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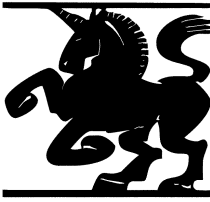
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Curious Appetites: Food, Desire, Gender, and Subjectivity in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* Texts

Carina Garland

Lewis Carroll's *Alice* texts are all about "malice" (Cohen, *Interviews* 108): that is, the often spiteful attempts of the male author to suppress and control Alice's agency so that Carroll can desire and own her. This control, and the anxieties Carroll has surrounding female sexuality and agency, are expressed via representations of food and appetite within the text and the relationship of these to the feminine. There has always been something unnerving about Lewis Carroll's Alice as one very early reviewer of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* noticed in 1868: "We enjoy the walk with Alice through Wonderland [but] now and then, perhaps, something disturbing almost wakes us from our dream" (Sigler xii). What that "something disturbing" is has been the subject of considerable interest for critics for some time, with the more recent reading of the Alice texts exploring aspects of control and desire in the texts, particularly in terms of gender and agency. As Carolyn Sigler notes, "Along with many other interpretations, the *Alice* books have consistently been read as portrayals of the experience of growing up and the construction of agency and identity" (xiv). The contemporary studies of the texts by Sigler and especially U. C. Knoepfelmacher have contributed to discussion of the Alice texts in terms of growing up, agency, and identity by recognizing the differences that exist—in terms of power, in particular—between *Wonderland* and *Looking Glass*. However, it is the contention of this article that the recent analyses of the Alice texts have misrepresented, misplaced, and misinterpreted the specificities of the gendered power dynamic present in the books. This is due to the fact that the recent standout studies in the field (Auerbach; Knoepfelmacher) have been eager to see Alice as a subversive, active, empowered heroine. Additionally, some recent studies (Auerbach; Kincaid; and Knoepfelmacher in particular) either don't argue for a gendered power struggle in the texts, or, if they do, find that Alice—as opposed

to the controlling male author—wins. This study will show, in various ways particularly surrounding the presence/absence of food and hunger within the texts that the recent studies in the area are flawed as they do not correctly recognize the fundamental repression/hatred of adult female sexuality within the texts and Carroll's often perverse attempts to quell this repulsive sexuality in his child heroine, Alice.

Crucial to this analysis, is the shift between the two Alice texts as it has not been discussed extensively in the past. Recent analyses (Knoepfmacher; Nelson; Sigler) have all noticed that there is a marked difference in the way Alice is portrayed and idealized between *Wonderland* and *Looking Glass*, but these studies have failed to fully appreciate the significance of the shift in terms of the controlling male gaze and female sexuality. This study contends that *Wonderland* and *Looking Glass* both make similar comments about female sexuality: that is, it's a frightening and destructive force. The ways these ideas are expressed, however, and the positioning of desire and femininity in the texts, are quite different. Basically, *Wonderland* is about possession whereas *Looking Glass* is about loss. The anxieties surrounding these themes are much more complex than this statement suggests and this is examined extensively in this study, particularly in relation to food and appetite. As Catherine Driscoll has indicated, the Alice texts read in the context of Carroll's own anxieties, "enable questions about relations between girlhood and feminine adolescence" (42) to be asked. These questions enable an analysis of the Alice texts that move away from the tendency to give the heroine power as it becomes clear that the little girl is controlled and manipulated by the male author, as a result of his anxieties surrounding her move from girl hood into adolescence.

Despite the well-intentioned attempts by critics (Auerbach; Honig; Kincaid; Knoepfmacher) to read Alice as a subversive, active heroine in the past, this analysis concludes that such interpretations have been misplaced and have ignored the placement of women in the texts as well as the desiring nature of the male gaze. The contemporary studies of Carroll have challenged the early, strictly Freudian readings of the text and have attempted to hastily move away from interpretations that suggest the male author sexualized his heroine or, conversely, was devoid of sexual desire at all. This is true not only of academic writings on the literature but also biographical works (Leach) and recent analyses of Carroll's photography. While it is necessary to reassess earlier studies of texts and people, and it is crucial to create fresh arguments to further academic thought, the old adage concerning babies and bathwater needs to be remembered. While Karoline Leach is persuasive to some extent in her recent biography of Carroll in bringing new light to his relationships with women and girls, close readings of the texts using contemporary theories *still* suggest that

the male author is (sexually) preoccupied with his child heroine; there is something the girl intrinsically offers that a woman cannot. The girl is the border between states, with perceived transgressive desire directed toward her embodied limit. Leach's study is to a great extent dedicated to illuminating the friendships Carroll had with women—at times asserting a sexual, scandalous element to these friendships. However new and fresh Leach's study is, it is not entirely without its faults, the main one being that, in an attempt to rescue Lewis Carroll from being depicted as asexual or a repressed child-lover, she instead essentially paints his character as that of an old lecher, hiding his sexual improprieties behind a veneer of an eccentric innocent who enjoyed the company of children over adults. Among the evidence Leach cites to indicate Carroll's conventional sexual urges are the several nudes Carroll owned of adult females. This argument is flimsy, the figure of the nude not pornography, but art that often desexualizes the body through representation and is not necessarily indicative of conventional sexual desire. Also, Carroll owned and created nudes of girls, so if Leach's argument is accepted that nude portraiture was a site for Carroll's desire, then her point must be applied to his artistic representations of girls, too. In any case, this article argues and understands Carroll's texts differently to that of other studies, including Leach's. This study distinguishes itself from the earlier critical works on Alice as well as most of the contemporary studies that have already been discussed.

The field of Carroll scholarship has been lacking this kind of discussion as it has been perceived (due to the academic and biographical texts that I have noted) that the aspect of agency is done and dusted; that Alice is empowered and that feminist critiques on the texts need not persist. I contend that this is *not* the case and instead seeks to apply feminist theory to Alice in order to understand the nature of the gender/power dynamic that takes place within and between the texts. There is an understandable resistance in Alice theory to any study that paints Carroll as a creepy, pseudo-pedophile unable to maintain adult relationships and this analysis appreciates this. This analysis does not seek to necessarily read Carroll in this way, but doesn't wish to ignore elements of desire within the texts and in his own life, either. The Alice texts are primarily concerned with desire and control, directed to the female child and held by Lewis Carroll. Contemporary feminist critical and psychoanalytic theories—particularly the theories of Barbara Creed—have not been applied to the Alice texts, Carroll's books crying out for an analysis that reassesses and challenges the readings (or misreadings) of gender and power that have dominated the majority of past and more recent studies.

In closely reading the Alice texts in terms of desire and sexuality, the positioning of female figures and their relationships with food can best be

understood by referring to Barbara Creed's work *The Monstrous Feminine*, particularly the notion of *vagina dentata*. This term, which literally translates as a "vagina with teeth," sums up a male fear of an aggressive female sexuality and is present in both Alice texts. Creed's work was originally applied to filmic texts but in recent times there has been a move to apply this visual theory to literature. The vagina dentata theory is one that refers to a bestial, aggressive, destructive female sexuality and is an interesting feminist reclaiming of Freud's theories surrounding the phallus. Essentially, Creed's theory is about a sexuality possessed by the feminine that threatens to destroy the masculine, a vagina with teeth violently devouring the penis. The vagina dentata is present in the Alice texts and there are also examples of a fear of this in Carroll's own life. For example, he once asked a young female friend not to visit him if she were to wear a red dress, this color being one that is strongly associated with a rampant female sexuality (such as the term *Scarlet Woman*), with Carroll generally having had a preference for girls in lighter shades (Greenacre 166). In terms of the depiction of female characters in *Wonderland* and *Looking Glass*, they are actually quite small in number and are almost exclusively human figures (whereas the male figures outnumber the female ones and are mostly animals). Despite the differences in desire and sexuality present in the two texts, a point on which I will be dwelling quite substantially further on in this paper in regards to Eros/Thanatos, the adult female characters are generally presented in very similar ways. Alice is the only female child character and she is adored by Carroll, both in real life and in the text. Compared to her, the other female characters—who are all women—are very frightening and reviled by Carroll through their representation. Essentially, women are posited as the natural enemy of little girls.

Many of *Wonderland*'s most memorable moments concern the consumption of food. Alice is told to "Eat Me" and "Drink Me" by mysterious food that changes her body in ways she cannot predict. Food is a very important element in reading desire and subjectivity within the Alice texts. Not only is food one of the most famous features of the Alice texts, their author was also infamous in his own eating habits and attitudes toward food, this contributing to an understanding of the representations of sexuality and subjectivity in *Wonderland* and *Looking Glass*. Lewis Carroll was notoriously thrifty when it came to eating in his own life, often only consuming a biscuit and some sherry for his main meal and never eating lunch. In Morton N. Cohen's popular study of Carroll, it is noted that Carroll had odd eating habits for both himself and his child guests, "surviving himself on simple food and small portions" (Cohen, *Biography* 291), while meticulously planning the times and quantity of

his child guests food consumption, including treats like coca, jam, and sweets when entertaining children. In his personal writings, there is much evidence of Carroll's uneasiness surrounding appetite and consumption. He was known to be extremely controlling with food, often bringing his own meals to friend's homes when invited for dinner. In a letter declining a luncheon invitation, Carroll wrote: "I always decline luncheons. I have no appetite for a meal at that time, and you will perhaps sympathise with my dislike for sitting to watch others eat and drink" (Cohen, Volume 1 319). Carroll was also notably disgusted by a ravenous appetite in his many female child friends, their later reflections of the author indicating he would often berate them for being greedy and encourage them to only eat modestly. Carroll had a confirmed and well-known adoration of the little girl figure, and it wasn't unusual for him to present gifts and lavish (excessive) attention on little girls, enjoying many friendships. Carroll once sent a small knife to Kathleen Tidy, a child friend, as a birthday present (a gift that has phallic allusions) and instructed her to use it to cut her dinner, as "this way you will be safe from eating too much, and so making yourself ill. If you find that when the others have finished you have only had one mouthful, do not be vexed about it" (Cohen, Volume I 49). Here, the repulsive female appetite (representative of vagina dentata) can be stopped by the use of a phallic object. This point of female friendship in itself is most important when assessing desire, objectivity, and subjectivity within the texts but even more so when considering that Carroll idealized a modest appetite in girls and was disgusted by young females who satisfied their hunger ravenously. It is quite clear that Carroll idealized young girls and wasn't as fond of women, as manifested in his willing of his female child friends to stay young and small and the fact that no concrete romantic interest or proven sexual relationship with a mature female was ever present in his life.

In her biography of Carroll, Leach uses the author's love poetry as examples of his capacity to desire sexually, in opposition to the various somewhat mythologized portrayals of Carroll as an asexual virgin (Collingwood; Bowman). Carroll's love poetry is naïve, but there are some clear themes present in the poems Leach selects in her biography. Leach hopes that the poems will be persuasive in illustrating the fact Carroll wrote about women, which he does in the poetry. However, the elements of desire within the poetry belie the fact that Carroll had some difficulty consciously lusting after sexually mature females. In *Three Sunsets*, the figure of "perfect womanhood" (*Complete Works* 249) is seen once and then taken away from Carroll, the longing merely an aesthetic one, seeming to lack any real substance. The adult female is also attached strongly

to aspects of loss and this poem (as well as others, *The Willow Tree, Beatrice*) features funereal motifs surrounding the desired woman. *Stolen Waters* is interesting as the male narrator becomes victim of a Queenly fairy, who plies him with a magical liquid and causes him to uncontrollably, remorsefully desire her. Carroll writes the mythical female as old, fierce and frightening:

In the gray light I saw her face,
And it was withered old and gray:
The flowers were fading in their place
The grass was fading where we lay.

Forth from her, like a hunted deer,
Through all that ghastly night I fled,
And still behind me seemed to hear
Her fierce unflagging tread,
And scarce drew breath for fear. (Ibid. 865)

This is contrasted with the stanzas that follow, the poem's narrator hearing sweet singing which restores his corrupted body and soul:

A rosy child—
Sitting and singing in a garden fair; The joy of hearing, seeing;
The simple joy of being—
Or twining roses in the golden hair
That ripples free and wild

A sweet pale child—
Wearily looking to the purple west—
Waiting the great Forever
That suddenly shall sever
The cruel chains that hold her from her rest—
By earth joys unbeguiled. (Ibid. 866)

The relationship Carroll presents between sexual females, desire, fear, and death is contrasted strongly with female children, innocence, joy, and life. This dichotomy is key to understanding the concerns in the Alice texts surrounding desire, gender, and subjectivity. The notions in *Stolen Waters* (the title of which suggests a kind of violation) of feared sexual women and idealized pre-pubescent girls continues and is complicated within the Alice texts in ways relating to Barbara Creed's vagina dentata theory and Carroll's confused control over his child heroine. While the poetry in itself doesn't do as Leach perhaps hopes in convincing us that Carroll had sexual urges toward women and wrote widely about these,

Stolen Waters is of particular interest to my own discussion, as the lack of (sexual) control in the poem is caused by the forced consumption of food: something oft repeated in Carroll's Alice texts.

For Carroll, food and appetite are corrupting and extravagant forces. This is clear when analyzing the relationship Carroll had with young girls and appetites. Little girls were idealized by Carroll whereas appetites and eating disgusted him. Thus, the immature female and appetite are opposites in Carroll's world: one being ideal, the other being horrifying. Hunger, which is representative of desire, expressed by young girls made them impure and undesirable from his perspective. Thus, within the Alice texts, I hold that Carroll was exercising his own desire through Alice's hunger and his feeding of her, with Alice the passive and therefore desirable object of the male author. While Nina Auerbach and others have suggested Alice is a subversive, active heroine, I read the Alice texts as stories of the male author's desire. Quite plainly, Carroll idealizes his heroine, and he was a man who liked young girls to be modest in every way, unless they were controlled by him, for example, in his photography, in which case it was appropriate for them to dress in extravagant costumes or pose seductively. In the case of the Alice texts, Carroll exercises this desiring control over his heroine in regards to her appetite. In *Wonderland*, the male author doesn't acknowledge the heroine's hunger and has her consume without appetite, this being an attempt to maintain her purity by separating her appetite and consumption. There are many examples of this, the most obvious being Alice eating the objects marked "Eat Me" simply because she has been instructed to, without expressing any hunger. In contrast, Carroll has Alice voice her hunger many times in *Looking Glass* but he denies her any opportunity to satisfy it. One example is at Alice's coronation feast at the end of the text where she is desperately ravenous but is prevented from eating by the Red and White Queens. It is important to remember that Alice never grows from a child in the texts, even though her size increases. This is because the positioning of the child and adult figures and Carroll's control of appetite form the basis for acknowledging the anxieties surrounding female sexuality within the texts.

In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the grotesque Queen of Hearts is placed in direct opposition to Alice and is significantly a figure who has a strong association with food. The theft of her tarts renders her even more murderous than usual, leading her to order decapitation, landing Alice in the courtroom and in harm's way, and also resulting in the potential destruction of all the characters Alice has encountered (who become key witnesses in the trial). The depiction of the Queen of Hearts is, as Carroll himself wrote in an article about Alice, an "embodiment of an ungovernable passion—a

blind and aimless Fury" (Gardner 109). So, Carroll himself associates the Queen of Hearts with something uncontrolled (and uncontrollable), horrifying and feminine. Additionally, the Queen of Hearts mirrors, in many ways, the British Queen Victoria, with John Tenniel's illustrations bearing a particular resemblance to her. This is interesting because it corresponds to a statement made by Jacques Lacan and used by Creed in order to bolster her argument for vagina dentata. Lacan once said "Queen Victoria, there's a woman. . . . when one encounters a toothed vagina of such exceptional size. . . ." (Creed 106); to continue on, it would presumably be for Lacan to face castration, or, in the *Wonderland* instance, to have the monstrous woman scream "Off with his head!"

In Freudian terms, the Queen of Hearts' tendency to scream "Off with their heads!" can be read as a castration desire. While my analysis does seek to move away from traditional Freudian interpretations of this text, eliminating the phallus and emasculating *Wonderland*'s mostly male population is an important part in understanding the presence of vagina dentata within the text. This fear of castration is something Carroll associates with the adult females in *Wonderland* while the emasculation of men is a frequent, strong feature of the text. Compared to the Queen of Hearts, the King of Hearts is portrayed as a weak, meek creature who is frightened of his own wife. In terms of traditional gender roles and language, the King occupies the feminine space while the Queen becomes the more dominant, masculine figure. By making the female character the masculine, Carroll aligns a predatory sexuality with her that threatens men and, also, Alice. But this female sexuality is not infallible and is still inferior to the phallus. When Alice grows during the trial, she becomes phallicized and it is only at this point that the Queen feels fear and becomes relatively submissive. This means that Carroll's fear of female sexuality doesn't render it more powerful than a male's—a significant point to make when broaching the issue of subjectivity and agency.

In Knoepfelmacher's recent substantial study on Victorian children's and fantasy texts, *Ventures into Childland*, the author contends that the power/gender dynamic shifts between the two texts in such a way that grants Alice dominance, superiority, and even control over her environment and those she interacts with in the second book. The basis for such a claim is that *Looking Glass* is full of weak male characters as opposed to what Knoepfelmacher presumably sees as strong men in *Wonderland*. Knoepfelmacher states that Carroll, "rather than indulge sentimental longing or an aggressive desire for domination . . . can mock the manifestation of such emotional excesses in a new set of male personages" (195) such as the White King, the White Knight, and the Gnat. This argument grants

Alice with power and control—as it idealizes female sexual power—but is rather shaky. It is impossible to isolate these “weak” men as examples of Alice’s dominance in the second text as almost identical characters are present and are equally overwhelmed by the heroine in *Wonderland*. For example, the King of Hearts is emasculated, the White Rabbit is frightened by Alice and the Mock Turtle is even more weepy than his *Looking Glass* counterpart, the Gnat. Quite simply, *most* of Carroll’s male characters are somehow weak or threatened by the monstrous feminine, the vagina dentata. While I agree that male characters within the Alice texts are mocked, emasculated and weak, this treatment does *not* valorize feminine power, nor is it exclusive to *Through the Looking Glass*. Instead, male characters are weakened in both texts, because they cannot compete with a vicious and frightening female sexuality that threatens them and Carroll’s dream child as Alice moves to join their ranks when she grows into a (female) adult.

The Queen of Hearts is not the sole (female) figure in *Wonderland* who embodies terrifying excess. The Duchess is another bad kind of woman: she is a neglectful mother, she is brash and crude and, importantly, is constantly associated with food. For example, Alice meets the Duchess in her kitchen and nearly all conversations that the pair have result in the Duchess diverting the topic of discussion to food: “He might bite,” Alice cautiously replied, not feeling at all anxious to have the experiment tried.

“Very true,” said the Duchess: “flamingoes and mustard both bite” (*AIW* 121). Here, the Duchess is unnecessarily focusing on food in conversation as opposed to the subject at hand. The Duchess also holds the interesting theory that food affects people’s personalities, which connects strongly to the idea that satisfying hunger is a fulfillment of a sexual desire:

“Maybe it’s pepper that makes people hot-tempered,” she went on, very much pleased at having found a new kind of rule, “and vinegar that makes them sour—and chamomile that makes them bitter—and—and barley sugar and such things that make children sweet-tempered” (*AIW* 119–20).

Considering Carroll’s own approach to girls and their hungers, this idea is fascinating. This is especially so when the Duchess comments further on using food to manipulate personality. Of making children sweeter with the more sweet food they are fed, the Duchess says “I only wish people knew *that*: then they wouldn’t be so stingy about it, you know” (*AIW* 120). This could be Carroll criticizing over feeding children, as this philosophy comes straight from the Duchess—one of the reviled women characters in the text—but given the kind of food Alice has been eating and the ways she has come about her food, it could be Carroll advocating an adult control over what it is that children consume. Either theory here

could apply and it doesn't really change the attitude Carroll has toward food, eating, and women.

It is clear that in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the link between the women and the threat is food within the text. The Queen of Hearts is, like everyone else in Wonderland, quite mad but the extent of her insanity and lust for castration and power is only realized when her food (her tarts) is stolen. Her lack of food (and the subsequent presumed presence of hunger) turns her into a most monstrous being. This is a crucial point to note as it acts as a precursor for the kind of behavior Alice enacts in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, in regards to her attacking and desiring the talking pudding at her coronation feast. In *Wonderland*, The Queen of Hearts is at her most murderous during the trial scene, the final moment of Alice's adventure. In *Looking Glass*, Alice behaves in a similarly vicious way during the feast to celebrate her move from child to woman, which is also the ultimate scene in her alternate world:

'I won't be introduced to the pudding, please,' Alice said rather hastily, 'or we shall get no dinner at all. May I give you some?'

But the Red Queen looked rather sulky, and growled 'Pudding—Alice: Alice—pudding. Remove the pudding!' and the waiters took it away so quickly that Alice couldn't return its bow.

However, she didn't see why the Red Queen should be the only one to give orders; so, as an experiment, she called out 'Waiter! Bring back the pudding!' and there it was again in a moment, like a conjuring-trick. It was so large that she couldn't help feeling a *little* shy with it, as she had been with the mutton: however, she conquered her shyness by a great effort, and cut a slice and handed it to the Red Queen." (*TLG* 331–32).

Here, both between and within *Wonderland* and *Looking Glass*, the females and their attitudes toward food are very similar. These depictions clearly communicate the anxieties Carroll has surrounding hunger, appetite, agency, and women. While the female child is idealized, the female adult is a disgusting creature in Carroll's worlds.

The anxieties surrounding vagina dentata, food and desire, which are present in *Wonderland*, are much more complex when analyzing *Looking Glass*, which is a more sophisticated text. By the time the second of Carroll's Alice texts was published, there were some significant shifts in his world and in his relationship with the little "dream-child" who had inspired his original story. Alice Pleasance Liddell was, by the time *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* was published, a sexually mature woman and no longer the little girl Carroll was so enchanted by. Importantly, Alice's mother, Mrs. Liddell, had withdrawn contact between her family and Carroll for unknown reasons. In Carroll's diaries and letters there has been much effort to suppress whatever facts surround

this issue and it is probable that these will never be known. Despite this, *Looking Glass* can clearly be interpreted as a book of loss, of longing, and of impossible desire. The second Alice book is full of sadness, the pleasure/death principle of Eros/Thanatos present right throughout the pages of the text. In order to understand the shift in tone in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, and the ways the second text deals with desire, food, and vagina dentata, it is important to compare and contrast the representations of appetite and satisfaction in the two books. This is because appetite and satisfaction are essentially the crux of desire in the texts, issues of gender, sexuality, and power being expressed via the portrayal of these two important aspects.

In *Alice in Wonderland*, food is eaten constantly and results in bodily changes but is consumed without any explicit hunger (or desire) being expressed. Alice is continually following (the male author's) instruction. She consumes a bottle marked "Drink Me" simply because it directs her to do so and this forms the basis for the pattern of eating and drinking: something will presumably happen if she does, but it is unclear what that something actually is. It is important that Alice is excluded from knowing in *Wonderland* and it is something that has consciously occurred on Carroll's part. In the original manuscript *Alice's Adventures Underground* (written as a gift from Carroll to his child friend Alice Pleasance Liddell and later changed into *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*), Alice was given significant information regarding the way food would influence her body and this was subsequently taken away from her when the public version of the text was published. For example, in *Alice's Adventures Underground* the Caterpillar tells Alice that the top of the mushroom will make her grow taller and the stalk will make her grow shorter (Carroll 60). In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice is given no such information but is instead given the vague instruction that "one side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter" (AIW 73). This increased ambiguity in the ways the mushroom will change Alice's body is another way for the male author to control her. Alice doesn't know what food will do to her, but is told she must eat it. In fact, in Alice's exchange with the Caterpillar in *Wonderland*, there is ambiguity even as to what it is that will make her grow shorter or taller, Alice needing to clarify: "One side of *What?*" (AIW 73). The result of the editing that has taken place between the two versions of Alice's story is that the final version completely denies her knowledge and therefore any control over what she consumes and the changes her body undertakes as a result of this eating. Alice eats in *Wonderland* because the male author and the male characters direct her to. Importantly, Alice is rarely given the chance to satisfy her hunger. She eats without desire

and without knowledge, her consumption being an innocent and ignorant one that is almost without consent.

In fact, the only time Alice does express her hunger (during the trial scene), she is not given the opportunity to satisfy it with the food object she desires:

In the very middle of the court was a table, with a large dish of tarts upon it: they looked so good, that it made Alice quite hungry to look at them—"I wish they'd get the trial done," she thought, "and hand around the refreshments!" But there seemed to be no chance of this; so she began looking at everything about her to pass away the time.' (AIW 143)

In this sequence, Alice desires the tarts and, realizing she isn't able to eat them, represses this hunger by "looking at everything about her" (AIW 143) to distract her from the objects she wants to consume. This final scene in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a precursor to the way Alice will behave and the appetite that she will express in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*. In this trial scene, Alice shows an aspect of agency, active women possessing a violent (and hungry) sexuality in Carroll's texts, as evidenced by The Queen of Hearts and The Duchess in *Wonderland*. This growing agency implies Alice's imminent move from childhood to adulthood, a theme that becomes the cause for anxiety in *Looking Glass*. Alice finally expresses hunger in the last scene of *Wonderland* in much the same way she will continually express it in the second book, only to have satisfaction thwarted.

In *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* the presence of hunger and the absence of eating become important, both in themselves and in their stark contrast to the depictions of hunger and eating in *Wonderland*. Alice's position as a construct of male desire is explicitly clear in this second text as she is the product of the Red King's Dream. In *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, Carroll is explicit in his mournful desiring of Alice, the terminal acrostic poem being evidence of this:

Still she haunts me, phantomwise,
Alice moving under skies
Never seen by waking eyes . . . (TLG 345)

The above lines refer to several crucial elements that are significant to reading the texts. These elements are Alice Pleasance Liddell's (the real Alice) maturation, which has rendered her undesirable and Mrs. Liddell's banning of contact between Carroll and her daughter. This poem and the feelings of an impossible desire are present throughout *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*. Here, the presence of the pleasure/death

principle (Eros/Thanatos) is clear and this will inform the ways in which female sexuality can be interpreted within this second text.

Eros/Thanatos is present in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* in almost exclusive relation to food, hunger, and eating. A notable exception to this is the “Jabberwocky” poem that in this context is read as the destruction of vagina dentata (aggressive female sexuality). In much the same way Carroll gave his child friend Kathleen Tidy a phallic knife and suggested she use it to stop her appetite, the hero of “Jabberwocky” uses his masculine prowess and his sword (representing the phallus) to kill the dragon, which is symbolic of female sexual desire. This is significant as the embedded destruction of an aggressive, predatory female sexuality—or at least a mature and awakened sexuality—is the one thing that can restore Carroll’s idealized child friend Alice and, indeed, all the other girls he has befriended over the years only to have them grow up. This feeling of loss corresponding with a female child friend’s maturation, which is essentially what *Looking Glass* is about, is neatly expressed in Carroll’s reflection:

About nine out of ten of my child’s friendships get shipwrecked at the critical point where the stream and the river meet, and the child friends once so affectionate become uninteresting acquaintances whom I have no wish to set eyes on again. (Goldschmidt 331)

Looking Glass is full of sadness, with examples such as the *Jabberwocky* informing an understanding of Carroll’s frustrations and anxieties surrounding the loss (repulsive sexual growth) of his female child friends. Here, the *Jabberwocky*’s death represents the victory of the male desire over the repulsive, mature, sexual female (the vagina dentata).

In terms of food, however, there are many instances of Eros/Thanatos being present in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, making an analysis that seeks to read desire and female sexuality in Carroll’s texts much more sophisticated and complex. Firstly, while all examples of Eros/Thanatos are necessarily sado-masochistic, the most brutal and explicit example of this in *Through the Looking Glass* exists in the strange way food is personified in the second Alice text. In the poem “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” recited to Alice by Tweedledum and Tweedledee, the male Walrus befriends the female child Oysters and then proceeds to eat them.

‘It seems a shame’ the Walrus said,
 ‘To play them such a trick.
 After we’ve brought them out so far,

And made them trot so quick!
The Carpenter said nothing but
'The butter's spread too thick!'

'I weep for you,' the Walrus said:
'I deeply sympathize.'
With sobs and tears he sorted out
Those of the largest size,
Holding his pocket-handkerchief
Before his streaming eyes.

'O Oysters,' said the Carpenter,
'You've had a pleasant run!
Shall we be trotting home again?'
But answer there came none—
And this was scarcely odd, because
They'd eaten every one." (TLG 235–36)

All the while the Walrus plans to eat the Oysters, he mourns them. After devouring them, the Walrus "weeps for [them]" (TLG 236), presumably showing remorse for eating his female friends. Alice remarks "[she] likes the Walrus best . . . because he was a *little* sorry for the poor oysters" (TLG 236), ignoring the Carpenter's passive resistance to the murderous feast. Alice's feeling toward the Walrus, her sympathy toward him, validates the kind of desiring and destroying that simultaneously occurs in Looking Glass Land, as well as perhaps justifying for the male author's own attention toward Alice.

Another instance where desiring and destroying occurs in the text is at Alice's feast once she has been crowned Queen. Alice is notably hungry in this book (as opposed to *Wonderland* where she seldom is) and seeks to satisfy her hunger frequently. When she does this at her feast, she is denied satisfaction by the male author, even though her actual desire has been (finally) acknowledged (the latter presumably occurring because she has matured in real life and is now not an innocent child but a mature, sexual woman.)

Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There is essentially a journey from childhood to adulthood for the female as Alice makes her way across the chessboard, progressing from pawn to Queen. The absence of satisfaction and the overwhelming presence of hunger and desire in this text are aspects of Eros/Thanatos being expressed. "The Walrus and the Carpenter" is one example of this, but there are many more instances of this desire and destruction and of sadomasochism throughout the text.

The key philosophy of Looking Glass Land, being “Jam to-morrow, Jam yesterday but never Jam to-day“ (*TLG* 247), is one that uses food to understand the impossibility of achieving satisfaction on the other side of the mirror. This idea is expressed perhaps most sadly in the depiction of the White Knight. The White Knight is said to be a caricature of Carroll (Gardner 296) and, if this is indeed the case, adds another layer of pathos and sadness to the story and this analysis. The White Knight muses about his desire for a pudding that he acknowledges can never, ever exist. The impossible pudding indicates that there is no satisfaction to be had in Looking Glass Land and really emphasizes the presence of the idea of Eros/Thanatos in the text. When Alice comes to leave the White Knight, it is exactly at the moment she enters the final chess square to become Queen (woman), and the farewell is quite drawn out. The White Knight sings a melancholy tune (called “The Aged, Aged Man”) and makes Alice very sad but she finds that she cannot cry at this point. There is a sense of loss in this exchange: the final reality of Alice’s adulthood and the fact that Carroll’s child friend is gone forever are resoundingly clear.

Food connects loss/denial and desire in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* and in the same way the impossible pudding sums up desire and longing for the White Knight, the talking pudding becomes the final connection between Eros/Thanatos and vagina dentata for the newly matured Alice at her coronation feast. In the same way that the Queen of Hearts became murderous and reached the pinnacle of her repulsiveness in the final Wonderland scene, during the trial regarding her stolen food in *Wonderland*, so Alice becomes similarly aggressive and violent during the last *Looking Glass* scene, at her feast. Alice, despite being told it is impolite to eat food once it has been introduced to her by the two Queens, finds her hunger (which has constantly been either prevented from being satisfied or been satisfied without her feeling any hunger) overwhelms her to the point where she is prepared to kill to eat. This new attitude coincides with her move into Queendom (adulthood) and aligns her with the other fearsome women (the Duchess, The Queen of Hearts, the Red and White Queens) whereas she has previously been positioned to oppose them. Food and hunger meet only this one time in Carroll’s Alice texts and even here, the eating is only implied, Carroll presumably still wanting to idealize Alice to a certain extent. Here, Alice kills to satisfy desire, Eros/Thanatos quite clearly present. Additionally, her killing to satisfy her desire aligns her with the frightening women in Carroll’s texts and emphasises the notion of vagina dentata.

Again, in *Looking Glass*, the woman figures are positioned as Alice’s enemies and this opposition is, as it was in *Wonderland*, intimately con-

nected with food. This is best illustrated in the following exchange, which occurs between the Red Queen and Alice:

"I'm quite content to stay here-only I *am* so hot and thirsty!"

"I know what *you'd* like!" the Queen said good-naturedly, taking a little box out of her pocket. "Have a biscuit?"

Alice thought it would not be civil to say "No", though it wasn't at all what she wanted. So she took it, and ate it as well as she could: and it was *very* dry: and she thought she had never been so nearly choked in all her life. (TLG 211).

Here, desire is either misread by the Red Queen (placing her in opposition to Alice) or Alice confuses her own desire (in which case she is experiencing an awkward stage in the move between childhood and adulthood, the pubescent stage). In either case, woman— either the actual woman embodied by the Red Queen or the woman Alice is to become—is enemy. This scene is an absolutely crucial moment within the text as it is the initiation of Alice into womanhood. Here, Alice's objective in Looking-glass Land is first revealed, her journey from Pawn (child) to Queen (woman) commencing at this point. Alice finds this moment unpleasant, but eats the biscuit out of a feeling of obligation and expectation. The Eros/Thanatos theme is present again as the food doesn't satisfy Alice but only leaves her desiring something else (in this case a drink).

Carroll's Alice texts feature food very strongly, this inviting an analysis of desire, sexuality and gender. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* shift slightly in their approach to these issues, but there are similarities. Essentially, female sexuality is reviled by Carroll whereas female passivity is idealized. Carroll places women and girls in opposition to each other in both texts, Eros/Thanatos and Creed's notion of vagina dentata pertinent in this analysis regarding food, appetite and desire. Alice is desired and controlled by the male gaze. It is important for the male author's control to be acknowledged so that a feminist reading of the texts can take place. What is most clear from this study of gender, desire and subjectivity in the Alice texts in terms of food is that Carroll's heroine is *not* the active, feminist child critics have long held her to be. Instead, Alice is a passive heroine who is denied her own feelings of hunger in order to satisfy a desiring male gaze.

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