviously in the *Alice* books, where there are frequent references to puzzles and riddles. Carroll's response to visiting the Great Exhibition in 1851 also demonstrates an interesting, intertwined combination of fantastical and factual elements. Carroll writes to his sister that 'it looks like a sort of fairyland' and that 'there are some very ingenious pieces of mechanism. A tree […] with birds chirping and hopping from branch to branch exactly like life.'[72] As in his writing, Carroll's view here seamlessly merges the fantastical with the rational mechanical. It is clear that, just as with the era more generally, there is no rational Dodgson and fantastical Carroll, but rather one person embracing both and exploring the ways in which they intertwine.

'Is life itself a dream, I wonder?' - *Sylvie and Bruno*

The dream is undoubtedly one of the key features in the fictional writing of Lewis Carroll. Florence Becker Lennon goes as far as to say that 'works of imagination had existed before, but the special technique of the dream was Dodgson's own invention.'[73] What is most

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[71] Lewis Carroll, 'A letter to Helen Feilden' (March 15, 1873) *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, Vol. 1 (London: Macmillan, 1979) p.187
[72] 'To his sister Elizabeth', (July 5, 1851), p.17
[73] Florence Becker Lennon, *Lewis Carroll* (London: Cassell, 1947) p.178

interesting, however, is the way in which 'dreaming' and 'imagining' are so similarly defined by Carroll, and how they both become routes into worlds which fantastically mirror our own. The similarity allows for close comparison between the importance of imagining in other works, such as Dickens,' and the importance of the dream to Carroll.

The dream was a frequently discussed topic during the Victorian period and, interestingly, Catherine Bernard points out that 'in the Victorian age, dreams belonged as much to the supernatural world as to science. Interpreters were sharply divided on the question of origins: spiritualists argued that dreams were miraculous events that permitted communication with the supernatural world, while scientists insisted they were natural phenomena that could be assigned governing laws.'[74] It is likely that the supernatural element of this study appealed to Carroll. Stuart Dodgson Collingwood points out that Carroll 'took a great interest in occult phenomena, and was for some time a member of the psychical society.'[75] An example of this interest can be found in a letter Carroll writes to his sister Mary in 1867 about visiting an artist, Mr Heaphy, who had submitted a 'curious story of a ghost-lady (in either *Household Words* or *All the Year Round*), who sat to an artist for her picture.'[76] Carroll continues 'we had a very interesting talk about the ghost, which certainly is one of the most curious and inexplicable stories I ever heard.' William Raeper also claims that Carroll's 'interest in ghosts and spirits, in the thin shimmering veil that separates this world from the next, and the dream-like quality of this life compared with what was seen as the solid reality of the next, all preoccupied Dodgson, and were all concerns he shared with MacDonald.'[77] The connection with MacDonald will be discussed later, but it is striking that Raeper recognises elements of the dream and of a passable reality boundary in relation to this interest of Carroll's. The

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[74] Catherine Bernard, 'Dickens and Victorian Dream Theory', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 360 (1981), 197-216 (pp.197)
[75] Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898) p.92
[76] 'To his sister Mary' (April 26, 1867), p.104
[77] William Raeper, *George MacDonald* (Tring: Lion, 1987) p.174

dream, like so many aspects of Victorian interest, problematized the boundary between the rational and fantastical, seemingly belonging to both. Like Alice's looking-glass, the dream presents a slightly distorted version of reality and provides a kind of entrance to that fantastically altered world.

The dream is of course particularly important in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as Wonderland is Alice's dream, from which she wakes at the end of the book. However, it is important that the reader is not aware Wonderland is a dream, until the point Alice wakes. The only suggestion that Alice may have fallen asleep at the beginning of the book comes in the comment that 'the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid,'[78] but there is no distinction between Alice's 'sitting by her sister on the bank' wondering 'whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies', and her seeing the White Rabbit, which prompts her journey into Wonderland. The withholding of this information allows the reader to relate to Alice's experience of Wonderland, without knowing she is dreaming, Alice is fully immersed in a truly fantastical place. The consequence of not being fully immersed is shown at the end of the book where Alice's sister begins 'dreaming after a fashion' until 'the whole place around her became alive with the strange creatures of her little sister's dream.' However, she only '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.' This is also the first example in Carroll's writing of using the term 'dreaming' for act which is actually imagining.

The similarity between dreaming and imagining is confirmed in *Through the Looking Glass*. In this book Alice does not need to dream in order to enter the fantastical Looking-Glass World, she does so purely through imagination, by playing 'let's pretend.' W.H. Auden notes

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[78] Carroll, *The Annotated Alice*, p.11, 126

that in both *Alice* books, 'games play an important role. The whole structure of *Through the Looking-Glass* is based on chess, and the Queen of Hearts' favourite pastime is croquet – both of them games Alice knows how to play. To play a game, it is essential that the players know and obey its rules, and are skilful enough to do the right or reasonable thing at least half the time.'[79] The playing of games is an important theme most likely because of its relation to childhood, particularly the freedom and innocence of childhood which Carroll, along with Dickens and MacDonald, appears to feel is of great importance. However, there are different types of game. Chess, though it is made fantastical by Carroll through his personification of the pieces, is in essence a game of logic. The game Alice plays by herself to enter Looking-Glass Land, however, is purely a game of imagination. In a conversation with her kitten, Alice considers "how nice it would be if we could only get through into Looking-glass House! I'm sure it's got, oh! Such beautiful things in it! Let's pretend there's a way of getting through into it, somehow, Kitty. Let's pretend the glass has gone all soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare!"[80] Alice's passage through the looking-glass actually shares many similarities to her dreaming of Wonderland. The dream in the first book allowed Carroll to create a fantastically distorted reflection of the real world, which happens again in *Through the Looking Glass*, only in this case Carroll uses the mirror as a symbol of the boundary between the real and fantastical worlds. As Sabine Melchior-Bonnet points out, 'the mirror mediates between the dream and the real.'[81] Interestingly, Martin Gardner notes that 'the looking-glass theme seems to have been a late addition to the story. We have the word of Alice Liddell that a good part of the book was based on chess tales that Carroll told the Liddell girls at a time when they were learning excitedly how to play the game. It was not until 1868 that another Alice, Carroll's distant

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[79] W.H. Auden, 'Today's "Wonder-World" Needs Alice' in *Aspects of Alice*, p.9
[80] Carroll, *The Annotated Alice,* p.143
[81] Sabine Melchior Bonnet, *The Mirror: A History* (London: Routledge, 2002) p.233

cousin Alice Raikes, played a role in suggesting the mirror motif.'[82] Gardner quotes the story told by Alice Raikes in the *London Times* (January 22, 1932), where she explains that Carroll handed her an orange and asked her to "first tell me which hand you have got that in", to which she responded "the right." He then asked her to "go and stand before that glass, and tell me which hand the little girl you see there has got it in." to which she responded "the left." Carroll then asked "and how do you explain that?" Alice writes 'I couldn't explain it, but seeing that some solution was expected, I ventured, "if I was on the *other* side of the glass, wouldn't the orange still be in my right hand?" I can still remember his laugh. "Well done, little Alice," he said. "The best answer I've had yet." Alice also writes that she was told in later years 'that he said that had given him his first idea for *Through the Looking Glass*.'[83] This reinforces the idea that the mirror was chosen simply as a symbol of a concept that already existed in Wonderland. Carroll had already written one book about a fantastical reflection of reality, and was obviously considering the way in which the mirror inverts that which it reflects. It is never suggested that the looking-glass is a magical object itself, like the enchanted mirrors of fairy tale. Alice does not need the object to travel to Looking-Glass Land, Carroll shows it is her imagination that allows passage. The mirror is therefore only a physical symbol of the boundary crossed. Without this distinction the main element of the book, the child's imagination, is diminished in importance.

Melchior-Bonnet also writes that the mirror 'threatens the ability to distinguish fantasy from reality.'[84] This is a subject which Carroll considered for many years and which appears multiple times in his writing. On February 9th 1856 Carroll wrote in his diary 'Query: when we are dreaming and, as often happens, have a dim consciousness of the fact and try to wake, do we not say and do things which in waking life would be insane? May we not then

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[82] Martin Gardner, 'Notes' in Lewis Carroll, *The Annotated Alice* ed. Martin Gardner (London: Norton, 2000)
[83] Gardner, p.141
[84] Melchior-Bonnet, p.264

sometimes define insanity as an inability to distinguish which is the waking and which is the sleeping life? We often dream without the least suspicion of unreality: "Sleep hath its own world", and it is often as lifelike as the other.'[85] This is of course the idea behind the first *Alice,* where Alice does dream her way into Wonderland 'without the least suspicion of unreality' while she is there. It also explains, as Roger Lancelyn Green suggests, why the Cheshire Cat tells Alice "We're all mad here. I'm mad, you're mad," and when questioned how he knows explains "you must be, […] or you wouldn't have come here."[86] The 'insanity' of being completely immersed in a place of imagination is necessary to enter Wonderland. Carroll was clearly still considering the issue in 1889 when *Sylvie and Bruno* was published. At one point the narrator considers that "either I've been dreaming about Sylvie […] and this is the reality. Or else I've really been with Sylvie, and this is a dream!"[87] In this story too, the reader is also often left unsure of whether the narrator is dreaming or actually experiencing the events of the story, as the transition between 'real' and 'dream' events happen suddenly and without explanation. For example in the conversation:

> "When will it be done?" she eagerly asked. "If there's any chance of it in
>
> my time, I think I'll leave off reading and wait for it!"
>
> "Well, perhaps in another thousand years or so -"
>
> "Then there's no use waiting!" said my Lady. "Let's sit down. Uggug, my
>
> pet, come and sit by me!"[88]

The first line of dialogue is spoken by Lady Muriel, with whom the narrator is having a conversation in the 'real' world. The second is obviously a response from the narrator, but

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[85] *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, p.76
[86] Roger Lancelyn Green, 'Note' in *The Diaries of Lewis Carroll* p.66
[87] Lewis Carroll, *Sylvie and Bruno* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1889) p.19
[88] p.23

the third, despite fitting as a response in the conversation, is actually the Sub-Warden's wife in the dream world of the story, 'Outland', though the reader only knows this through her reference to Uggug. At other times there are suggestions of sleeping and waking. For example, the reader sees the narrator wake as he exclaims '"Uggug, indeed!" […] a sudden gust swept away the whole scene, and I found myself sitting up, staring at the young lady in the opposite corner of the carriage, who had now thrown back her veil, and was looking at me with an expression of amused surprise.' The narrator explains 'I have no idea what I said. I was dreaming.' But he also admits to 'half-doubting whether, even now, I were fairly awake,'[89] which maintains a degree of uncertainty. There are suggestions of sleeping before some transitions to 'Outland', such as that in which the narrator 'leaned back and closed my eyes for a moment, trying to recall a few of the incidents of my recent dream. "I thought I saw -" I murmured sleepily: and then the phrase insisted on conjugating itself, and ran into "you thought you saw – he thought he saw – and then it suddenly went off into a song.' The song then merges into a scene in Outland, and the story continues in that place without the narrator recognising the change. There is an interesting similarity between the narrators murmuring in this scene and Alice's sleepy descent into Wonderland, where she wonders '"Do cats eat bats?" and sometimes "Do bats eat cats?"'[90] However, while Alice's question actually becomes inverted, the *Sylvie and Bruno* example seems to be more closely based around Carroll's interest in language. Prickett suggests that *Sylvie and Bruno*, which 'offers us two parallel worlds with abrupt magical transitions' is 'reminiscent of MacDonald's fantasies.'[91] This statement is particularly relevant to MacDonald's *Lilith*, but use of the dream in the two is very different, as will be shown in the following chapter.

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[89] p.55, 57
[90] *The Annotated Alice,* p.14
[91] p.131

Another example of this dream or reality debate occurs in the 'Tweedledum and Tweedledee' chapter of *Through the Looking Glass*, on the subject of the sleeping Red King:

> "He's dreaming now," said Tweedledee: "and what do you think he's dreaming about?"
>
> Alice said "Nobody can guess that."
>
> "Why about *you*! Tweedledee exclaimed, clapping his hands triumphantly. "And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"
>
> "Where I am now, of course," said Alice.
>
> "Not you!" Tweedledee retorted contemptuously. "You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of thing in his dream!"
>
> "If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out – bang! – just like a candle!"[92]

The importance of this section is emphasised by its return in the final chapter, which is titled 'Which Dreamed It?' In this chapter Alice has returned from Looking Glass Land and is once again speaking to her kitten, appropriately mirroring the beginning of the book, as she says "Now, Kitty, let's consider who it was that dreamed it all. This is a serious question […] you see, Kitty, it *must* have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream, of course – but then I was part of his dream too! *Was* it the Red King, Kitty?" The real answer to this question seems to be implied by the final line of the book in which, in an unusual aside to the reader, the narrator asks "Which do *you* think it was?"[93] By drawing attention to the teller of

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[92] p.189
[93] p.271

the story, Carroll reminds his readers that it is of course he who truly 'dreamed it all' by inventing the story, another combination of the 'dreamed' and 'imagined' definitions.

The definition of words is itself an interesting theme in the *Alice* books, where even the rationality of language is twisted and made fantastical. The 'Humpty Dumpty' chapter of *Through the Looking Glass* deals most directly with language and its changeability. Humpty Dumpty, for example, changes the definition of words, using "glory" to mean "there's a nice knock-down argument for you" and, on Alice's objection, argues that "when *I* use a word […] it means exactly what I choose it to mean."[94] Based on Humpty Dumpty's assuredness about the definition of words, she asks him to help her understand the meaning of the poem 'Jabberwocky.' Patricia Meyer Spacks writes that his interpretation – reducing the splendid stanza to an account of animals resembling badgers, lizards, and corkscrews, going through various gyrations in the plot of land around a sundial during the part of the afternoon when one begins broiling things for dinner – destroys the poem.'[95] The original appeal of the poem seems to be the potential for varying definitions. Alice's reaction to the original poem was that "it seems very pretty […] but it's *rather* hard to understand! […] Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas – only I don't know exactly what they are!'[96] Spacks emphasises this idea when she explains that when Humpty Dumpty 'recites to her his own poem, a creation devoid of difficult words or leaps of imagination, it seems to her greater nonsense than the other: she doesn't know what it means either, but it doesn't fill her head with ideas.' Perhaps, in the same way as Jackson's definition of fantasy, the value 'seemed to reside in precisely this resistance to definition, in its "free floating" and escapist qualities.'[97] The changeability of language is explored similarly in many smaller instances of words with dual meaning, or

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[94] p.213
[95] Patricia Meyer Spacks, 'Logic and Language in Through the Looking Glass' in *Aspects of Alice*, p.271
[96] *The Annotated Alice*, p.150
[97] Jackson, p.1

which do not differ in speech. 'The mouse's tail' and 'the mouse's tale' is one example of this, as is the confusion created by the tale over the words 'not' and 'knot.'

Language is also questioned and made fantastical in the chapter 'Looking-Glass Insects', where names are altered slightly and made literal. The 'Rocking-horse-fly', which 'is made entirely of wood, and gets about by swinging itself from branch to branch,'[98] is one example. Using the common word of 'horse' Carroll combines the children's toy with the common insect to create something that resembles both but is entirely new and fantastical. Alice also encounters the 'Bread-and-butter-fly', whose 'wings are thin slices of bread-and-butter, its body is a crust, and its head is a lump of sugar.' The impracticality of this fantastical creature which takes its name very literally, combining elements of bread-and-butter and the butterfly, is particularly emphasised. This is likely a continuation of the question raised at the beginning of the chapter, on the purpose of names. Alice concludes that names are 'useful to the people that name them' but the question is further explored as Alice enters the wood of things that have no name. Alice soon learns the difficulty of this situation as she cannot name the object she wants to sit under as a tree, but also soon finds a positive element. On meeting a fawn which also cannot remember its name, they walk 'together through the wood, Alice with her arms clasped lovingly round the soft neck of the Fawn.' Once the two exit the wood and regain their names, the situation suddenly changes: 'the Fawn gave a sudden bound into the air, and shook itself free form Alice's arm. "I'm a Fawn!" It cried out in a voice of delight. "And, dear me! you're a human child!" A sudden look of alarm came into its beautiful brown eyes, and in another moment it had darted away at full speed.' The suggestion seems to be that we are sometimes limited by expectations and definitions. Though the Fawn has nothing to fear and has already been walking with Alice, when it regains its definition as a fawn it also regains the expectation that it should be afraid of and

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[98] p.175, 177, 178

run from humans. There is an example of a similar, though less developed, idea in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, when Alice notes 'a footman in livery came running out of the wood'[99] but Carroll goes on to explain that 'she considered him to be a footman because he was in livery: otherwise, judging by his face only, she would have called him a fish.' Carroll later refers to this character as 'the Fish-Footman' and he is indeed both fish and footman but it is interesting that Carroll emphasises the fact that Alice defines him by his clothes. This is potentially intended to be a humorous class comment; the fish, regardless of his clothing is ultimately still a fish, but it certainly has its basis in the same idea as the wood with no names. It seems that Carroll considered language as a problematic yet interesting puzzle in a similar way to his consideration of dream and reality. Language, though technically rational, is easily distorted to fantastical use.

The Imagination of Childhood

The dream is not the only way Carroll questions the boundary between reality and fantasy. An interesting alternative example can be found in a scene of *Through the Looking Glass,* in which Alice meets a unicorn. In another of the looking-glass's mirror inversions, the unicorn does not believe in children. Carroll writes that the Unicorn's

> eye happened to fall on Alice: he turned round instantly, and stood for
>
> some time looking at her with an air of the deepest disgust. "What – is –
>
> this?" he said at last.
>
> "This is a child!" Haigha replied eagerly, coming in front of Alice to
>
> introduce her […] "we only found it to-day. It's as large as life, and twice
>
> as natural!"

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[99] p.57

"I always thought they were fabulous monsters!" said the Unicorn. "Is it alive?"

"It can talk," said Haigha solemnly. The Unicorn looked dreamily at Alice and said

"Talk, child."

Alice could not help her lips curling up into a smile as she began: "Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters, too? I never saw one alive before!"

"Well, now that we have seen each other," said the Unicorn, "if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?"[100]

The final line of conversation poses the question of whether belief, and therefore what we perceive to be reality, is a matter of choice. This appears closely related to a conversation between Alice and the White Queen, in which Alice is told

"Now I'll give *you* something to believe. I'm just one hundred and one, five months and a day."

"I ca'n't believe *that*!" said Alice.

"Ca'n't you?" the Queen said in a pitying tone.

"Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes."

Alice laughed. "There's no use trying," she said: "one *ca'n't* believe impossible things."

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[100] p.229, 199

"I daresay you haven't had much practice," said the Queen. "When I was

your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've

believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast."[101]

Belief is presented as something to be learned and practiced, and to improve upon. This could

be a comment on childhood belief in the fantastical, but it appears that believing impossible

things potentially seemed quite rational to Carroll, who asks in *Silvie and Bruno* 'Which

contain the greatest amount of Science, do you think, the books, or the minds?'[102] and decides

that 'everything, recorded in books, must have once been in some mind, you know.' This is

surely inspired by new discovery in areas such as biology, archaeology and engineering

which would have been previously thought impossible; ideas and theories becoming reality.

The particular unicorn scene quoted above is derived from the nursery rhyme The Lion and

the Unicorn, one of many nursery rhyme references in the *Alice* books. Jackie Wullschläger

points out that Carroll not only uses nursery rhyme characters such as Humpty Dumpty and

the Knave of Hearts, but that 'Carroll's nonsense shares with nursery rhymes the weird,

magical happenings ('the cow jumped over the moon') and the sudden, random violence ('cut

off their tails with a carving knife').'[103] Perhaps this partly explains why, despite the fact

Carroll referred to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a fairy tale, both *Alice* books avoid

many of the traditional fairy tale elements in favour of the nursery rhyme. Jessica Tiffin

argues that both *Alice* books 'are not fairy tales'[104] and that 'Motifs in the *Alice* books are

recognisable from fairy tales – a child wandering with a vague sense of quest in a magical

landscape of kings and queens, magic objects, and talking animals – but their potentially

fairy-tale nature is disrupted by Carroll's disintegrated logic. Where a strong sense of pattern

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[101] p.199
[102] p.21, 22
[103] Jackie Wullschlager, *Inventing Wonderland: the lives and fantasies of Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, J.M. Barrie, Kenneth Graham and A.A. Milne* (London: Methuen, 1995) p.100
[104] Jessica Tiffin, 'Carroll, Lewis (1832-1898)' in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Folktales and Fairy Tales* ed. by Donald Haase (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2008) 161-162 (p.161)

does underpin the narratives, it tends to come from structures such as games (cards and chess), mathematics, or Victorian poetry, which are rather different from fairy tale.' However she goes on to suggest that 'On the other hand, Carroll's ongoing invocation of familiar nursery rhymes, with their mythic and magical characters and essential situations (the Lion and the Unicorn, or Tweedledum and Tweedledee facing the Monstrous Crow), does provide some sense of folkloric narrative.' The fairy is not a subject Carroll avoids, though he writes to Helen Feilden about Sylvie and Bruno that 'I don't much care about fairies, as a general rule: and that is the only time I ever tried to write about them: and they've come out much more like children than fairies, after all!'[105] Despite this he mentions the subject multiple times in his letters and diaries, for example, writing to Lilia MacDonald that his view 'quite looks like Fairy Land'[106] and on one occasion writing about the paintings of Noël Paton, mentioning both 'A Fairy Raid' and 'The Quarrel of Oberon and Titania.'[107] However, clearly Carroll felt that the nursery rhyme fitted his intentions in *Alice* more closely than the fairy tale. This may be because of the traditionally didactic nature of the fairy tale. Multiple critics have praised *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as the first book to truly break the moral, didactic tone of Victorian children's literature.[108] There is evidence to show that Carrol intentionally wrote the *Alice* books without a moral, for example his letter to Lilia MacDonald in 1867, where he writes that the book he has sent her 'has got a moral – so I need hardly say it is *not* by Lewis Carroll.'[109] Lennon points out that 'so much of the academic training of children then consisted in mere passive memorizing that it fatigued the most active minds,'[110] and this is something Carroll directly targets in the *Alice* books. He

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[105] 'To Helen Feilden', (March 15, 1873), p.187
[106] 'To Lilia MacDonald', (January 5, 1867), p.96
[107] 'To his sister Mary', (September 19, 1871), p.165
[108] Wullschläger, Jackie, *Inventing Wonderland*, p.103.
Zipes, Jack. *Victorian Fairytales*, p.xxii
[109] *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, p.96
[110] p.25

even rejects his first title 'Alice's Adventures Under Ground' because he worried it was 'pronounced too like a lesson-book, in which instruction about mines would be administered in the form of a grill.'[111] There are multiple occasions where Alice demonstrates her own passive memorisation by reciting lessons and facts. Even as she begins falling down the rabbit hole:

> "I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?" she said aloud. "I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think-" (for, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the school-room, and though this was not a *very* good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over) "-yes, that's about the right distance – but then I wonder what Latitude or Longitude I've got to?" (Alice had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say.)[112]

Carroll emphasises the pointlessness of this lesson repetition, pointing out that not only is nobody listening, but also that Alice does not actually understand what she's saying, she has not truly learnt anything other than to repeat what she hears. Harry Morgan Ayres sees Alice as 'a child who is anxious to please, thrust forth from the nursery into a world with which she is obviously ill prepared to cope.'[113] As a consequence of this ill-preparation, Ayres points out, Alice struggles to overcome the challenges she is faced with, 'when she has the golden key in her hand, the door is too small for her to squeeze through; when she is sufficiently diminished to enter, she has left the key out of reach on the glass table […] Clearly Alice has much to learn, and what she has been taught in her schoolroom is of precious little use to

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[111] Lewis Carroll, *The Letters of Lewis Carroll Vol. 1*, ed. Morton Cohen (London: Macmillan, 1979), p.65
[112] *The Annotated Alice*, p.13
[113] Harry Morgan Ayres, *Carroll's Alice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1936) p.22, 23

her.' This schoolroom theme is also the main focus of the 'Mock Turtle's Story', in which the

Mock Turtle lists the subjects he took at school, including 'Reeling and Writhing […] and

then the different branches of Arithmetic – Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and

Derision.'[114] As Martin Gardner points out, these are obviously puns based on real school

lessons and would be humorous to children, though there seems to be an additional satirical

element in the pride with which the Mock Turtle lists his ultimately useless set of lessons.

Though avoiding a moral, Carroll does introduce social satire here in his expression of the

adult world from an alternate perspective. This is also not limited to education, Carroll also

appears to comment frequently on social etiquette. The 'Mad Tea Party' chapter demonstrates

this particularly strongly. In one exchange for example:

> "Have some wine," the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.
>
> Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. "I
>
> don't see any wine," she remarked.
>
> "There isn't any," said the March Hare.
>
> "Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it," said Alice angrily.
>
> "It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited," said the
>
> March Hare.
>
> "I didn't know it was *your* table," said Alice: "it's laid for a great many
>
> more than three."
>
> "Your hair wants cutting," said the Hatter.[115]

The conversation switches suddenly between enforcing behaviour which is deemed polite and

apparently nonsensical breaking of the same rules. Alice's perception of the rational alienates

her from the situation rather than helping her because the rules of the other tea party guests do

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[114] *The Annotated Alice*, p.98

[115] p.70

not fit with her own perception. This fits with Ayres' conclusions of Alice's childhood struggles in the adult world, with a specific focus on social behaviour. Equally, as Alice is ceremoniously rewarded for her participation in the Caucus race by being presented with her own thimble, Carroll writes 'Alice thought the whole thing very absurd, but they all looked so grave that she did not dare to laugh.'[116]

Similarities can be found between Carroll's satire on the subject of education and Dickens', particularly in *Hard Times,* for example in Bitzer's accurate but useless definition of a horse. And again like Dickens, Carroll specifically targets didactic literature for children in other sections of the books. Elsie Leach points out that 'the Duchess's motto is "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it," and she becomes more and more extravagant and nonsensical in her application of axioms to everything Alice says and does. When Dodgson makes a ridiculous character like the Duchess praise and practice moralizing in this manner, he clearly indicates his attitude toward didacticism directed against children.'[117] Martin Gardner notes that the Duchess' quote is very similar to one found in *Dombey and Son*, 'there's a moral in everything, if we would only avail ourselves of it.'[118] Another example can be found when Carroll parodies the poem 'Against Idleness and Mischief' by Isaac Watts, turning…

How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower!

How skilfully she builds her cell!
How neat she spreads the wax!
And labours hard to store it well

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[116] p.33
[117] Elsie Leach, 'Alice in Wonderland in Perspective' in *Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dreamchild as Seen Through the Critics' Looking-Glasses, 1865-1971*, ed. by Robert Phillips (London: Gollancz, 1972) 88-92 (p91-92)
[118] 'Notes', *The Annotated Alice*, p.91

<div style="text-align: center">With the sweet food she makes.[119]</div>

Into:

<div style="text-align: center">
How doth the little crocodile
Improve his shining tail,
And Pour the waters of the Nile
On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
How neatly spreads his claws,
And welcomes little fishes in,
With gently smiling jaws![120]
</div>

Alice actually recites this 'as if she were saying lessons' with her hands crossed on her lap, but yet again the suggestion is that she doesn't understand what she is reciting anyway. After reciting them she realises 'I am sure those are not the right words,' she is still in doubt, though in actual fact she entirely erased the moral purpose as well as inverting its meaning. As Martin Gardner points out, 'Carroll has chosen the lazy, slow moving crocodile as a creature far removed from the rapid-flying, ever-busy bee.'[121] But it is also relevant that Carroll actually cuts out the two stanzas explaining the moral entirely. The original actually finishes:

<div style="text-align: center">
In works of labour or of skill,
I would be busy too;
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.

In books, or work, or healthful play,
Let my first years be passed,
That I may give for every day
Some good account at last.
</div>

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[119] Isaac Watts, 'Against Idleness and Mischief' in *Divine and Moral Songs for Children* (London: John Van Voorst, 1848) p.49-50

[120] *The Annotated Alice*, p.23

[121] *The Annotated Alice*, p.24

This is a moral which specifically highlights the restrictions on children and childhood, on play and imagination, that are in complete opposition to the intentions of the *Alice* books, and which Carroll likely experienced himself. In her biography of Carroll, Lennon points out the restrictions Carroll would have faced as a child living in a traditional and deeply religious environment and concludes that 'there was no harshness in his home – his fears were those, not of a child who has been threatened, but of one whose standards are unchildlike.'[122] One of the 'real world' conversation of *Sylvie and Bruno* debates restrictions on children on Sundays in particular, arguing that they should have the right to play and quoting a letter from a woman who describes 'when, as a child, I first opened my eyes on a Sunday-morning, a feeling of dismal anticipation, which began at least on Friday, culminated. I knew what was before me, and my wish, if not my word, was 'Would God it were evening!' It was no day of rest, but a day of texts, of catechisms (Watts'), of tracts about converted swearers, godly charwomen, and edifying deaths of sinners saved.'[123] Arthur replies that 'such teaching was meant well, no doubt, […] but it must have driven many of its victims into deserting the Church-Services altogether.' This type of very strict education, Carroll shows, is more likely to turn children away than to help them. Lennon also talks about Ayres research as presenting 'a satire on education and its distortion of the natural child,'[124] a phrase which seems fitting to Carroll's interest and intentions but also resonates with Dickens. There is evidence to show that Carroll read Dickens fairly frequently, including novels such as *Little Dorrit* and *David Copperfield* as well as *Household Words*.[125] He shows some evidence of the influence in 1866, just after the publication of the first *Alice,* when he writes to Tom Taylor of an idea for a drama which 'would be something like *Oliver Twist.* '[126] Though the work of these two

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[122] Lennon, p.22, 27
[123] p.387, 388
[124] Dickens often deals with distortions of childhood, perhaps most notably in *Hard Times* and *Dombey and Son*. This is discussed further in chapter two.
[125] The Letters of Lewis Carroll Vol. 1. 'To his sister Elizabeth' and 'To his sister Mary'.
[126] The Letters of Lewis Carroll Vol.1. 'To Tom Taylor' p.86

authors are greatly different, particularly at the point of the *Alice* books, it is not unlikely that Carroll was influenced by the sentiments in Dickens writing.

Other critics have noticed a general sympathy with children that Carroll exhibits in the books. Elsie Leach, for example, notes that the other characters in Wonderland and Looking Glass Land 'behave towards Alice as adults behave to a child – they are peremptory and patronizing. Only the eccentric Cat accepts her as an equal. In the guise of a dream fantasy, *Alice* states the plight of a little girl in an adult world. Throughout the book Dodgson describes sympathetically the child's feelings of frustration at the illogical ways of adults – their ponderous didacticism, and contradictory behaviour. They aren't consistent and they aren't fair. And their puzzling use of language is one very important manifestation of their bullying and condescension.'[127] Alvin Kibel similarly believes that the talking animals of Wonderland display an impatience with Alice which 'mirrors the chronic impatience of elders with their juniors.'[128] Ayres writes that 'the adult world, as viewed by the child, is full of indifferent, worried, busy, incompetent, meddlesome, and distinctly disagreeable people. Alice frequently has to comment on that. It should be a great lesson to all grown-ups, and Carroll meant it to be.'[129] However, it seems more likely that the presence of these elements in the books were intended to relate to the child, to both comfort and amuse them, rather than to instruct an adult audience. Yet Carroll stops short of the social reform narratives created by contemporary authors such as Dickens and Gaskell, and Lennon suggests that

> the keen memories of his own miseries made him sympathetic with
>
> children whose sufferings, like his, were of the mind. But it is hard to see
>
> why he never took the next step of sympathy, never reached out to the
>
> much larger class of children whose sufferings were quite as real – that

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[127] Leach, p.92

[128] Alvin Kibel, 'Logic and Satire in "Alice in Wonderland", *The American Scholar*, 43.4 (1974), 605-629 (p.608)

[129] Ayres, p.36

is, physical. He told the story of *Alice* to three little girls who, like his

own sisters, had known only loving parents and sunny gardens,

shadowed only by lessons and a somewhat exigent religion. In the same

year Parliament appointed a commission to inquire into the "Employment

of Children and Young Persons in Trade and Manufacturing not already

Regulated by Law."[130]

The resulting report revealed appalling conditions for children and Lennon goes on to

suggest that 'Perhaps this was too horrible for him to contemplate – against these evils, and

others he saw no cure for, he wrapped himself up in nonsense.'

Yet Carroll was concerned with the physical welfare of children suffering physical

ailments, as can be seen in his letter to Margaret Gatty where he writes that 'only the other

day I had the pleasure of sending some more *Alices* for the sick children at Gough House,

having learnt, on enquiry of the secretary, that their supply was reduced to *one* copy, in rags.

If you should ever know of any other sick children, old enough to appreciate *Alice,* and too

poor to possess it, please let me know.'[131] This is not the only example, Morton Cohen notes

that 'Dodgson gave a great many copies of his books to children's hospitals.'[132] It could also

be argued that Carroll's wish for the freedom of childhood play and imagination relates to all

children, regardless of class. Interestingly, Carroll does demonstrate a broader interest in

social issues throughout his letters and diaries. For example, his diary entry for January 7th

1856 records 'Finished *Alton Locke*. It tells the tale well of the privations and miseries of the

poor, but I wish he would propose some more definite remedy, and especially that he would

tell us what he wishes to substitute for the iniquitous "sweating" system in tailoring and other

trades. If the book were but a little more definite, it might stir up many fellow-workers in the

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130 Lennon, p.29
131 Letters of Lewis Carroll Vol. 1, p.150
132 Morton Cohen, 'Notes' in *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, p.150

same good field of social improvement.'[133] Though neither *Alice* book presents direct influenced by these issues, it is possible to see some influence in *Sylvie and Bruno*. For example, in contrast to the innocent Sylvie and Bruno is the selfish and spiteful child Uggug. When an 'old Beggar' appears at the window, Uggug tips a jug of water over him as the adults encourage him and refuse the man any food, only Sylvie and Bruno follow the man to give him their own cake.[134] Though the 'Beggar' turns out to be the King of Elfland, the point is quite clearly that the poor should both be treated with respect and aided by those who have more than them. There is also a political vein throughout the story, in which those who wish to be in positions of power have purely selfish motives and completely ignore what is best for the people. While Carroll clearly did have an interest in such topics, it seems he felt they did not belong on Wonderland.

Floating Heads: The Phantasmagoria of the Theatre
Technology and invention seem to have been a particularly interesting subject to Carroll. In both *Through the Looking Glass* and *Sylvie and Bruno* there is an inventor. For *Through the Looking Glass* it is the White Knight who details multiple nonsensical inventions, such as a box, carried upside down, "so that the rain ca'n't get in."[135] He is, however, one of the few characters who speaks to Alice as an equal and the Knight's song, Carroll writes, 'of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly.'[136] The Knight also has an important position in the movement of the plot and chess game, as he escorts Alice to her new position as Queen. *Sylvie and Bruno* features a similar inventor, who introduces 'very strange-looking boots, the

[133] Letters of Lewis Carroll, Vol.1, p.71
[134] p.53
[135] p.236
[136] p.234

tops of which were open umbrellas'[137] which are to be used in 'horizontal weather.' Again

this character is kind to the children and the impression of entertainment is emphasised in the

sections in which he appears. In both cases the inventions are entirely useless, but they are

also great feats of imagination. As the use of imagination is something Carroll praises it is

likely that these characters are positive examples of the imagination being of greater

importance than the rational. At a time when various new inventions were rapidly emerging

and being publicly displayed through things such as The Great Exhibition, Carroll gives a

positive twist to invention that arises not from the rational but purely from the imagination.

Carroll was very familiar with new forms of technology, including the camera. As has

been mentioned previously, the difficulty of distinguishing between appearance and reality

was given particular prominence by the rise of photography. In a poem written specifically on

photography, 'Hiawatha', Carroll satirically questions whether realism is actually the desired

outcome of photography. The poem follows the story of a disastrous attempt to photograph a

family. All have a very specific idea of how they want to look, and all cause the photograph

to fail through incidents such as through movement during the process. Carroll then writes…

> Finally my Hiawatha
> Tumbled all the tribe together,
> ('Grouped' is not the right expression),
> And, as happy chance would have it
> Did at last obtain a picture
> Where the faces all succeeded:
> Each came out a perfect likeness.
>
> Then they joined and all abused it,
> Unrestrainedly abused it,
> As the worst and ugliest picture
> They could possibly have dreamed of.

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[137] p.14

The subjects of the photograph are displeased precisely because of its 'perfect likeness', they would rather it present a false, improved, version of reality, just as Alice sees a more fantastical version of the real world through the Looking-Glass.

Helmut Gernsheim notices that in Carroll's diaries the years 1863 and 1864 have 'more frequent and longer entries' on photography, the two years before the publication of the first Alice book. It is therefore quite possible that the presence of this subject in the *Alice* books had some direct inspiration from Carroll's interest in photography. And photography is not the only example of visual technology inspiring his writing. There are also very clear references to theatre and lantern technology in both books. Carroll was certainly familiar with the phantasmagoria. As early as 1840, when Carroll was only a child, he visited an exhibition in Warrington town hall, at which there was a phantasmagoria lantern. He later wrote a poem titled 'Phantasmagoria.' He would also have been made more familiar with specific lantern techniques in 1856, when he purchased a magic lantern and created his own performances, the first of which was to 'about eighty children, and a large miscellaneous party besides of friends, servants etc.'[138] Terry Castle explains how in a phantasmagoria show, by projecting an image with the magic lantern 'in darkness, with the screen itself invisible, images could be made to appear like fantastic luminous shapes, floating inexplicably in the air.'[139] This effect is very similar to the appearance of the Cheshire Cat's floating head in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where Alice notices 'a curious appearance in the air: it puzzled her very much at first, but after watching it a minute or two she made it out to be a grin.'[140]

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[138] Diaries of Lewis Carroll, p.99
[139] Castle, p.33
[140] *The Annotated Alice*, p.86

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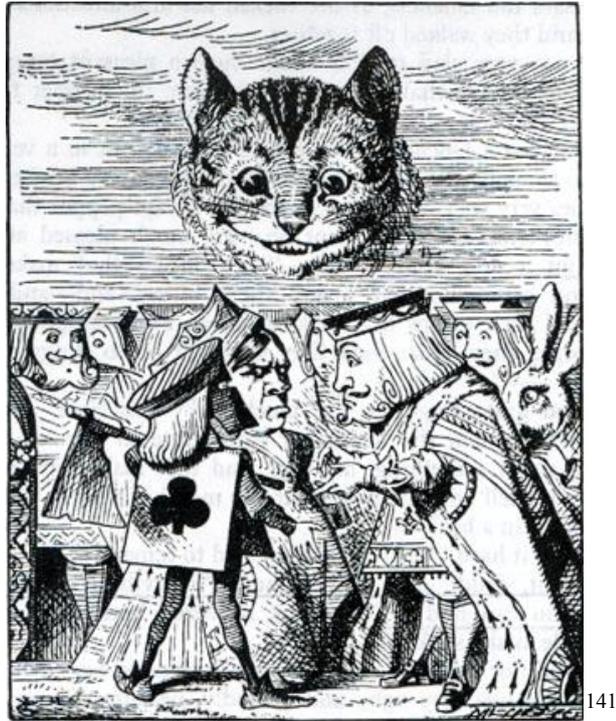
Another possible influence of the magic lantern can be seen in Alice's continual growing and shrinking. Critics have suggested various reasons for this, for example its being a metaphor for Alice's 'cutting back and forth across the borders of childhood,'[142] but Joss Marsh writes about a lantern technique used in the phantasmagoria where 'figures grew larger or smaller as the lantern 'tracked' towards or away from the screen.'[143] It is also possible that the metamorphosis of a baby into a pig was inspired by lantern techniques, as Castle notes that the early Phantasmagoria, or 'fantasmagorie' by Etienne-Gaspard Robertson 'specifically involved a metamorphosis, or one shape rapidly changing into another – an effect easily achieved by doubling two glass slides in the tube of the magic lantern over one another in a quick, deft manner.'[144] Again this inspiration comes from a source that itself seemed to question the boundary of reality and fantasy.

[141] John Tenniel, 'The Cheshire Cat Reappears Above the Cast of Characters', 1865
<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/tenniel/alice/8.4.html>
[142] Lennon, p.123
[143] Joss Marsh, 'Dickensian 'Dissolving Views': The Magic Lantern, Visual Story-Telling, and the Victorian Technological Imagination', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 6.3 (2009), 333-346 (pp. 338)
[144] Castle, p.36

[145] Yet another obvious outside source of inspiration for the *Alice* books is the theatre. The papier-mâché 'big heads' of the pantomime are certainly bought to mind by Tenniel's illustration of the Duchess, whose body is in proportion with Alice's, but whose head is far larger. Carroll was greatly involved with the creation of illustrations for both Alice books, and as he was also interested in theatre and the pantomime it seems likely this is an intentional similarity. Carroll even sends off a copy of *Alice* to Thomas Coe, a stage manager and actor with 'vague hopes […] that it may occur to him to turn it into a pantomime. I fancy it would work well in that form'[146] Richard Foulkes recognises futher similarities between the *Alice* books and pantomime, writing that 'insubstantial walls, animals that talk, outsize heads, riddles and puns were all features of the pantomime.'[147] There are also more specific potential influences, as Foulkes points out 'playing cards coming to life and conversing find their counterpart in *The Children in the Wood, or Harlequin Queen Mab and the World of Dreams* by Carroll's favourite pantomime author E.L. Blanchard.' The court scene at the end

[145] John Tenniel, 'The Duchess and Alice', 1865
<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/tenniel/alice/9.1.html>
[146] Carroll, Lewis. Letter 'To his brother Edwin' March 11, 1867. *The Letters of Lewis Carroll Vol. 1.* P.102
[147] Richard Foulkes, *Lewis Carroll and the Victorian Stage: theatricals in a quiet life* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005) p.55

of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a particularly chaotic one where many of the "nonsense" elements of the book are greatly emphasised. In Tenniel's illustration of this chapter there is once again suggestion of the pantomime 'big heads', this time shown on the King.

Though there is no size comparison between the King and the other characters, as there is with Alice and the Duchess, Tenniel seems to have intentionally emphasised the legs

of the King, which show that his head (also emphasised by the size of his crown and wig) is of far larger proportion than the rest of his body. Foulkes points out that 'court of law scenes were not associated with pantomimes, but there had been two celebrated examples in plays that Carroll had seen: Boucicault's *Janet Pride,* which he saw twice (Adelphi 13 December 1856 and 16 July 1864), and the same author's *The Trial of Effie Deans* (from Scott) at Astley's (Theatre Royal, Westminster) on 9 February 1863.'[148] It seems likely, particularly considering the closeness in dates of Carroll's visit to these plays and the publication of *Alice*, that Carroll was inspired by them to emphasise the theatricality of this scene.

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[148] p. 55

Story telling also features strongly in both *Alice* books. These small performances which Alice stops to watch along her journey attempt to both entertain and instruct her, though are not necessarily successful. The first of these is 'the mouse's tale', which Martin Gardner suggests 'is perhaps the best-known example in English of emblematic, or figured, verse.'[149] Gardner also points out the possibility that Carroll got the original idea from Tennyson, as Carroll writes in his diary 'Tennyson told us that often on going to bed after being engaged on composition he had dreamed long passages of poetry […] which he liked very much at the time, but forgot entirely when he woke. One was an enormously long one on fairies, where the lines from being very long at first gradually got shorter and shorter, till it ended with fifty or sixty lines of two syllables each!'[150] Though it is the form and not the fairy theme that influences Carroll here it is an interesting example of Carroll's knowledge and interaction with the fairy subject at this time. The mouse's tale actually serves to foreshadow the court trial at the end of the book but Alice, who uses her imagination to turn the tale into a mouse's tail, offends the mouse with her inattention, causing it to leave. Another audience member, an old crab, then takes a moral from the scene, announcing "let this be a lesson to you never to lose *your* temper!"[151] The scene is nonsensical, not only because the mouse's tale does not tell the story of why it is afraid of cats and dogs, as it was meant to, but also because Alice's response to the story is nonsense to the mouse and the old crab's moral was not really taught by the situation. It is an example of Alice's failure to respond correctly to the world around her based on a situation of performance and audience. Alice also listens to stories from the Mock Turtle, Humpty Dumpty and the White Knight,[152] amongst others.

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[149] p.34
[150] *The Diaries of Lewis Carroll*, p.146
[151] p.35
[152] p.96, 216, 244

While many similarities can be found in their influences, particularly in popular entertainment, Carroll's fiction, unlike Dickens', is far more defined by its focus on the fantastical dream world. As has been seen, this is not necessarily limited to the literal dream but also to the imagination, the day dream, or the child's games of 'let's pretend.' Yet in all of these dream scenarios Carroll presents his readers with a very similar looking-glass distortion of reality. The recognisable is merged with the fantastical and the seemingly rational is questioned by Carroll's intricate word play and puzzles. The persistent exploration of the boundary between dream and reality again demonstrates the incredibly close coexistence of the rational and fantastical, undoubtedly inspired by Carroll's interest in other entertainments and hobbies which were themselves raising these questions, such as photography and the phantasmagoria.

Chapter Three: George MacDonald, Fairyland and the Fantastical Journey

The friendship between Lewis Carroll and George MacDonald has led to speculation on the similarities and potential influences between the two.[153] The dream and mirror symbols previously discussed are used in very similar ways by both authors for example. The features that set the two furthest apart are MacDonald's intentional allegory, and his consistent use of the traditional fairy tale, both of which are avoided by Carroll.

One example of MacDonald's use of traditional folk and fairy tale features is his use of talking animals. In this there is also a very clear contrast with Carroll. Though Carroll also uses talking animals, Catherine Elik points out that in this use he is 'consciously breaking with the folktale tradition of animals being helpful.'[154] The creatures of Wonderland do occasionally help Alice. She is advised, for example, by both the Cheshire Cat and Caterpillar, but both of these animals also confuse and contradict her. MacDonald, on the other hand, follows this tradition in both his adult and children's books. In *Lilith*, Mr Vane is guided by Mr Raven, who is often presented in the form of an actual bird, though at times he is a man who resembles one. In *The Giant's Heart*, the children are carried to their destination by giant talking spiders and given the ability to defeat the giant by them. Unlike Carroll's animals, MacDonald's are benevolent and willingly helpful.

While MacDonald uses motifs from the traditional fairy tale frequently in his work, it is in *Phantastes* particularly that he makes continuous and direct reference to them. For example, he draws on one of Perrault's fairy tales when he uses 'the very house of the ogre

[153] J. MacIntyre, 'Phantastes into Alice', *Newsletter of the Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada*, 3.2 (1977), p.6-9; R.B. Shaberman, 'George MacDonald and Lewis Carroll', *North Wind Online Digital Archive* (1982)
[154] Catherine Elick, *Talking Animals in Children's Fiction: A Critical Study* (North Carolina: MacFarland & Company, 2015) p.26

that Hop-o'-my-Thumb visited.'[155] In Perrault's story three children are invited to sleep in the

house of an ogre, who then plans to kill them while they are asleep. Therefore when Anodos

is warned about the house in *Phantastes*, MacDonald ensures the setting is already associated

with fear and trickery. The woman who lives there, Anodos is told, also has 'teeth long

enough, and white enough too, for the lineal descendant of the greatest ogre that ever was

made.' Here MacDonald is extending the original fairy tale as he merges it with his own

story, an addition which seems intended to add authentication to the original while also

helping to build the impression of an established world of fairy tale existence. The ogre's

descendant and her house appear soon after the warning, though Anodos does not recognise it

and only notes a 'vague misgiving' about the place. Despite his misgivings he is drawn to the

place, he 'must needs go closer', and feels that 'an irresistible attraction caused me to enter.'

Although he still does not recognise the woman inside the house, he stays to hear her reading

aloud from a book. With passages such as "as darkness had no beginning, neither will it ever

have an end" the language, as Nick Page points out, is 'reminiscent of the Authorised Version

[of the Bible].' Specifically Page notes that the language 'resembles an inversion of language

found in John's gospel and letters.'[156] MacDonald clearly intends this to be a second warning,

which Anodos again fails to recognise and continues to look further into the house. This is

also the point at which MacDonald merges the good and evil of the fairy tale with religious

notions of good and evil, as well as their symbolic representations as light and darkness.

Once fully inside the house, Anodos again feels an 'irresistible desire' to open another door.

Though he is warned against opening it by the ogre 'the prohibition […] only increased my

desire to see.' It is worth noting the link between Anodos' desire and Biblical story of

temptation to original sin, a section of the Bible MacDonald draws on again in *Lilith*, where

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[155] Nick Page, 'Notes' in *Phantastes*, p.104, 105, 108, 109
[156] *Phantastes*, p.109, 110, 129

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choosing to eat the fruit of the 'Bad Giants' or those of the 'Little Ones' is directly related to moral goodness. By opening the forbidden cupboard, Anodos finds his 'shadow.' The shadow is an important but much debated symbol in the book, and one which MacDonald himself never explained. The Biblical association would suggest that by giving in to temptation Anodos metaphorically opens the door to sin, yet the shadow often seems to symbolise something far more specific to Anodos. However, Anodos' first description of the shadow as 'so dark, that I could see it in the dim light of the lamp, which shone full upon it, apparently without thinning the intensity of its hue', seems at least to highlight the importance of the shadow as a symbol of absolute darkness, and therefore evil. The house of the ogre is also later referred to as the 'Church of Darkness', again associating the evil in fairy tale to religious notions of evil. In this case the use of the fairy tale appears to be used as a simplification of a more complex religious moral message. As in all fairy tales, 'good' and 'evil' are clearly defined in 'Hop-o'-My-Thumb' and so by association the ogre's house is a place of evil. In other sections of Anodos' journey MacDonald uses the fairy tale villain in the form of three giants and a wolf who appears to eat children. The setting of the three giants bears similarity to '*The Valiant Little Taylor*' which was published in Grimm's Fairytales, while the wolf (which is also disguised in order to eat the innocent and unsuspecting victim) has much in common with the wolf of *Little Red Riding Hood*.

Despite the use of these fairy tale 'villains', the fairy tale is more frequently praised and associated with goodness. In *Phantastes*, for example, Anodos notes that 'since my visit to the Church of Darkness, my power of seeing the fairies of the higher orders had gradually diminished, until it had almost ceased.'[157] The ability to see these fairies is therefore directly influenced by the 'darkness' a person possesses. Another example of this is given as Anodos sees 'a lovely fairy child, with two wondrous toys, one in each hand. The one was a tube

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[157] *Phantastes*, p.129, 130, 132, 133, 134

through which the fairy-gifted poet looks when he beholds the same thing everywhere; the other that through which he looks when he combines into new forms of loveliness those images of beauty which his own choice has gathered from all regions wherein he has travelled.'[158] When the child stands in Anodos' shadow, however, 'straightaway he was a commonplace boy[…] the toys he carried were a multiplying-glass and a kaleidoscope.' Again, the darkness of the shadow prevents Anodos from viewing the fantastical, therefore defining the fantastical as something pure and good. MacDonald's use of optical gadgets is also interesting here, as they too can be viewed in either a fantastical or commonplace way, possessing the potential to be both rational and fantastical. Morus writes that the kaleidoscope 'was itself a product of his [the inventor, David Brewster] serious philosophical concerns with the relationship between appearance and reality.'[159] In this sense, MacDonald's use of these particular toys is also relevant because of their relation to questions of vision and reality. Anodos views the child in two completely different ways through his shadow and the light of fairy land but there is no explanation of which view is the true one. This question is clearly raised by MacDonald as he later provides an explanation of the relationship between Anodos' shadow and illusion:

> In a land like this, with so many illusions everywhere, I need this aid to
> disenchant the things around me. He does away with all appearances, and
> shows me things in their truer colour and form. And I am not one to be
> fooled with the vanities of the common crowd. I will not see beauty
> where there is none. I will dare to behold things as they are. And if I live
> in a waste instead of a paradise, I will live knowing where I live.[160]

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[158] p.116
[159] p.39
[160] p.117

This view represents the purely rational, the shadow removes every element of the fantastical from the world, disenchanting it. This view is quickly dismissed by Anodos and is meant to be quickly dismissed by the reader, who is supposed to recognise that, rather than seeing things in a truer form, this purely rational view blinds Anodos to the truth, causing him to deem the benevolent knight untrustworthy. There is a stubborn pride in the statement that may be read as a mocking representation of those who support the rational above all else, similar to Dickens' often mocking tone in reference to the Gradgrindian school of thought in *Hard Times.*

Despite the shadow's negative effect, in Fairyland there is always a more powerful light than there is darkness, again following traditional religious symbolism. This is a concept represented in the settings as opposing the ogre's 'Church of Darkness' MacDonald introduces the much larger Fairy Palace. Finding his room within this palace Anodos finds rest as he says to himself "my shadow dares not come here." The amount of light is constantly emphasised, from the 'blaze of light' that greets Anodos in his room, to the entire outside of the building, which 'shone like silver in the sun.' The palace is even 'too bright, in the sun, for earthly eyes.' In this place the shadow is 'barely discernable', though it still clings to Anodos. It is also here that the greatest explanation of the Shadow is given, as Anodos speaks directly to it saying "Shadow of me! […] Which art not me, but which representest thyself to me as me; here I may find a shadow of light which will devour thee, the shadow of darkness! Here I may find a blessing which will fall on thee as a curse, and damn thee to the blackness whence thou hast emerged unbidden." That there can be a 'shadow of light' suggests in itself that the Shadow is an almost physical representation of Anodos. The dark shadow reflects the darkness, or evil, in Anodos, while the shadow of light provides a representation of its absolute opposite, pure goodness and light. This is why, even in the intense light of the Fairy Palace, Anodos still keeps his shadow, as he has not yet learnt

his lesson and rid himself of the 'darkness' inside. With the continuous encouragement and forgiveness of the fairies and people of Fairyland, Anodos finally loses his Shadow when he lets go of his pride. In the chapter of this occurrence MacDonald brings back a character from a previous chapter, a 'little maiden' Anodos wrongs by breaking a globe of music and light belonging to her. Anodos, having been trapped in a tower, hears a song which talks about prayer and love and finishes with the words:

> From the narrow desert, O man of pride,
> Come into the house, so high and wide.

At the end of the song Anodos finds he can open the door to his prison. He finds that the maiden is there and she explains to him that she had taken the broken pieces of her globe to the Fairy Queen and been told to sleep, after which she found she could sing. She further explains that 'now I can go about everywhere through Fairy Land, singing till my heart is like to break, just like my globe, for very joy at my own songs. And wherever I go, my songs do good, and deliver people. And now I have delivered you, and I am so happy.'[161] The maiden has forgiven Anodos entirely and this is certainly part of his new freedom but also, as Anodos explains, 'the light and the music of her broken globe were now in her heart and brain.'[162] The light appears to be no different to the pure light of the Fairy Palace, which did not rid Anodos of his shadow, suggesting that it was the maiden's ability to speak to Anodos through her music that is key to his losing his shadow. In 'The Fantastic Imagination' MacDonald compares fantastical literature with music and so seems to be suggesting the power of the imaginative in forms such as these to help to guide those who hear or read them.

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[161] p.245
[162] p.246

In Fairyland goodness is rewarded and immorality punished, and even immoral actions can be easily forgiven. The world is well explained in a conversation between Anodos and the Knight, where the Knight explains that

> "Somehow or other […] notwithstanding the beauty of this country of Faerie, in which we are, there is much that is wrong in it. If there are great splendours, there are corresponding horrors; heights and depths; beautiful women and awful fiends; noble men and weaklings. All a man has to do is better what he can. And if he will settle it with himself, that even renown and success are in themselves of no great value, and be content to be defeated, if so be that the fault is not his; and so go on to his work with a cool brain and a strong will, he will get it done; and fare none the worse in the end, that he was not burdened with provision and precaution."

When Anodos suggests "But he will not always come off well," the reply is "perhaps not, […] in the individual act; but the result of his lifetime will content him."[163] The description of imperfections in the world are easily, and surely intentionally, applicable to the real world, as much as Fairyland. The suggestion is that a person's goodness, even if it leads to that individual's downfall, will still be ultimately rewarded. This is a notion very much shared by Dickens, who continuously promotes the widespread effects of individual goodness, and can be seen in characters such as Stephen Blackpool and Amy Dorrit.

Elements of the traditional fairy tale are also of importance in the setting of *Phantastes*. Although Anodos remains in Fairyland throughout the novel, he moves through a series of very different settings within that world. The settings define the various stages of his journey, a different lesson to be learnt, and the fairy tale theme is the uniting element of these

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[163] *Phantastes*, p.253

different settings. For example, the first place Anodos visits is populated by small garden fairies, possibly the most traditional fairies in the book. They are particularly childlike and mischievous, as well as being very much associated with nature, physically resembling the flowers they are named after. The fairies at the Fairy Palace however are very different, and clearly of normal human size. Although Anodos struggles the see the fairies in this place, vague descriptions such as 'the passing wave of a white robe; or a lovely arm or neck gleamed in the moonshine,'[164] emphasise the mature grace of these fairy beings, as opposed to the small childish forms Anodos first encounters. Other areas are quite vastly different to this. The place in which the three giants live, for example, has no mention of actual fairies at all. The fairy tale has now become one of knights and monsters, and the setting fittingly becomes more like a medieval town, with crumbling castles and a court that reflects a normal, though outdated, social order of kings and nobles.

'Our life is no dream; but it ought to become one, and perhaps will.' - *Novalis*
The above quote is used by MacDonald to begin chapter twenty five of *Phantastes.* It was, as Nick Page points out, 'one of MacDonald's favourite quotes and occurs in several of his books,'[165] including *Lilith,* for which it is the final line. The opening statement, 'our life is no dream' seems an interesting inversion of Carroll's 'is all our life then but a dream?' and yet the fact that 'it ought to be become one, and perhaps will' treats the dream in a very similar way to Carroll; questioning how it can be defined and indeed how the boundary between dream and reality are defined. However, there are also examples in MacDonald's work where he portrays life as a dream, and death to be the moment of waking from that dream. In a letter to his father (December 2, 1857), he writes 'may the one Father make us all clean at last by

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[164] *Phantastes*, p.136
[165] *Phantastes*, p.268

his beautiful forgiving tenderness & his well-ordered sufferings, & when the right time comes, wake us out of this sleep into the new world, which is the old one, when we shall say as one that wakes from a dream – Is it then over, & I live?'[166] This idea is central to both *Phantastes* and *Lilith*.

In *Phantastes*, sleeping and waking, and therefore the implication of dreaming, frames the narrative and is often essential to the movement of the plot. For example, Anodos sleeps in a boat, a 'cradle, in which mother Nature was rocking her weary child,' and is transported to the Fairy Palace. The reference to dream here is emphasised by the fact that when he wakes Anodos feels 'as if I had died in a dream, and should never more awake.' Like Carroll, MacDonald leaves the reader unsure of whether Anodos' experiences are dream or real. This is certainly intentional, and is accentuated by the use of a first person narrative. In the first line of the book Anodos states 'I awoke one morning with the usual perplexity of mind which accompanies the return of consciousness' and then begins to tell the story of 'the strange events of the foregoing night.' The admittance of confusion as well as the fact that the strange events happened at night are surely designed to suggest dreaming. Following this, while still in bed, Anodos' room begins to transform into Fairyland. He describes that 'looking out of bed, I saw that a large green marble basin […] was overflowing like a spring; and that a stream of clear water was running over the carpet […] and, stranger still, where this carpet, which I had designed myself to imitate a field of grass and daisies, bordered the course of the little stream, the grass-blades and daisies seemed to wave in a tiny breeze.'[167] The changes continue in this way until the room has transformed completely into Fairy Land. Knowing that Anodos consciously created the features of his room to replicate a forest makes the possibility that he is dreaming of their coming to life more reasonable. Anodos' doubts on the

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[166] George MacDonald, *An Expression of Character: the Letters of George MacDonald*, ed. by Glenn Edward (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1994) p.124

[167] *Phantastes*, p.125, 127, 42, 47, 105, 271, 504

reality of his surroundings are summarised in the comment 'I did not believe in Fairy Land', which he makes after spending just one night away from any extraordinary events. The reader is only truly assured that Anodos' experiences were real at the end of the novel, when he describes his sisters' experience of his disappearance and discovers he was gone for exactly 'twenty-one days.'[168] Anodos doubts the existence of Fairy Land just as the reader does, a believable reaction from an adult character perhaps. But the adult doubts of the fantastical world are ultimately proved wrong and the boundary between the rational and fantastic remains passable. Comparing *Phantastes* with the *Alice* books, MacIntyre writes that 'the quest objective in *Phantastes* keeps changing as the story proceeds, an unusual feature for quest stories, and this change of objectives also appears in *Alice*.'[169] In *Alice* these sudden changes are related to the dream, where unexplainable shifts in focus are expected. However, by looking at both *Phantastes* and *Lilith,* both of which feature these sudden changes in objective, it seems more likely that MacDonald's intention is to show in these novels that there is only one true quest which the protagonist, through various adventures, must learn to recognise. On finding and completing the quest that originally meant for them, MacDonald's protagonists are allowed to leave place it is set in. As with many of MacDonald's themes this has a clear religious origin, emphasised by the protagonists of both novels finding both death and paradise at the conclusion of their quests. This theme is also suggested by a song in *Phantastes*:

> Though goest thine, and I go mine –
> Many ways we wend;
> Many days, and many ways,
> Ending in one end

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[168]p.271, 257
[169] J. MacIntyre, 'Phantastes into Alice', *Newsletter of the Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada*, 3.2 (1977), 6-9 (pp.6)

<div align="center">

Many a wrong, and its curing song;

Many a road, and many an inn;

Room to roam, but only one home

For all the world to win.[170]

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The paths and the places to stop along them vary but there is ultimately only one objective and end. Raeper also suggests that 'in such a protean landscape as Fairy Land in *Phantastes*, where things change their shape and habit from one line of text to the next, the reader is disturbed into examining the text more closely.'[171]

In *Lilith* the dream is also treated differently as there is little reason for the reader to believe Mr Vane is dreaming his experience as he passes through to a new world of multiple dimensions, though he sometimes compares his experience to that of a dream. For example he describes the difficulty of recounting his experience in terms of feeling 'like one in the process of awaking from a dream, with the thing that seemed familiar gradually yet swiftly changing through a succession of forms until its very nature is no longer recognizable.' Dreaming within the fantastical dimensions however, is not as clear. Even when the existence of the new dimensions are accepted as fact, Vane's experiences within those dimensions are sometimes confusingly divided between dream and 'reality', which is emphasised by the fact that Vane's house appears in the fantastical world and is only recognisable from the original when something fantastical occurs. For example, Vane, believing he has returned to his home and normal world, steps into the garden, only to turn and find himself in a pine forest. This confusion exists throughout the entire novel, and is particularly well expressed in the final chapter, after Vane has 'woken' a number of times to different dimensions:

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[170] p.246
[171] p.145

> Can it be that that last waking also was in the dream? That I am still in
>
> the chamber of death, asleep and dreaming, not yet ripe enough to wake?
>
> Or can it be that I did not go to sleep outright and heartily, and so have
>
> come awake too soon?[172]

Throughout all of the dimension changes, and Vane's interaction with each, MacDonald emphasises the link between sleep and death, the dream of reality versus the "reality" of the afterlife. The characters of *Lilith* must sleep in Mr Raven's cemetery until it is 'the hour to ring the resurrection-bell' at which point they are woken, though it is not clear whether this waking is only into another dream-like state. However the narrator, Mr Vane, is afraid to sleep in the cemetery when he first encounters it, and Mr Raven explains that 'no one who will not sleep can ever wake.' This raises the question of what the alternative state is if Vane is neither sleeping nor awake. The answer to this seems to be in Mr Raven's description of 'the region of seven dimensions.' Just as Mr Raven explains that death is defined differently in the various dimensions when he says 'I almost forget what they mean by DEAD in the old world. If I said a person was dead, my wife would understand one thing, and you would imagine another', sleeping is also defined differently depending on the dimension. To sleep in the 'vaults' of Mr Raven is a sleep which represents death before resurrection, but Mr Vane is still able to sleep and wake multiple times in other dimensions without the same implication. In chapter eighteen of *Phantastes* MacDonald quotes *Hesperus*, writing:

> From dreams of bliss shall men awake
> One day, but not to weep:
> The dreams remain; they only break
> The mirror of the sleep.

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[172] *Lilith*, p.518, 525, 509, 518, 653

This quote fits very well with *Lilith* and the cycle of sleeping and waking but it is also interesting that Page notes MacDonald 'added a reference to 'the mirror' which is not in the original.'[173]

'All mirrors are magic mirrors' - *Phantastes,* 125

The mirror is a symbol which occurs multiple times in MacDonald's writing, both fiction and non-fiction. R.B. Shaberman considers MacDonald's use of the mirror in *Phantastes* to have specifically influenced the *Alice* books.[174] One passage in *Phantastes* gives particular emphasis to the importance of the mirror:

> What a strange thing a mirror is! And what a wondrous affinity exists
>
> between it and a man's imagination! For this room of mine, as I behold it in
>
> the glass, is the same and yet not the same. It is not the mere representation
>
> of the room I live in, but it looks just as if I were reading about it in a story I
>
> like. All its commonness has disappeared. The mirror has lifted it out of the
>
> region of fact into the realm of art; and the very representing of it to me has
>
> clothed with interest that which was otherwise hard and bare; just as one
>
> sees with delight upon the stage the representation of a character from which
>
> one would escape in life as from something unendurably wearisome. But is
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> it not rather that art rescues nature from the weary and sated regards of our
>
> senses, and the degrading injustice of our anxious everyday life, and,
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> appealing to the imagination, which dwells apart, reveals Nature in some

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[173] 'Notes', p.195

[174] R.B. Shaberman, 'George MacDonald and Lewis Carroll', *North Wind*, 1 (1982), p.10-30

degree as she really is, and as she represents herself to the eye of a child,

whose every-day life, fearless and unambitious, meets the true import of the

wonder-teeming world around him, and rejoices therein without

questioning?[175]

There are many interesting revelations on MacDonald's use of the mirror symbol in this

passage, and it is easy to see how it potentially influenced Carroll, particularly in writing

Through the Looking Glass. The mirror reflects not a 'mere representation', but a world lifted

'out of the region of fact' as though the world viewed in the mirror were truly a different

place, but a fantastical rather than a factual one. It is significant that by viewing this

fantastical mirror version of reality, 'that which was otherwise hard and bare' has been

'clothed with interest.' This appears to be MacDonald's intention in his own writing, which

uses the fantastical to present real moral issues, encouraging the reader to consider these

everyday 'cold and bare' problems. This also shares some similarity with Dickens stated

intention 'to show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the

surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out.'[176] It is also significant that

MacDonald views the theatre in the same way, a way to present something with 'delight'

rather than it being 'unendurably wearisome.' MacDonald used the theatre for exactly this

purpose and in a very similar way to his fictional writing. Working with Octavia Hill, the

MacDonald's would put on plays at their home, 'The Retreat', in Hammersmith. Kathy

Triggs points out that 'Octavia Hill owned property in London, and once a year she brought

all her tenants – from thirty to a hundred – to The Retreat for a day's outing […] they would

bring out onto the lawn a portable stage , with scenery painted by the MacDonald boys.'[177]

Fittingly Triggs points out that 'Louisa wrote the scripts' and 'most were fairy tales.' Of

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[175] *Phantastes*, p.154-155
[176] *Household Words*
[177] Kathy Triggs, *The Stars and the Stillness* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1986) p.97

Louisa's 'more ambitious works' Triggs names Dickens' *The Haunted Man*, though this is

again a story with strong use of fairy tale elements and a clear moral message. It is also one

which, yet again, contains echoes of the 'Preliminary Word' where Dickens writes that

shadows 'danced about the room, showing the children marvellous shapes and faces on the

walls, and gradually changing what was real and familiar there, to what was wild and

magical.'[178]

MacDonald's use of the theatre here also suggests that he shared Dickens' views on

its ability to transcend class boundaries. Osama Jarrar argues that the subject of class was

important to MacDonald and that in his writing he 'contradicts the hierarchical structure of

the Victorian social scale that is based on hereditary privilege.'[179] It is certainly true that

many of the lower class characters in MacDonald's writing have the greatest capacity for

good, the greatest 'nobility of character', as Jarrar describes it. It is also interesting that

MacDonald, writing that imagination 'reveals Nature in some degree as she really is, and as

she represents herself to the eye of a child', implies that imagination is required to view the

world in a truer light, and that this is something children have the ability to do. This is

perhaps the reason that the protagonists in both *Phantastes* and *Lilith* struggle to accept the

reality of the fantastical world they are presented with, yet become increasingly comfortable

with it after learning from characters who are more childlike. In *Lilith* the theatre is used to

represent the revelation of the fantastical when MacDonald writes 'the sun is shining golden

above me; the sea lies blue beneath his gaze; the same world sends its growing things up

towards the sun, and its flying things into the air which I have breathed from my infancy; but

I know the outspread splendor a passing show, and that at any moment it may, like the drop-

scene of a stage, be lifted to reveal more wonderful things.'[180] Yet the fantastical world it

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[178] *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings*, p.230
[179] p.14
[180] p.520

reveals proves to be the truest world in *Lilith*. This is an idea often at the heart of Dickens' work as has been seen, particularly in relation to *Hard Times*.

The mirror also returns as an important symbol in *Lilith*, where it shares a greater similarity with Carroll's 'Looking-Glass.' At the beginning of his journey Mr Vane follows a shadowy figure to a room in which there is 'a tall mirror with a dusty face, old-fashioned and rather narrow – in appearance an ordinary glass.'[181] However, this glass has no literal reflection, it shows instead 'a wild country, broken and heathy' and Mr Vane wonders 'could I have mistaken for a mirror the glass that protected a wonderful picture?' This theory is proven wrong however when he stumbles through the mirror into the world he could see through it. This differs from Alice's experience as her mirror presents a true reflection of the room but Alice's preoccupation is with the things she cannot see and which her imagination makes fantastical. However, there are some similarities between Mr Vane's entrance to this world and Alice's into Wonderland and Looking–Glass Land. Mr Vane wonders for example 'how was life to be lived in a world of which I had all the laws to learn?' This is a question central to the *Alice* books, in which Alice continuously attempts to conform to the nonsensical rules around her. J. MacIntyre notes a similarity between *Alice* and *Phantastes* on this subject, writing that 'Fairyland has laws known to its inhabitants, though a visitor like Anodos can never quite grasp what they are.'[182] However there are some important differences between the use of dreaming in the two authors work, which are more obvious in *Lilith*, where the dream is dealt with more frequently in the narrative. While Alice notes the 'curious' nature of the laws in her newly discovered world she accepts them very quickly and attempts to use them properly, for example as she learns how to become the correct size by eating. But much of Alice's unquestioning compliance, as has been seen, comes from the fact that she is

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[181] *Lilith*, p.503, 511
[182] p.6

dreaming, and possibly the fact that she is a child who, as Ayres and Leach suggest, perceives the creatures of Wonderland as adults. Alice also appears to be more accepting of the fact her perceptions of the rational could be incorrect. She says, for example, 'When I used to read fairy tales, I fancied that kind of thing never happened, and now here I am in the middle of one! There ought to be a book written about me […]'[183] therefore accepting that her previous disbelief in fairy tales has been proven incorrect and the books she has read could have been based on "real" events, such as the ones she is experiencing. The narrative of *Lilith* however does question the differences in the dimensions and the potential unreality of them. As Mr Raven describes the overlapping dimensions, one a home and the other a forest, he simultaneously describes an overlapping of the senses, saying 'those long heads of wild hyacinth are inside the piano, among the strings of it, and give that peculiar sweetness to her playing!' Mr Vane insists that "two objects […] cannot exist in the same place at the same time"[184] and yet only a little later 'smells' Grieg's Wedding March in a rose. MacDonald demonstrates that much of Vane's difficulty comes from his inability to accept that which is not rationally explainable by his own set standards and definitions. This is a lesson which becomes central to the plot of *Lilith* and the reader sees the gradually increased acceptance of fantastical events, particularly after Mr Vane loses confidence in the reality of his original world. This is something MacDonald particularly draws the reader's attention to in chapter seven where, having found himself again in the library of his home, Vane wonders 'Had I come to myself out of a vision? – or lost myself by going back to one? Which was the real – what I now saw, or what I had just ceased to see? Could both be real, interpenetrating yet unmingling?' This shares the same implications as dreaming in the book as reality loses its original definition. By breaking down perceptions of reality in this way MacDonald attempts

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[183] p.39
[184] *Lilith*, p.510, 511, 520

to reinforce the concept that ideas beyond our current perception are not necessarily unreal. In Lilith these ideas are clearly centred around religious beliefs on resurrection and afterlife.

Knowledge and Fancy

William Raeper points out that for a time MacDonald 'went to a 'nobleman's house', thought to be Thurso Castle, to tutor and also catalogue the library' and argues that 'The library introduced MacDonald to all that was to mark him and his writing for the rest of his life: romance, the sixteenth-century divines, romantic poetry and German literature.'[185] It is unsurprising, then, that the library would come to hold importance to MacDonald, and Raeper goes on to say that 'the image of the library is one that haunts MacDonald's fiction constantly, appearing in *David Elginbrod, Wilfred Cumbermede, Phantastes, There and Back*, and especially in *Lilith*. In *Lilith* the library is a mysterious, magical place, the beginning of adventure – and MacDonald, opening up his mind to new thoughts and ideas in the library at Thurso must have similarly felt at the beginning of a spiritual adventure.' It is particularly interesting to note how MacDonald uses the library to portray knowledge, and his views on the type of knowledge which is most important.

At the beginning of *Lilith* the narrator explains that a notable number of his ancestors had been 'given to study'[186] and that 'I had myself so far inherited the tendency as to devote a good deal of my time, though, I confess, after a somewhat desultory fashion, to the physical sciences. It was chiefly the wonder they woke that drew me. I was constantly seeing, and on the outlook to see, strange analogies, not only between the facts of different sciences of the same order, or between physical and metaphysical facts, but between physical hypothesis and suggestions glimmering out of the metaphysical dreams into which I was in the habit of

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[185] Raeper, p.49, 50
[186] *Lilith*, p.500, 503

falling.' The rational is here being appreciated for its closeness to the fantastical, its ability to create 'wonder.' Vane also originally attributes fantastical occurrences to scientific explanations. For example, after seeing 'a tall figure' which then disappears, Vane 'concluded that my optic nerves had been momentarily affected from within.' Having passed through the mirror he describes 'imagining myself involved in a visual illusion, and that touch would correct sight.' However, as has been seen, Vane's doubts are soon corrected. His experiences are shown not to be illusion and the library becomes important not for rationalising facts but because it is often the place which mediates between the different dimensions in the book, just as it creates a bridge between 'physical hypothesis' and 'suggestions glimmering out of the metaphysical dreams.'

The library in *Phantastes* has many similarities. This library exists in the Fairy Palace, and while there Anodos visits it 'day after day.'[187] He describes a 'peculiarity' of the books he reads in the Fairy Palace library, explaining that:

> if, for instance, it was a book of metaphysics I opened, I had scarcely read
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> two pages before I seemed to myself to be pondering over discovered truth,
>
> and constructing the intellectual machine whereby to communicate the
>
> discovery to my fellow men. […] Or if the book was one of travels, I found
>
> myself the traveller. New lands, fresh experiences, novel customs, rose
>
> around me. I walked, I discovered, I fought, I suffered, I rejoiced in my
>
> success. Was it a history? I was the chief actor therein. I suffered my own
>
> blame; I was glad in my own praise. With a fiction it was the same. Mine
>
> was the whole story. For I took the place of the character who was most like
>
> myself, and his story was mine; until, grown weary with the life of years

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[187] *Phantastes*, p.137, 137-138

condensed in an hour, or arrived at my deathbed, or the end of the volume, I

would awake, with a sudden bewilderment, to the consciousness of my

present life, recognising the walls and roof around me, and finding I joyed

or sorrowed only in a book.

The importance, and the magic, of these books, whether fiction or non-fiction, is in the readers immersion. The fact that Anodos feels he truly experiences what he has read is emphasised in each description and raises the question of how different this type of experience is to real experience. This appears to be an expression of MacDonald's belief in the ability of books, of any genre, to teach important moral messages. It is interesting that, in both *Lilith* and *Phantastes*, there are books which are not only read but somehow felt. In *Lilith,* 'the poem seemed in a language I had never before heard, which yet I understood perfectly, although I could not write the words, or give their meaning save in poor approximation'[188] and in *Phantastes* 'it glowed and flashed the thoughts upon the soul, with such a power that the medium disappeared from the consciousness, and it was occupied only with the things themselves. My representation of it must resemble a translation from a rich and powerful language […] into the meagre and half-articulate speech of a savage tribe.'[189] This emphasises the emotion created for an individual reader and is closely related to MacDonald's statement in 'The Fantastic Imagination' that everyone 'who feels the story, will read its meaning after his own nature and development: one man will read one meaning in it, another will read another.'[190] There is a suggestion in the experience of another character of *Phantastes*, the Knight, that this also applies to oral story telling. After one of his quests the Knight rescues a child who he says 'told me all her story; but it seemed to me, all the time, as if I were hearing a child talk in its sleep. I could not arrange her story in my mind

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[188] *Lilith*, p.586
[189] *Phantastes*, p.148
[190] 'The Fantastic Imagination' in *Phantastes*, p.277

at all, although it seemed to leave hers in some certain order of its own.'[191] It is possible that through this MacDonald intended to include not just storytelling as it appears in this scene but also theatre and performance generally. The repeated message MacDonald provides is that all knowledge is most worthwhile in its ability to inspire moral and spiritual growth. The content, he suggests, is not as important as the feelings created by that content, and how it can encourage a person's betterment.

Childhood and the Instruction of Innocence

A large amount of George MacDonald's work was of course written for and about children but his thoughts on childhood extend beyond the children's books and have many similarities with Dickens.' In 'The Fantastic Imagination' MacDonald writes 'he who will be a man, and will not be a child, must – he cannot help himself – become a little man, that is, a dwarf. He will, however, need no consolation, for he is sure to think himself a very large creature indeed.'[192] In his children's books particularly, the morality of the child is often shown to exceed that of the adults. In *The Princess and the Goblin* for example, the child princess insists that a promise must be kept while her nurse discourages her from keeping the promise to kiss Curdie, as he is 'only a miner-boy.'[193] Ideas of class and propriety distort the adult's judgement, but the child's is based purely on her knowledge of right and wrong. This idea is also present in *Lilith*, published only two years after 'The Fantastic Imagination,' where MacDonald demonstrates his belief in the importance and innocence of childhood through 'the Little Ones.' This group of children, 'some just able to run alone, and some about twelve or thirteen'[194] are central to the plot of *Lilith*, returning multiple times in Vane's journey and

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[191] p.257
[192] 'The Fantastic Imagination', p.281
[193] p.17
[194] p.531

becoming key to the goal of freeing the city of Bulika from Lilith. MacDonald emphasises the rural setting when writing of the Little Ones. This provides a contrast to the city of Bulika, which is described as 'a dead city' where Vane can see 'no water, no flowers, no signs of animals.'[195] This city is a fairy tale city, rather than a modern one, with its courtyard and crumbling towers but it is certainly relevant that the one city setting is the place of evil. When Vane enquires about the origin of the Little Ones, on the other hand, he is told that 'we all came from the wood. Some think we dropped out of the trees.' Although this is not the case, the image of the Little Ones as connected with nature remains. Other connections with nature are evident as they also use bird calls to communicate at times and are aided by animals such as 'diminutive horses', 'small elephants' and 'little bears.'[196] They also adapt from living in bushes to making nests in trees. These connections seem closely linked to the nostalgia for the loss of the countryside, which is associated with the fairy. These 'Little Ones', or 'Lovers' as they are also called, never grow up unless they are 'bad', in which case they become 'Bad Giants' (negative and exaggerated portrayals of adulthood) and are symbolic of purity and innocence. Although the innocence of childhood seems very clearly divided here from the adult world, MacDonald does maintain, as Dickens does, that the adult can learn from the innocence of the child. While the 'Bad Giants' forget their childhood entirely, Vane communicates with Little Ones, becoming known as a 'Good Giant' to them. John Pennington suggests that 'in the hands of MacDonald, the fairy tale has profound moral and social clout, not because an adult could identify with apparent themes, nor because a child could find concrete moral guidance, but because the adult and child – the *childlike* in all – could immerse himself or herself in a once-upon-a-time land where all are equal.'[197] This equality is an interesting feature and could certainly, as Pennington suggests, add to the

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[195] p.569, 535, 598

[197] John Pennington, 'The "Childish Imagination" of John Ruskin and George MacDonald: Introductory Speculations', *North Wind*, 16 (1997), 55-65 (pp. 63)

appeal of MacDonald's writing for various ages. In *Lilith*, the Lovers ride with Vane to Bulika as an army would, their bravery is constantly referred to but, unlike the invading army the reader might expect in this situation, none have intentions of violence or the gaining of power. This unusual combination of childhood and adulthood displays the equality of the two in ability but continues to suggest a greater natural link between the child and morality. Pennington's theory applies, therefore, not only to the childlike in the reader, but to the childlike quality of innocence and morality that makes the characters of all ages equal in the books.

The strongest example of the childlike as a positive force is in the character Lona, of *Lilith*, who dedicates her life to looking after the Little Ones and represents absolute selflessness and innocence despite being 'bigger' than them. She is described as 'almost a woman, but not one beauty of childhood had she outgrown'[198] and as 'one who, grow to what perfection she might, could only become more the child.' This is similar to MacDonald's description of the 'little maiden' in *Phantastes*, who, in Anodos' view, dances 'happy as a child, though she seemed more to me a woman'[199] and 'produced on me more the impression of a child, though my understanding told me differently.' The maiden is another childlike symbol of innocence and benevolence, becoming, as Lona does, a saviour of the protagonist. Lona is also the subject of the prophecy which states a child will be the death of Lilith. The inspiration for this section of the plot is clearly biblical in origin, with Lilith having all children in her city murdered just as in the Bible King Herod has the male children of his city murdered, having heard it prophesised that a child would take his throne. The child as saviour is a theme that originates in MacDonald's Christian beliefs but it is continuously tied in with the theme of childhood innocence. It is Lona's innocent love of all things that ultimately

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[198] *Lilith*, p.604, 600
[199] p.117

destroys her mother, Lilith. Interestingly, MacDonald continues to link childhood with imagination in 'The Fantastic Imagination.' MacDonald writes that where an author's 'object is to move by suggestion, to cause to imagine, then let him assail the soul of his reader as the wind assails an aeolian harp. If there be music in my reader, I would gladly wake it'[200]. This music appears in *Phantastes*, in a hall of the Fairy Palace where Anodos explains 'enchanting verses rose around me as of their own accord, chanting themselves to their own melodies, and requiring no addition of music to satisfy the inward sense.'[201] The way in which Anodos hears the music here is very similar to MacDonald's description of wind assailing the Aeolian harp as it passes through him, satisfying the 'inward sense.' It is fitting that this should happen in the hall of the Fairy Palace, which has been recently presented to the reader as a place of goodness and light. In the same hall Anodos also dreams and sings, enforcing the associated with imagination. For MacDonald, the refusal to be child as well as a man is equal to refusing to have the imagination woken. The outcome, MacDonald suggests, is a negative effect on the person, who must become a 'small man.' This corresponds in many ways to Dickens' beliefs, both demonstrating an intrinsic bond between childhood and imagination and suggesting that aspects of that childhood imagination are necessary for a happy and successful adult life. When he speaks of the music that can be woken by stories of imagination MacDonald also implies something very similar to Dickens' description of 'the light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast.'[202] In both cases imagination is a quality possessed by all humans but which emerges in various degrees and can be emphasised by a person's experience of works of imagination.

Chad Shrock examines childhood in MacDonald through the theme of education in his books, suggesting that 'MacDonald visualized education and progress in the form of a

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[200] 'The Fantastic Imagination', p.281
[201] p.175
[202] 'Preliminary Word'

cycle with three stages: childhood, learning and childhood.'[203] Schrock applies this to

Phantastes, arguing that, in fairy-land, adults become like children because 'one who travels

there […] takes everything as it comes; like a child, who being in a chronic condition of

wonder, is surprised at nothing.'[204] The ultimate purpose of this, according to Shrock, is the

'returning to something that resembles the original uneducated simplicity in preparation for

further growth.' This idea also relates very strongly to *Lilith* and Vane's 'education' from the

Little Ones, which he must receive to further his quest as he manages to ascend, with the

Little Ones, a path which is clearly symbolic of a path to Heaven. This also further

demonstrates the theme of childhood as the ultimate state of innocence, becoming the ideal

state the adult can reach. Not all children in MacDonald's work, however, attain this

perfection. One example of this can be found in *The Giant's Heart*, in which some of the

captured children, though they only need to stop eating to escape, are so greedy that 'the

giantess, who fed them, comforted herself with thinking that they were not real boys and

girls, but only little pigs pretending to be boys and girls.'[205] This is also an example which

resonates with Carroll's baby-to-pig metamorphosis in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*,

published the year after MacDonald's short story. Schrock's argument is particularly

interesting when considered alongside MacDonald's links between childhood and the

fantastical. In *The Princess and the Goblin*, the greatest defence against the goblins is verse

because, MacDonald explains, 'they could not make any themselves, and that was why they

disliked it so much […] those who were never afraid were those who made verses for

themselves; for although there were certain old rhymes which were very effectual, yet it was

well known that a new rhyme, if of the right sort, was even more distasteful to them, and

therefore more effectual in putting them to flight.'[206] Curdie, who is around twelve years old,

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[203] Chad Shrock, 'From Child to Childlike: The Cycle of Education' *North Wind,* 25 (2006), p.58-76 (pp.59).
[204] *Phantastes*, p.67
[205] MacDonald, George, *The George MacDonald Treasury*, p.309
[206] *The George MacDonald Treasury,* p.19

is particularly talented at creating new verse and this drives many of his heroic actions throughout the story. The child has the greatest power of imagination and because of this stands as the force of good against the cruel goblins, who entirely lack this imaginative ability. This creates a situation, though very different in execution, similar to that in *Hard Times* where those without the ability to access 'fancy' become cruel and cold. Sissy, armed with imagination and fantastical tales, is emotionally very strong and supports, even rescues, the damaged Louisa throughout the book.

Chapter Four: Charles Dickens

While always as equally concerned with morality in his novels as MacDonald, Charles

Dickens deals far more in current social and political issues. In the novels his settings are not

fantastical in themselves: they are recognisable, often industrial city settings. It is interesting

that nether Carroll or MacDonald use the modern city in their work. Carroll's fantastical

worlds vary in setting from forests to gardens and, sometimes, isolated houses. MacDonald's

are similar, though they sometimes present more populated settings, such as a small village,

they are still rural. For these two authors the industrial city is a force of rationality that does

not fit in the fantastical world. In Dickens' work however, he attempts to imbue the rational

world with the fantastical. Along with his essentially rational setting, Dickens' character

characters, whilst at times exaggerated to a point that they almost border the fantastical, are

never other than human. This also places him closer to representing reality than either Carroll

or MacDonald. However, the fantastical remains a strong influence on Dickens' work. As

Taylor Stoehr argues, 'Dickens does not create a representationalist world. On the contrary,

his world is romantic, fantastic, even mad; […] Dickens' vision combines literal report with

magic and miracle, as in dreams.'[207]

It could be argued that the reality of Dickens' work is further distorted by his use of

caricature. Although this is very different from the fantastical elements previously discussed,

being a comic exaggeration of character and setting, rather than an association of real and

fantastical worlds, it is a technique which similarly lifts the world away from its expected

rationality. Stoehr writes about 'the general hunger of artists, photographers, and the public

alike for representations of real things, bits of truth which might be hung on the walls as a

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[207]Taylor Stoehr, *Dickens: The Dreamer's Stance* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1965), p.260

mirror of their own world, only more so.'[208] This provides a good explanation for Dickens'

use of both caricature and the fantastical in general. The resulting world he presents is a

representation of a real thing, only 'more so.' One example of this can be found in the

brothers Cheeryble of *Nicholas Nickleby*, identical twins who, in appearance, are notably

similar to Carroll's twins, Tweedledum and Tweedledee. As identical twins, who also dress

and behave in the same manner, they instantly stand out as an unusual feature of the real

world. Although the Cheeryble brothers are not themselves fantastical, they are intended to

be characters functioning in the rational world, they possess aspects which are exaggerated to

a degree that separates them from the fully rational. Along with their distinct appearance they

have personalities of exaggerated benevolence and a name that very obviously reflects that

personality.

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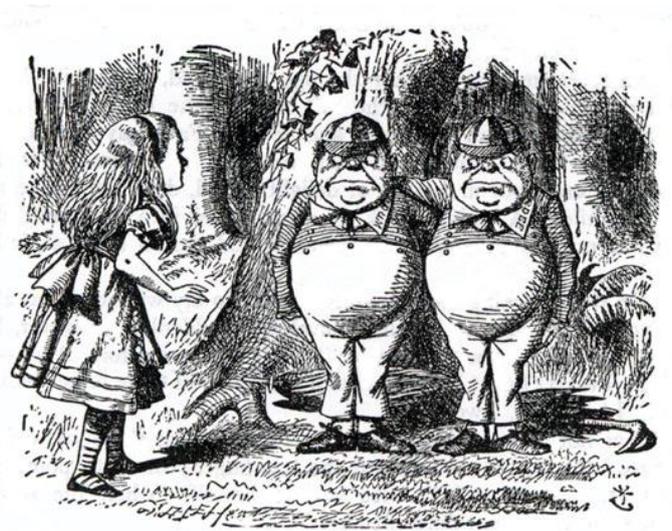
[208] Stoehr, p.258

[209] John Tenniel, 'Tweedledum and Tweedledee', 1865.
<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/tenniel/lookingglass/4.1.html>

[210] Hablot K. Browne, 'Mr. Linkinwater Intimates His Approval of Nicholas', 1838.
<http://www.victorianweb.org/art/illustration/phiz/nickleby/23.html>

In 'Dickens and the Evolution of Caricature,'[211] Earle R. Davis argues that Dickens'

use of caricature stems from his love of the theatre. Davis focuses mainly on the staccato

manner of speech and its Dickens' first use in *The Pickwick Papers*, explaining that 'one of

Dickens's favourite comedies was Thomas Morton's *A Cure for the Heartache*, first

presented in 1797, a play which contains a character called Rapid' who 'does everything in a

rapid-fire manner'[212] including speaking. Sleary's exaggerated speech impediment in *Hard

Times* is likely from a similar source. Among the features of comedy which influence

Dickens, Davis also briefly mentions tags of speech, giving as an example a character in *The

Poor Gentleman* who 'is continually saying "Do you take, good sir? Do you take?" There is a

notable tag of speech in *David Copperfield* where Mrs. Gummidge repeatedly says "I am a

lone lorn creetur."'[213] Lewis Carroll notes that this particular feature amuses him in the

book[214] and it is interesting he should highlight this, considering his own great interest in

entertainment. However, aside from his use of it in representations of speech, Dickens' use of

caricature can also be more broadly related to the theatre. The 'big heads' of the pantomime

seem a perfect physical example of the caricature style, for example. Like Dickens' settings,

they take the normal, everyday image (in this case, of the human face) and exaggerate that

image into something that borders the fantastical. The influence of popular entertainment

upon Dickens is not limited to the features of specific characters but permeates his entire

style of writing.

The reason behind Dickens' use of the fantastical can be found in his 'Preliminary

Word', discussed previously. It is here he first describes the 'light of fancy', a symbol which

represents the illuminating quality of the fantastical, a means to literally view the world in a

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[211] Davis, Earle R, 'Dickens and the Evolution of Caricature', *PMLA*, 55.1 (1940), p.231-240

[212] p.235
[213] p.40
[214] 'To his sister Elizabeth' (May 24, 1849), p.10

different light. It explains ideas shared by many writers of fantasy, fairy tale, and other works of the imagination. The aims Dickens points to in the 'Preliminary Word' are mainly focused on the teaching of a moral message; one that will dispose people to a mutually 'kinder understanding.' This is an idea he also argues for in his essay 'Frauds on the Fairies', in which he writes of the fairy tale that 'it would be hard to estimate the amount of gentleness and mercy that has made its way among us through these slight cannels. Forbearance, courtesy, consideration for poor and aged, kind treatment of animals, love of nature, abhorrence of tyranny and brute force – many such good things have been first nourished in the child's heart by this powerful aid.'[215] This is perhaps why many of the elements of the imaginative Dickens uses are derived from traditional fairy tales.

In Defence of Childhood

Dickens' comments in 'Frauds on the Fairies' clearly display confidence in the ability of the fairy tale to teach moral messages, particularly to children. And yet the article itself targeted George Cruickshank's attempt to write a fairy tale promoting Total Abstinence. This has of course led many critics to see the article as hypocritical. Elaine Ostry notes that he 'does not acknowledge how he himself has used the fairy tale for moral purposes,'[216] and Jack Zipes points out that 'Dickens did use the fairy tale to make political and social statements.'[217] However, both acknowledge the difference between Dickens' use of the fairy tale and Cruickshank's. Dickens writes that Cruickshank's opinions 'whether good or bad in themselves, they are, in that relation, like the famous definition of a weed; a thing growing up

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[215] Dickens, *Frauds on the Fairies,* n.p
[216] Ostry, p.33
[217] Jack Zipes, *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1999) p.122-123

in the wrong place.' The most important point for present purposes comes in Dickens' use of

the word 'opinions' to describe the message Cruickshank is trying to promote. While he

believes in the benefit of promoting general morality, such as 'forbearance, courtesy,

consideration […],' he resents the use of the fairy tale to promote personal beliefs and

opinions, and Temperance was just such a belief. Phillip Allingham goes as far as to suggest

that Dickens 'came to regard Cruickshank's temperance propaganda as fanaticism.'[218] If

Dickens did view Cruikshank's beliefs on Temperance as fanatical, it is unsurprising that he

would so strongly resent the use of the fairy tale to promote it, particularly when he believed

so strongly in the fairy tale's power of influence.

Dickens' own use of the traditional fairy tale varies, but is most often used to enhance

a particular impression of a setting or character. In some cases the association between

characters and their fairy tale counterparts are very direct, for example Clara of *Great*

Expectations, who is 'a most charming girl, and might have passed for a captive fairy, whom

that truculent Ogre, Old Barley, had pressed into his service.'[219] There are also subtler

associations, for example, in *Dombey and Son*, Carker undergoes a metaphorical

transformation into a wolf as he taunts Mr Dombey with news of his daughter. As he finishes

his speech, Dickens writes 'Wolf's face that it was then, with even the hot tongue revealing

itself through the stretched mouth, as the eyes encountered Mr Dombey's!'[220] The scene

mirrors that of 'Little Red Riding Hood' as Dombey becomes suspicious of Carker's true

character. Perrault's version of this fairy tale had long been available, having been published

in 1697, but contemporary readers probably would have been even more familiar with the

popular Brothers Grimm version, 'Little Red Cap,' published in 1812. Dickens' use of a

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[218] Phillip V. Allingham. "A Transcription of Charles Dickens's 'Frauds on Fairies.'" *The Victorian Web,* (2006) n.p <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/dickens/pva/pva239.html>

[219] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*, ed. by Edgar Rosenberg (New York: Norton & Company, 1999), p.281

[220] Charles Dickens, *Dombey and Son* ed. by Alan Horsman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) p.386

well-known fairy tale character has two effects. Carker is usually portrayed as a greedy and manipulative modern business man, but all of his complex manipulations are condensed into a very simple character when he becomes the fairy-tale wolf. It also gives a clearer idea of the relationship between Dombey and Carker. Dombey, who is sometimes portrayed as the antagonist, having failed to develop a loving relationship with his children or wife, takes the position of Little Red Riding Hood, with his naivety and vulnerability suddenly becoming apparent. Here Dickens literally reveals 'the familiar world in a new light,' and in doing so provides a simple but very clear description of the relationship between two of his most important characters. A complex plot becomes a simple moral message. To be like Carker is to be like the fairy-tale wolf, a role which the majority of people have been taught from childhood is evil. To be like Dombey is not to be evil but to be blind to evil, which ultimately leads to destruction. Although in both *Dombey and Son* and Grimm's version of 'Little Red Cap' the destruction is reversed by another character who is apparently without moral flaws. Harry Stone points out the scene in *David Copperfield* in which David attempts to sell his jacket after running away from the warehouse where he has been made to work, arguing that this particular scene 'seems to be merely odd and farcical until seen in its fairy-tale perspective.'[221] The frightening experience presents David with an old man whose fairy tale representation is an ogre. The setting David enters for this scene emphasises the fairy tale association, taking him physically away from the previous setting to the 'corner of a dirty lane, ending in an inclosure full of stinging nettles.'[222] Dickens also points out 'trays full of so many old rusty keys of so many sizes that they seemed various enough to open all the locked doors in the world.' Stone suggests that the rusty keys symbolise David's 'baffled attempts to open the doors of escape' but keys are also a motif frequently used in fairy tale

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[221] Harry Stone, 'Fairy Tales and Ogres: Dickens' Imagination and "David Copperfield"', *Criticism*, 5.4 (1964), p.324-330, (pp. 327, 328, 330)
[222] Charles Dickens, *David Coperfield*, ed. by Jerome H. Buckley (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), p.161

and Dickens would have recognised this. Stone goes on to look at 'the monster's strange ritual cry: "Oh, my eyes and limbs, what do you want? Oh my lungs and liver, what do you want? Oh, goroo, goroo!"' The frequency with which the old man repeats this, as Stone points out, is almost farcical and yet from David's point of view, captured by a terrifying ogre, it is in no way humorous. The ogre association is greatly emphasised, Stone rightly points out that "Oh, goroo!" 'is nothing more or less than a variation of the word "ogre" itself' and the strange references to body parts are clearly intended to bring to mind stories of ogres eating humans, as they do in the 'Hop-O'-My-Thumb' story MacDonald refers to. Stone concludes that this scene shows 'that Dickens' imagination allows us – largely by virtue of its protean fairy-tale blendings, transformations, and recurrences – to see, now grotesque humour, now distanced adult recollection, now terrified childhood immediacy, now mythic enlargement and generalization.'[223] This is particularly well demonstrated by the simultaneity of the reader recognising the farcical nature of the old man's behaviour and their discomfort created through empathy with David, who believes himself truly in danger from this man who is, to the child, a monster. Though this is a very specific example, the conclusions are applicable to Dickens' use of the fairy tale, and even other elements of the fantastical, more broadly. The enhanced understanding of Dombey and Carker through their fairy tale associations, for example, is created in the same way, presenting dual layers of meaning that serve to enhance understanding. This enhanced understanding is a key motive behind Dickens' use of the fantastical.

Although Dickens' novels are all set in the everyday world of his readers, and most often the industrial cities, they still contain fantastical, sometimes specifically fairy tale, references. Perhaps the most striking example of this appears in *Hard Times*, where the

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[223] Stone, p.329-330.

factories become 'the Fairy Palaces' which 'burst in illumination.'[224] Dickens was clearly fascinated by modern invention and was supportive of it. His fictional representation of the inventor Daniel Doyce in *Little Dorrit* reveals a great amount of respect for this profession, and he uses the novel to criticise the lack of support for great inventors in Britain. This description of the fairy palace factories suggests the potential for them to be filled with amazing things, possibly even magical things. However, the spell is soon broken when the light of day reveals 'monstrous serpents of smoke trailing themselves over Coketown.' Readers would have recognised the serpent as a biblical symbol of temptation and evil, and they certainly give a more sinister impression to the scene. However the passage is also important because it integrates the Fairy Palaces back into the normal, industrial image of Coketown. The smoke serpents do not destroy the image of the factory as a fairy palace, but they linger around it, suggesting a darker side to the place, and implying that something wrong or evil is obstructing the potential for good. But it is relevant, in this and other examples, that Dickens leaves the suggestion that there *is* potential for good here. As has been seen, the fairy tale for Dickens is very much tied in with childhood nostalgia, a place where 'we may walk with children, sharing their delights,'[225] and in his use of the fairy tale in his settings and characters he appeals to the nostalgic remembrance of his readers while continuing to demonstrate his intention 'to show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out.'[226]

However, the key message in 'Frauds on the Fairies' is of course the necessity of 'fancy', and *Hard Times*, published just a year after the essay, is Dickens' greatest warning against removing the fantastical in favour of fact, especially in children. The novel begins "Now, what I want is, Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are

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[224] *Hard Times*, p.56
[225] 'Frauds on the Fairies'
[226] 'Household Words'

wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to Facts sir!"[227] This particularly emphasises not only the teaching of fact but the attempt to remove anything that is not purely fact. Dickens soon begins to associate this point of view with the destruction of childhood, titling the second chapter 'Murdering the Innocents' and writing in it that the teacher Thomas Gradgrind 'seemed a kind of cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts, and prepared to blow them clean out of the regions of childhood at one discharge.' Children's education is, of course, a central theme in *Hard Times*. It is the Gradgrindian school, which attempts to discourage imagination, with Mr Gradgrind not only the damaging cannon but also the 'galvanising apparatus […] charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the tender young imaginations that were to be stormed away.'[228] In his representation of this school system Dickens directly implies that a lack of imagination leads equally to a lack of morality and kindness. Bitzer states his belief that 'the whole social system is a question of self-interest […] I was bought up on that catechism when I was very young.' Bitzer will not even help Gradgrind when he is in need because, he explains, "my schooling was paid for; it was a bargain; and when I came away, the bargain ended." Bitzer does not understand why there should be any emotional connection to his past experiences. Dickens goes on to explain that Bitzer's view:

> was a fundamental principle of the Gradgrind philosophy, that everything
> was to be paid for. Nobody was ever on any account to give anybody
> anything, or render anybody help without purchase. Gratitude was to be
> abolished, and the virtues springing from it were not to be. Every inch of the

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[227] *Hard Times*, p.5, 6, 7
[228] p.6, 7, 214

existence of mankind, from birth to death, was to be a bargain across a

counter. And if we didn't get to Heaven that way, it was not a politico-

economical place, and we had no business there.[229]

 Like the view of the world though Anodos' shadow, this view is one based entirely on

rationality, Bitzer lacks the ability to apply any kind of imagination to the situation and the

result is a philosophy which clearly cannot work. The absolute rational actually becomes an

irrational way of viewing, and function in, the world. The lack of practicality this view

provides is more obvious in Tom Gradgrind, Louisa's brother, who steals from a bank and

allows another man to take the blame. Tom's actions, like Bitzer's are devoid of emotion. It

is not rational to admit he has committed the crime himself when it has been blamed already

on another person, so he does not, regardless of the immorality of the action and the

consequences to others. This is a clear message to adults that a child's education cannot be

based upon fact alone, just as their lives outside education, and even adults lives, cannot.

In the presentation of education in the book there is also a lesson in treating the child

as an individual. This is done through the creation of sympathy towards Sissy Jupe, who is

terrified by her first experience in Gradgrind's school, where the adults insist everything she

knows is wrong, including her own name. Gradgrind tells her "Sissy is not a name, […] don't

call yourself Sissy. Call yourself Cecilia." Her true name having already been removed, Sissy

is then referred to as 'girl number twenty' as the system entirely disregards her individuality.

There are similarities here with Alice, who is constantly corrected by the Wonderland

creatures as she does not understand their perception of rationality. As with Sissy, her

definition of words often proves incorrect, though she knows what they mean and even her

definition of self is questioned and lost. When asked what she is, Alice can only answer

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[229] p.214-215, 6, 7

'rather doubtfully' that she is 'a little girl.'[230] This further promotes Ayres' theory of the animals of Wonderland representing the adult world. In the purely rational system of education, Sissy loses all faith in her intelligence, despite the fact that her thought processes display deeper thought than the rational explanation would provide. For example, she describes one question she is asked: "this schoolroom is a Nation. And in this Nation, there are fifty millions of money. Isn't this a prosperous nation, and a'n't you in a thriving state?"[231] Sissy's response to this is that "I couldn't know whether it was a prosperous nation or not, and whether I was in a thriving state or not, unless I knew who had got the money, and whether any of it was mine.' Sissy is told this is incorrect, as "it wasn't in the figures at all", however this is a response which looks beyond the rational which, as both MacDonald and Carroll show, does not necessarily give an honest depiction of the situation. The response also considers the individual and the fact that, regardless of wealth, the distribution of wealth affects the prosperity of the nation. Sissy is also asked 'this schoolroom is an immense town, and in it there are a million of inhabitants, and only five-and-twenty are starved to death in the streets, in the course of a year. What is your remark on that proportion?' Her remark is 'that I thought it must be just as hard upon those who were starved, whether the others were a million, or a million million.' The answer is also wrong in the eyes of the factual education system, but again it shows Sissy's awareness of the individual, following Dickens' own beliefs against utilitarianism which are displayed in many of his novels. Though driven by emotion and imaginative thought rather than mathematical facts, Sissy's response to the world is far more useful, and arguably more rational, than those she is expected to give.

However, Sissy is new to the school of Fact, and comes from a family who work in the circus, a place which comes to symbolise the very opposite of Gradgrind's school.

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[230] p.55
[231] p.47

Dickens shows how this difference has affected the children when he describes Sissy as 'so dark-eyed and dark-haired, that she seemed to receive a deeper and more lustrous colour from the sun when it shone upon her' while Bitzer, an earlier student, is 'so light-eyed and light-haired that the self-same rays appeared to draw out of him what little colour he ever possessed. His cold eyes would hardly have been eyes, but for the short ends of lashes which, by bringing them into immediate contrast with something paler than themselves, expressed their form […] his skin was so unwholesomely deficient in the natural tinge, that he looked as though, if he were cut, he would bleed white.' Bitzer is the product of the school of fact, and compared to Sissy he is cold, lifeless and bland.

As the novel progresses, the reader sees the irreparable damage done to the children as they struggle to function properly in the adult world. The most prominent example of this comes in Louisa's speech to her father, who she asks:

> "How could you give me life, and take from me all the inappreciable
> things that raise it from the state of conscious death? Where are the
> graces of my soul? Where are the sentiments of my heart?" and "if you
> had known that there lingered in my breast, sensibilities, affections,
> weaknesses capable of being cherished into strength, defying all the
> calculations ever made by man, and no more known to his arithmetic
> than his Creator is […] would you have doomed me, at any time, to the
> frost and blight that have hardened and spoiled me? Would you have
> robbed me –for no one's enrichment – only for the greater desolation of
> this world – of the immaterial part of my life, the spring and summer of
> my belief, my refuge from what is sordid and bad in the real things
> around me, my school in which I should have learned to be more humble
> and more trusting with them, and to hope in my little sphere to make

them better? […] Yet, father, if I had been stone blind; if I had groped

my way by my sense of touch, and had been free […] to exercise my

fancy somewhat, in regard to them; I should have been a million times

wiser, happier, more loving, more contented, more innocent and human

in all good respects, than I am with the eyes I have."[232]

In this section Louisa explains all that is lacking and all that has been damaged by a system

which believes only in fact. The lack of access to the fantastical imagination becomes a lack

of freedom, happiness and understanding. Without fancy, Dickens suggests, hope, love and

innocence are stunted. Reflections of the 'Preliminary Word' with its sentiment that fancy is

inherent can be seen again as Louisa claims she would be more human with access to fancy,

rather than in a state of 'conscious death', a term which suggests the unnatural. It also

highlights the issue on a broader scale by suggesting that people positively affected by fancy

benefit the world.

An alternative approach to this same issue can be found in *Dombey and Son*, in

Dickens' representation of the child character Paul Dombey. Paul is described as being like

'an old man or a young goblin,'[233] who 'looked (and talked) like one of those terrible little

Beings in the Fairy tales, who, at a hundred and fifty or two hundred years of age,

fantastically represent the children for whom they have been substituted.' Malcolm Andrews

suggest that these descriptions give Paul a 'grotesque quality.'[234] He argues that 'Dickens

intends that his singularity should keep the reader at arm's length because our unqualified

devotion is to be reserved for the real child-hero of the novel, Florence.' However, Andrews

also notes that, in this novel, Dickens explores the 'inadvertent damage that adults can do to

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[232] *Hard Times*, p.163-164
[233] *Dombey and Son*, p.101, 98
[234] Malcolm Andrews, *Dickens and the Grown-Up Child* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994) p.112, 113

children, especially those adults who subscribe to certain Victorian middle-class values.'[235] It is possible that these uncanny, slightly grotesque, descriptions are actually intended to reflect that damage. Paul lacks natural love from his father and is denied the freedom to be childlike, therefore he becomes an unnatural, distorted child. Unlike the plot of *Hard Times,* which explores the effects of childhood experience on adult life, and even the ultimate effects on society more generally, the character of Paul Dombey is exclusively about the individual child, a fact which is reinforced by Paul's death before he reaches adulthood. Doubtless Dickens was inspired to explore effects on childhood so specifically by current events: in 1842 the 'Children's Employment Commission Report' had been published, revealing shocking conditions and treatment of children. Dombey and Son was written not long after, being serialised from 1846 to 1848. In 1843 Dickens had revealed another clear reaction to the report in *A Christmas Carol*, when he revealed the children 'Ignorance' and 'Want.'[236] Metaphors for two of the greatest evils revealed in the report, the children 'where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds.' These children are intentionally shocking, emerging unexpectedly from the robe of the Ghost of Christmas Present following scenes of happiness and plenty. Though different in many ways, they also share similarities with Paul Dombey. Both appear strangely aged by their negative experiences, possess elements of the uncanny and are intended to provoke sympathy towards children's rights. Evidence that the subject was still an important issue during the time Dickens' was writing *Dombey and Son* can be found in the passing of the 1847 Factory Act, which reduced the working hours for women and children to ten per day. In showing the damage done to Paul, Dickens widens the debate on childhood to include the middle class. In

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[235] Andrews, p.115

[236] *A Christmas Carol and Other Christmas Writings*, p.94, 92

Novels of the Eighteen Forties, Kathleen Tillotson describes Dombey and Son as 'a plea for children, generally for their right to be treated as individuals, instead of appendages and hindrances to parental ambition, and particularly against the wrongs done to them in the name of education.'[237] It is the effect of this that Dickens represents in his uncanny descriptions of Paul, and he uses the fairy tale to do it. The use of the fairy tale in particular, especially in using the changeling child, relates Paul to a recognisable, pre-defined character, and one which embodies exactly the thing Dickens wants the reader to recognise in Paul, a child who has been overtaken by something 'other' and distorted by it.

Dream

Dickens uses the dream in many different ways. As Jonathan Glance points out, literary dreams appear in novels throughout his entire career, as well as creating 'the essential structure for shorter prose fiction, like *A Christmas Carol* and *The Chimes.*'[238] Glance also notes that Dickens depicts dreams in his nonfiction works and that he 'published numerous articles on dreams in his magazines *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, and speaks of them in his letters.' Catherine Bernard also considers the importance of dreams to Dickens, pointing out that 'we do know that his Gad's Hill library contained many of the major studies on dreams, including Abercrombie's *Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers and the Investigation of Truth* (1838), Robert MacNish's *The Philosophy of Sleep* (1838) and Dugald Stewart's *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (1814). It is true, as Leonard

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[237] Kathleen Tillotson, *Novels of the Eighteen-Forties* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954) p.194
[238] Glance, Jonathan, 'Revelation, Nonsense or Dyspepsia: Victorian Dream Theories', Mercer University. NVSA Conference. 29 April, 2001
<http://faculty.mercer.edu/glance_jc/files/academic_work/victorian_dream_theories.htm>

Manheim has pointed out, that some of these books were presentation copes that Dickens may not have read. But since so many of these books recapitulated scientific and popular theories of the day , we can assume that Dickens' reading of a limited number of them would have familiarized him with the major currents of Victorian dream theory.'[239] An interest in modern theories on dreaming would explain Scrooge's reasoning, in *A Christmas Carol*, that the ghost of Jacob Marley may be 'an undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese, a fragment of underdone potato.'[240] However, Dickens draws the story back to the imaginative or supernatural dream, as Scrooge is forced to believe in the ghosts, and to learn his lesson from them. Despite his interest in the rational theories, Dickens seems to be defending their imaginative use, just as he did with the Fairy Tale. One quote from the Abercrombie book Dickens owned - "Our duty is to keep steadily in view, that the objects of true science are facts alone, and the relation of these facts to each other … it is entirely out of the reach of our faculties to advance a single stop beyond the facts which are before us"[241] could almost have come straight from the Gradgrindian school of fact, where "we want nothing but Facts, sir; nothing but Facts!"[242] Dickens' main message in this novel is that there is always more than just fact. In the second chapter for example, Sissy Jupe, whose father rides horses in the circus, is asked to give a definition of a horse but cannot. Another child, a student of the Gradgrind school of Fact, gives the definition as "Quadruped. Graminivorous. Forty teeth, namely twenty-four grinders, four eye-teeth, and twelve incisive. Sheds coat in the spring; in marshy countries, sheds hoofs, too. Hoofs hard, but requiring to be shod with iron. Age known by marks in mouth." Taylor Stoehr, looking at this section, explains that while 'Sissy is unable to regurgitate the little pellets of information that constitute Bitzer's experience of "horse"' she 'clearly knows what a horse is, and knows it in a way that Bitzer

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[239] Bernard, p.202
[240] *A Christmas Carol*, p.45
[241] Bernard, p.200
[242] *Hard Times*, p.5, 7

cannot even comprehend, not as "factual" data abstracted from real life, but as past and present experience of the real thing, met at first hand in daily life.'[243] While Stoehr is correct in saying that Sissy knows what a horse is in a way Bitzer, or fact alone, cannot comprehend, there is a greater reason for this than the explanation that Sissy sees horses in her everyday life. Sissy understands the horse differently because of her ability to imagine and her emotional freedom. For Sissy the horses are part of the fantastical circus acts, and a living creature with which to feel empathy. Imagination and emotion are the two things which are destroyed by Fact in the book. They are not factually explainable, but Dickens shows that they exist nevertheless, and that there is far more happiness to be found in them than there is in Fact.

This appears to be part of the reason Dickens uses dream images in his writing. In the same way he often used fairy tale elements, he hoped to permeate his rational writing with imaginative elements as a way of expressing his belief that the imaginative exists in everyday life, and that recognising this brings happiness. Just as he stated the intention of Household Words to 'teach the hardest workers at this whirling wheel of toil, that their lot is not necessarily a moody, brutal fact, excluded from the sympathies and graces of imagination.' One use of the dream can be found in *David Copperfield* as David's aunt, Miss Betsy, arrives demanding the new female baby should be named Betsy Trotwood Copperfield. On finding the baby is a boy she 'vanished like a discontented fairy; or like one of those supernatural beings'[244] and Dickens writes that to him 'Betsy Trotwood Copperfield was forever in the land of dreams and shadows, the tremendous region whence I had so lately travelled.' The elements of Fairy tale and dream are merged, both literally in this scene and in their purpose. This section of the novel is also relevant as it seems to show that, like Carroll, Dickens

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[243] Stoehr, p.260
[244] *David Copperfield*, p.18

considered dreaming to be very much the same thing as imagining. Betsy Trotwood Copperfield was the child Miss Betsy imagined would be born. But Dickens imagined the boy David Copperfield as the novel's hero, and so he is the character allowed to travel from 'the tremendous region' of 'dreams and shadows.' Looking at the relationship between fairy tale and *David Copperfield*, Harry Stone argues that Miss Betsy takes the role of the godmother of fairy tale throughout the novel. As evidence of this he cites her deeds, such as when she 'summons the wicked Murdstones and exorcises them before his [David's] eyes' then 'christens him anew, calling him Trotwood.' Stone goes on to write that 'Miss Betsy's godmotherhood serves to emphasize David's traumatic childhood trials, dramatize his struggle in a world of confusing good and evil, and enhance our sense of his painful apprenticeship to life.'[245] By merging the region of fairy tale and dream with the otherwise rational setting, the reader's impression of events is enhanced. Dickens provides a recognisable structure in his use of this fairy tale element and simultaneously provides a figure to guide the reader through, and emphasise, the key points in David's life. The reference to dream alongside this fairy tale association emphasises the fantastical nature of the character in a way that Dickens' other fairy tale metaphors do not do. Further evidence of Dickens' merging dream and imagining can be found in his article 'Railway Dreaming' in *Household Words*. Here he states 'I am never sure of time or place upon a Railroad, I can't read, I can't think, I can't sleep – I can only dream.'[246] The rest of the article is social commentary in which Dickens substitutes 'France' for 'Moon' and refers to the people of France as 'Mooninians.' Dickens uses the final paragraph to raise a social issue he was addressing in *Little Dorrit*, which was being serialised at the time. He begins by mocking the aversion to the centralisation of the Railway in London. Pointing out 'how much better they

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[245] p.326, 327
[246] Charles Dickens, 'Railway Dreaming' in *'Gone Astray' and Other Papers from Household Words 1851-59*, ed. by Michael Slater (London, Dent, 1998) 369-376 (pp. 370, 376)

manage coaches for the public in the capital of the Mooninians' by using Centralisation, he argues 'let us have Centralisation. It is a long word, but I am not at all afraid of long words when they represent efficient things. Circumlocution is a long word, but it represents inefficiency; inefficiency in everything; inefficiency from the state coach to my hackney cab.' Readers of *Little Dorrit* would have recognised the Circumlocution office from the book as a system by which progress is stunted, where issues and proposals are forever being passed between departments until it is entirely lost. It is a system which fails to help the people who need it. And so Dickens' 'dream' of Mooninians and their better systems becomes an alternative piece of social criticism on a subject Dickens obviously felt strongly about at the time of writing. Dickens appears to have believed that the dream, like the fairy tale, appealed to all classes, which may be why he chose to use it as a theme in this particular piece of social criticism. Just four years before 'Railway Dreaming' Dickens had written another article for *Household Words* titled 'Lying Awake.' In it he considers the 'equality of sleep', explaining that:

> here, for example, is Her Majesty Queen Victoria in her palace this present
> blessed night, and here is Winking Charley, a sturdy vagrant, in one of Her
> Majesty's jails. Her Majesty has fallen, many thousands of time, from that
> same Tower, which I claim a right to tumble off now and then. So has
> Winking Charley. Her Majesty in her sleep has opened or prorogued
> Parliament, or has held a Drawing Room, attired in some very scanty dress,
> the deficiencies and improprieties of which have caused her great
> uneasiness. I, in my degree, have suffered unspeakable agitation of mind
> from taking the chair at a public dinner at the London Tavern in my night-

clothes […] Winking Charley has been repeatedly tried in a worse

condition.[247]

Dreams are class-levelling in this description, they are shared by queens and 'vagrants', just

as the fairy tale is.

Catherine Bernard considers the possibility that Dickens was using the dream in a

way which was different from any other author of his time. She points out that

the sensationalist writers of Dickens' day used dreams frequently in their

novels, but these were Gothic props, serving the needs of the plot, not

character. Novelists like Wilkie Collins and Mary Braddon assigned

ominous dream warnings to their heroes and heroines to heighten the

atmosphere of fear and develop suspense by anticipating the story's final

outcome. But they were more intent upon relaying the events of the story

than in recreating a character's state of mind.[248]

While pointing out that Dickens does sometimes use the dream in a similar way to these

writers, Bernard believes that, particularly later in his career, Dickens uses the dream 'in a

more suitable psychological fashion.' However, Bernard's suggestion that Dickens

anticipated Freud's theories on dreaming before they were published seems unlikely. As

Jonathan Glance points out, 'to attribute to Dickens a modern understanding of the

unconscious or an intuitively Freudian notion of dreaming is to wrench him from his

historical context.'[249] However, Bernard is correct in stating that his literary dreams often

'reveal underlying conflicts and strivings that contradict the dreamer's statements and actions

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[247] Charles Dickens, 'Lying Awake' in *'Gone Astray' and Other Papers from Household Words 1851-59*, ed. by Michael Slater (London, Dent, 1998) 88-95 (pp.90)
[248] Bernard, p.207, 208
[249] Glance, p.2

in waking life.' And also that 'Dickens' use of the wish-fulfilling dream served a very practical purpose. It provided him with a convenient means for expressing thoughts that […] Victorian audiences would have deemed unsuitable for their heroes and heroines.' Bernard uses *Hard Times'* Stephen Blackpool as an example of this, explaining that in spite of his unhappy marriage 'in his waking life, a figure like Stephen Blackpool […] never reproaches his wife' and so 'When he sights a bottle of poison on his wife's nightstand, his thoughts turn to suicide, not to murder. But shortly afterward, Stephen falls asleep and experiences a long, troubled dream in which he is clearly the murderer of his wife and is about to take a new bride. Stephen's dream thus permitted him to express some threatening wishes that he could never consciously imagine; it also managed to keep his goodness intact.' It certainly would have been deemed inappropriate for Stephen to have murdered his wife, and by creating this scene as a dream, the reader is allowed to see Stephen's true desperation to rid himself of his wife and be allowed to marry the woman he loves. However, this dream sequence may have a secondary purpose. To show that, although Stephen realises he could simply murder his wife to achieve his happy ending, he still does not, and therefore sacrifices his happiness to do what is morally right. This greatly emphasises Stephens goodness, in a way that simply leaving out the dream passage would not have done. The reader's belief in Stephen's absolute goodness, and their resulting sympathy for him, strengthens Dickens' criticism of a system which allows only the wealthy to divorce, regardless of the circumstances. The dream is therefore being used one again, albeit in a different way, to aid the purpose of social criticism.

Entertainment

Dickens' interest in the theatre can be traced back to his childhood. Paul Shlicke points out Dickens' 'schoolboy production of The Miller and His Men in a toy theatre'[250] and he appears to have had an early talent for theatricals. John Forster describes that even as a child he 'told a story offhand so well, and sang comic songs so especially well, that he used to be elevated on chairs and tables, both at home and abroad, for more effective display of these talents.'[251] There is also much evidence to show he maintained this interest throughout his life. For example, his letters show that in 1842 he wrote a prologue for the play *The Patrician's Daughter* by John Westland Marston, based on an idea which he thought 'would take the prologue out of the conventional dress of prologues – quite – get the curtain up with a dash – and begin the play with a sledge hammer blow.'[252]

Dickens also appears to have been a lifelong fan of the magic lantern. Joss Marsh, using the account of the Dickens family's nursemaid, claims that 'he fell in love with the lantern as a child.'[253] However, it seems very likely that, considering his stance in 'Frauds on the Fairies', Dickens would not have completely agreed with some of the lantern's uses, particularly for promoting specific personal beliefs such as temperance. Dickens interest in the lantern would therefore have been in its entertainment value, and its ability to create fantastical images in an increasingly realistic way. All of the examples of lantern influence on Dickens' writing given by Marsh are particularly focused on the fantastical and supernatural. She argues for example that 'the lantern had inspired two of Dickens' most-loved stories', *A Christmas Carol* and *Gabriel Grub*, both of which are based on the use of fantastical and supernatural creatures. It is certainly true, particularly of *Gabriel Grub*, that Dickens appears to directly incorporate lantern visual techniques. For example, Marsh explains that Gabriel is

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[250] Paul Schlicke, *Dickens and Popular Entertainment* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985) p.3

[251] John Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Holly Furneaux (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2011) p.24

[252] Charles Dickens, *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, Vol.3, ed. by Madeline House, Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson and Noel C. Peyrouton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p.113

[253] Marsh p.335, 336, 337, 339

'seized upon by the King of the Goblins, who summons his minions, 'la[ys] hand upon [Gabriel's] collar, and s[inks] with him through the earth' – a grand effect at the Polytechnic, courtesy of a vertical panorama.' In looking at *A Christmas Carol* Marsh uses the multiple changes of scene Scrooge experiences on his journey, particularly with the ghost of Christmas past, as an example, arguing that this is very much like the changing of lantern slides. This argument is given more emphasis by Marsh's note of the language Dickens' uses as he describes the scene changing with 'a rapidity of transition', which Marsh describes as 'a most self-consciously technical lantern term.' Dickens also refers directly to the magic lantern in *Little Dorrit,* where he describes

> changing distortions of herself [Mrs Clenham] in her wheeled chair […]
> would be thrown upon the house wall that was over the gateway, and would
> hover there like shadows from a great magic lantern […] Mistress Affery's
> magnified shadow always flitting about, last, until it finally glided away into
> the air, as though she were off upon a witch excursion. Then the solitary
> light would burn unchangingly, until it burned pale before the dawn, and at
> last died under the breath of Mrs Affery, as her shadow descended on it
> from the witch-region of sleep.[254]

 The distortions and shadows of the lantern are here being used to reinforce an impression of illusion and secrecy but also to give a sense of the uncanny and supernatural, bringing a fantastical element to the ordinary scene and dramatizing it in a way which adds a degree of mystery and tension.

Escapism is an aspect of theatre Dickens also praises, writing in 'Household Words' that dramatic entertainments were 'at once the most obvious, the least troublesome, and the

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[254] *Little Dorrit*, p.184

most real, of all escapes out of the literal world.'[255] And also, as Richard Eyre points out 'he

says in a speech to raise money for actors in hard times: 'I dare say that the feeling peculiar to

the theatre is as well known to everybody here as it is to me, of having for an hour or two

quite forgotten the real world, and of coming out into the street with a kind of wonder that it

should be so wet, and dark, and cold … by all these things I entreat you to not go out into

Great Queen Street by-and-by, without saying that you have done something for this fleeting

fairyland, which has done so much for us.'[256] This image of a 'fleeting fairyland' is an

interesting expression of the way an audience is allowed to experience a purely imaginative

world for a short time in watching a theatre production. This is similar to his praise of the

precious escape provided by the fairy tale, which is perhaps why, in an article in the first

volume of *Household Words*, 'The Amusements of the People', he defends theatrical

entertainment in much the same was as he did for the Fairy tale in 'Frauds on the fairies.'

Like 'Frauds on the Fairies', 'The Amusements of the People' is comical and amusing

in itself, but it also contains messages of a serious nature. For example Dickens writes 'It is

probable that nothing will ever root out from among the common people an innate love they

have for dramatic entertainment in some form or other. It would be a very doubtful benefit to

society, we think, if it could be rooted out.'[257] This comment holds a clear similarity to

Dickens' comment earlier in the 'Preliminary Word' on the 'light of Fancy which is inherent

in the human breast […] which (or woe betide that day!) can never be extinguished.' This

certainly suggests that 'fancy' and 'dramatic entertainment' are very similar, or interlinked,

concepts to Dickens, and that they share the same effects. He then, as in 'Frauds on the

Fairies,' goes on to argue against the purely factual by writing that 'The Polytechnic

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[255] Charles Dickens, 'The Amusements of the People' in *Charles Dickens on Theatre* (London, Hesperus Press, 2011) p.3-18 (pp.4)

[256] Richard Eyre, 'Foreword' in *Charles Dickens on Theatre* (London, Hesperus Press, 2011) p.vii-xi (pp.xi)

[257] Charles Dickens, 'The Amusements of the People' in *Charles Dickens on Theatre* p.13

Institution in Regent Street, where an infinite variety of ingenious models are exhibited and explained, and where lectures comprising a quantity of useful information on many practical subject are delivered, is a great public benefit and a wonderful place, but we think a people formed *entirely* in their hours of leisure by Polytechnic Institutions would be an uncomfortable community.' He goes on to give two reasons for this belief. The first is another suggestion that exposure to the imaginative, rather than only the factual, affects a person's character for the better. On this, Dickens writes

> we would rather not have to appeal to the generous sympathies of a man
>
> of five-and-twenty, in respect of some affliction of which he had no
>
> personal experience, who had passed all his holidays, when a boy, among
>
> cranks and cogwheels. We should be more disposed to trust him if he had
>
> been bought into occasional contact with a Maid and a Magpie; if he had
>
> made one or two diversions into the Forest of Bondy; or had even gone
>
> the length of a Christmas Pantomime.

The second reason is one which is found at the heart of *Hard Times*, a belief that there is simply something about the imaginative or fantastical that people are drawn to, and which they need to experience. Dickens explains 'there is a range of imagination in most of us, which no amount of steam-engines will satisfy; and which The-great-exhibition-of-the-works-of-industry-of-all-nations, itself, will probably leave unappeased.' In the same article Dickens also argues on the benefit of the theatre to the working class in particular. As Richard Eyre points out, the article is based around Dickens' visit to the Victoria Theatre, where he watched 'plays which are simple moral fables underscored with music –

melodramas.'[258] Eyre then goes on to point out Dickens' description of 'his imagined

common man, Joe Whelks', who:

> is not much of a reader, has no great store of books, no very commodious
>
> room to read in, and no power at all of presenting vividly before his
>
> mind's eye what he reads about. But, put Joe in the gallery of the
>
> Victoria Theatre; show him doors and windows in the scene that will
>
> open and shut, and that people can get in and out of; tell him a story by
>
> these aids, and by the help of live man and women dressed up, confiding
>
> to him their innermost secrets […] and Joe will unravel a story through
>
> all its entanglements, and sit there as long after midnight as you have
>
> anything to show him.[259]

Therefore the theatre is the perfect way to present the moral message of literature to those

who could not, or would find it difficult to, read. He expressed the same opinion on the

theatres ability to instruct, without class specification, three years earlier in a speech for the

General Theatrical Fund, where he asks for theatrical performance to be respected as 'an art

and as a noble means of general instruction and improvement.'[260]

Pantomime is one of the entertainments which Dickens refers to directly in his novels.

As Eigner points out 'the word *pantomime*, used both as a noun and as a verb, occurs

throughout his writings. David Copperfield goes to the pantomime; so does Pip, Dickens'

other autobiographical self-portait; and Nicholas Nickleby is introduced to the members of

the Vincent Crummles theatrical company by the pantomime actor Mr Folair.'[261]

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[258] Eyre, p.vii
[259] Charles Dickens, 'The Amusements if the People' p.13
[260] Dickens, Charles. "Speech for the General Theatrical Fund, 29 March 1847", *Charles Dickens on Theatre* (London: Hersperus Press, 2011) p.57-58 (pp.57)
[261] Edwin M. Eigner, *The Dickens Pantomime* (London: University of California Press, 1989) p.5

Interestingly Dickens gives great attention to the fairy tale elements of the pantomime in 'Gaslight Fairies', a *Household Words* article from 1855. As he recounts watching a pantomime rehearsal, he describes that 'a massive giant's castle arose before me, and the giant's body-guard marched in to comic music; twenty grotesque creatures, with little arms and legs, and enormous faces moulded into twenty varieties of ridiculous leer.' The sense of escaping into an imaginary world is again suggested as Dickens stands in front of a giant's castle and the pantomime is mixed in this article with another story of the theatre. Dickens goes into detail with 'one of the faces in particular – an absurdly radiant face, with a wink upon it, and its tongue in its cheek.'[262] Unlike the fairy tale this gives a sense of the ridiculous, perhaps even of Carrollian 'nonsense.' Though Dickens recognises the 'absurd' in the pantomime here, it is the fairy tale escapism which for him remains key.

Dickens' opinion on the circus and its relationship to nostalgia has already been discussed and, of course, the circus is made particularly important in *Hard Times*. The first direct mention of the circus in the novel comes when Sissy Jupe explains to Mr Gradgrind that her father "belongs to the horse-riding" and is told "we don't want to hear anything about that, here. You mustn't tell us about that, here."[263] And so in the first few pages the 'horse riding' is set up as the institution in opposition to the Gradgrindian school of Fact. However, the circus also affects the novel on a more subtle level, such as in Dickens description of 'the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down, like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness.' The image of an elephant in the context of the book is surely a reference to the circus, but like the 'fairy palaces' choked by 'serpents of smoke', the elephant is distorted by the atmosphere of Coketown, driven mad by the lifeless monotony of 'several large streets all very like each other, and many small streets still more like one

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[262] Charles Dickens, 'Gaslight Fairies' in *'Gone Astray' and Other Papers From Household Words 1851-59*, 276-282 (pp.278)
[263] *Hard Times,* p.7, 21, 56, 21, 25

another, inhabited by people equally like one another.' The circus itself is the place of escape from this, where the people are kind individuals and imagination is encouraged. This is emphasised by Dickens' description of the performer's lives outside the circus itself. The reader is first presented with the Gradgrind home 'Stone Lodge', which has 'iron clamps and girders, fireproof from top to bottom; mechanical lifts for the housemaids, with all their brushes and brooms; everything that heart could desire' and a father who is 'eminently practical.' The home lacks any emotion at all, it is as cold and heartless as its name suggests. In contrast the reader is then introduced to Sleary's company, staying in a public house, the 'Pegasus's Arms.' The name itself links the fantastical winged horse with 'Sleary's Horsemanship', the title of the chapter. Inside, 'framed and glazed upon the wall behind the dingy little bar, was another Pegasus – a theatrical one – with real gauze let in for his wings, golden stars stuck on all over him, and his ethereal harness made of red silk.' The fantastical here becomes fully linked to the theatrical, with the gauze, silk and stars surely intended to prompt association with the costumes and props of the theatre. Dickens then describes that the members of Sleary's company are 'not very tidy in their private dresses, they were not at all orderly in their domestic arrangements, and the combined literature of the whole company would have produced but a poor letter on any subject.'[264] There are noticeable links here with Joe Welks, Dickens' fictional audience member from 'Amusements of the People' who 'is not much of a reader' but benefits from the ability to watch a theatre performance. The article was written only four years before the publication of *Hard Times* and provides an interesting example of Dickens' view on the positive impact of theatre as equal to both performer and audience. Dickens goes on to describe Sleary's company as having 'a remarkable gentleness and childishness […] a special inaptitude for any kind of sharp practice, and an untiring readiness to help and pity one another, deserving, often of as much respect, and always of as

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[264] p. 12, 31

much generous construction, as the every-day virtues of any class of people in the world.' As well as being another example of Dickens' praise of childhood, as 'childishness' is used in a positive context, this description emphasises the contrast between the company, with few possessions but a great deal of virtue and Thomas Gradgrind, who is wealthier but lacks all the positive aspects the company possess. The circus and its performances were also clearly designed to be as recognisable to the reader as possible. For example, one of the performances at 'Sleary's Horse-riding' which Dickens specifies is Signor Jupe 'appearing as his favourite character of Mr William Button, of Tooley Street, in the "highly novel and laughable hippo-comedietta of The Tailor's Journey to Brentford."' Kaplan and Monod note that this was 'a pantomime staged on horseback. Performances of this kind […] were popular in circuses and amusement halls such as Astley's in London.'[265] They also note that 'In February 1854, when Dickens and his friend Mark Lemon were visiting circuses to gather information to be used in *Hard Times*, Astley's was advertising a double bill featuring an elephant show ("Wise Elephants of the East") to be followed by *Billy Button's Journey to Brentford; or Harlequin and the Ladies' Favourite."* This production, described as a "Grand Equestrian Comic Pantomime" recently written by Nelson Lee, was based on a popular pantomime of a tailor who rode his horse facing backward.' In doing this Dickens presents Sleary's Circus as a recognisable place and therefore the emphasis of the benefits of entertainment come across as directly applicable to these real performances.

Dickens takes the rational world and its everyday social issues and imbues them with 'fancy' and 'romance.' The result is a mirror image of reality, reflected back to the reader in a way which is slightly different, slightly distorted, yet still recognisable and relevant. His beliefs on the potential of the fairy tale and theatre specifically, as well as on the importance of imagination more generally, are all at the heart of the fantastical elements of the novels.

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[265] Fred Kaplan and Sylvére Monod, 'Notes' in *Hard Times,* p.13

Often, Dickens draws on the reader's familiarity with the more specific fantastical elements, using them to promote a specific emotional response to a character or place, as we see with Carker for example. In this way the fantastical is used as part of a greater purpose of social criticism which Dickens is particularly well known for. Throughout all of these uses and all of Dickens' comments on aspects the fantastical there also lies an important relation to childhood. As can be seen in both *Hard Times* and *Dombey and Son*, Dickens views the fantastical imagination as central to the very notion of childhood and to a child's successful development to adulthood. And as an adult, Dickens clearly maintains his belief in the fantastical both as an escape and as a source of moral instruction. Keeping alive the 'light of fancy' in the rational world of fact seems for Dickens the greatest solution to the problems of Victorian society.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Lewis Carroll, George MacDonald and Charles Dickens each demonstrate in their work the importance of the fantastical to literature of the Victorian period. Each uses the fantastical in very different ways and the intentions with which they use it vary but, ultimately, the elements they use are derived from the same sources and are frequently interconnected. In tracing these sources, I found that the fantastical was strongly linked to particular themes which are frequently emphasised in both literature and popular entertainment: these themes are childhood, the dream and the mirror. Consideration of these themes in relation to the fantastical provides further insight into its sources, its use and the way in which it links three quite different authors.

Childhood is one of the recurring focuses which is of great importance to the work of all three authors. Though this is in part derived from childhood's links with nostalgia and the fairy tale, it is clear that the association between childhood as a state of innocence and the fantastical imagination is also key. Often in Dickens' work it is the child's power of imagination, or 'fancy', which carries them through difficult times. The emphasis is clearly derived from Dickens' own childhood experiences. In *The Life of Charles Dickens* John Forster quotes from 'one of the many passages in Copperfield which are literally true':

> My father had left a small collection of books in a little room up-stairs
>
> to which I had access […] From that blessed little room, *Roderick*
>
> *Random*, *Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar*
>
> *of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas,* and *Robinson Crusoe* came out,
>
> a glorious host, to keep me company. They kept alive my fancy, and

> my hope of something beyond that place and time, - they, and the
>
> *Arabian Nights* and the *Tales of the Genii*[266]

Imagination, inspired by fiction, provides both company and hope for the child. There is a clear relationship between the fantastical characters who come out from the small upstairs room and Dickens' *Preliminary Word* comment that 'in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out.' The fantastical as a protective force here is very similar to Curdie's ability to protect himself through the creation of verse in MacDonald's *The Princess and The Goblin.* The *Alice* books too are based around the concept of a child escaping from reality into a fantasy world through the use of imagination.

The importance of the fantastical to the adult is displayed across the work of all three authors with an equal force. However, the adult's ability to access the fantastical is often dependant on their connection with childhood. Their ability, as Dickens writes in 'Frauds on the Fairies', to 'walk with children, sharing their delights.' Paul Schlicke notes three strong examples of Dickens' use of childhood attitudes in adults, pointing out Rumpty Wilfer's outing in *Our Mutual Friend*, Bob Cratchit's excited journey home on Christmas Eve in *A Christmas Carol* and Mr Pickwick's fun sliding on ice with his friends in *The Pickwick Papers*.[267] These examples span Dickens' career, from the first to his last completed novel, demonstrating the importance of this theme in Dickens' work. Another example can be found in the character Maggie of *Little Dorrit,* who believes herself to be a ten year old child despite being 'about eight-and-twenty.'[268] Through Maggie, the reader sees things from a child's perspective, one that is innocent, accepting and honest. When the reader is first

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[266] Forster, John, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, ed. by Holly Furneaux (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2011) p.23
[267] p.17
[268] p.109, 111, 111

introduced to Maggie she describes a hospital she had to visit when she had a 'bad fever' as a child. Rather than a negative portrayal of illness, Maggie provides descriptions such as 'such beds there is there! […] such d'licious broth and wine! […] Oh, AIN'T it a delightful place to go and stop at!' The effect is to deepen the contrast between the poverty Maggie lives in normally and an environment which provides basic comforts like a clean bed and food. By drawing the reader's sympathy in this way Dickens simultaneously raises awareness of the lack of support available to the poor and praises the existence of a hospital for children. As Dennis Walder explains, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children, the 'first hospital in London exclusively for children' was founded only a few years before the publication of *Little Dorrit* and was supported by Dickens.[269] Maggie's unusual connection with childhood and subsequent innocence and honesty therefore strengthens the social message of the scene.

Maggie's situation provides one example of childhood as a state of innocence from which the world can be viewed in a way that is both more fantastical and, in many ways, more accurate. The same can be said of the *Alice* books with their childhood view of the world's irrational rules. Childhood is central to all of Carroll's fictional work and the author demonstrates a great empathy for the child throughout them. Carroll also clearly understood, and shared in, the positive aspects of childhood entertainment and imagination. Greville MacDonald, in *George MacDonald and his Wife*, remembers 'one annual treat was Uncle Dodgson taking us to the Polytechnic for the entrancing "dissolving views" of fairy tales, or to go down in the diving bell, or watch the mechanical athlete *Leotard*. There was also the Coliseum in Albany Street, with its storms by land and sea on a wonderful stage, and its great panorama of London. And there was Cremer's toy shop in Regent Street – not to mention bath-buns and ginger-beer.''[270] Carroll's diary also notes a trip with the three Liddell children

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[269] Dennis Walder, 'Notes' in *Little Dorrit*
[270] MacDonald, Greville in *The Diaries of Lewis Carroll*, Vol. 1, p.155

and their governess to Sanger's Circus.[271] This once again relates back to the sentiments expressed by Dickens on the importance of maintaining a relationship with childhood and the 'fancy' associated with it. It is perhaps this which allowed Carroll to execute what Lennon describes as the 'articulation of the inarticulate impressions of childhood.'[272] Schlicke writes of Dickens that 'the eager curiosity and receptiveness to novelty and energy, the fascination with imitation and its problematic relation with reality; the sense of absurdity, in which delight and terror are never far apart – each of these vital components of his genius has its roots in his conception of childhood, and each finds particularly full expression in his concern with entertainment.'[273] The quote is just as easily applied to Carroll, particularly in relation to the *Alice* books where imitation, absurdity, terror and delight feature heavily and certainly have their roots in the 'inarticulate impressions of childhood.'

However, while Dickens and Carroll explore the child's view of the real world, they do so in very different ways. For Dickens the child's fantastical perception of a situation is dropped into a recognisable, rational one, usually through metaphor. An example can be found in *Dombey and Son,* where Mrs Pipchin is described as an 'ogress' and her home a castle, complete with a castle dungeon.[274] However, the castle, Dickens explains, is actually a house 'in a steep by-street in Brighton' and its dungeon 'an empty apartment at the back.' Brighton, Delgado explains, was a fashionable holiday destination during the Victorian period,[275] making Dickens' choice of location recognisable and therefore a particularly vivid contrast to the fairy tale image of an ogre in a castle. The reader is always aware these fantastical descriptions are only fantastical perceptions of the real world which the characters are not immersed in. With Carroll, particularly in the *Alice* books, the reader experiences the

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271 Carroll, Lewis 'June 23. 1863' in *The Diaries of Lewis Carroll*, p.198
272 Lennon, p.127
273 Schlicke, p.14
274 p.106-107, 106, 107
275 p.84

story entirely through the child's view, which is constantly immersed in the fantastical imagination or dream world. In these settings the fantastical is accepted as fact and the laws of the normal world are often broken. As early as Alice's descent through the rabbit hole the laws of gravity are broken as she falls unusually slowly, managing to take a jar of marmalade from a shelf as she falls past and replace it on another shelf, fearing she would injure someone should she drop it. As Gardner points out 'in a normal state of free fall Alice could neither drop the jar (it would remain suspended in front of her) nor replace it on the shelf (her speed would be too great).'[276] In Looking-Glass Land the laws are also changed, this time inverted. For example, Alice must walk away from the Red Queen in order to go towards her.[277] In these "dream" worlds the rules of the normal world, which would be considered rational by the reader, are entirely different but also completely accepted by the participating characters. They are environments which redefine the rational and in this sense Carroll's work is most closely related to entertainment such as the phantasmagoria, which attempts to immerse the viewer entirely in its fantastical spectacle and question the boundaries of the rational. While MacDonald also uses the dream to question the reality boundary, particularly in *Phantastes* and *Lilith*, he does so from the view of an adult struggling to accept that what he believed is fantastical is fact. These messages of faith and belief in MacDonald's work are religious in origin, causing the dream passages of MacDonald to differ greatly in both form and intention to those of Carroll's.

The dream and the mirror are the other themes which reoccur and connect not only all three authors but also cultural sources of the fantastical. Though I originally intended to explore these two themes separately, further research, particularly into Carroll, demonstrated that the two are very closely connected. Each of the two reflects the real world in a way that

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[276] Martin Gardner, 'Notes', *The Annotated Alice,* p.13
[277] p.161

distorts it and introduces fantastical elements to it. The mirror is also a common theme in the fairy tale but comparing its use in that form provides an interesting contrast to its use by Carroll, MacDonald and Dickens. Cynthia Chalupa looks at the accuracy of the mirror's reflection in this context, speaking of its use to provide 'truths about reality, both present and displaced.'[278] There are multiple examples of this use in the fairy tale. Chalupa points out both "Beauty and the Beast" by Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (1757), in which 'Beauty views the mirror in her room to learn the fate of her family at home' and Grimm's "Snow White" (1812) in which 'the evil stepmother consults the omniscient mirror, which conveys to her unpleasant truths based on its obligation to reflect reality.' However, Chalupa acknowledges a shift, in which 'during the nineteenth century, the mirror changed from a primarily magical entity to an object with psychological dimensions. Living reflections, broken mirrors, and the doppelganger – the double – acquired negative connotations as their physical forms were used to embody morality, angst, and the troubled subconscious of the protagonist.' This use of the mirror could certainly apply to MacDonald, with the broken mirror of *Phantastes* and the shadow of Anodos. However, though Chalupa notes *Through the Looking Glass* as an exception to this change, as it serves as an entrance to a fantastic world, it is a fantastic world of the dream, or imagination (as Carroll uses the terms interchangeably), and therefore very much a psychological entity. Looking-Glass land however does not entirely conform to Chalupa's definition as it is not a negative psychological space. While it could be argued that the mirrored world does explore the 'troubled subconscious of the protagonist' as it explores the difficulty of coming to terms with rules that appear nonsensical, it is equally a positive space which emphasises exploration and learning through experience. Thus Alice learns she must walk away from the Red Queen to reach her. Alice's victory as she captures the Red Queen, resulting, as Gardner points out, in 'a legitimate checkmate of

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[278] Chalupa, Cynthia, 'Mirrors' in *The Greenwood Encyclopaedia of Folktales and Fairytales*, p.628

the Red King'[279] confirms the positive element of this mirror space. As an object, the mirror is not relevant to Dickens - but his writing, when considered itself as a mirror to the contemporary world, contains elements of both of Chalupa's definitions. It reflects traditionally accurate, though at times unpleasant, truths about society and politics and certainly contains psychological dimensions, the psychological effect of an upbringing based purely in fact, as explored in *Hard Times,* is a particularly clear example.

There are vast differences between the novels of Carroll, MacDonald and Dickens yet all three continuously demonstrate a firm belief in the importance of the fantastical. The source of this is undoubtedly varied, influenced by factors as diverse as nostalgia for a pre-industrial world and the rapid technological progress of the time widening the boundaries of reality. In this research I found that sources as varied as popular entertainment, optical technology and fairy tale are all related to fantastically distorted reflections of the rational world and these fantastical distortions are at the heart of the fictional work of all three authors. Considering these elements together provides a new stance from which to view Victorian literature, one which considers the fantastical not only as an element which runs alongside the rational but which is fuelled by it and constantly interacts with it. The presence of the same fantastical elements in the work of all three authors, as well as in multiple cultural sources, is undeniable evidence that the fantastical held an important position within the "rational" Victorian age and should be considered as a defining feature of its literature.

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