

SUBVERSION IN THE CHILDREN'S FANTASY NOVEL

**THEMES AND TECHNIQUES OF SUBVERSION
IN THE CHILDREN'S FANTASY NOVEL FROM THE
VICTORIAN TO THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD**

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

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**MASTER OF ARTS (1999)
(English)**

**McMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario**

**TITLE: Themes and Techniques of Subversion in the Children's Fantasy Novel from
the Victorian to the Contemporary Period**

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NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 123

ABSTRACT

Fantasy stories have their roots in oral storytelling and fairy tales, but it was in the Victorian era that fantasy flourished and developed into a distinctive genre for children in the works of writers such as Lewis Carroll, George MacDonald, and E. Nesbit. Fantasy's coincidence with Romantic perceptions of the child helped to secure its acceptance by the public.

This thesis examines four works of children's fantasy through textual analysis situated within a socio-historical context, and argues that these four works criticize the society of their time and offer their own visions of better societies. The works examined are as follows: Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There (1871), Norton Juster's The Phantom Tollbooth (1961), and Paul Stewart's The Thought Domain (1988). Using similar literary techniques, these novels express concerns about and perceptions of the child, the educational system and its goals for teaching the child, and other social problems arising from modernization in their respective socio-historical time periods.

Through their novels' fantasy worlds, Carroll, Juster, and Stewart offer alternatives to the societies in which their children live. They desire societies that are less egotistical and rigid in their thinking, and that have people in them who are more conscious of social

problems, especially as they affect children. These three authors also desire societies that value children and their abilities more highly, and that are conducive to children's development.

To my knowledge, there have not been any previous, extended studies of Juster's or Stewart's novels, nor comparisons between them and Carroll's Alice novels, so this study hopes to offers an original contribution, and also show how earlier fantasy works can influence those that come after.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. John Ferns for his assistance and helpful advice, and for the time that he took to edit my drafts and offer suggestions for improvement. In addition, I would like to thank Dr. Ron Granofsky and Dr. Grace Kehler for reading my thesis and suggesting improvements for it.

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I. Introduction to the Fantasy Genre: Mirroring and Criticising Society

According to Charles Glicksberg, literature is shaped by and reflects the socio-historical context in which it is written (140). Glicksberg examines literature as a social institution, recognizing that “literature does not operate in a vacuum; it is preeminently a social act as well as a social product” (1) that “must be situated in its cultural and historical context” (140). He acknowledges the imaginative components that are necessarily part of a work of fiction, but asserts that a story “creates an image, however distorted or idealized, of the society in which its characters have their being” (75). However, while literature is a “mirror of society,” it is also “a mirror of wishes and dreams” (Rockwell 37) that envision alternative realities that are better than present ones. The “literature of social criticism” aims to speak to the reader’s conscience and make her/him aware of society’s problems and injustices by exploring the “gap between the ideal and the real” (Glicksberg 143). The “ideal” Glicksberg defines as the author’s vision of what society should be, whereas the “real,” in his terms, is the actual socio-historical conditions of the author’s time. Literature “creates an imaginative world of its own” (Glicksberg 141), through which the writer can expose the inadequacies of society, criticizing and undermining them as well as offering alternatives. The author hopes that, through the gap between the ideal and real, her/his work will “induce his readers to look

into their heart and determine their degree of guilt for what has befallen them and their world” (Glicksberg 143).

These views of the relationship between literature and society are found in various approaches to the fantasy genre. Numerous critics have proposed definitions for the fantasy genre, including J. R. R. Tolkien in his well-known Tree and Leaf (1964). While he discusses “fairy-stories,” his insights can be equally applied to the fantasy genre. He suggests that fantasy is “made out of the Primary World” (53), through which the writer “sub-creates” a “Secondary World,” or fantasy world, that has consistent laws (36-37). However, Tolkien’s focus is limiting because it excludes those stories that have fantastical elements, but which do not necessarily take place entirely in fictive universes.

Definitions of fantasy have also created typologies and categories in attempting to clarify what a fantasy genre is. Such attempts can be limiting because categorizations can become abstract. For example, in Rosemary Jackson’s approach to the fantasy novel, which she also calls the “fantastic” novel, she situates fantasy between the literary modes of the “marvellous” and the “mimetic.” She suggests that the narrative of the “marvellous” novel represents events from the distant past that have no implications for the present. Such a narrative has a passive relation to reality, while the “mimetic” novel implicitly claims to depict accurately the real world. She argues that the fantasy novel incorporates elements of the marvellous and mimetic, as it “borrow[s] the extravagance of one and the ordinariness of the other...and is without their assumptions of confidence or presentations of authoritative truth” (Jackson 35).

Over Jackson, I prefer the definitions of fantasy offered by critics such as C. N. Manlove, Kathryn Hume, Ann Swinfen, and Brian Attebery. While broad, their definitions are illuminating because the range of works that one can consider fantasy are diverse in the fantastical elements they include. Kathryn Hume suggests that fantasy “is any departure from consensus reality” (21). Fantasy, therefore, contains elements of the impossible, which can take the form of either transgressions of physical laws, or technological and social innovations that have not occurred (Hume 21). Similarly, Ann Swinfen suggests that the essential ingredient of fantasy is “‘the marvellous,’ which will be regarded as anything outside the normal space-time continuum of the everyday world” (5).¹

Within the fantasy genre, approaches to fantasy literature are diverse, but I suggest that they can be divided into two main areas. The first type of approach tends to focus on fantasy’s benefits to the individual and on the internal workings of the fantasy novel. These include psychological and psychoanalytic perspectives such as the Freudian approach, and structuralist approaches such as Tzvetan Todorov’s that focus on fantasy’s internal structure. Penelope Farmer is a critic who discusses fantasy’s benefits largely in individual terms. She discusses the effect of fantasy on the audience (30-31), which she links to the primary function of art: “For me, chiefly, [fantasy’s and art’s] function is to communicate, and particularly to communicate the almost incommunicable—that is feelings and experiences of every kind—emotional, spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic; all of which helps to lessen the huge distances between ourselves and other people, so making us feel less isolated, less alone” (30). Other approaches suggest that fantasy is a form of

escape from our own world. Todorov's approach to fantasy in The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre (1973) focuses on fantasy's structure and form. He does mention that fantasy makes reference to everyday reality, but only insofar as reality is used to construct a fantasy work, rather than reality being examined in a work of fantasy. In addition, he does not discuss fantasy's relation to its socio-historical context. Instead, his study focuses on defining the key characteristics of the fantastic (33), and he constructs a typology for the different types of the fantastic (44). Approaches such as the structuralist tend to downplay the author's agency, the author's communication with her/his readers, and the reader's agency. Other critics focus on creating typologies to categorize works within the fantasy genre, which I see as an extension of Todorov's approach.² Again, these are useful but limiting because fantasy works may not necessarily fit neatly into categories.

Certainly, these approaches to fantasy are valuable, because many fantasies are escapist and entertaining. However, for the purposes of the present study, I find a second type of approach more relevant. This approach emphasizes fantasy's relation to its socio-historical context; this relates more closely to Glickberg's and Rockwell's views of literature as simultaneously reflecting, while critiquing, society. Such an approach to fantasy examines the relationship between literature and society, and analyses whether literature affirms social ideologies and attitudes, or subverts them. In addition, such an approach recognizes that a work of fantasy is a product of its time, yet has the potential to challenge society within, or despite, its fantastic structure. Unlike the first approach, the socio-historical approach recognizes that authors are affected by their social milieu.

Both approaches differ in the extent to which they link fantasy and reality and the nature of the connection between the two. For example, I find Rosemary Jackson's model limiting, as she focuses on the subversive intent of fantasy as primarily involving a critique of the objective world we live in and the ontological and epistemological assumptions by which we make sense of it. She suggests that a central thematic concern of fantasy is the problem of visioning the "real world," as fantasy "interrogates nominal unities of time, space, and character, as well as questioning the possibility, or honesty, of fictional re-presentation of those unities" (Jackson 175). Fantasy moves towards an area of "non-signification" that exposes the gap between sign and meaning (38), "dramatiz[ing] the impossibility of arriving at definitive meaning, or absolute reality" (41). While these elements are undoubtedly part of the secondary worlds in fantasy novels that function according to "laws" different from our own, the model does not work as well for fantasy texts that criticize the socio-historical developments of society through techniques such as satire and irony. Such works of fantasy often ask for answers to the problems that they see with society, rather than undermining monolithic representations of the "real world" that Jackson's model emphasizes. At some points, Jackson seems to affirm that fantasy can critique the socio-historical conditions in which it is written. She suggests that fantasy allows the "unseen of culture" to be seen, suggesting that which is suppressed—in other words, alternative points of view. However, she does not pursue these points.

In contrast, Ann Swinfen is explicit in seeing fantasy as a critique of social reality. She emphasizes the potential of fantasy to criticize socio-historical conditions,

particularly through the use of symbolism and allegory (100). Defending the value of fantasy literature, Swinfen asserts that fantasy allows writers “to comment upon the real world and to explore moral, philosophical, and other dilemmas posed by it” (Swinfen 231). Swinfen suggests that “a natural outcome of the moral disillusionment which has followed on the disasters of twentieth-century history has been the questioning of traditional ideals” (192), and that fantasy is “as much as the ‘realist novel’...about reality—about the human condition. All serious fantasy is deeply rooted in human experience and is relevant to human living” (231). She defends fantasy against the charge that the “‘realist’ mode of writing is somehow more profound, more morally committed, more involved with ‘real’ human concerns” than fantasy (Swinfen 10). She argues that the fantasy genre is equally effective in critiquing society. Fantasy gives the writer more freedom to critique society, because the writer is free from the restrictions of the realist novel (Swinfen 92), including the necessity of depicting society “accurately.” Through the construction of a fantasy world, the writer can “offer his own view of society or philosophy of life” (92) and construct a new set of values through which society’s problems can be addressed: “fantasy provides the writer with greater scope to construct his own scheme of morality, his own time structure, his own political and social order” (Swinfen 231).

I recognize the danger of over-emphasizing the author’s role in creating the work of fantasy alone. Perhaps, an author may not have intended to put certain elements in the fantasy story or intended them to have particular meanings. However, authors do have intentions in writing to and communicating with readers, whether for entertainment or

more serious purposes. What a reader gets from a fantasy text is important in the process of acquiring meaning from it, and a reader will inevitably relate to the text within the context of her/his personal and social experience.

Several critics of fantasy, including Lloyd Alexander, Madeline L'Engle, Carmen Richardson, Guy Kay, and Roger W. Drury have commented similarly on the value of the fantasy genre in critiquing social reality. They disagree with the idea that fantasy is merely escapist literature, a view often held by earlier critics (see Attebery, Strategies of Fantasy). Earlier literary critics did not give fantasy literature the same importance as it is given today. Citing one example of the lack of academic attention given to fantasy, Attebery discusses that when a collection of essays on J. R. R. Tolkien was published in 1968, "virtually nothing in the way of theory...had been proposed for the examination of fantasy" (Strategies of Fantasy 18).³

Lloyd Alexander echoes Swinfen's assertions about fantasy; he argues that fantasy's "true subject is the human condition" (170) and that the mechanics of the fantasy world are of secondary importance (171). He suggests that the author of the fantasy work is strongly influenced by the socio-historical context in which s/he writes. A work of fantasy is "a conscious creation by a conscious creator," who offers "his unique and personal vision of the people" (170). Fantasy explores that which has been previously unexplored or thought impossible by opening us to new possibilities: "Fantasy begins far closer to the real than we are used to supposing, and it extends as a tantalizing fringe of the probable many, many leagues out, blending at last imperceptibly into the impossible" (Drury 115).

Therefore, fantasy not only examines society, but also leads us to reexamine ourselves and question values that may be detrimental to our personal and social lives. Fantasy can give us hope that things can be improved: “Whether we’re children or grownups, fantasy can move us because it suggests a world where all we value as human beings—courage, justice, love—really work. And if ‘they lived happily ever after,’ maybe someday we can learn how to do it, too” (Alexander 174). In this respect, fantasy is subversive because it does not accept the status quo. Instead, it questions the status quo and makes us aware of its problem, and suggests solutions to those problems through the imaginative elements of the story. As Lucie Owen asserts, in a fantasy novel “we have the chance to see problems solved, not just put off or compromised about,” for fantasy offers “the vision of clear values...[where] the reader can tell what is good and what is evil” (Owen 76-77).

In children’s fantasy novels, another element of subversion occurs with respect to the child. Fantasy is inherently liberating for the child because the author places the child in a position of power that s/he may not normally possess in the real world. In the fantasy novel, the child protagonist can reject the constraints of the adult world and assert her/himself. More importantly, it is the child, rather than adults, who ultimately overcomes obstacles and reaches goals. Such resolutions implicitly value the child as someone who is independent and responsible enough to solve problems.

Kath Filmer asserts that works of fantasy are particularly important in the twentieth-century because they offer a sense of hope for the future: “Fantasy, more than ever, performs its priestly, prophetic function, alerting readers to the social and spiritual

dangers of apathy and cynicism; while offering reassurance and hope for a better tomorrow” (137). Filmer suggests that twentieth-century fantasy has been significantly influenced by nineteenth-century Romanticism. Like Romanticism, fantasy valorizes the power of the imagination. Suggesting that fantasy, to an extent, replaced the declining influence of religion in the nineteenth century, Filmer asserts that the fantasy author is like a prophet or priest: “If fantasy literature is the voice of hope in this age of discontinuity, displacement, and despair, then the authors of fantasy mediate that voice so that the readers can engage with it and experience, through the regeneration of their own imaginative faculties, the rebirth of hope” (20).

Through various literary techniques, fantasies comment on and critique socio-historical conditions and their problems. These literary techniques range from the more overt techniques of satire and parody to more subtle and indirect techniques such as allegory, irony, figurative language, and imagery. According to Brian Connery and Kirk Combe, satire insists upon a historical specificity, as the object of attack is grounded in the socio-historical context in which the work is written. Behind satire is the intention of the author, who deliberately draws attention to the object of attack. Satire’s “self-proclaimed purpose, which is social rather than aesthetic...[is] to lash vice and make folly ridiculous” (5). Satire is also flexible because it often uses other literary techniques such as irony, parody, and oxymoron (9), and frequently appears within other literary genres (5).

Rabkin suggests that the fantasy genre is particularly useful for satire because satire is inherently fantastic (146). He uses “fantastic” to refer to those imaginary elements within a work of fantasy that do not exist in our “real world,” asserting that “the fantastic gives us the chance to try out new, ‘unrealistic’ possibilities, and thus, perhaps change seen reality” (216, 217-227). In other words, fantasy makes the reader aware of new perspectives on reality that challenge the status quo. Satire involves “stating the reverse of the truth as though it were the clear truth” (146). He further suggests that fantasy is self-reflexive, as it comments on its own ground rules and draws attention to the constructed nature of social reality. Therefore, through fantasy, satire acquires new possibilities, because the writer is not confined to the limits of our “reality” (see Swinfen above). The fantasy writer can create imaginary situations and characters that offer powerful critiques; these critiques expose the objects of criticism as detached from reality and, therefore, changeable.

Social criticism, or more specifically, satire, also makes use of parody, which is closely aligned to satire as it subverts the normal by overturning its conventions. M. H. Abrams’s definition of parody is limiting, as he focuses on the parody of literary works; parody “imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, or the distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical stylistic and other features of a serious literary genre, and applies the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject” (Abrams *et al.* 18). Parody makes fun of its subject without the harsh tone of satire. However, satire does include parody, as it mocks its subject in order to criticize and undermine it. The difference between the two lies in tone and intent;

whereas parody tends to make fun of something without offering an alternative, beneath satirical comments is an implicit alternative that the author holds as a corrective to the current situation. The author does not necessarily have to be conscious of this, but satirizing does signal discontent with the current situation.

Irony is a central technique in satire that reveals discrepancies between what the characters in the story or the reader expect to happen, and what actually occurs. Such discrepancies are the means through which the satirical intent of the author is revealed to the reader, as they draw upon the reader's knowledge of his own reality in order to subvert it. Central to the effectiveness of irony are the author's intentions, and the ability of the reader to grasp these intentions and identify the irony that the author wants to communicate. Various types of irony can occur through narrative, dialogue, character, and other aspects of fantasy. Verbal irony occurs when the meaning of the speaker in a narrative differs sharply from the meaning that is supposedly expressed. Narrative (or dramatic) irony occurs when the events that happen are prefigured, but are not those the audience wish for. The discrepancy between what is expected and what actually occurs often highlights the objects of satire and of social criticism.

Allegory is another technique that an author can use for the purpose of social criticism. Waggoner suggests that "fantasy is not allegorical, but metaphorical" (27). However, I disagree with Waggoner because works of fantasy can be allegorical; allegory can take the form of something that is imaginary, but which alludes to events in the real world. In a work of fantasy, imaginative elements such as the events, characters, or setting of the author's constructed fantasy world can function as allegories to problems in

our own world. In Modern Allegory and Fantasy, Lynette Hunter attempts to distinguish between fantasy and allegory, without really acknowledging that allegory can be found in fantasy. For example, a work of fantasy can use anthropomorphic characters in order to allegorize human vices or failings. Similarly, the fantasy story's narrative may include an imaginary "secondary world" that is separate from our own world, but it may involve an allegory of historical events or current societal developments. Ellen Leyburn links satire with allegory and suggests that the common types of frameworks for satiric allegories are "stories of plot, the presentation of false heroes, animal stories, journeys, and future worlds" (14). She further asserts that the allegorical satirist will find the fantasy genre appealing because of its imaginative possibilities. The satirist can construct an imaginary world, onto which s/he can allegorically project the failings of this world (Leyburn 71).⁴

M. H. Abrams divides allegory into two main areas: through plot and through characters. He states that an allegory "is a narrative fiction in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived to make coherent sense on the 'literal,' or primary level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of agents, concepts, and events" (4). The two main types of allegory are the historical and political allegory and the allegory of ideas. In the former, the characters and actions "represent, or 'allegorize,' historical personages and events" (4), while in the latter, the story's elements usually personify abstract entities such as "virtues, vice, states of mind, modes of life, and types of character" (4).

Symbolism, figurative language and imagery are other techniques that authors use to critique society. A symbol involves a “word or phrase that signifies an object or event which in its turn signifies something, or has a range of reference, beyond itself” (Abrams *et al.* 206). Figurative language “is a departure from what users of the language apprehend as the standard meaning of words, or else the standard order of words, in order to achieve some special meaning or effect” (Abrams *et al.* 66). These include such devices as simile and metaphor, while imagery uses language to evoke often visual images that can take either “realistic” or fantastical forms in fantasy novels.

Not all fantasies are primarily aimed at social criticism. Some focus on entertaining the reader through fantastical elements alone. But I argue that all fantasies are linked to the real world in some way; the fantasy works differ in the degree to which they allude to or incorporate elements from our own world into their narratives. In turn, this will reflect the extent to which we should read a fantasy in relation to the real world, the extent to which the fantasy is critiquing it, and the extent to which it offers (either implicitly or explicitly) an alternative vision of society.

Like other literary genres, the development of the fantasy genre has been shaped by previous literary influences and socio-historical contexts. In her discussion of the fantasy genre and its historical development, Sheila Egoff suggests that the fantasy genre has its roots in the traditional modes of storytelling that encompass myth, legend, and folktale. She argues that modern fantasists often make use of elements found in myth, legend, and the folktale, including the presence of magical and mystical events,

imaginative characters and the supernatural. According to Brian Attebery, the fairy tale, or *märchen*, is a type of folktale that is the earliest kind of fantasy; it embodies several characteristics of the fantasy story that will emerge as a distinctive genre in the nineteenth century. Fairy tales were told by our ancestors, not only to entertain others, but also to express themselves and to criticize the society in which they lived: “the story is...an outlet for protesting social injustices and fulfillment of the hopes and wishes of man generally, especially of the poor man in backward, rural communities” (Attebery, The Fantasy Tradition 4). Like fantasy, fairy tales offer a vision of society that is fulfilled by the protagonist in the story; the realizing of this vision is possible in the fairy tale because it draws upon the imagination for its story, rather than being restricted by “true” events or the actual society in which our ancestors lived. As discussed earlier, critics and children’s fantasy writers have discussed the links between the fantasy novel and our own society, and suggested that fantasies speak to and critique society.

However, the development of the fantasy genre was inhibited by societal attitudes towards children that in turn affected what was produced for children to read. During the age of reason, the fairy tale was sometimes suppressed because critics considered the imagination dangerous. The fairy tale was seen as amoral (Darton 94) because it encouraged the imagination. Mrs. Trimmer was one such critic who saw fairy tales as part of that “infantine and juvenile literature” (Darton 96) that is destructive to children: “In general, anything that smacked of impossibility, absurdity, unbridled fancy was alien to eighteenth-century ways of thought” (Townsend 30). The dispute over children’s books at this time was, according to Darton, fundamentally between the imagination and

rationalism (99), and that has been a dominant struggle in the history of children's literature: "It involves the belief that anything fantastic...is inherently noxious, or at least so void of good as to be actively dangerous" (99). This position, along with society's attitudes towards children influenced what was published and what children were allowed to read. During the eighteenth century, Locke's Some Thoughts Concerning Education (1693) and Rousseau's Emile (1764) were used to demonstrate the importance of educating the child to reason, and to reinforce the view that children should be given instructional and moral reading materials. As a result, during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in England, the primary form of children's literature were moral tales (Sandner 3) that emphasized writing to, as opposed to for, the child (Sandner 3, 23). Works for children with fantasy elements were suppressed, and children's authors at that time focused on instilling morals and emphasizing instruction over entertainment. Fantasy that did exist was often didactic (Smith 86).

Paralleling these developments in England, American authors such as Parson Mason Locke Weens and Peter Parley around this time also focused on instilling morals: "The horn book and battledore and earlier primers were undisguised religious teaching materials" (Haviland 35). Other prominent American works with similar intentions included The New England Primer, and moral children's books were also imported from England (Haviland 36-37). While Peter Parley is "known as the first author of American children's books to put as much emphasis on entertainment as instruction" (Haviland 38), he nevertheless "could not see the importance of anything nonfactual" (39). Children's fiction before 1860 was largely written for the purposes of educating children in morality.

However, the fantasy genre seemed to develop more freely in the United States, as various authors such as Irving, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville incorporated supernatural and fantastic elements into their stories (Attebery The Fantasy Tradition, 36-57). Romance writers “helped clear the way for more fully developed fantasies concerned not so much with shadows and ambiguity as with sheer wonder, told with a full measure of belief” (Attebery, The Fantasy Tradition 58).

In mid-nineteenth century Victorian England, Romantic ideas and changing social attitudes towards the child contributed to the revitalization of the fantasy genre (Smith 121, 177). Childhood toys grew in elaboration and variety (Smith 98), and other forms of entertainment for children also developed (103). Darton sees the nineteenth century as the time of a clear break from the moral tale, and with it the revitalization of the fairy tale and creation of more imaginary and creative works (202-203): “lowlier levities, conceived in the same amoral spirit...” (202). But the impulse that was lacking (212) was revitalized in the 1860s with Kingsley’s The Water Babies (1863) and Carroll’s Alice books (1865, 1871) (261). Works with fantasy elements flourished, including William Brighty Rands’s Lilliput tales (1864-1872) (Darton 274). During the 1860s, books for girls also changed (288-289). By the end of the 1860s, the overtly moral/didactic tales were almost gone: “Fiction was by now a long way predominant over fact, magic was not rebuked but at large, nonsense was free” (290).

In the United States, Hawthorne “led the way for a great many American children’s writers in the nineteenth century” (Attebery, The Fantasy Tradition 63). Authors who wrote fantasy and fairy tales included writers such as Virginia Baker, Frank

Stockton and Howard Pyle (68-69). However, writers such as James Kirke Paulding and Christopher P. Cranch (75-76) who tried to “transport fairy materials to this continent were not so successful” (74). Nevertheless, their stories still had strong points. Apart, perhaps, from Mark Twain, the first truly American fantasy appeared in 1900 with L. Frank Baum’s The Wizard of Oz (82), and after this other writers began “to make use of the American scene for children’s fantasies” (109).

The fantasy genre for children continued to grow in the twentieth century, developing new forms that reflected changing attitudes towards childhood as well as literary developments in other areas of children’s literature (Egoff 174-176). For example, Egoff suggests that there were dramatic changes in children’s literature during the 1960s, as “it was the decade when the term ‘realism’ was first applied to a novel for the young” (173). The “problem” novel for children proliferated and dealt with contemporary issues that had not been focused on before; these included divorce, drug addiction, sexuality, and child abuse (175). Children’s fantasies of this time were similarly extensions of reality and dealt with moral and social issues. Fantasies shifted in the 1980s and introduced new directions, including the melding of realistic settings with the magical (273) and the use of time travel to return to the past (284). The idea of fantasy as therapy carried over from the 1970s as well. Egoff ends her study by relating fantasy back to its socio-historical context, and asserts that “the best fantasies remind us of our humanity” (310).

For the purposes of this study, I have chosen to focus on four works of fantasy that reveal strong connections between the fantasy worlds within the novels and the socio-historical context in which the novels were written. The novels that I discuss are Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) and Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There (1871), Norton Juster's The Phantom Tollbooth (1961), and Paul Stewart's The Thought Domain (1988). While these four fantasies were written at different times, they reveal common concerns with society's attitudes towards the child and with social problems; they express their concern through similar literary techniques that enhance our awareness of the social problems presented.

All four novels use the fantasy genre as a form of escape from the real world in order to critique it from within a fantasy world that operates according to different "rules," expectations, and physical "laws." Through criticism, each author implicitly offers a vision of a better society. In this respect, a utopia is implicitly presented in each novel, as the each story encourages us to see how change in our own world is possible by demonstrating the possibility for change in a fantasy world.

I will analyse the four works by first situating them within their socio-historical contexts. Also, I will offer a textual analysis of the literary techniques used to express each novel's social critique. The selected authors use similar literary techniques to criticize society and to offer alternatives to it; humour is an important element of these authors' techniques, because making something laughable inherently suggests an incongruity and deficiency between what is made fun of and what ought to be. As Ken Davis suggests, humour can "suddenly hurl us out of the monotony of everyday life"

(309), allowing us to see things in different ways. Through humour, we can draw attention to human failings.

The technique of “showing” through significant imagery helps to make the child visually aware of the problems presented. Of course, there are also playful elements in these fantasy works that are not part of the authors’ social critique. I will touch on these elements, but they will not be the main focus of my analysis.

In addition, I argue that the fantasy world in each novel liberates the child protagonist from the constraints and expectations of the society in which s/he lives, placing her/him in a position of power. This empowering of the child is significant, for it is the child in all three authors’ novels who embodies and implements the solutions to the social problems of their respective societies. Each author values the child’s qualities of imagination, sense of independence, and ability to triumph over obstacles.

Finally, I will draw comparisons and contrasts between the three authors’ texts. I argue that Carroll’s novels have influenced Juster’s and Stewart’s novels, and that Juster’s has significantly influenced Stewart’s novel. Influences are revealed in the similar issues that these three authors raise, as well as in the similarity in the literary techniques that they use to dramatize these issues. Literary allusions are important in each of the four novels. Also, the four novels have similarities in narrative and plot development that contribute to the author’s social criticism.

II. Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass

Lewis Carroll was born on January 27, 1832, “during the reign of William IV, in the parsonage of Daresbury in Cheshire” (Cohen 3). His mother detected his “uncommon nature” during his childhood. His home was “dominated by Evangelical orderliness and the rule of denial” (Cohen 10). Early in his youth, his creative talents developed and he published in his family’s magazines. He was educated in classics, mathematics, and science, with the intention of a scholarly career (Cohen 53-55), but became fascinated with photography and later, with “child nature” (Cohen 105). Carroll’s view of childhood was greatly influenced by the Romanticism of Coleridge, Blake and (possibly) Rousseau, and by the Victorianism of Dickens (Cohen 107-108): “For both Blake and Charles [Dickens], the child is the measure of all good, and the child’s intrinsic qualities show how mankind has moved away from eternal values” (Cohen 111). Dickens influenced Carroll’s writing, as Carroll imbibed Dickens’s techniques of “humorous exaggeration and stinging irony” (Cohen 118-119). Morton Cohen suggests that Carroll’s upbringing contributed to his sensitivities towards children and their behavior, and consequently to his friendships with young girls and thence to the writing of the Alice books: “perhaps...this interest developed into a need, an essential component of his own happiness” (106).

Carroll's interest in children was reflected in the friendships that he developed with them. In particular, his friendship with Alice Liddel was to be the most significant, because it was during their friendship that he wrote the first Alice novel—a novel that generations of readers have since enjoyed. Carroll's friendship with Alice Liddel came about due to his friendship with Alice's father, Henry George Liddel. After Dean Gaisford died on June 2, 1855, Henry George Liddel took over the deanery of Christ Church, Oxford, over which he presided for thirty-six years (Mogen 53, 57-58). His influence on Christ Church was significant, "particularly his determination to change everything from eating arrangements in Hall to liberalizing the curriculum and refashioning the shape and fabric of the college" (Cohen 58). Liddell's was a sharp and dramatic break from his predecessor Gaisford, who had been very conservative and opposed to change of any kind. Carroll himself was teaching at Christ Church during Gaisford's time, and soon became friends with Henry Liddel. His hobby of photography allowed Carroll access to the Liddel children, whom he photographed and with whom he eventually cultivated a friendship (Cohen 62). Even though he was a busy tutor, Carroll "did not slight his creative promptings" (Cohen 71).

The idea for Alice in Wonderland arose on a boat trip in 1862, during which Carroll composed the story impromptu for Alice Liddel. She later asked him to write it into a book, and "'kept going on, going on' at him until he promised to oblige her" (Cohen 126). Carroll wrote down his story as Alice's Adventures Under Ground, included his own illustrations and gave it to Alice as a Christmas gift in 1864. The

positive responses that Carroll received from Alice as well as from George MacDonald and his son Greville encouraged him to submit the story for publication.

Alice in Wonderland appeared in 1865, illustrated by the famous Punch cartoonist John Tenniel. Tenniel also illustrated its sequel Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There, which was published in 1871. Cohen suggests that Carroll's sequel also "grew directly out of shared experiences with the Liddell sisters," and links several events in Carroll's story to actual events during that time (136).

Both books were instant successes with children and adults. While some reviews were negative or indifferent, the books' popularity was reflected in their sales (Cripps 42; Cohen 130-135); they went through several editions in Carroll's lifetime, and were also adapted twice into plays. A key theme in both books is the child: "The Victorian idea...of the child is at the heart of both stories" (Cohen 137). Carroll's novels reflect changing Victorian attitudes towards the child and to the depiction of the child in novels. As Cohen notes, the "lyrical landscape of pure and innocent childhood...[became] almost doctrine for many Victorian writers" (118). Similarly, Peter Coveney asserts that the child became a symbol of imagination and sensibility in a world "given increasingly to utilitarian values and the Machine" (31).

Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There both operate as implicit commentaries on the institutions, lifestyle, and debates of the Victorian era. Carroll parodies and satirizes—as well as offering an escape from—Victorian society in his fantasy world. He undermines and subverts the

“normal” rules and conventions of mid-Victorian society. It is useful to examine both books together, for in both, Carroll deals with similar themes using similar literary techniques. The social critique in his Alice novels is centered upon the following themes: mid-Victorian attitudes towards the child and the child’s place in the adult world; religious and intellectual debates occurring at the time; and social conventions and changes in societal and personal lifestyles.

In examining these critiques in each novel, I will analyse each narrative, the characters that Alice encounters in her journey through the fantasy world, and the fantasy world itself. The techniques that Carroll uses for his social critique include the structural techniques of narrative, plot structure and development, and textual techniques of word play, symbolism, allegory, and satire. Carroll’s social criticism is enhanced by his use of the fantasy genre, for through it frees himself from the rules and conventions of mid-Victorian society. Fantasy allows Carroll to construct an alternative world that draws his readers’ attention to the unquestioned values and social structure under which they live and to which they are expected to subscribe.

Alice’s journeys through Wonderland and the land beyond the Looking-Glass are satiric allegories of the child’s development into adulthood. While it is true that both of these stories take place in dream worlds, they are nevertheless subversive because the character Alice in both stories is a symbolic figure who embodies the childhood innocence and individuality that Carroll valorizes and wants to preserve.

Prior to the Victorian era, society’s attitude towards the child focused on preparing it for life in the adult world. Gillian Avery suggests that up until 1780, “the

ideal child was the industrious child” (16), and that this image of the child was disseminated in literature through characters such as Dick Whittington, Giles Gingerbread, and Primrose Prettyface (16-17). Joseph Priestley was a prominent influence on education during the late 1700s; he saw the activity of reading in pragmatic terms, “not an end in itself but...directed at some purpose such as that of encouraging morality or enlarging worldly knowledge” (Avery 33). Other stories written for children in the eighteenth century warned them about the consequences of vices such as vanity and indulgence (Avery 28, 43), and taught them “the true principles of religion,” discouraging anything that might stimulate the child’s imagination (Humphrey 7).

Such evangelical and rationalistic attitudes towards the child continued to prevail in Victorian society. Children were taught religious and moral values through works of children’s fiction such as Maria Charlesworth’s novel Ministering Children (1857) (Brown 50). This novel cast the child in a morally virtuous role. Children were expected to emulate this model of behavior: “The ideal Victorian child *wanted* to be good” (Avery 133). Family stories of the period encouraged children to improve; these included works such as The Whisperer (1850), which presents a friend called Conscience, and Juliana Ewing’s short story “Madam Liberty,” in which a girl is thrifty and saves for the rest of her family. The Sunday school was central in Victorian life: “[T]he evangelical insistence on the sanctity of every moment of Sunday had become part of the national way of life...it became equated with law and order and decency and respectability” (Avery 110).

However, Ronald Reichertz suggests that from the last decades of the eighteenth century through to the 1860s, didactic forms of literature, composed of the “religious, rational/moral, and informational” (21) came into conflict with a more imaginative, non-didactic literature that was developing in mid-Victorian Britain. This development parallels the changing conception of the child. The Victorians increasingly began to see the child in Romantic terms that contrasted sharply to earlier eighteenth-century attitudes. Judith Plotz asserts that the child was seen as “the living embodiment of that most powerful of Romantic abstractions, Nature” (174). Romanticism linked the child positively with the imagination and consequently helped to promote the fantasy genre for children (Sander 7-8). Humphrey Carpenter suggests that the first signs of these positive attitudes towards the child occurred with Blake’s Songs of Innocence (1789) (7). Adults had a responsibility to take care of the child (Plotz 172-173), and people began to see childhood as a distinctive phase of life that was separate from adulthood. The child’s “powers of intuition, holism, play, and imagination are increasingly regarded as exemplary for the adult” (Plotz 176). Romantic writers and poets such as Coleridge exalted the child as “an embodiment of Nature’s vitality” (176). Society took the death of a child more seriously: “Indeed, childhood death is frequently interpreted by bereaved adults not simply as destroyer but as the preserver of the most valuable part of life which would otherwise be obliterated in normal adulthood” (Plotz 172).

Through his Alice books, Carroll aligns himself with the Romantic conceptions of the child and embraces play as a form of pleasure in itself, rather than as a mere adjunct to education. He shared the Romantics’ conception of the imagination and its importance

for the child, and rejected the acquisition of factual knowledge for its own sake. Through the fantasy worlds of Wonderland and behind the Looking-Glass, Carroll satirizes and parodies the rules and social conventions of behavior that are part of the adult world.

In Wonderland, the behavior of the various human and non-human characters parodies the moral order stressed by Victorian evangelism and didacticism. The Duchess asserts that “Everything’s got a moral, if only you can find it” (88). The following passage effectively satirizes the didacticism of earlier children’s literature. The Duchess is an allegorical figure used to satirize the intrusive narrator often found in didactic literature; the author of such literature would intervene through her/his narrator during the story, interrupting the narrative in order to convey a moral or lesson to the child, much like the Duchess’s interruption of Alice’s conversation in order to insert a moral:

“The game’s gone on rather better now,” she said, by way of keeping up the conversation a little.

“‘Tis so,” said the Duchess: “and the moral of that is—’Oh, ‘tis love, ‘tis love that makes the world go round!’”

“Somebody said,” Alice whispered, “that it’s done by everybody minding their own business!”

“Ah, well! It means much the same thing...and the moral of that is—’Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves.’”

“How fond she is of finding morals in things!” Alice thought to herself. (88)

Carroll satirizes authorial intrusion by having the Duchess intrude into the text at every other sentence. Alice’s comment on the Duchess’s attempts to find morals in everything invites the reader to laugh at the Duchess. The morals that she offers are humourously irrelevant given the chaotic nature of the croquet game (81-83).

Carroll continues his satire of morality by parodying moralistic poetry that was popular in his time. As Florence Miller notes, all the poems in Alice in Wonderland are “parodies upon these once familiar rhymes” (246). During the Victorian period, a high sense of decorum prevailed. Children were taught appropriate manners such as respecting their elders and behaving appropriately in given social situations. The poem that Alice recites after falling down the rabbit-hole (26) parodies Isaac Watts’ moral poem “Against Idleness and Mischief” that tells its readers to work hard and avoid laziness. The following stanzas reveal Watts’s moral preoccupation:

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

...In works of labour or of skill,
I would be busy too;
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do. (Milner 246)

The reader is clearly directed to emulate the industrious bee, or else risk falling into vice. In contrast to Watts’ moral poem, Carroll’s parody is devoid of morality; instead, it is a comical piece about the crocodile and its lack of industriousness. The crocodile does not need to do any work to get food. It only needs to open his jaws to “[welcome] little fishes in” (26). Alice’s unsuccessful attempts to repeat the poems correctly contribute to the satire because she cannot live up to adult standards (26).

Besides satirizing didactic literature for children, Carroll criticizes the highly structured Victorian educational system with its emphasis on facts; instead, he advocates a more flexible system through which the child would be encouraged to explore and to

nurture her/his imagination. According to Pamela Horn, the Revised Code of 1862 caused schools to be funded on a “payment by results” basis (2); the funding received became dependent on “the success of its pupils in an annual examination in the three Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic), plus a satisfactory level of average attendance” (2). Curricula grew more rigorous as the century progressed, and “the daily routine became an unremitting grind in the three Rs, with constant repetition and rote learning the normal method of instruction” (5).¹

Carroll specifically criticizes such rote learning of facts through bracketed asides to the reader. When Alice is falling down the rabbit-hole, he writes, “for you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the school-room, and though this was 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” (17). The sheer irrelevance of recollecting facts while she is falling into an unknown place heightens Carroll’s satire of rote learning. The consequences of such learning result in the learning of facts without understanding their context or meaning. Carroll criticizes this again through a bracketed aside: “Alice had not the slightest idea what Latitude was, or Longitude either, but she thought they were nice grand words to say” (17). Alice’s inability to answer the question “Do bats eat cats?” (18) implicitly criticizes attempts to impose closure on knowledge; instead, Carroll suggests that knowledge should be more open. Also, everything that Alice has learned is incomprehensible to the other creatures, and vice-versa, which exposes the limits of the usefulness of “fact.”

Carroll further satirizes Victorian education through the Mock-Turtle's story of his education; Carroll parodies the names of various subjects that he himself would have taken in school, including reading, writing, the four basic arithmetic skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, geography, and art (drawing, sketching and painting). The absurd associations that he makes between subject name and subject matter mocks fact, because what the Mock-Turtle learns is for merely pragmatic rather than intellectual purposes. Perhaps, Carroll is also criticizing utilitarian education, as Charles Dickens did in Hard Times (1854):

...“I only took the regular course.”

“What was that?” inquired Alice.

“Reeling, and Writhing, of course, to begin with,” the Mock Turtle replied; “and then the different branches of Arithmetic—Ambition, Distraction, Uglification, and Derision.”

...“What else had you to learn?”

“Well, there was Mystery...Mystery, ancient and modern, with Seaography: then Drawling—the Drawling-master was an old conger-eel, that used to come once a week: *he* taught us Drawling, Stretching, and Fainting in Coils.”

“What was *that* like?” said Alice.

“Well, I ca’n’t show it you, myself,” the Mock Turtle said. “I’m too stiff. And the Gryphon never learnt it.” (95)

Mock Turtle's matter-of-fact attitude contributes to the parody, as he is speaking about these subjects as if they were common knowledge. This is a common characteristic in both novels that contributes to Carroll's humour and satire; in *Wonderland* and the *Looking-Glass* world, the creatures' sense of what is “normal” or “common” knowledge differs sharply from Alice's, thereby enhancing the satire. In addition, both the Mock-Turtle's and the Gryphon's condescending attitudes towards Alice's ignorance satirize the moral and supposedly more knowledgeable adult the Victorian child was expected to

emulate. The Gryphon remarks to Alice that ““if you don’t know what to uglify is, you *are* a simpleton”” (94).

In the Looking-Glass world, factual forms of knowledge are further satirized through the characters and their statements. The satire arises from the absurdity of the characters’ knowledge and the pride they take in knowing such things. The White Queen asserts ““Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast”” (184), while the Red Queen says proudly that ““I can read words of one letter!”” (233). This seems to mock the impossibility of knowing everything, and implies that the child should focus on the imagination as well.²

In place of merely factual learning, Carroll affirms the value of the child’s imagination by creating a world where notions of time and space are different from those in our world. The conventional markers of knowledge do not exist in Wonderland or in the Looking-Glass world. Alice’s perceptions of and reactions to other objects and animals change to correspond with her size. When she is small, Alice is more conscious of her own safety and reacts more humbly. Perhaps, Alice’s reactions to the animals parody the deference that Victorian children must have towards adults. When Alice encounters the dog, she thinks “that it might be hungry” (46); she initially thinks that the mouse “must be a walrus or hippopotamus” (28).

Through word play, Carroll further challenges factual learning and encourages his readers to exercise their imaginations and consider alternative points of view. He explores the multiplicity of meanings that can be associated with words, and indicates that meanings are not absolute. Several instances of word play occur in both novels.

During the mad tea party, the Mad Hatter asserts that it is not the same thing to say what one means as opposed to what one says, and gives an example that problematizes the fixedness of meaning: “Not the same thing a bit!...Why, you might as well say that ‘I see what I eat’ is the same thing as ‘I eat what I see!’” (69). Humpty Dumpty further undermines the fixedness of meaning during his conversation with Alice. When Alice asks him whether a word could mean “so many different things” (196), Humpty Dumpty replies, “The question is...which is to be master—that’s all” (196).

In the Looking-Glass episode in which Alice and the deer wander through the wood, they befriend each other because they do not know each other’s names. But once they remember who they are, the deer runs off because it is supposed to be frightened of “humans.” Again, Carroll asks us to consider the multiplicity of meanings for each word. This scene also seems to suggest a connection between status and social behavior. A deer is “supposed” to be afraid of humans, but when Alice and the deer do not remember their identities, they are able to step outside their roles as “human” and “deer” and befriend each other (164-165). Once the deer remembers what it is, “a look of alarm came into its beautiful brown eyes, and in another moment it had darted away at full speed” (164).

Carroll’s playfulness extends to his satire of the Victorians’ adherence to social etiquette. According to Geoffrey Best, respectability was dominant during the mid-Victorian period; it can be characterized as “a style of living understood to show a proper respect for morals and morality” (257; also see Helson 67). Through his fantasy world, Carroll is able to satirize social manners through his human and anthropomorphized

animals who humourously mimic manners. As well, Alice functions as an allegorical figure for the child who fails in her attempts to follow social manners.

When Alice first arrives in Wonderland, she tries to make sense of her world by searching for stable markers of the reality from which she has come. In addition, she behaves in ways that reflect the respect and decorum of the Victorian way of life. She puts the jar back into the cupboard “for fear of killing somebody underneath” (16), and tries to make sense of where she is (17). The conventions that Alice uses to judge her behavior in her own world operate unreliably in Wonderland. Her preoccupation with decorum is parodied when she tries to curtsy: “fancy, *curtseying* as you’re falling through the air! Do you think you can manage it?” (17).

The following scene in which Alice encounters two footmen further parodies Victorian authority and the manners that children were asked to follow. The fantasy genre allows Carroll the flexibility to reveal the manners and dress as absurd through employing anthropomorphized animals who act outside their conventional animal characters: “The Fish-Footman began by producing from under his arm a great letter, nearly as large as himself, and this he handed over to the other, saying, in a solemn tone, ‘For the Duchess. An invitation from the Queen to play croquet.’ The Frog-Footman repeated, in the same solemn tone, ‘For the Queen. An invitation for the Duchess to play croquet’” (57). Tenniel’s illustration of the two footmen contributes to the satire of manners by parodying the clothing styles of the aristocracy, in particular their wigs, and Carroll creates a situation in which the wigs interfere with their manners: “Then they both bowed, and their curls got entangled together” (58). The tone is light and comical, and

the fantasy setting allows Carroll the freedom to satirize these manners without offending adult readers of his time.

Later in this scene, Carroll further satirizes manners when Alice speaks to the Frog-Footman. Alice asks the footman politely how she can get inside the house, but the footman's reactions does not conform to what Alice expects from a footman in her own world. Instead of being helpful, the Frog-Footman is lazy and speaks "without attending to [Alice]" (59). When a plate flies out of the house, he continues speaking "in the same tone, exactly as if nothing had happened" (59).

This scene parallels the Looking-Glass episode in which Alice tries to enter the castle. Again, the expected rules of behavior that Alice is accustomed to in her own world do not operate with predictable results in the Looking-Glass world. In addition, there are no class markers to tell Alice what to do, and she must knock the door like everyone else (238). However, she gets an unexpectedly rude response that subverts the expectation of respect for the upper-class. Even though she is queen, and therefore technically entitled to more respect and deferential treatment, she is treated as if she were a common person: "Just then the door opened a little way, and a creature with a long beak put its head out for a moment and said, 'no admittance till the week after next!' and shut the door again with a bang" (238). The old Frog's parodic attitude towards Alice's problems of entering the castle reminds us of the Frog footman's attitude, as they both embody the acceptance of chaos that is typical of both fantasy worlds. Carroll also uses word play to heighten the parody of social manners by having the old Frog interpret the

common phrase of “answering the door” literally: “To answer the door?...What’s it been asking of?” (238).

The tea party episode parodies the English custom of having tea by introducing illogical situations that further subvert conventions of social behavior. V. T. J. Arkell comments that “mid-afternoon tea drinking became fashionable among the upper-classes from the 1840s” (184), and that country families also picked up the custom (148-149). The mad tea party parodies the manners and politeness associated with the upper class through its illogic and the rudeness of the other tea party members towards each other and towards Alice (68-76). Perhaps, Carroll is satirizing the genteel activity of having tea through the conversation of the tea party, which revolves around meaningless and inconsequential topics such as time and treacle. Through pseudo-intellectual conversation, Carroll creates a parodic situation in which the tea party characters’ discussion is meaningless and goes round in circles. In addition, Alice finds herself being attacked and questioned by the other characters, despite her attempts to be polite. When Alice interrupts their story, the Dormouse says, “If you ca’n’t be civil, you’d better finish the story yourself” (74). Later on, the Mad Hatter asserts that “you shouldn’t talk” (76). As a result, Alice decides to leave, for “this piece of rudeness was more than [she] could bear” (76).

The feast in the Looking-Glass world further satirizes social etiquette. Carroll satirizes formal introductions between people through the Red Queen’s introductions of Alice to the anthropomorphized food:

“You look a little shy: let me introduce you to that leg of mutton,”
said the Red Queen. “Alice—Mutton: Mutton—Alice.” The leg of

mutton got up in the dish and made a little bow to Alice! and Alice returned the bow, not knowing whether to be frightened or amused.”

“May I give you a slice?” she said, taking up the knife and fork, and looking from one Queen to the other.

“Certainly not,” the Red Queen said very decidedly, “it isn’t etiquette to cut anyone you’ve been introduced to. Remove the joint!” (240)

The play on “cut” in this passage, which means to snub someone overtly, takes on a humorous twist by its violent connotations in this passage. At the end, the feast turns chaotic when the Red Queen toasts Queen Alice’s health, and the people start eating and drinking in an undignified manner: “...all the guests began drinking it directly, and very queerly they managed it: some of them put their glasses upon their heads like extinguishers, and drank all that trickled down their faces—others upset the decanters—and three of them (who looked like kangaroos) scrambled into the dish of roast mutton, and began eagerly lapping up the gravy” (242). Again, the fantasy world characters’ indifferent reactions to the chaos contributes to the humour and satire of the situation; instead of reestablishing order, they treat the chaos as if it were a normal part of a feast, and ask Alice to “return thanks in a neat speech” (243).

When Alice meets the Red Queen in another Looking-Glass episode, we again encounter the decorum and manners that Alice, as a “good girl,” should follow. The Red Queen appears to be an allegorical figure for the adult who tries to socialize the child in proper manners:

“Where do you come from?” said the Red Queen. “And where are you going? Look up, speak nicely, and don’t twiddle your fingers all the time.”

Alice attended to all these directions...

“...Curtsey while you’re thinking what to say. It saves time.”

“It’s time for you to answer now,” the Queen said, looking at her watch: “open your mouth a *little* wider when you speak, and always say ‘your Majesty.’” (148)

Yet, this adherence to manners is satirized through the Red Queen’s commands. Her ironic comment to curtsy first in order to save time draws attention to itself as a constructed form of social conduct.

Despite Romantic exaltation of the child, conservative eighteenth-century attitudes towards the child and her/his socialization persisted. Carol Dyhouse explores the role of girls and women in Victorian England, and suggests that there was a gender-based division of labour, through which girls were expected to contribute to domestic tasks (Girls Growing Up 11). Girls were instructed in “womenlike” behaviors and tasks (12). Women were responsible for the moral socialization of the child, and encouraged “moral rectitude and paternal responsibilities for their husbands” (80). This linked them with the household and family, which was the central institution of middle-class Victorian society, and had economic, spiritual, social, and personal significance (Brown 92). Women were “angel[s] in the house” (Brown 92), a role that paradoxically valorized yet restricted them. Schooling for middle- and upper-class girls usually took place at private schools or at home through governesses. Women “of all social groups were encouraged from childhood to consider it selfish to become wrapped up in their own interests, for the ideal was to serve others, and always to consider the interests of the menfolk first” (Dyhouse, “Girls Growing Up” 26).

Through the Wonderland and Looking-Glass worlds, Carroll subverts these Victorian ideals of moral socialization. Alice's meeting with the Duchess and her baby is a chaotic scene that satirically contrasts to the comfort and safety of the Victorian domestic ideal. The kitchen is "full of smoke from one end to the other" (60), and violence soon follows:

...the cook took the cauldron of soup off the fire, and at once set to work throwing everything within her reach at the Duchess and the baby—the fire-irons came first; then followed a shower of sauce-pans, plates, and dishes. The Duchess took no notice of them even when they hit her; and the baby was howling so much already, that it was quite impossible to say whether the blows hurt it or not. (60)

The Duchess is an ineffectual mother figure, and the cook acts in an unexpected manner that transgresses the role of the servant in the household. In addition, the female cook is ironically ignorant about cooking, and wonders, "'Twenty-four hours, I *think*; or is it twelve?'" (61). Carroll seems to poke fun at Romantic attitudes towards the child as well through the Duchess's lullaby to the child, which advocates violence as a way to silence the child (62). The Duchess's song parodies the gentleness of G. W. Langford's "Speak Gently" (Milner 248), further contributing to the chaotic world of Wonderland in which the inhabitants do not adhere to expected rules of conduct.³ The Duchess's singing of the song further satirizes the feminine ideal of motherhood through her unsuccessful attempts to calm the baby, for she "kept tossing the baby violently up and down" (62).

The narrative structure of both novels further undermines societal attitudes towards gender roles. Gerald P. Mulderig suggests that a striking characteristic about

Wonderland is its “moral laxity. For just as Alice’s attempts at politeness go unreciprocated, her bursts of rudeness go unpunished” (Mulderig 325). He contrasts the lack of moral reinforcement in Wonderland with Thomas Day’s Sandford and Merton (1783-89), a widely-read book of the period that “incorporate[s] the principle that goodness is ultimately rewarded as surely as evil is punished” (Mulderig 324). By contrast, in Wonderland there is a lack of retribution for immoral actions, and it seems to be “a world of striking moral laxity.” Instead, Alice is able to indulge herself fully, for “one is never held responsible for one’s actions” (326). I agree with Mulderig, and would extend this lack of consequence to the lack of enforcement with respect to social manners. As discussed above, the lack of enforcement of social manners, as well as the characters’ indifferent attitudes towards them, undermines their validity in Alice’s world. Alice also functions as an ironic figure herself, as she transgresses social manners by being rude and sitting down at the tea table without being first invited (68).

Taking the narratives together, Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, operate as allegories for Alice growing up. However, while these stories do reflect such a process, Alice comes to reject Wonderland in favour of childhood in the real world; the secondary world operates as a subversive area in which adulthood and its associated attitudes and conventions are undermined and satirized as illogical and laughable. In addition, the overarching narrative structure of both novels contributes to the undermining of fact and the extolling of imagination.

Both novels open in unexciting worlds from which Alice escapes through her imagination. In the beginning of the first novel, “the hot day made [Alice] feel very

sleepy and stupid” (15). She is bored by the book that her sister is reading: “once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it, ‘and what is the use of a book,’ thought Alice, ‘without pictures or conversations’” (15). Alice’s reaction seems to suggest that her sister is reading an instructional book of the kind that was popular during the Victorian era. When Alice sees the White Rabbit, she “burn[s] with curiosity” (16) and goes down the rabbit-hole. Similarly, in the second novel Alice is bored; she is “half talking to herself and half asleep” (129), and decides to make things more interesting by using her imagination to consider what it would be like to live in a Looking-Glass House (133). She tells her kitty, “let’s pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze, so that we can get through” (134).

Furthermore, the endings of both novels tease the reader’s imagination. They appear to be deliberately open-ended. An adult narrator does not intrude and close the story by stating a moral or lesson, as was frequent in Victorian morality tales for children. The ending of the first book valorizes the child and the imagination through Alice’s sister and her envy of Alice:

she pictured to herself how this same little sister of hers, would, in the aftertime, be herself a grown woman; and how she would keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood; and how she would gather about her other little children, and make *their* eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale, perhaps even with the dream of Wonderland of long ago; and how she would feel with all their simple sorrows, and find a pleasure in all their simple joys, remember her own child-life, and the happy summer days. (119-120)

These thoughts of Alice’s sister also cast Alice in a subversive role, because they hint at the idea that Alice will never completely grow up and live according to the

Victorian adult female ideal. Instead, it is suggested that Alice will retain her childhood dreams and imagination, and pass them on to other children.

The refusal to conform to woman's conventional role in Victorian society is even more prominent in the ending of Through the Looking-Glass. Here, Alice rejects the prescribed role more overtly. In contrast to the first book's narrative, which concludes with the envious thoughts of Alice's sister towards Alice's retention of her childhood, Alice's thoughts dominate the final scene of the second novel. The awoken Alice continues to affirm the centrality of childhood and rejects the adult world by mimicking its statements of etiquette: "Sit up a little more stiffly, dear!' Alice cried with a merry laugh. 'And curtsy while you're thinking what to—what to purr. It saves time, remember!' And she caught it up and gave it one little kiss, 'just in honour of its having been a Red Queen'" (247). Also, the second novel's final scene ends with an open-ended question that is meant to stimulate the child reader's imagination. Carroll asks his readers to consider whether Alice or the Red King dreamed about Alice's adventures in the Looking-Glass world: "Which do you think it was?" (249).

In place of Victorian morality and social etiquette, Carroll creates a society in which there are no definite rules to follow. He creates a sense of play and spontaneity that is expressed in the various games in each novel. During the Victorian era, several leisure activities were aimed at educating the child. Ira Bruce Nadel suggests that while inventing games was a popular pastime for Victorian children, adults created games that stressed the moral and utilitarian character of play (23). These included board games that

provided lessons in geography and history, as well as dolls and optical toys that aimed “to teach social rank, tasteful dress, and the occupations of various classes” (Nadel 30). It was only in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods that societal attitudes towards play changed, paralleling the decline of the moral tale for children. Society came to see play as something to engage in for the “sheer enjoyment of it” (Nadel 32).

Carroll clearly aligns himself with non-didactic, spontaneous forms of play through the games that he depicts. Alice realizes that the games in Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world do not conform to the rules that she is accustomed to in her own world; instead, they are created spontaneously and develop in unpredictable ways. For the Caucus Race, the animals “marked out a race-course, in a sort of circle, (‘the exact size doesn’t matter,’ it said)” (33). There are no fixed starting and finishing points to the race, and instead, everyone “began running when they liked, and left off when they liked, so that it was not easy to know when the race was over” (33). Similarly, the following description from the croquet game conveys a sense of chaos, as the game operates without the rules that Alice is accustomed to. In his discussion of Victorian leisure activities, Arkell indicates that croquet, along with lawn tennis, became popular sports among women during the Victorian era (214). Carroll does not follow the rules of the croquet game and, instead, makes it a chaotic affair in which the arches, croquet balls and mallets are live creatures that move all over the place:

The chief difficulty Alice found at first was in managing her flamingo: she succeeded in getting its body tucked away, comfortably enough, under her arm, with its legs hanging down, but generally, just as she had got its neck nicely straightened out, and was going to give the hedgehog a blow with its head, it *would* twist itself round and look up in her face, with such a puzzled expression that she could not help bursting

out laughing; and, when she had got its head down, and was going to begin again, it was very provoking to find that the hedgehog had unrolled itself, and was in the act of crawling away: besides all this, there was generally a ridge or a furrow in the way wherever she wanted to send the hedgehog to, and, as the doubled-up soldiers were always getting up and walking off to the other parts of the ground, Alice soon came to the conclusion that it was a very difficult game indeed.

The players all played at once, without waiting for turns, quarreling all the while, and fighting for the hedgehogs.... (82-83)

In the second book, the chess game that Alice plays in order to become queen also does not operate according to the correct rules of chess. Again, a sense of play and spontaneity dominate Alice's travels as she uses various modes of transportation to move from one square to the next, including walking and taking the train or boat (see 155-158, 187-190).

Carroll further reveals his playfulness through his ironic inversion of spontaneity in his depiction of battles in the Looking-Glass world. The battle between the two knights is comical because it lacks spontaneity (214-216). Their use of stock phrases combined with chess terminology to threaten each other dilutes the seriousness of the battle: "At this moment her thoughts were interrupted by loud shouting of 'Ahoy! Ahoy! Check!'" (214). Their battle reminds Alice of Punch and Judy, and ironically they observe the "Rules of Battle" (216) in order to decide upon the outcome. Similarly, the battle between the lion and unicorn is equally humorous because it lacks spontaneity. Instead, the battle is treated as if it were a daily activity, for the combatants decide to break for refreshments (209).

Besides affirming Romantic conceptions of the child, Carroll's social critique extends to the Victorian social hierarchy. This is coupled with his addressing debates and social changes that were occurring in his time. Mid-Victorian society was characterized by rapid change. Increased industrialization contributed to changing workforce patterns and the changing lifestyle of the people, which grew more consumer-oriented as the century progressed. This was also a time of religious and intellectual upheaval (Houghton 8). "The traditional framework of thought was breaking down" (8). Walter Houghton cites John Morley's comment about the 1850s and 60s, which suggests the immensity of the intellectual change: "It was the age of science, new knowledge, searching criticism, followed by multiplied doubts and shaken beliefs" (11). In religious circles, conflict among denominations arose due to differing beliefs and practices, with debates going on about such questions as the existence or nature of God, heaven and hell, and whether there was a "true" religion (11). Various disciplines arose that sought answers to these questions: "As one prophet after another stepped forward with his program of reconstruction, the hubbub of contending theories, gaining in number as the century advanced...[this] created a climate of opinion in which...the habit of doubt was unconsciously bred" (12). Significant increases in both historical and scientific knowledge further disturbed people's beliefs and contributed to the rise of anti-intellectualism, which was "a conspicuous attitude of the time" (Houghton 110).

The fantasy genre allows Carroll to satirize the authority of science and religion, by creating an alternative, imaginary world in which everything works in opposite, illogical ways that defy traditional religious beliefs and scientific principles about how

the world operates. Harold Perkins suggests that the scientific study of society, which goes back to the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, increased in prominence during the Victorian era. Several Statistic Societies were established throughout Britain, and these societies advocated the empirical method as a way to solve social problems: “they applied it to an immense range of social problems from illiteracy and crime to slum housing and industrial strikes” (Perkins 326). However, W. L. Burns notes that the Victorian period was such a “fecund and fervent age...so anxious to exploit immediately every new resource. The outcome was that new problems were constantly being added to the backlog of half-solved problems which existed” (Burns 138). The lion’s question about whether Alice is a vegetable, animal, or mineral (212) seems to play on the desire of science to place everything in neat categories. Tenniel’s illustration seems to contribute to Carroll’s satire of scientists, as the lion is wearing glasses and looks tired.

Similarly, the White Knight that Alice encounters seems to function as a satiric allegory of the Victorians’ faith in science to solve their social problems. Even the White Knight’s way of thinking is incomplete, as he jumps from one problem to the next (221-224). The inventions that he discusses are trivial, including “inventing a new pudding during the meat-course” (233) and “inventing a new way to get over the gate” (221). Through him, Carroll satirizes chivalry as well, for the White Knight is an incompetent knight who cannot stay on his horse.

Carroll further satirizes Victorian religion and science by entering the debates on these subjects. Morton Cohen discusses Carroll’s ambivalent attitude towards religion: “Charles also rebukes the Church and its ministers for being too dogmatic, and certainly

too parochial. Both Blake and Dodgson reach beyond Anglican and Catholic dogmas to embrace all humanity” (Cohen 112). Also, Humphrey Carpenter suggests that Carroll mocks religion through his Alice novels by exploring “violence, death, and Nothingness...that is specifically a mockery of Christian belief” (62). Carroll was insecure about religion and refused “to proceed fully into Holy Orders” (64). In the Alice books, religious material is transformed into its perverse opposite (Carpenter 63). In his discussion of Alice in Wonderland, Carpenter suggests that even “the story’s very structure [is] a parody of religion” (65): “in its exploration of Nothingness and Not Being it denied the old certainties about the physical world, just then being shaken in another fashion by Darwin, whose Origin of Species appeared six years before Alice (The baby, surely, is *evolving* into a pig)” (69, emphasis in text).

The rationalism of science is subverted in several instances in both novels. Rational principles are mocked through Alice’s encounters with the Cheshire cat and his illogical ability to vanish: “and this time it vanished quite slowly, beginning with the end of the tail, and ending with the grin, which remained some time after the rest of it had gone” (66-67). Similarly, the White Queen’s ability to live life backwards and the Red Queen’s assertion that one must run to stay in one place also go against the principles of science.

With respect to the rapid social changes occurring during the Victorian period due to advancements in science and industrialization, the anthropomorphized animals and objects allegorically satirize the conservative thinking of Carroll’s time, presenting, in contrast, chaos, illogic, and disorder. As noted by Charles Frey and John Griffith, “the

animals do not represent nature responsive to innocence, good will, and charity, but rather they are masks for roles and attitudes of humans in a society based upon competitiveness and pride” (117). Indeed, the White Rabbit satirizes the notion of progress, as he allegorically embodies the efficient industrialist who is concerned with time and punctuality. When Alice first encounters it, it “*took a watch out of its waistcoat pocket, and looked at it, then hurried on*” (16, emphasis in text). Later, the Rabbit is again in a hurry: ““Oh! The Duchess, the Duchess! Oh, *wo ’n’t* she be savage if I’ve kept her waiting”” (24). The notion of progress is also undermined by the ironic lack of progress at the Mad Hatter’s Tea Party, where their tea times continue without end (68-76). Similarly, in Through the Looking-Glass, Carroll parodies progress through his allegorical world, through ironic inversions of what one must do to advance. Alice must run to stay in the same spot, and must move backwards to catch up with the Red Queen (147-153). The Red Queen even makes the ironic comment that Alice’s world is ““a slow sort of country”” (152), for it takes more effort to move ahead in the Looking-Glass world than it does in Alice’s own world.

Other instances in both books, in which Carroll satirizes royalty and Victorian social class structure involve episodes that undermine the upper-class’s and royalty’s authority. Continually, Carroll shows their incompetence or lack of “adult” control. In one particular scene in his first book, Carroll effectively combines his satirizing of authority and the religious and intellectual debates of his time, as well as giving power to the child over the “adult” world.

Royalty is satirized through the queen's and king's ineffectual attempts to control their people, as well as the queen's arbitrary commands that undermine her authority: "The Queen had only one way of settling all difficulties, great or small. 'Off with her head!' she said without even looking around" (84). The King's manner is parodied through his uncomfortable reaction to the Cheshire Cat, which ironically reverses the traditional hierarchy in which the weak fear the powerful: "'Don't be impertinent...and don't look at me like that!' He got behind Alice as he spoke" (84). Similarly, the hierarchical structure of Victorian society is further mocked through the talking flowers that mimic the deference of one person to another of higher status: "'It isn't manners for us to begin'" (201). Only in a fantasy novel can Carroll have the flowers speak; this effectively criticizes the human hierarchical structure through humorous imitation of respect for adults.

In the following passage from the croquet game, Carroll addresses the religious and intellectual debates of his time, and also affirms the value of the Romantic child. The Cheshire Cat appears in a godlike position over the cards and Alice; this impression is enhanced by John Tenniel's illustration, with the cat leering over the crowd—perhaps, as Carpenter suggests, Carroll is mocking God in his two novels by mocking our traditional conception of god as a human-like figure:

When she got back to the Cheshire-Cat, she was surprised to find quite a large crowd collected round it...The moment Alice appeared, she was appealed to be by all three to settle the question, and they repeated their arguments to her, though, as they all spoke at once, she found it very hard to make out exactly what they said.

The executioner's argument was, that you couldn't cut off a head unless there was a body to cut it off from: that he had never had to do such a thing before, and he wasn't going to begin at *his* time of life.

The King's argument was that anything that had a head could be beheaded, and that you weren't to talk nonsense.

The Queen's argument was that, if something wasn't done about it in less than no time, she'd have everybody executed, all around (It was this last remark that had made the whole party look so grave and anxious). (85-86)

Comically, Alice is positioned as the authority figure whom the adult characters ask to resolve their problems. The manner in which they simultaneously attempt to grab Alice's attention conveys the impression that they are childlike, whereas Alice is the adult who is calm, composed, and in control. In addition, the Queen's rather impulsive threats to cut off everyone's head further infantilizes her and renders her unthreatening. Indeed, the Gryphon's statement that "'they never executes nobody'" (91) further erodes our sense of the adult characters' authority and control.

In this scene, Carroll also mocks the religious debates of his time and further problematizes the questions of life after death and of whether there is a God. He subverts the traditional hierarchy of human beings' domination over animals by placing the Cheshire Cat in an ironically godlike position. Their debate over chopping off heads further makes fun of death, which was a prominent preoccupation in nineteenth-century novels. Indeed, after the cat's head disappears (86), everything is forgotten: "the rest of the party went back to the game" (86). Carroll also makes fun of aging and death in the *Looking-Glass* novel through his White Knight's ballad, which Martin Gardner notes is a parody of Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence" (Gardner 307-312).

Carroll inverts the human-animal hierarchy in *Wonderland* through Alice's encounters with various animals. Alice continually finds herself in trouble in *Wonderland*, and responds meekly to the other animals and human beings whenever they

are angry with her. This subverts the traditional human-animal order through which human society has characterized its relationship with other animals. One such example of this reversal occurs when Alice has shrunk and encounters a dog (44-47); her relationship with the dog has changed, and she now fears that it will eat her.

Carroll further undermines authority and infantilizes the adult characters in Through the Looking-Glass.⁴ He inverts the adult-child relationship and gives Alice control. The battle between the Lion and Unicorn satirizes the units of monarchy. The Lion and the Unicorn are part of the British coat of arms that was created after the union of Scotland and England (Carroll 210-211; Gardner 283). Ironically, they seem ready to fight each other over something as trivial as cake. They behave in childlike ways, and are thus infantilized: “I say, this isn’t fair!” cried the Unicorn, as Alice sat with the knife in her hand, very much puzzled how to begin. ‘The Monster has given the Lion twice as much as me’” (213). Similarly, Tweedledum and Tweedledee are childlike characters who are prone to outbursts. That they dress up parodically as knights is also childlike. Again, Tenniel’s comical illustrations show the lack of seriousness behind Carroll’s mock battle:

“We *must* have a bit of a fight, but I don’t care about going on long,” said Tweedledum. “What’s the time now?”

Tweedledee looked at his watch, and said, “Half-past four.”

“Let’s fight till six, and then have dinner,” said Tweedledum.

“Very well,” the other said, rather sadly: “and *she* can watch us—only you’d better not come *very* close,” he added: “I generally hit every thing I can see—when I get really excited!” (243)

Overall, Carroll's techniques of social criticism are enhanced by his use of the fantasy genre. The chaos of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world helps him to satirize the authority of Victorian morality and social etiquette, and more generally, the hierarchy of Victorian society that helps to affirm them. Carroll's characters act in unpredictable and illogical ways that do not conform to the social conventions of Alice's own world, and Alice cannot rely on social conventions from her own world as indicators and predictors of behavior in Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world. Rosemary Jackson asserts that commonly held attitudes and assumptions move towards a realm of non-signification in the fantasy world. Developing Jackson's idea, I think that this allows Carroll to satirize them because they no longer have the stability or authority that is part of the real world. He constructs absurd situations that contrast to Victorian domestic ideals, yet these would not be ultimately discredited because Carroll's stories are works of fantasy. Carroll makes use of the absurdities that are possible in the fantasy genre to create comical and satiric characters such as the White Knight and the Cheshire Cat who help to question common assumptions about science and religion. Carroll's novels extoll the child and encourage the child to exercise imagination, as well as pursue play for the sake of pure pleasure rather than for instructional purposes alone.

III. Norton Juster's The Phantom Tollbooth

The son of Samuel H. and Minnie Juster, Norton Juster was born on June 2, 1929, in Brooklyn, New York. After studying architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and city planning at the University of Liverpool in England, Juster went into the U. S. Navy from 1954 to 1957 (Montreville and Crawford 206). Following this, he pursued work as an architect, and taught architectural design at Hampshire College, Massachusetts until his recent retirement.

Brandon Trenz suggests that he is “best known to children and adults alike as the author of The Phantom Tollbooth” (217). It was first published in 1961, and since then has been reviewed and discussed in books, periodicals, journals, and newspapers, and continues to be to this day. In 1996, a thirty-fifth anniversary edition of the novel came out with a preface by the well-known Canadian children’s author and illustrator Maurice Sendak. The book has gone through numerous adaptations for film and stage, including an animated film by M-G-M in 1970, and a play adaptation performed by the Great Big Theatre Company of Dundas, Ontario (April 1997).

Juster turned to writing as a diversion when he was in the navy during the 1950s. After the navy, he was writing a book on urban aesthetics but the work became dull. So during a holiday retreat, Juster began writing what eventually became The Phantom Tollbooth. In Montreville and Crawford’s book on children’s authors, Juster asserts that

he originally began the novel in 1959 “as a relaxation from an arduous planning project, I began to write what I thought was a short story—for my own relaxation. Before I knew it, it had created its own life and I was hooked” (Montreville and Crawford 205). In a telephone interview (July 3, 1999), Juster told me that he wrote the story for himself, and that he had not considered publication until a friend suggested it to him. In this respect, Juster’s situation parallels Lewis Carroll’s, for Carroll also wrote Alice in Wonderland without the original intention of publishing it.

Juster’s novel has been prominent ever since its publication: “[it] was on the New York Times list of best selling children’s books in 1962 and was also included in that paper’s 1966 list of the fifty best books in the previous five years” (Montreville and Crawford 206). Emily Maxwell’s review in the New Yorker (1961) called Juster’s novel “a newborn classic,” helping to widen the book’s appeal to the public (222). It later won the Seventh Recognition of Merit in 1971, an award sponsored by the George G. Stone Center for Children’s Books at Claremont Graduate School in California (Horn Book Magazine 242). Brandon Trenz notes that the novel’s “wordplay and fantastic characters” have caused reviewers to compare it to Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland (217-219). Brian Doyle comments that it is “an up-to-date morality tale...it did not lack incident and freshness and was hailed by many leading literary critics as one of the most important children’s stories to be published for some years” (160). Similarly, Naomi Lewis praises the book in her annotated bibliography of children’s fantasy books, and suggests that it is “[p]robably the best piece of post-war ‘nonsense’ in the Alice line on either side of the Atlantic” (27).

There were negative reactions to the book when it was first published. David C. Davis gave the book a negative review and sees Juster as an imitator of Carroll. In retrospect, Davis's suggestion is ironic since Juster had never read Carroll's Alice books prior to writing the story (as he told me in the telephone interview). Davis sees Juster's novel as part of what he considers a growing trend in imitation:

The most overrated piece of writing reeking of blatant imitation appeared recently in Norman [sic] Juster's The Phantom Tollbooth. Had the book been given reliable critical analysis, it would never have reached the pages of a national magazine for previewing. To the children who love Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, The Wind in the Willows, and The Hobbit, this was a hodgepodge of words, dull, unrewarding, and completely lacking in humor, satire, or subtlety. (267-268)

Davis's assessment does not do justice to Juster's word play and social criticism. Juster mentioned to me that at the time his book came out, word lists were common and aimed to help children learn vocabulary; since his book contained complex words, some people felt it would be too difficult. For example, Miriam Mathes feels that younger children may be unable to appreciate the book and its complexity: "The ironies, the subtle play on words will be completely lost on all but the most precocious children. Definitely for the sophisticated, special reader. Only the large libraries can afford to experiment with it" (332). While subtleties may be lost, a young reader can grasp Juster's ideas intuitively through the images that he presents of his characters.

In my telephone interview with Juster, he said that the fantasy and children's literature genres were advantageous when combined, as he felt that people were more willing to consider ideas that are new and unfamiliar when they are presented in a fantasy

context. He said that this may be why he feels attracted to both genres. He mentioned that he still enjoys reading books of both kinds today.

When I asked Juster about how he became interested in writing for children, he said that he has always been interested in writing. As a child, his favourite stories included fairy tales and L. Frank Baum's Oz books, although it is interesting to note that he had never read Alice in Wonderland prior to writing The Phantom Tollbooth. Nevertheless, I think that both Carroll's and Juster's books have similar themes and similar styles, which I will discuss later in this chapter. Also, Juster enjoyed the Marx brothers movies, and his father had been fond of word play and jokes. Juster feels that these two influences rubbed off on him. He said that in his writing, he delights in twisting things and playing with words. As a child, he was fascinated with how things were in and out of context and in finding out what things meant. When he later taught architectural design, he wanted students to learn to see things with a fresh eye; in retrospect, Juster feels that this idea of seeing with a fresh eye is perhaps what The Phantom Tollbooth expresses.

Juster's novel remains popular today. Numerous teachers use it in their classes, and fans continue to send Juster letters about the book; generally, the responses have been positive. Juster visits classrooms to discuss his book as well. Since the publication of The Phantom Tollbooth, he has published several other books that are either in the fantasy genre or that incorporate the word play prominent in his first children's novel, including The Dot and the Line (1963), Alberic the Wise and Other Journeys (1966),

Otter Nonsense (1983), and As: A Surfeit of Similies (1989). Recently, he has written an opera version of The Phantom Tollbooth that is in the process of publication.

Like Carroll, Juster expresses concern for the child, as well as concern about disturbing social and personal trends of his time (America during the 1950s and early 1960s). In analysing his social critique, I will focus on three aspects of his novel: the overarching quest narrative to save Rhyme and Reason; the protagonist's journey through the fantasy world; and the fantasy world itself. In these three aspects of the novel, Juster criticizes the growing division and lack of communication between the humanities and sciences, American education and its negative effects upon the child, and the negative effects of modernization on American society. Juster uses similar literary techniques as Carroll does to draw attention to what he sees as pressing American social problems. Juster offers possibilities for change through his fantasy world by implicitly creating a new set of values for personal and social life; he dramatizes these values for a rehabilitated American society through his novel's utopian ending.

The overarching quest narrative to rescue Rhyme and Reason operates symbolically to suggest the dangers of narrow-mindedness and the consequent inability to solve social problems effectively. Words connote the humanities and traditional intellectual thought, while numbers connote the sciences and logical thought, and Rhyme and Reason symbolize the necessary unity and partnership that Juster believes must exist between these two realms of thought. Neither is superior to the other, and both offer equally valuable perspectives on reality: "Words and numbers are of equal value, for, in

the cloak of knowledge, one is warp and the other woof” (77). The banishment of Rhyme and Reason has resulted in increasing enmity between the two brothers King Azaz and the Mathemagician. Each brother believes that his own kingdom is superior to the other’s, and worse, both brothers seem unaware of the communication barrier that has grown between them. When the Mathemagician tells Milo that he wrote King Azaz a friendly letter, he does not consider the possibility that his brother may not understand what he wrote. The fantasy genre allows Juster to parody interpersonal communication in a humorous fashion because he can construct a fantasy world where some people compose letters with numbers instead of words. On a more serious note, Juster reveals the lack of communication between the King and the Mathemagician:

“He’s much too unreasonable,” interrupted the Mathemagician again. “Why, just last month I sent him a very friendly letter, which he never had the courtesy to answer. See for yourself.”

He handed Milo a copy of the letter, which read:

4738 1919,
 667 494017 5841 62589
 85371 14 39588 7190434 203
 27689 57131 481206.
 5864 98053,
 62179875073

“But maybe he doesn’t understand numbers,” said Milo, who found it a little difficult to read himself.

“NONSENSE!” bellowed the Mathemagician. “Everyone understands numbers. No matter what language you speak, they always mean the same thing. A seven is a seven anywhere in the world.” (199)

The enmity between Dictionopolis and Digitopolis symbolizes the division between the humanities and sciences. It reveals Juster’s interest in the “two cultures” debate between the humanities and the sciences that continues today. The modern debate began with C. P. Snow’s controversial Rede lecture (1959) entitled “The Two Cultures

and the Scientific Revolution,” in which he criticizes the polarization of intellectual life into two camps, the literary intellectuals and scientists, or more generally, between abstract and practical orientations to reality. He remarks that each side has formed “common attitudes, common standards and patterns of behavior” (Snow 9) that ignore the other side’s point of view (Snow 14). Due to their narrow-mindedness, Snow suggests that the two camps have developed a sense of superiority and exclusiveness towards their own disciplinary area, considering it as providing the superior way to interpret reality. In Juster’s novel, this exclusiveness is characterized by the extreme sensitivity of King Azaz (86), the Mathemagician (199), and their representatives such as the Dodecahedron (177) towards any mention of the other brother’s kingdom.

Juster warns us that if the “two cultures” remain separate, we are more susceptible to the dangers of ignorance and manifestations of evil embodied symbolically by the evil creatures from the Mountains of Ignorance. He seems to share Snow’s desire for the reconciliation of the “two cultures” so that social problems can be dealt with more effectively, for “when those two senses have grown apart, then no society is going to be able to think with wisdom” (Snow 50).¹ But Juster seems to take Snow’s argument further to criticize the more fundamental problem of extreme specialization that is exemplified by Dr. Dischord who asserts that noise is the most important thing in the world (142), by Chromas, who orchestrates the colours of the world, and by the Soundkeeper, who stores noises in her fortress. Each of these characters is locked in her/his own specialty, seemingly oblivious to the roles of other characters.

However, Juster does not advocate a homogenized union of the various disciplines into a “melting pot,” like Canby, a jack-of-all-trades, who can do everything yet nothing: “‘I’m as strong as can be,’ he roared, lifting an enormous boulder over his head, ‘and I’m as weak as can be,’ he gasped, staggering under the weight of his hat...” (165-166). Instead, Juster wants to preserve the unique qualities and perspectives of each discipline, and suggests that we must deal with societal problems by looking beyond our individual disciplines and acknowledging other disciplinary perspectives. The novel’s ending symbolizes the unity of the disparate disciplines and peoples against the demons of Ignorance: “There in the lead was King Azaz...and, with him, the Mathemagician... From his tiny wagon, Dr. Dischord hurled explosion after explosion...Chroma the Great led his orchestra in a stirring display of patriotic colours” (244).

Milo’s use of the various items that he acquires during his journey to overcome the traps in the Mountains of Ignorance metaphorically represents Juster’s desire to deal with societal problems through a collective pooling of disciplinary talents; only through the combined use of all disciplines does Milo rescue Rhyme and Reason. He uses King Azaz’s box of words to escape from the Gelatinous Giant (Juster 222), the Mathemagician’s magic staff to expose the Trivium’s trap of petty tasks (213), Alec’s telescope to reveal the true nature of the monster of insincerity (216-217), and the Soundkeeper’s sounds to break out of the Senses Taker’s enchantment (230).

Juster suggests that one must not only acknowledge the benefits of pooling disciplinary talents, but also use these talents at the right time. In her discussion of Juster’s novel, Ann Swinfen suggests that it advocates “the right use of words—neither

hoarding them nor over-spending—and the right use of the reasoning and the mathematical faculty of the mind” (121). I agree with Swinfen because the characters in Juster’s novel continually articulate the necessity of using things at the right time. The Soundkeeper says that ““you can’t improve sound by having only silence. The problem is to use each at the proper time”” (163). Similarly, King Azaz tells Milo that his box of words will prove useful to him on his quest, but reminds him to use them wisely: ““[W]ith them you may ask all the questions which have never been answered and answer all the questions which have never been asked. All the great books of the past and all the ones yet to come are made with these words. With them there is no obstacle you cannot overcome. All you must learn to do is to use them well and in the right places”” (90).

I would extend Swinfen’s ideas further to the general idea that it is necessary to think through problems thoroughly before taking action. Juster suggests that without careful thinking, we cannot deal with social problems effectively because we will be susceptible to the “ugly Dilemma” (242), who symbolizes the dead-end situation in which one does not know how to proceed, and the Horrible Hindsight “whose eyes were in the rear and whose rear was out front...invariably leap[ing] before he looked and never cared where he was going as long as he knew why he shouldn’t have gone to where he’d been” (238). Acting hastily can result in wasted time and effort; when Milo and his friends literally jump to Conclusions, their trip metaphorically represents the undesirable consequences that can result from making hasty deductions. As Milo says, ““from now on I’m going to have a very good reason before I make up my mind about anything. You can lose too much time jumping to Conclusions”” (170).

The necessity of having a flexible, active intellect is carried into Juster's criticism of America's educational system and its effects upon the child. Like Carroll, Juster implicitly redefines perceptions of the child and affirms the importance of the imagination; Milo's journey could be seen as an allegory of the revitalization of an imagination whose development has been inhibited by an educational system that is focused too exclusively on logic and facts. In my interview with Juster, he mentioned that one activity that he likes when he visits classrooms is to start off a story, and then ask each student to add a bit more to the story. He notices that the ideas that students are using are often coming from television shows, which he finds a bit depressing. This suggests that the students lack the imagination to create more original stories, and that Juster may be addressing this issue in his novel by encouraging his readers to be more imaginative. In addition, his novel affirms the pleasure that comes with exercising imagination as a form of play in itself.

The opening passages of Juster's novel reveal Milo's apathy towards learning and his lack of imagination. He considers "the process of seeking knowledge as the greatest waste of time of all" (9), and "can't see the point in learning to solve useless problems, or subtracting turnips from turnips, or knowing where Ethiopia is or how to spell February" (9). This results in boredom and a lack of curiosity about the outside world. Instead, Milo shuts himself up in the house every day after school, thinking that, "there's nothing for me to do, nowhere I'd care to go, and hardly anything worth seeing" (11). Milo's life lacks any sort of fun and play: "He looked glumly at all the things he owned. The

books were too much trouble to read, the tools he'd never learned to use, the small electric automobile he hadn't driven in months—or was it years?—and the hundreds of other games and toys, and bats and balls, and bits and pieces scattered around him.” (11)

The Lethargarians satirize Milo's inactive and unimaginative state to an extreme; they do nothing but sleep and idle about all day (26-27) in the Doldrums, where ““nothing ever happens and nothing ever changes”” (23). Their ironic excuse for doing nothing—““it's really quite strenuous doing nothing all day”” (27)—implicitly suggests Juster's disapproval of intellectual laziness. The Doldrums' schedule that ironically details how they waste their day enhances the situation's parodic inversions of time:

...“From 4:00 to 5:00 we loaf and lounge until dinner.

“From 6:00 to 7:00 we dillydally.

“From 7:00 to 8:00 we take our early evening nap, and then for an hour before we go to bed at 9:00 we waste time.

“As you can see, that leaves almost no time for brooding, lagging, plodding, or procrastinating, and if we stopped to think or laugh, we'd never get anything done.”

“You mean you'd never get nothing done,” corrected Milo.

“We don't want to get anything done,” snapped another angrily; “we want to get nothing done, and we can do that without your help.”
(27)

Milo's attitude towards learning coincides with Juster's attitudes towards learning during his childhood (mentioned to me in the telephone interview), as he wondered about the relevance of what he learned in school.

The playfulness in Juster's novel affirms the importance of the “irrational” and the imaginative; adults have been socialized as children to do things rationally, and have not always had the opportunity to exercise their imaginations. Like Carroll, Juster continually plays with words, as well as numbers, and presents parodic inversions of

social behavior. Using fantasy allows Juster to subvert common assumptions about meanings of words and numbers and accepted norms of behavior, because fantasy is not bound by the rules and conventions of our own society. Dialogue and humour are prominent features of Juster's playfulness and contribute to the delight expressed in his novel. During the banquet at Dictionopolis, Milo must literally eat his words (88), and common phrases that we use to describe meals are parodically manifest in physical form:

“Well,” said Milo, remembering that his mother had always told him to eat lightly when he was a guest, “why don't we have a light meal?”

“A light meal it shall be,” roared the bug, waving his arms.

The waiters rushed in carrying large serving platters and set them on the table in front of the king. When he lifted the covers, shafts of brilliant-coloured light leaped from the plates and bounced around the ceiling, the walls, across the floor, and out the windows.

“Not a very substantial meal,” said the Humbug, rubbing his eyes, “but quite an attractive one. Perhaps you can suggest something a little more filling.”

The king clapped his hands, the platters were removed, and, without thinking, Milo quickly suggested, “Well, in that case, I think we ought to have a square meal of—”

“A square meal it is,” shouted the Humbug again. The king clapped his hands once more and the waiters reappeared carrying plates heaped high with steaming squares of all sizes and colours.

“Ugh,” said the Spelling Bee, tasting one, “these are awful.” (86)

This scene also makes fun of social etiquette. Milo follows his mother's advice about how to behave as a guest, but his requests have unexpected results; this is similar to the satire of Victorian rules and conventions of behavior in Carroll's *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass* worlds. Social etiquette is further parodied when people rush out of the banquet hall when King Azaz starts to make a speech, rather than staying and listening respectfully: “the moment he had begun to speak everyone but Milo, Tock, and the distraught bug rushed from the hall, down the stairs, and out of the palace” (93).

Similarly, parody of social behavior occurs when Milo and his companions leave Dictionopolis. The citizens' reactions to their departure are an ironic inversion of the expected response; in our society, people typically feel sad when someone is leaving, but in Dictionopolis, the people are cheering: "the crowd waved and cheered wildly, for, while they didn't care at all about anyone arriving, they were always very pleased to see someone go" (100).

Unexpected results also occur when Milo has a meal with the Mathemagician, but this time the humour comes from the fantastical nature of the situation that inverts even "normal" bodily functions. Instead of filling Milo and his companions up, Digitopolis's food leaves them hungrier after they have eaten. The Dodecahedron's and Mathemagician's attitude towards Milo's puzzlement about the meal enhances the humour of the situation, because their sense of what is "normal" differs from Milo's. Milo expects a meal to make him full, whereas the Dodecahedron and Mathemagician expect the opposite:

"Certainly," replied the Mathemagician; "what did you expect? The more you eat, the hungrier you get. Everyone knows that."

"They do?" said Milo doubtfully. "Then how do you ever get enough?"

"Enough?" he said impatiently. "Here in Digitopolis we have our meals when we're full and eat until we're hungry. That way, when you don't have anything at all, you have more than enough. It's a very economical system. You must have been quite stuffed to have eaten so much."

... "Oh dear," said Milo sadly and softly. "I only eat when I'm hungry."

"What a curious idea," said the Mathemagician.... "The next thing you'll have us believe is that you only sleep when you're tired." (186-187)

Other instances of comical word play occur in Milo's interaction with other characters, who often take his questions literally. When Milo asks for the biggest number, the Mathemagician takes out "the biggest 3 that Milo had ever seen. It was fully twice as high as the Mathemagician" (189). Word play also occurs through literalized plot events. When Milo and his friends jump to conclusions about their present situation, they literally jump to the island of Conclusions and must swim back to the main shore (163-170). Similarly, the carriage that takes Milo and the five ministers to the Palace in Dictionopolis literally goes without saying: "And, sure enough, as soon as they were all quite still, it began to move quickly through the streets, and in a very short time they arrived at the royal palace" (79).

Besides valuing imagination and play, Juster's novel values the child's ability to solve problems. At the end of the novel, the King announces his debt to Milo for what he has taught them, suggesting that children can contribute valuably to adult life (250). King Azaz's and the Mathemagician's continuing argument after Milo's quest about the superiority of words or numbers contrasts with Milo's conciliatory attitude that recognizes the importance of both "disciplines" (252). Like Carroll with Alice, Juster empowers Milo through his fantasy world, for it is Milo who gets his companions out of many dangerous situations through his quick thinking (222).

With respect to the educational system and its debilitating effects upon the child's imagination and desire to learn, Juster offers a corrective by implicitly redefining the teacher's and child's roles in the learning process. He promotes a "child-centered" educational system that encourages flexible, imaginative thinking rather than simply

factual memorizing. Juster shares the views of John Holt, who suggests in How Children Fail (1964) that the teachers' present role is detrimental to the students' learning process: "We present ourselves to children as if we were gods, all-knowing, all-powerful, always rational, always just, always right" (212). Curriculum materials of Holt's time further discouraged learning, when they should, instead, have challenged children: "We encourage children to act stupidly, not only by scaring and confusing them, but by boring them, by filling up their days with dull, repetitive tasks that make little or no claim on their attention or demands on their intelligence....Why not give tasks that are interesting and demanding?" (Holt 210). The Humbug's criticism of the Spelling Bee's ability to spell words criticizes the method of rote-learning that Juster and Holt both reject.² Rote-learning involves the memorizing of facts alone, and consequently lacks the depth of understanding and intellectual development that one can gain through more creative and experiential tasks: "A slavish concern for the composition of words is the sign of a bankrupt intellect" (68).

I agree with Maurice Sendak that The Phantom Tollbooth can be read as "an allegory for the awakening of the lazy mind" (6), in which Milo develops a flexible, open-minded intellect that considers creative and unexplored possibilities. Several times during the novel, Juster directs our attention to Milo's intellectual exertions and the difficulty he has thinking. Initially, Milo feels unenthusiastic about the Phantom Tollbooth and comments rather off-handedly that "I do hope this is an interesting game, otherwise the afternoon will be so terribly dull" (15). When Milo must think in order to escape from the Doldrums, the narrator informs us that "Milo began to think as hard as he

could (which was very difficult, since he wasn't used to it)" (31). We are clearly asked to agree with the narrator's bracketed aside and disapprove of Milo's lack of thinking. Other instances in which Juster alerts us to Milo's intellectual exertions are when Milo "trie[s] to think" to select the menu (82), and finds his head "spinning from all the numbers and questions" (175) after meeting the Mathemagician.

Milo's intellect develops through his encounters with various beings in Juster's fantasy world. Alec Bings challenges Milo's sense that there is a correct, logical answer to everything by his very presence that physically and spatially defies logical explanation. Alec asks Milo to consider the possibility that trees are people and people are trees; this imaginary situation has no real application to the real world, but is intended to provoke Milo's mind and stimulate him to think creatively (104). Alec further challenges Milo's sense of uniformity by stating that objects look different depending on the person's perspective, implicitly encouraging Milo to avoid empiricist perspectives of reality that quantify the world and observe it only "objectively." Instead, like the five ministers of Dictionopolis and their word play, Alec fosters a more "postmodern" sensibility in Milo that encourages him to accept a multiplicity of meanings in reality: "For instance, from here that looks like a bucket of water...but from an ant's point of view it's a vast ocean, from an elephant's just a cool drink, and to a fish, of course, it's home" (108). Similarly, the man who resides in the tree further challenges Milo's perceptions of reality. His physical size depends on his relation to someone else's size, rather than having any sort of "objective" measurement: "'to tall men I'm a midget, and to short men I'm a giant; to the skinny ones I'm a fat man, and to the fat ones I'm a thin one'" (114). Through word

play, the five ministers of Dictionopolis reveal to Milo the diverse meanings of words, how they can mean the same thing (39), their similarities in meanings, and the dependence of their meanings on the contexts in which they are found.

All these characters instill in Milo a desire to learn and explore that coincides with his growing intellectual independence. Milo's acceptance of the quest to rescue Rhyme and Reason reveals an independence and activity that contrasts to his previously passive intellectual and physical state (9-11). After meeting Alec Bings, Milo's head was "full of strange new thoughts" (132). Later, he outwits the Mathemagician with cunning logic (200). By the end of the novel, Milo is eager to explore the "real world" around him: "His thoughts darted eagerly about as everything looked new—and worth trying" (256). This newly formed child is the epitome of Rousseauian ideals of education continued in A. S. Neill's educational thought that stressed that one must never compel the child to learn: "under freedom children acquire something that no compulsory system can give them, a sincerity that stands out bravely, an attitude to life that is independent and fluid, an interest in people and things that all the discipline and textbooks in the world cannot give; rather they inhibit it" (Neill 315).³ Indeed, Milo is not compelled to learn; the characters in Juster's fantasy world may facilitate his intellectual growth by opening new ways of seeing to him, but ultimately it is Milo who takes charge and initiates his own learning.

Besides his critique of perceptions of the child and of the educational system, Juster criticizes social and personal trends in American society in the 1950s; he achieves

this mainly through his characters and setting, using the textual techniques of allegory, symbolism, and satire. In particular, Juster criticizes the negative effects of capitalism, urbanization, and the growing influence of the media and bureaucracy on peoples' lives, values, and social well-being. During the post-war period from 1945 to 1960, major societal changes included the population boom, increased labour productivity, and geographic expansion through acquisitions of more land for the United States (Marcus 82-89).⁴ Americans felt optimistic about their country's future (105-106), and a consumer culture developed rapidly as the baby boomers rushed to buy homes and acquire other material goods. These developments coincided with the migration of people from rural to urban areas and the rapid development of suburbia to accommodate the baby boom. From 1945 to 1955, fifteen million housing units were built (O'Neill 19). Moreover, metropolitan governments proliferated in synchronization with urban and suburban development (Abbott 88-92), and "growth-oriented administrations that dominated American cities in the 1950s" (Abbott 82). Mass communications proliferated through the television medium, and some critics saw this medium as being "more worried about broadcast images than issues" (Marcus 99).⁵ Along with these social developments came changes in family structure, education, religion, and "culture," that have "manifested themselves in a constant conflict or interplay between the democratic equalitarianism proclaimed as a national ideal in the basic documents of the American Revolution, and the strong emphasis on competition, success, and the acquisition of status, the achievement orientation which is also deeply embedded in our national value system" (Lipset 160).

Through his monsters from the mountains of Ignorance, Juster criticizes what he sees as dangerous developments in American societal institutions such as the media and bureaucracy. Juster criticizes the media's potential to disseminate propaganda and distort people's sense of reality through creatures such as the Wordsnatcher, the demon of insincerity, and Gross Exaggeration. Through the Wordsnatcher, Juster plays with homonyms to reveal how meanings can be twisted when words are taken out of context. When Milo attempts to call the Wordsnatcher back, it takes the word "wait" out of context and tells Milo its weight instead: "'Wait!' shouted Milo, who'd thought of many more questions he wanted to ask. 'Thirty-four pounds,' shrieked the bird as he disappeared into the fog" (207). Similarly, the demon of insincerity distorts Milo's and his friends' sense of reality (214-217) to make them see what it wants them to see: "'I'm the long-nosed, green-eyed, curly-haired, wide-mouthed, thick-necked, broad-shouldered, round-bodied, short-armed, bowlegged monster...one of the most frightening fiends in this whole wild wilderness'" (216). But Milo is not fooled, for he had "learned by now that people are not always what they say they are" (216). Only with his active mind and the telescope's help, does Milo see the monster's true self. Gross Exaggeration appears to symbolize the paparazzi and the sensationalism of tabloid newspapers: "[his] rows of wicked teeth were made only to mangle the truth" (239).

Juster suggests that these societal changes have personal ramifications. Riesman asserts that "the mass media, whether as advertisers or as vendors of entertainment and news, presented an image of life as smiling, tolerant, urbane, and relatively affectless...presented consumer goods so glamorously, in competition with other less

touted values” (liii). His statement describes Juster’s city of Illusions in essence, an image of something that people like to see but which is actually not there. As Alec tells Milo, it is sometimes easier to delude oneself and pretend to see what is not really there in order to avoid the truth: “sometimes it’s much simpler than seeing things that are...if it isn’t there, you can see it just as well with your eyes closed. That’s why imaginary things are often easier to see than real ones” (115). The danger of delusions and fantasies is symbolized by the Senses Taker who feeds into the fantasies of Milo and his friends (228-229). By succumbing to the Senses Takers’ fantasies, Milo and his friends have their immediate desires fulfilled at the cost of being immobilized: “I help people find what they’re *not* looking for, hear what they’re *not* listening for, run after what they’re *not* chasing, and smell what isn’t even there” (230, emphasis in text).

The Terrible Trivium, like the Lethargians, symbolizes the idleness of people’s lives and satirizes people’s desires to procrastinate and get away from dealing with important problems by wasting energy on trivial ones: “If you only do the easy and useless jobs, you’ll never have to worry about the important ones which are so difficult” (213). The Triple Demons of Compromise and Threadbare Excuse (237-238) further symbolize the laziness that Juster feels threatens society; they reflect the doing of nothing, compromising without action and making excuses to procrastinate and avoid addressing important issues and problems. The Whether Man’s comment on expectations satirizes people’s tendencies to envision what their futures will be like; these tendencies can be as detrimental as not thinking, because having expectations without acting to achieve them does not produce results: “Expectations is the place you must always go to

before you get to where you're going. Of course, some people never get beyond expectations'" (19).

Through the Senses Taker, Juster satirizes the bureaucratization of society that has contributed to depersonalizing the individual. He delays Milo's progress by asking him to answer meaningless questions and to fill out forms (227); this satirizes the bureaucratic red tape that mires the individual in procedures that delay and discourage action. The absurd specificity of the questions and the context in which they are asked heightens Juster's satirical effect, as the Senses Taker seems unconcerned about Milo being in danger and treats him like another customer: "Now, if you just tell me...the schools you've attended, the schools you haven't attended, your hobbies, your telephone number, your shoe size, shirt size, collar size, hat size, and the names and addresses of six people who can verify all this information'" (226).

Besides satirizing America's media and bureaucracy, Juster criticizes industrialization and urbanization through satirical figures such as Dr. Dischord and his noise collector Dynne. Dr. Dischord's tale about his business is, I think, a satiric allegory on increasing industrialization and urbanization that simultaneously parodies entrepreneurs:

"Business wasn't always so good. Years ago, everyone wanted pleasant sounds and, except for a few orders during wars and earthquakes, things were very bad. But then the big cities were built and there was a great need for honking horns, screeching trains, clanging bells, deafening shouts, piercing shrieks, gurgling drains, and all the rest of those wonderfully unpleasant sounds we use so much of today. Without them people would be very unhappy, so I make sure they get as much as they want. Why, if you take a little of my medicine every day, you'll never have to hear a beautiful sound again. Here, try some." (137-138)

The Dynne comments ironically that he heard an explosion “so lovely I cried for days” (141), equating noise with notions of beauty. Capitalism and its consequence, consumerism, are satirized by the “word-sellers” in the marketplace, who describe their goods with adjectives as if they were commodities, including “fresh-picked,” “ripe,” and “juicy” (45). One “word-seller” puns on the commonly associated meanings of “packaged goods,” implicitly satirizing the excessive packaging of goods that continues to this day. He asks Milo whether he would be interested in “a package of ‘goods’—always handy for a good morning, good afternoon, good evening, and good-by” (49). Juster criticizes passive consumerism as another manifestation of intellectual laziness: “Most people are just too lazy to make their own words” (50).

The story that Alec tells Milo about the city of Reality functions as an allegory of America’s more rural and relaxed way of life of the early 1900’s that collapsed with the increasingly materialist lifestyle after 1945. Alec laments that people stopped looking at things, and instead grew more concerned with keeping schedules and getting to places on time rather than with the process of getting there, “seeing nothing of the wonders and beauties of their cities as they went” (118). As a result, the people in Reality gradually retreated into themselves and their own private fantasies, causing isolation, lack of community, and lack of attachment and concern for the natural environment. Nature faltered and, with no one to care for it, started depleting: “No one paid attention to how things looked, and as they moved faster and faster everything grew uglier and dirtier, and as everything grew uglier and dirtier they moved faster and faster...Because no one cared, the city slowly began to disappear” (118). With this lifestyle, people were “so

busy with the things that had to be done that they scarcely had time to listen at all...the sounds they made grew louder and uglier. It became difficult to hear even the birds or the breeze, and soon everyone stopped listening for them” (148).

These developments are endemic to a fast-paced lifestyle more concerned with time and money, much like the White Rabbit and other instances where progress is satirized in Carroll’s Alice novels. It is interesting to note that Rachel Carson’s famous Silent Spring appeared shortly after Juster’s novel in 1962, and is a prophetic reminder of our wanton disregard and destruction of the natural environment through practices such as the use of pesticides, chemicals and other pollutants. She criticizes the “fanatic zeal” of many specialists and control agencies to create “a chemically sterile, insect-free world” (22), at the expense of not investigating fully the chemicals’ effects on the environment. Silent Spring is considered a classic because it “offered the first shattering look at widespread ecological degradation and touched off an environmental awareness that still exists” (Amazon website).

Moreover, the Mathemagician’s ironic comment about the jewels exposes American materialism: ““They’re such a terrible nuisance...and no one can think of what to do with them...So we just keep digging them up and throwing them out”” (182). The ironic inversion of values in this scene intensifies Juster’s satire of materialism, because the Mathemagician considers numbers more valuable than jewels.

As a solution, Juster implicitly redefines the American lifestyle and advocates a less materialistic and less egocentric orientation towards life. He calls for more conscientious people who will recognize the effects of their actions on society’s

collective well-being, and the destructive effects of their actions on the environment: “whatever we learn has a purpose and whatever we do affects everything and everyone else, if even in the tiniest way” (233). Characters symbolizing the individual who does her/his part for the good of the whole include Chroma, the conductor who keeps the colours of the day going, and the miners of the Numbers Mine, who dig up numbers. Juster implicitly asks us to disapprove of the Gelatinous Giant who symbolically stands for conformity to popular opinion and conventional norms of behavior: “I try to be just like whatever I’m near” (219). The Giant is “afraid to make a positive statement” (221), and wishes to preserve the status quo because “changes are so frightening” (221). The demons want to “destroy the intruders and protect Ignorance” (222) because Milo and his companions represent the opposite of ignorance and its connotations of narrow-mindedness and exclusiveness. They represent open-mindedness and intellectual activity, and consequently threaten the status quo of intellectual passivity and unquestioned obedience that the demons want to preserve. Through King Azaz and the Mathemagician, Juster encourages his readers to take initiative and deal with America’s social problems: “so many things are possible just as long as you didn’t know they’re impossible” (247). As well, Milo allegorically embodies the child who Juster wants to see develop—a child who retains her/his imagination like Carroll’s Alice, yet who is also eager to learn.

When Milo triumphs, Juster evokes a sense that a new, more optimistic order will come to the fantasy world, with a less materialistic orientation to life and a greater sensitivity towards nature: “Garlands of flowers hung from every house and shop and

carpeted the streets...shutters closed for so many years were thrown open to let the brilliant sunlight shine where it hadn't shone in so long" (246). Juster implicitly offers alternative values for American social organization and interpersonal relationships through the kingdom's celebration of Milo's successful quest. The celebration symbolically represents a harmonious, community in which people contribute their own talents to the festivities and get along regardless of disciplinary and intellectual differences (248-249). Juster's ending is, therefore, utopian. Milo allegorically embodies what Juster would like other children as well as adults to be—someone who is willing to learn, try new things, and take action to help solve problems.

IV. Paul Stewart's The Thought Domain

A contemporary British author, Paul Stewart began his writing career for children with the publication of The Thought Domain in 1988. Stewart took a degree at Lancaster University, followed by a creative writing course with Malcolm Bradbury and Angela Carter. Stewart taught in Sri Lanka, but, as he remarks, “the civil war started and people I knew disappeared. In the end I had to leave, came back to England and didn’t feel I wanted to write anything for adults” (ACHUKA Interview). As a result, he started thinking of writing for children. Stewart discusses the impetus for writing The Thought Domain: “I resurrected this old idea of doing a sister book to The Phantom Tollbooth, because [Norton Juster] never wrote anything else as far as I know. And that turned into my first book which was The Thought Domain” (ACHUKA Interview). In a questionnaire that I sent to Stewart (July 1999), he responded that the main focus of his novel is “getting people thinking again. I wanted to make a fun book that would also, literally, make people think. From the school visits I did at that time, the children did pick up on them.” The reviews of The Thought Domain were “modest but extremely positive...and I have subsequently had a large number of letters from boys and girls in almost equal numbers, saying they liked the book a lot...Adults [also] like it” (questionnaire).

Stewart states that he enjoys writing for children: “I...like the fact that you can be quite serious about it. You have to take your readership quite seriously. You mustn’t talk down to it...When I write I like to treat children as adults, but not the way I would treat adults”(ACHUKA Interview). In other words, Stewart believes that it is important to treat children with respect, and trust their capacity for dealing with complex issues, yet at the same time recognize that the state of childhood is something that should be valued as a special time as well as a time distinct from adulthood. Stewart says that he writes for children because “you have to be so sincere and honest to your readers. Adults...read, so often, to be so self-indulgent. It allows me to be more imaginative. It also allows me to encourage my readers to view issues in a way they might not otherwise do” (questionnaire). Stewart mentions that he often uses fantasy elements in his novels: “I found it easier to slip in discursive social issues in a palatable form” (questionnaire). This is similar to the advantages that Juster sees from using the fantasy genre.

Reflecting upon The Thought Domain, Stewart feels that perhaps the novel might have been too “esoteric” and more enjoyable to brighter readers; he asserts that if he were to write the novel today, it would remain the same in essence, but he would target nine-year-old rather than thirteen-year-old children, and “play up the fantasy element more, perhaps isolating it from reality completely” (questionnaire). He suggests that his views on writing have changed over the years: “I no longer see myself as having any educational ‘mission’ in the stories” (questionnaire). He acknowledges the importance of the quality of writing and the inclusion of issues in stories, but that it is important to make books appealing for children to read, or else they will not read about the issues anyway.

Nevertheless, he says that issues still persist in his most recent stories. Since The Thought Domain, Paul Stewart has published several more books for children, ranging from novels such as Adam's Ark (1990) to The Edge Chronicles novel series (1998, ongoing) as well as a couple of picture books.

It is interesting to note that the books which inspired Stewart to become a writer include Carroll's Alice books and Juster's The Phantom Tollbooth, and that his favourite book as a child was Juster's novel (ACHUKA Authorfile). Reading Stewart's novel, we are reminded of Carroll's and Juster's novels. While I will focus on Stewart's novel, I will also compare it to Juster's and Carroll's novels. I will analyse similarities and differences between the three authors in terms of the issues they explore, their literary treatment of these issues, and how the structure and content of their narratives are affected by their handling of these issues.

Paul Stewart's novel shares similar concerns to those in Carroll's and Juster's novels, including conceptions of the child, the impact of the educational system upon the child, and social problems endemic to modern Western society.¹ Like Carroll and Juster, Stewart criticizes the education system and its adverse effects upon the child because of its increasing focus on testing and the acquisition of facts, rather than on encouraging the child to think independently and creatively. Stewart's playfulness with words and images reveals his celebration of the child's imagination. He is critical of the separation between reason and imagination, which he sees as two equally important components of sound thinking. Chaos seems to symbolize imagination, while Order symbolizes reason;

Stewart symbolically illustrates how both Chaos and Order are integral to thought by having his child protagonist Neil unite both realms with a Seed of Knowledge at the end of his quest. This is similar to Juster's criticism of the "two cultures," or the separation between the sciences and humanities. What Juster sees as the separation of "two cultures" correlates with the separation of Chaos and Order in Stewart's novel, and both authors advocate increased communication between the two sides.

But unlike Carroll and Juster, who use techniques of satire to criticize society and its problems, Stewart relies more on techniques such as imagery, language, and narrative development to draw attention to social problems. Like Carroll and Juster, the fantasy genre allows Stewart freedom to create situations and characters that allegorically and metaphorically reflect the social problems he dramatizes. Imagery is a prominent technique through which Stewart depicts social problems.

Stewart's narrative can be read as an allegory of the development of an active mind, as was the case with Juster's protagonist Milo, who starts thinking and finds learning exciting. However, whereas Milo is intellectually lazy at first, Stewart's adults are lazy and discourage children from learning. Neil is not intellectually lazy, for he wants to know more about the world around him. However, his parents keep him insulated from external events by refusing to answer his questions. The story opens with Neil's cynical attitude towards his parents, who appear to be "agreeing with one another, but Neil knew better" (7). The opening passage sets the tone for the quest that Neil will undertake in the Thought Domain. There is a lack of communication between Neil and

his parents. This lack of communication ultimately becomes part of the solution to Neil's quest:

Every morning they would read through the two newspapers, and every morning they would argue about the news they found in them. If Mr. Davies said 'yes', Mrs. Davies would say 'no'; if she argued for more, he would argue for less. Whatever one said, the other would have to claim the opposite. And because of this Neil knew that as they seemed to be in agreement, they must be reading different articles.

"Something'll *have* to be done," shouted Mrs. Davies.

"It's disgraceful!" said Mr. Davies, thumping the table with his fist.

"What is?" asked Neil.

"You get on with your breakfast," said his mum.

A typical morning. His head turned from left to right and back again as his parents continued to make their comments on what they were reading. The curious thing was that they both seemed so sure of what they were saying. It was no wonder that they never reached any conclusions: after all, they couldn't both be right, could they? Neil tried his best to find out which one was making the mistakes, but they'd never answer his questions properly. (7)

He is curious about what they are discussing, but "[i]t was hopeless. None of the words seemed to mean anything" (9). Neil seems equally alienated from the adults in his school. His experience in school is strikingly similar to Juster's Milo, who also feels bored by the school curriculum. Neil "looked up and pretended to be interested" (10), but instead, he wants to know more about what he had heard at breakfast. Instead of answering him, Miss Beale condescendingly criticizes his lack of knowledge: "'My word...you certainly are a most stupid boy at times'" (12). Neil feels frustrated by the refusal of adults to answer him. He bursts out, "'Why don't any of you answer us?'... 'Why can't anyone take a couple of minutes to listen to us for a change? All we ever learn are the unimportant things, and anything we want to know is just ignored...'" (12).

These passages, which appear prior to Neil's entry into the fantasy world of the Thought Domain, resemble the openings of Carroll's and Juster's novels. All three novels begin in the real world, which is characterized as mundane and unexciting from the child protagonist's perspective. Alice finds the book that her sister is reading uninteresting and feels bored; in her second adventure, she enters the Looking-Glass world, hoping to find something more exciting there. Milo finds school boring because he cannot see the relevance of what he learns to the real world. Similarly, Neil cannot see the relevance of what he is learning (12). However, unlike Alice and Milo, who journey aimlessly into another world, Neil overtly expresses dissatisfaction about what he learns (12).

Neil's attitude towards the learning of irrelevant subjects reflects Stewart's attitude towards changes in the educational system. The Thatcher government (1979-90) ushered in "the ten most hectic years ever experienced by the public education system" that reflected a "new hard-right ideology" (Tomlinson 183) emphasizing that schools are "the instrument of change" and that they should prepare pupils for life in society (183, 190). The Education Reform Act (1988) significantly reversed the terms of the 1944 Education Act by reintroducing the market's influence into education (Morrell 55). The question of connection between achievement and children "has determined the kind of schooling available" (Morrell 72). These changes in the British educational system reflect a philosophy that runs counter to the more inclusive, child-centered philosophy of progressive education.² Thatcher's government introduced standardized testing through a national assessment system and a national curriculum that schools had to meet.

Admission procedures were also changed so that parents could choose schools if there was room available (Tomlinson 184). This encouraged a competitiveness between schools for students, which Frances Morrell regards as destructive for the educational system as a whole. She is also critical of the new national curriculum, which she sees as “rigid and inflexible[,] without a proper mechanism which will allow it to develop and grow. It provides a minimal framework which will restrict and become the maximum” (116). Further, she asserts that knowledge should not simply be knowledge of facts, but also of processes and attitudes (107). This the national curriculum has failed to take into account (107).

Stewart criticizes these educational developments through his narrative by creating a sense of playfulness with words, and by denigrating the restrictedness of education to the acquisition of mere facts. Like Carroll, Stewart expresses the value of imagination and play in children’s lives. Fantasy allows Stewart to play with words and create a world that does not need to conform our world’s social conventions and physical laws. By stepping outside these boundaries, Stewart achieves the freedom necessary to exercise imagination. Implicit in the imagination that Stewart valorizes is the desire for an educational system that is perhaps less structured and more sensitive to the child’s individuality.³

Through word play, he encourages imaginative and humorous ways of thinking about language. He uses common idioms and literalizes them into humorous images. For example, the “train of thought” becomes physically embodied as a train: “It was a two-note whistle; one high, one low, and an instant later a whole column of speeding

thoughts whizzed past them” (128). Similarly, the “foggiest idea” is characterized as a “thick and swirling fog” (63) that is “a collection of all the confused notions, half-baked theories, ill-conceived plans and flimsy excuses put together” (64).

Stewart’s playfulness and celebration of the imagination is developed most extensively in Chaos, a place where “normal” laws of existence do not exist. Instead, Neil quickly finds out that “nothing is what it seems” (154), like Alice and Milo in their respective fantasy worlds. Physical landscapes and their colours change randomly (153-154), and Neil’s bones are able to separate from his body in a way that defies the laws of our existence. In the following comic scene, Neil’s bones perform acrobatic stunts as if they were human acrobats with distinct personalities. There are even two inept, clumsy bones that continually disrupt the other bones’ acrobatic routines. Stewart provides a refreshing change from the dullness and monotony that Neil experiences in Order. He paints a lively scene that seems to combine figure skating and gymnastics:

...the bones put on a dancing display of incredible detail and intricacy. One [after] another they span through the air like drum-majorettes’ batons, then they lined up in order of size and did a rat-ta-tat tap-dance until the skull came rolling along towards them and knocked the first, which knocked the second, which knocked the third, until, like a row of dominoes, they all fell down. They didn’t stay on the ground for long, though. A second later and they were flying through the air in...loop-the-loops, figures of eight, somersaults, and cartwheels, and every one executed perfectly by all the bones except for two....Time after time they messed everyone up and got in everyone’s way...The long left thigh-bone was just about to attempt a double-somersault back flip with anti-clockwise twist when the two bones tripped it up, causing it to come crashing down heavily on its ball-and-socket joint. (157)

As discussed earlier, Carroll parodied poems and transformed them into imaginative pieces that have no obvious moral. Similarly, Stewart encourages the child’s

imagination through his parodies of traditional fairy tales and fairy tale elements. For example, in his parody of the fairy tale of Rapunzel, Stewart plays with the imagination by creating a comical narrative in which the knight does not rescue the princess. Parodic inversions of fairy tale elements contribute to the humour of the Rapunzel parody. When Neil enters the spiral tower, he finds a “small, hunchbacked old woman” (171) inside, rather than a young, beautiful woman. Moreover, the woman had cried for help when she did not need rescuing at all, for the tower is ironically her home (171). The situation’s humour is enhanced when the knight enters violently by breaking down the door with an axe (172), rather than entering in the expected chivalric manner. The dialogue that follows between the knight and old woman comically subverts the fairy tale trope of the noble knight rescuing the “fair damsel in distress” (173). The rescue that is supposed to happen in Rapunzel does not occur, and instead, the knight and old woman take a ridiculously long time attempting to introduce themselves:

“Sir Ender!” he boomed.
 “I do,” whimpered the old woman pitifully.
 “No, hag, *I* am Sir Ender.”
 “You surrender?”
 “I AM Sir Ender,” he roared, spelling it out.
 “Ah,” she said. “I am Miss Taken.”
 “In what way, pray?” asked the knight.
 “Epithetically speaking,” said the old woman complicatedly.
 “What?” yelled the knight. “If you think you can pull the wool over my eyes with your long words, you are very much mistaken.”
 “I am,” she replied.
 “Are what?”
 “Miss Taken. Miss Amelia Taken, witch of this parish.” (172-173)

There is also word play in this passage, as Stewart deliberately gives his characters homonymic names. “Sir Ender” (172) sounds like “surrender,” while “Miss

Taken” sounds like “mistaken,” and their similarities in sound contribute to the passage’s humour, because it comically inhibits their introductions to each other. Their appearances further parody the trope of the knight rescuing the princess, which Neil cannot help laughing at because they are so odd: “he couldn’t help laughing at the idiocy of these two geriatrics, one a wrinkled old woman in tattered robes hiding behind a wardrobe, the other a doddering old man in rusty armour sat upon the mangiest excuse for a horse he had ever seen in his life” (173).

Instead of “saving” the old woman (as she does not really need saving), the knight chops off her head and goes off to respond to the next scream for help (173). However, the old woman does not die; instead, she merely reattaches her head to her body: “‘Stupid old fool,’ said the head from its position over by the back wall. The body wandered over to it, picked it up and screwed it back into place” (174). This playfulness with death is reminiscent of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world, where death does not occur either.

Other elements of playfulness in Stewart’s novel allude to Carroll’s Alice novels. This suggests the continuing importance of Carroll’s novels and how they have influenced subsequent generations of fantasy writers. When Neil and his companions meet Tyler and Lindle, Tweedledum and Tweedledee from Carroll’s Through the Looking Glass come to mind: “Both were dressed in jeans and a T-shirt; both were short and stocky; both had freckles and a crew cut. In fact, apart from the different names printed on the front of their T-shirts they were completely identical. One was called Tyler. The other was called Lindle” (119). When they speak, they respond together as if

they were one person, just like Tweedledum's and Tweedledee's greetings to Alice (119). Similarly, when Neil wishes that he were taller and his neck starts growing longer, Stewart seems to allude to Alice's elongated neck. Stewart even uses the word "telescope" to describe Neil's extended neck, which Carroll also used to describe Alice's elongated neck (Carroll 22): "A curious itchy feeling made him scratch at his neck as he felt the skin grow taut. To his horror, it extended out like a telescope. He felt taller. His eyes told him that the ground was farther away, but the thin, ostrich-like neck swaying in the breeze was hardly what he'd had in mind" (161).

Besides affirming the importance of the child's needs in education, Stewart presents Neil's quest as an allegory of the revitalization of human thought processes whose imaginative and creative side has been stifled in favour of a rational, logical approach to societal and personal life. This is similar to Juster's novel, in which Milo must rescue Rhyme and Reason to reconcile the "two cultures" and restore harmony to the land. Similarly, Neil's quest to defeat the evil Gander ultimately results in establishing a link between Order and Chaos, which he recognizes as two equally important and necessary components of the thinking process. In both cases, balance between the separated sides is essential to restoring harmony.

However, Neil's journey in the Thought Domain has a significant difference that distinguishes it from Milo's and Alice's journeys through their respective fantasy worlds. The fantasy worlds in Carroll's and Juster's novels operate more or less separately from the "real" worlds of their respective protagonists. Alice's and Milo's journeys into their

respective fantasy worlds benefit their individual minds by nurturing their imagination, creativity, and eagerness to learn; their journeys have no impact on the society from which they have come. By contrast, the “real” world and the fantasy world of the Thought Domain in Stewart’s novel are intricately linked. Events in the Thought Domain affect the real world, and conversely, the problems of the real world result in damaging events in the Thought Domain. Neil’s quest and its successful outcome has direct consequences, not just for himself, but contributes to the alleviation of the problems in his society (201). In addition, through the success of Neil’s quest, Stewart implicitly redefines the child’s role in society and society’s attitudes towards the child by recognizing the child’s value and what the child has to offer, just as Juster and Carroll do by empowering the child protagonists in their novels.

Neil’s journey reflects a significant empowerment of the child that is unfortunately only possible in a fantasy world. According to David Archard, modern Western conceptions of the child regard childhood as a distinct and separate stage from adulthood (16), during which children “neither work nor play alongside adults; they do not participate in the adult world of law and politics...There is a marked division of roles and responsibilities” (29). At the same time, childhood is seen as a stage in the path to becoming an adult who can function competently in society (Archard 30). Childhood is simultaneously given importance, yet devalued because the child is expected to finally “grow up” and take his place in the adult world of society. Childhood “is a stage or state of incompetence relative to adulthood” (Archard 30). It is “defined as that which lacks

the capabilities, skills, and powers of adulthood....If childhood has virtues they are such only because of their very inappropriateness to adult life" (Archard 30).

Stephen Wagg suggests that "[I]n the New Right ideological formulations of the 1980s, children were more than ever the responsibility of their parents with, generally speaking, no rights as individuals" (175). However, Stewart's novel questions this view of the child; his narrative redefines what a child is in relation to adults, by putting Neil on an equal, if not superior, footing with adults. At first, Neil doubts his ability to destroy the evil gander: "Everything had suddenly become very big and he felt like a very small boy indeed. His shoulders were simply not wide enough for the amount of responsibility which had been heaped upon them. Why had he been chosen anyway? Surely there were others who could have carried out the task much better" (60). Later, after Neil and his companions sense the Proper Gander's evil presence, Neil again feels doubtful of his ability to succeed in the quest (132-133).

However, it turns out that Neil is better able than the adults of the Thought Domain to succeed, for he possesses the imagination and intuition that adults lack. Intuition prompts Neil to plant the Seed of Knowledge between the two pillars (150-151), even though he cannot explain why. Shambles mentions this deficiency of the Thought Domain's population to Neil: "I was just marvelling at that element of Chaos which is in every human being. That's why the Great Methodical had to get the help of a human child. No one here could possibly have any intuition: we're all too logical'" (150). Neil's inquisitiveness, brought over from the real world, keeps his mind active and

prepared for the unpredictable, which the thoughts of Order cannot cope with because they are only used to following rules.

The Great Methodical's organization of the Thought Domain is orderly and, ironically, does not require much innovative thinking (29-31). Everyone in the Thought Domain has specific functions, such as maintaining the Memory Bank and Thought Boxes, and extracting useless thoughts from people's Thought Boxes to allow new thoughts to flourish (23, 29-31). Stewart conveys the dullness of the Thought Domain and its lack of creativity through Neil's perspective. Neil's observations show us Order's systematic layout, characterized by "mile after mile of Thought Boxes disappearing into the distance. Even the sky...was uninteresting—just a dull, grey, endless area with no colour, no clouds, no sun" (44). Later, Neil again draws our attention to the featureless landscape: "Occasionally Neil would think that the light was beginning to fade, that the night was approaching. But it was no more than an optical illusion, the effect of his eyes tiring at the sight of the millions and millions of Thought Boxes stretching away all around him" (114).

General Knowledge is an allegorical embodiment of the ineffectual thinking that arises from a Thought Domain that accepts Order and excludes Chaos—for without Chaos one cannot think beyond the facts and synthesize them in meaningful and creative ways. General Knowledge's diminutive size and clean-shaven appearance enhances the attractiveness of knowledge as something that one should acquire: "A minute but impeccably dressed man appeared from the shadows....He was wearing a red and blue uniform with gold piping around the sleeves, collar and down the outside of his trouser

legs. He twisted his waxed moustache ostentatiously and saluted” (181). However, Stewart’s use of military imagery to describe the General subtly establishes a link between the General and the other thoughts in Order, whom he describes as “bland and regimented” (198). Stewart criticizes the apparently harmless acquisition of knowledge through the game that Neil plays with General Knowledge in order to get past. But as the questions grow increasingly difficult, Neil realizes the futility of the game, for one cannot possibly know such specific facts:

“...What nationality was Dame Nellie Melba?” he asked.
 ...“Sounds like an ice-cream,” said Neil.
 “Nationality is all I’m interested in,” snapped the General.
 “English?” said Neil.
 “Wrong,” said the General. “Australian.”
 “But I don’t even know who she is,” said Neil.
 “Irrelevant,” said the General.
 “But this is pointless,” said Neil.
 “Precisely,” he replied. “Absolutely useless. Utterly futile. Completely profitless, valueless, senseless. In short, a waste of time. But curiously compelling, wouldn’t you agree?”
 Neil looked at the little man and suddenly saw General Knowledge in a completely different light. It had always seemed something important to have, but at the moment at least it just seemed a way of keeping you from getting down to more important matters. (183)

Such facts are ultimately limiting and lack the imaginativeness necessary for thought to grow. The General’s inability to answer Neil’s riddle reveals the limits of “factual” thought that is reminiscent of Order. General Knowledge also parallels the Terrible Trivium in Juster’s novel, as both encourage one to procrastinate.

When Neil first arrives in the Thought Domain, the Great Methodical tells him that the Proper Gander has disrupted the order of thought, and that it must be destroyed so that the world can start thinking again (52). The Great Methodical externalizes the

evil gander as something that does not belong in the Thought Domain, yet by the end of the quest, Neil realizes that the Thought Domain's predictable environment allows evil influences such as the Proper Gander to flourish; it cannot cope with that which does not conform to the rules of the Thought Domain.

The lack of balance between the logical and illogical or imaginative faculties of human thought allows one to become susceptible to evil influences. Stewart reveals this susceptibility through several situations that expose the deficiencies that arise from a lack of balance. Without his logical, reasoning faculty, Neil's five senses succumb to the attractive thought of having a bacon sandwich. Stewart conveys the attractiveness of the sandwich through adjectives that evoke the five senses: "Neil, following a vision of rashers of crisp bacon nestling between warm bread, dripping with golden butter and topped with just a smidgen of tomato ketchup, had no ears for the little animal" (178). Neil is "mesmerized by the promise of his favourite snack, [and] was oblivious to almost everything around him. Blind to the increasing density of the woods, deaf to the imploring cries from the Inkling and insensitive to the thorns which scratched viciously at his face, he was only aware of his sense of smell. And this dragged him relentlessly towards the delicious fragrance of the frying rashers of bacon" (179). Neil realizes that without the balance between logic and the imagination, one also becomes susceptible to other thoughts that threaten to inhibit action or make one over-confident: "And then it occurred to him that just as you had to be on the look-out for all kinds of rascals, con-men and pickpockets in the real market, so here you had to be on your guard for the thoughts that were out to trick you" (142).

Neil recognizes that Order is vulnerable to attack because it is used to a routine of operating that lacks the mental agility and experience to cope with what it cannot understand. Since Neil possesses both Order and Chaos, he is able to resist fearing the Proper Gander, unlike the vulnerable thoughts of the Thought Domain: “No one knew what was going to happen next and the uncertainty put the whole collection of thoughts on edge. The song or laughter could just as easily change as the tension brought on fits of rage and floods of tears” (126-127). The atmosphere becomes increasingly depressed the closer Neil gets to Chaos: “The road was obstructed by thousand upon thousand of miserable thoughts. They shuffled about despondently like whole populations of homeless refugees” (136).

When he meets the Proper Gander, Neil realizes that its power has a significant weakness—that if no one believes in it, then it cannot exist. Much like Juster’s monster of insincerity, whose power comes from our ignorance, the Proper Gander’s power comes from those who believe in it. The imagery of decay and dirtiness that Stewart uses to describe the Proper Gander symbolically suggests that the Gander’s power comes from feeding off the thoughts of others who believe in and fear it:

Taller than the room, it was forced to stoop, which brought its savage beak swaying down close to Neil. It was bedraggled, it was filthy and it stank of rotting vegetables and sour milk. Eyes black as bottomless pits stared expressionlessly out from above its cruel beak, razor-sharp and lined with teeth. A little trickle of dried blood stained the feathers by its gaping mouth ominously. (190)

The Proper Gander is an allegorical embodiment of media bias, who is similar to that of the Wordsnatcher in Juster’s novel. Not uncoincidentally, “Proper Gander” sounds like “propaganda” (132), which Neil realizes is “the deliberate twisting of lies

designed to hurt as many people as possible” (133). The only way to defeat it is to see it for what it really is. The Proper Gander cannot be looked ““straight in the eye. It consistently defies all attempts at close analysis”” (135), suggesting that the Gander lacks substance and only derives its power from those who believe it. Since Neil refuses to believe the Proper Gander or let it frighten him, the Proper Gander is powerless and reveals its true image: “In its place was a pale, wiggly maggot wriggling around on the floor. ‘I *am* great. I *am* almighty. I *am* all-powerful,’” it squeaked. But now that Neil had seen the wicked Proper Gander for what it *really* was, there was no way it could ever exert any power over him again” (191-192).

Neil realizes that the Thought Domain must include both Chaos and Order, since both sides are integral to complete thought. Through Neil’s proposal for reforming the Thought Domain, Stewart voices his criticism of how people are prone to think conventionally; people are encouraged to think and make decisions based on logic and reason alone, and at the expense of the equally important faculty of imagination. Having experienced both Order and Chaos, Neil recognizes the artificiality and shallowness of the thoughts that are produced if the Thought Domain incorporates only Order, and excludes Chaos. When he is in Chaos, Neil recognizes that thinking is not just restricted to Order, because the events that occur there are familiar to him, even though they are chaotic: “though Chaos *was* chaotic, as it should be, there was something curiously familiar about it all. Like dreams he’d had and fairy-tales he’d read. And it occurred to him that as it *was* familiar to him, then maybe, just maybe, the Great Methodical hadn’t been entirely correct in saying that Chaos had nothing to do with the way people think”

(174, emphasis in text). After meeting Slipshod, the “chaotic double” of Shipshape (197), Neil asserts that she and Shipshape are “two halves of the same person” (197). In allegorical terms, Slipshod and Shipshape comprise the two sides of thought, Chaos and Order respectively, both of whom need to communicate with each other:

“...Order and Chaos cannot be separated. Both of them are vital to mankind. When I first came here I thought that the Thought Domain just meant Order, but I have discovered that Chaos is the other side of the same coin.”...

“What’s more...it is because Chaos was seen as something separate from and not a part of the Thought Domain that the Proper Gander was able to gain such a stronghold.”...

“There is always a little Chaos in the most ordered of minds...and a certain Order to the most chaotic of situations. The important thing is getting the balance between them right.”...

“What I suggest,” said Neil, “is a closer link between Order and Chaos. Regular communication, as it were, and I think I met just the right person for the job in Chaos. Her name is Slipshod.”

“WHAT?” bellowed the Great Methodical. “That young upstart! The little, meddlesome bounder! That...”

“That young upstart understood the link between the two halves of the Thought Domain,” said Neil. “If there isn’t any meeting-point between Order and Chaos, you’re bound to end up with thoughts so bland and regimented that they’ll be dangerously receptive to any future attack on the way people think. And next time it might not be possible to destroy any evil influence!” (198-199)

After Neil has trapped the Proper Gander between two mirrors, he places it in the cleft of the Tree of Knowledge that has grown from the seed that he planted on the border between Order and Chaos. This action is symbolic, because it suggests that both Order and Chaos must work together to thwart evil (196).

Neil recognizes the deficiencies that arise when thought is restricted to Order, for it leads to complacent thinking susceptible to evil influences. Bland thinking makes one susceptible to destructive influences like the Wand, who gives people what they want to

see (159), rather than showing them things as they really are. He resembles the demon of insincerity from Juster's novel, who exerts influence over Milo and his companions by making itself appear like a frightening monster, and the Senses Taker, who creates fantasies that fulfill Milo's desires. The Wand creates a sense of complacency similar to that created by Wishful Thinking by offering quick-fix solutions to problems. Neil is attracted to the thought that he could "destroy the Proper Gander and complete his task with one single wish" (159). However, as he finds out, quick-fix solutions are ineffective in dealing with problems, and, in fact, waste time and effort. This is exemplified by Neil's various attempts to wish for what he wants (160-162), but he always gets something that he does not expect.

The necessity of balance between the two halves of thought is further affirmed through Neil's interaction with his companions and the benefits of having both of his companions' abilities to help him. Neil's initial impression of them is that they are both different, physically and mentally:

Shipshape was a little taller than Neil, though slimmer. Her eyes were blue and smiley; her hair was thick and fair. It was her voice that Neil particularly liked: it was soft and clear and sounded as though she were about to laugh the whole time. Full of energy, even as they were driving along, Shipshape was drumming out the beat of their song on the dashboard the whole time.

Shambles couldn't have been more of an opposite. He was thin and nervy, his fingers constantly fiddling with imaginary threads of cotton and picking at specks of dirt even while driving. His green eyes darted around as though he was convinced that something was about to leap out at him at any moment. Unlike Shipshape he seemed continually anxious. (47)

Both Shambles's and Shipshape's abilities are necessary to their quest's success. Shambles is the cautious intellectual of Neil's group (90), while Shipshape is the

spontaneous pragmatist (98); both must work together to achieve the best results. For example, Shipshape rescues her companions from physical dangers. She rescues Shambles from the evil goose (109) and Neil when he is trapped in his own Thought Box, caught in a vicious cycle of regressive memory (110). Shambles uses his intellectual ability to get around the confusing comments of Tyler and Lindle, in order to find out how far they are from the Pillars of Reason, the gateway into the realm of Chaos (119-121). However, their different personalities lead to conflict. Neil must mediate to resolve their disputes. This resembles the conflict between the King of Dictionopolis and the Mathemagician over the superiority of words or numbers. It is Milo who resolves their differences. Ultimately, they must put aside their differences and work together to defeat the monsters of Ignorance.

Stewart establishes a link between people's lack of thinking, as revealed through Neil's quest, and the perpetuation of social problems; it is too easy to live inside a glass bubble safe from societal problems. This is similar to the Great Methodical's former conception of the Thought Domain as consisting only of Order, which is a site of predictability and rationality from which Chaos is excluded.

Separation from the real world is articulated by numerous personalities as a chronic societal problem. Robert Theobald discusses the short-sightedness of society to pressing global problems because of the pursuit of economic gain: "Societies everywhere...are failing to cope with the challenges of our times. The possibility of political and financial collapse is very real, because our institutions are obsessed with

economic issues rather than dealing with social, cultural, and environmental challenges” (8). Likewise, the British novelist Doris Lessing suggests that people “crave certainty” (27), and that “our left hand does not know—does not want to know—what our right hand does” (13). We desire easy answers to situations that they may not fully understand (Lessing 27). Lessing suggests that Britain is “a country that is rapidly being polarized into extremes...For a very long time in Britain we have had a balance of left and right, each side containing within itself a large range of different opinions. This balance has gone” (27). She uses the metaphor of prisons to suggest that we have chosen to enclose ourselves in predictable realities dissociated from societal and global problems. Similarly, Conor Cruise O’Brien asserts in his Massey lecture (1994) that the communicating of issues has become a mixture of fact and fiction that encourages simplistic views of problems and “quick fixes” to them (143). O’Brien suggests that the “guarded palace syndrome” (144) is “the tendency to flinch from reality” (144), which is aggravated by “very fast communications, a rapid sequence of varying sensational images, and very short attention spans” (144). This typifies the fast pace of life characteristic of Western societies. The “guarded palace” image conveys a sense of isolation resembling Lessing’s prison metaphor; people wish to insulate themselves from social problems and to focus on their personal lives instead.

In Stewart’s novel, Neil’s parents try to keep aware of the latest issues, but they do not do anything about them. Instead, Neil observes that they go round in circles without getting anywhere, yet he cannot articulate what exactly is wrong: “He wanted so much to help them solve their daily differences so that they wouldn’t argue over breakfast

any more. He wanted to stop them going over the same old ground and getting nowhere. If only he could help them arrive somewhere” (10). Just as bad as talking without taking action is his parents’ attempts to insulate him from societal problems; when Neil asks what is going on, they only tell him to eat his breakfast (10). As a result, he is ignorant of the real world (10), and cannot comprehend his parents’ conversation. So in contrast to Alice and Milo, who are ignorant at the beginning of their stories and seem content to remain so, Neil voices his discontent to his teacher.

Neil’s quest comes to have personal as well as societal benefits. His quest to destroy the evil Gander helps to save the world and allow people to start thinking again. However, at a personal level, Neil’s journey reveals a growing process of acquiring knowledge about social problems from which he had previously been insulated. As discussed earlier, Juster used imagery and allegorical monsters to draw attention to the problems of industrialization, urbanization, and media propaganda. Stewart uses the same techniques to convey social problems to his readers.

Shambles is an allegorical figure for people’s consciences, and their “gateway” beyond their glass bubbles of ignorance. The Great Methodical considers Shambles to be “far less reliable than the model Shipshape belongs to” (39), but Shambles has greater insight into problems than the more practical Shipshape, who is continually concerned with saving time. Whenever Shambles stops by some Thought Boxes, Shipshape is annoyed at the delay and asserts that they “haven’t got time to stop and go sightseeing” (48). It is Shambles who opens Neil’s mind up to social problems such as poverty. Phrases such as “Think of all the poor children in the world who can’t afford a nice meal

and be grateful for the food in front of you” (47-48) only brush over the problem in a superficial way without adequately addressing it through action. Shambles realizes this obstacle, and shows Neil what such a person’s life is really like. Neil breaks down:

“I didn’t know,” said Neil.

“Hey,” said Shipshape, gently lifting a teardrop off Neil’s chin, “You’re leaking!”

“I just didn’t know,” Neil repeated.

“That’s why I’d like to take some of those thoughts,” said Shambles, “and show them to the well-off people. But I didn’t mean to upset you like that,” he added quietly.

“It’s not your fault,” said Neil. “I’m glad you showed me. There’s no hope of any change before I get all the thoughts moving again, is there?” (52)

Neil’s reaction to the woman in poverty reveals how closed his world is, and how adults have shut him out of the “real” world. Stewart uses strong images to convey an emotional scene to his readers when Neil glances into such a poor person’s Thought Box:

he saw a small portion of rice steaming in a wooden bowl. He caught sight of a copper urn filled with water. He saw thoughts of bundles of firewood. He saw a small but brightly shining thought of an emerald green paddy-field with rice swaying in the wind and an ox ploughing the earth. He saw a smaller drab thought of a child with twisted legs lying in a wooden cot. And there were other thoughts that Neil was unable to identify; songs sung in a language he didn’t recognize. (49)

Clearly, the person is from a poverty-stricken country. Neil suddenly realizes how ignorant he has been. Stewart clearly criticizes lack of awareness in schools, where students learn facts devoid of social context: “At school everyone seemed to think that the highest mountains, longest rivers, dates of battles and the names of kings and queens were the most important things in the world to know” (50).

This awareness of the world is something new to Neil: “He was curious about the woman’s thoughts and keen to find out more, but almost frightened of asking any more

questions. It was all so strangely different” (51). Everything he takes for granted is put into question: “for the first time it occurred to Neil that he was quite lucky having a bathroom full of as much water as he needed” (50). Neil learns from the Thought Box that the child has rickets, and is caught in a hopeless life with only dreams to get him through each day (51).

Another global problem that Neil finds out about is the slaughtering of dolphins (73), and he reacts in a sobered manner: “‘I wish people didn’t kill them,’ said Neil simply. Since coming to the Thought Domain he had discovered a lot of things that he wished people didn’t do” (73).⁴

Besides these problems, Stewart also draws attention to physical and psychological problems, including anorexia nervosa and other disorders. Matra Robertson argues that anorexia nervosa is increasingly experienced by women in western societies “which themselves are increasingly obsessed with food, diet, shape and body” (xiii, 1). Similarly, Joan Brumberg sees anorexia as a symptom of deeper problems in society. In the twentieth century, “the body—not the face— became the special focus of female beauty” (231), and this coincided with medical studies from the 1900s to 1920s that stressed the health risks of being overweight (233). As a result, people grew obsessed with keeping thin: “Being thin was tied to attractiveness, popularity with the opposite sex, and self-esteem—all primary ingredients in adolescent culture” (Brumberg 253). During the 1980s, this preoccupation intensified, and dieting became “a central motif in the lives of women of nearly all ages; at least 50 percent of American women are on a diet at any given time” (Brumberg 253).

Stewart uses vivid images to convey the seriousness of people's obsession with thinness and food. The obsession can be so severe that it completely occupies a person's thoughts and daily life:

A small white dog was standing over by the far corner wagging its tail unenthusiastically and sniffing at a ginger brown guinea-pig. Neither animal noticed as the food slid over towards them. Suddenly, a wobbling portion of strawberry blancmange enveloped them both. The guinea-pig disappeared at once, but Shambles got one last glimpse of the wide-eyed horror of the dog as it too was swallowed up. The girl would never be able to think of the dog or the guinea-pig again. They had been erased by the dominant thought in her head: food.

...The mound of food was still growing. Second by second, the feast of gourmet delights was multiplying. A stream of confectioner's custard ran down the left side of the mound, where a dozen or more sponges had just appeared. Peach melbas and profiteroles, glace cherries and jelly babies appeared out of nowhere.

A couple more demoralized thoughts were engulfed. Even a thought of a battered old teddy-bear could not avoid the multicoloured edible mountain. From Shambles's experience, the thoughts of teddy-bears were generally the most resistant: people almost never forgot them. Things certainly were just about as bad as they could get. (92-93)

Stewart is careful to show that such obsession is not the fault of the individual alone; rather, the obsession is exacerbated by a society that is obsessed with women being thin. This supports Brumberg's assertion that "it is the nature of our economic and cultural environment, interacting with individual and family characteristics, which exacerbates the social and emotional insecurities that put today's young women at risk for anorexia nervosa" (259). As with the global problems discussed earlier, Stewart draws attention to the ignorance people have towards this problem. Shambles's initial reaction to the person's Thought Box is naïve, for he assumes at first that the woman is poor because there is so much food in there: "Is she from a poor country?" asked

Shambles naïvely. ‘No,’ said the thought. ‘You’d think so, wouldn’t you? But no, she’s from a wealthy family in a wealthy country. But there are so many pressures on her to stay thin, that she’d rather starve herself to death than put on an ounce of weight’” (92).

Through imagery and plot development, Stewart draws attention to the problems of mental disorder through Shipshape’s experience in a madman’s Thought Box. Erratic and unpredictable actions and emotions metaphorically reveal how the madman’s mind operates: “Blue. Brown. Blue. Brown. The colour in the Thought Box alternated between the two shades, and as it did so the thoughts chanted: ‘We’re so miserable. We’re so bored. We’re so miserable. We’re so bored.’ Suddenly the light turned to a dazzling shade of orange. The thoughts instantly became animated and friendly again” (101).

Ultimately, Stewart’s novel criticizes our egocentrism, and advocates instead a society with a stronger conscience about those who are disadvantaged. Neil exemplifies the kind of person that Stewart wants society to emulate—a person whose thinking reflects a balance of Order and Chaos, and who is willing to take part in remedying social problems.

V. Conclusion

The three authors that I have examined share similar concerns about the child and her/his education, as well as broader concerns about the societies in which they live. Their use of the fantasy genre frees them from being constrained by their own societies, and allows them to use their imagination to the fullest in order to voice their criticisms. By using the fantasy genre, these writers are able to express their concerns in imaginative ways that are not possible in the “realistic” novel. Using structural techniques of narrative, plot structure and plot development, and textual techniques of word play, symbolism and allegory, the fantasy writer can create new ways of seeing things in our world, and implement her/his own vision of life that is better than the one that predominates in her/his time.

In each novel a child protagonist journeys through a fantasy world that is used allegorically to draw attention to problems in society. Central to each novel is the empowerment of the child protagonist in the fantasy world, and the valuing of the child and her/his abilities within that world. The child ultimately proves superior to the adult and other characters in the fantasy world. Alice proves to be more “mature” and capable than the inept characters in both Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world; these characters are infantilized through comical inversions of the child-adult relationship that empower Alice and allow her to express her imagination and sense of play. Alice’s

journey can be seen as an allegorical journey that reflects the growing liveliness of Alice's mind that allows her to escape from the rigid world of social hierarchies, conventions of behavior, and utilitarian education. These inversions of the child-adult relationship also occur in the other two novels, in which Milo and Neil are respectively empowered. Milo's ability to balance points of view and extend his perspectives beyond the restrictedness of fact allows him to succeed in his quest. Like Alice, he enlivens his mind and imagination in a fantasy world. Neil, too, is empowered with the responsibility of defeating the Proper Gander, which he is able to do because of his imagination and ability to extend his thinking beyond the rigid rules typical of Order. Like Alice and Milo, Neil benefits personally from his journey into the Thought Domain. He learns more about the world around him. Through Chaos, Stewart valorizes imagination and play as important components of childhood.

These three child protagonists embody what their respective authors want other children and the rest of society to emulate. In each case, the journey gives freedom to the child protagonist, whose abilities and desires are ignored by her/his own society. Alice is imaginative and unstifled by fact and utilitarian education; Milo's intellect is creative and grows, breaking out of the fact-oriented education of the 1960s; Neil expands his thought by embracing Chaos, breaking free of the lack of thought of his parents and other adults in his world. The four novels suggest that we are ultimately the richer for embracing the imagination, the illogical, and the unpredictable as a part of our thought and life. All four celebrate the child's abilities, and encourage the child and adult reader to emulate the qualities of their protagonists and avoid stifling the imagination. To achieve these goals,

the authors use techniques such as word play that challenge our unitary conceptions of time, space, and character within their respective fantasy worlds; such techniques encourage us to see things in new ways and to break out of narrow patterns of thought.

These four books propose implicitly that one must have an open, creative mind in order to address social problems effectively, to decrease our vulnerability to dangers such as propaganda. The child in each novel embodies qualities necessary to solving social problems. Maurice Sendak makes a vivid comment in his introduction to Juster's novel that addresses the concerns presented in Carroll's and Stewart's novels as well: "[t]hings have gone from bad to worse to ugly" (7). The child continues to be the subject of debates about the goals of education, the teacher's role in the learning process, and curricula that should be implemented to achieve these goals. Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux criticize the American educational system's authoritarian nature (13) and its movement towards increasingly utilitarian ends that cater to business and corporate interests (223-224). Carroll, Juster, and Stewart all criticize this kind of education, because, for merely pragmatic purposes, it compromises the creativity and the imagination of children.

Modernization and its consequences for society are a common theme of all three authors. Carroll expresses concern about industrialization and its effects upon people's lives through such scenes as the mad tea party and the White Rabbit that satirize progress and our concern with time. Also, he criticizes the rigidity of social hierarchies and the didactic, educational literature produced for children. The same concerns are manifest in a contemporary context in Juster's novel; he criticizes post-World War II developments

such as increased urbanization that gives rise to cities like Reality and Illusion. Urban areas that suggest the city of Reality include those characterized by homelessness, poverty (Mauk and Oakland), and a “lack [of] community or clientele...[the city] may as well be an artificial and lifeless collection of individuals” (Combs 89). This comment echoes Stewart’s criticism of a society that wishes to hide itself from social problems, exemplified in the parents’ insulation of their son Neil from the outside world. Neil’s quest, and its outcome, addresses the social climate of the 1980s. The 1980s have been dubbed a decade of greed and materialism, in which the acquisition of money alone became a virtue. During the Thatcher era, government policies were oriented towards privatization, diversification, and competitive tendering (Jones 198), applied to all sectors of society, from local government to health and education. The Thatcher government “reshape[d] Britain in a new frame of reference—individualist rather than collectivist, stressing the values of self-help and enterprise rather than those of community and social concern” (Jones 189). Moreover, “consensus was replaced by competition, compassion by commercialism, and community by cut and thrust” (Jones 210).

These developments of the 1980s seem to have gone farther today with increased privatization and an achievement-oriented mindset. Social hierarchies, bureaucracy, and media propaganda continue to be systemic in today’s society. Television has turned to cheap, formulaic, entertainment-oriented programming dependent on audience ratings alone. Michael Parenti criticizes the media as a propaganda tool that distorts news through misrepresentation, omissions, and sound bites—these characteristics recall Stewart’s *Proper Gander*, whose power derives from people’s fear as well as Juster’s

allegorical monsters like the Wordsnatcher who distorts the meaning of words, or the Senses Taker who makes people see what is not there. The gap between the affluent and poor is widening (see Rentoul), and places such as amusement parks represent the increasing artificiality of American life because they are “places of contrived entertainment... manicured and made safe for mass enjoyment” (Combs 93). Such places are symbolic manifestations of the rigid rules of play that Carroll wants to get away from in his Alice novels. As well, they symbolically reflect the illusory pleasures in Juster’s city of Illusions that are created by people like the Senses Taker, and Stewart’s Wand and Wishful Thinking, all of whom cater only to what people want to hear.

Naomi Lewis suggests in her “Introduction” to 20th-century Children’s Writers that “many of the worst as well as the greatest written works belong to the genre of fantasy” (viii). Perhaps, then, among fantasy novels that deal with social problems, the novels that last are those that transcend their specific socio-historical contexts, and can still be appreciated by readers who may not be completely familiar with the problems addressed or the socio-historical context surrounding these problems. The novels I have analysed continue to be popular today. Carroll’s Alice novels are still being published; Juster’s novel recently got published in a 35th anniversary edition; and both Juster and Stewart continue to receive letters from fans of their books. In addition, these books are as significant today as when they were first published. They make readers aware of problems and call for changes. Because the creation of fantasy worlds allows writers to empower children in ways that are not possible in “realistic” novels, they have the potential to be utopian and give hope that necessary social changes can occur.

NOTES

Chapter 1

¹ Other definitions of fantasy include those by C. N. Manlove and Brian Attebery. In his definition of fantasy, C. N. Manlove aligns himself with Tolkien's idea that a fantasy work evokes wonder; however, he broadens the realm of fantasy to suggest that it includes "a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms" (*Strategies of Fantasy* 16-17).

Brian Attebery follows Tolkien's ideas about fantasy to suggest that fantasy "is a form that makes use of both the fantastic mode, to produce the impossibilities, and the mimetic, to reproduce the familiar" (*Strategies of Fantasy* 16-17).

Eleanor Cameron suggests that fantasies are "tales in which humans...living in the world of reality, are enabled to experience events which are impossible according to the laws of reality" (11). She asserts that a paradox of fantasy is that it "contains assumptions no factual person would be willing to admit and that it assaults and breaks the scientific laws of our world. And yet it is these very assumptions and assaults that give fantasy its character, its edge, its fascination, its singular delight" (16).

There are also other views on fantasy that focus on its characteristics, such as Michael Moorcock's discussion of fantasy's relationship to myth in "Aspects of Fantasy."

² Kathryn Hume constructs a typology for literary works that she then applies to fantasy; she suggests that a literary work "can offer four basic approaches to reality, namely, what I am calling illusion, vision, revision, and disillusion. Further, it can attempt to disturb the reader's own assumptions, or reaffirm those assumptions and comfort the reader" (55). She suggests that the literature of vision and revision are at opposite ends of a continuum—a fantasy novel can draw our attention to the inadequacies of our own reality, as well as to encourage and impel us to act and improve our social conditions: "At the one end, the author expects only reaction; at the other, he strives to push the reader from passive agreement to action. She acknowledges that "numerous works of revision [cluster] near the mid-point, their programs for action reduced to brief sketches, or left implicit" (56), and that "occasional works violate this platform" (57).

However, her categorization is too rigid, as a work of fantasy can simultaneously comfort as well as disturb (56-57). For example, a fantasy may disturb one's commonly held assumptions, but also offer a sense of hope that things can get better.

³ In Strategies of Fantasy, Brian Attebery suggests that fantasy continues to be taken as unimportant or as “lesser literature” than other forms: “Although fantasy has a large and loyal readership, it lacks the cultural sanction that allows academics to admit to reading detective novels, another mode that spans the gap between popular and elite culture” (x). He suggests that fantasy has been relegated to the margins because people tend to regard more “realistic” or “historic-like” literature more highly.

⁴ Leyburn notes that the satirist “who wishes to depart from this world in order to reveal it must go away either in time or in space. Thus, the creators of fantastic voyages make a geographical departure; the prophets of future worlds make a temporal one” (71). She suggests that Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels (1726) is representative of a satiric allegory with its voyages to far-away lands. Gulliver is “the representation of the foolish pride of a human attempt to live by reason alone” (Leyburn 85).

Chapter 2

¹ Jan Gordon cites two prominent studies of the education of the Victorian child, Froebel’s The Education of Human Nature and Herbart’s Science of Education both of which assert that “[t]he role of the parent is minimized in the growth of the child because he is not seen to have an identity prior to the age of seven” (102).

² Stephen Prickett cites some critics’s allegorical interpretations of the text and its satirizing of scholarly pursuits and knowledge : “[t]he mirror-writing has been seen as a parody of contemporary Oxford scholarship, while ‘Jabberwocky’ itself has been taken as the story of how Jowett, the notoriously agnostic Professor of Greek at Oxford, and Master of Baliol, came to sign the Thirty Nine Articles to save his job” (142). Ronald Reichertz discusses similar issues in The Making of the Alice Books (1997), particularly in his fourth and fifth chapters.

³ As Florence Milner discusses in her article “The Poems in *Alice in Wonderland*,” the actual lullaby of G. W. Langford is as follows:

Speak gently! it is better far
To rule by love than fear;
Speak gently; let no harsh word mar
The good we may do here!

Speak gently to the little child!
Its love be sure to gain;
Teach it in accents soft and mild;
It may not long remain.

Speak gently to the young, for they
 Will have enough to bear;
 Pass through this life as best they may,
 'Tis full of anxious care!

Speak gently to the aged one,
 Grieve not the care-worn heart;
 Whose sands of life are nearly run,
 Let such in peace depart!

Speak gently, kindly to the poor;
 Let no harsh tone be heard;
 They have enough they must endure,
 Without an unkind word!

Speak gently to the erring; know
 They must have toiled in vain;
 Perchance unkindness made them so;
 Oh, win them back again.

Speak gently; Love doth whisper low
 The vows that true hearts bind;
 And gently Friendship's accents flow;
 Affection's voice is kind.

Speak gently; 'tis a little thing
 Dropped in the heart's deep well;
 The good, the joy it may bring,
 Eternity shall tell.

In the rest of her article, Milner also discusses the other popular poems of Carroll's time that Carroll parodies in Alice in Wonderland. Martin Gardner's The Annotated Alice also gives a useful discussion of the allusions and parodies Carroll makes in Through the Looking-Glass. For example, he discusses how the White Knight's song (Gardner 307-312) is "a travesty on the subject matter of Wordsworth's poem about the aged leech-gatherer, 'Resolution and Independence'" (Gardner 308).

⁴ Carroll also satirizes political institutions. The Caucus race makes fun of political institutions and the circular reasoning which the politicians use to make decisions. At the same time, Carroll valorizes play for its own sake, rather than following preexisting rules with moral or utilitarian goals. This was also the time of Palmerston's rule as Prime Minister. He was adept at creating coalitions between different political groups. Lee suggests that Palmerston "was the most strongly individualistic of all the nineteenth-century prime ministers [who] unwittingly put together the basis of the modern Liberal

party” (Lee 134). Perhaps, the unusual congregation of animals that Alice meets after swimming ashore allegorically represents this political development in a comical fashion: “They were a queer-looking party that assembled on the bank—the bird with dragged feathers, the animals with their fur clinging close to them, and all dripping wet, cross, and uncomfortable” (31).

Chapter 3

¹ For more information on the “two cultures” debate, see Snow’s The Two Cultures & a Second Look, as well as the rebuttals to his views by F. R. Leavis and Lionel Trilling described in William H. Davenport’s The One Culture. Leavis’s Two Cultures? The Significance of C. P. Snow is a rebuttal to Snow’s initial lecture. McMaster University also held a symposium on the “two cultures” issue in 1988, with the collected papers in Science and Humanism: Is the House of Inquiry Divided?

² An early work that criticized America’s educational system was Bernard Bell’s Crisis in Education: A Challenge to American Complacency (1949), in which he criticizes the schools for creating curricula that catered to their own interests, rather than to academic standards: “As I listened to them...while they outlined their ideal program for the high school of the future, it was apparent that they were far more concerned with coddling the young minds committed to their charge than they were with strengthening and maturing those minds” (40).

The intensity of the educational debate in the 1950’s led to the publication of four prominent books in 1953 that criticized progressive education, including Arthur Bester’s Educational Wastelands, Robert Hutchin’s The Conflict in Education in a Democratic Society, Paul Woodring’s Let’s Talk Sense about Our Schools, and Albert Lynd’s Quackery in the Public Schools. Their views coincided with others who believed that America had to properly educate more mathematicians, scientists, and engineers (Lora 241-243).

The rise of the Cold War and fears of communism, particularly the 1957 launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union, contributed to the American sense of urgency for restructuring the educational system. Numerous articles after the Soviet’s satellite launch often related education to national goals (Lora 245; Goldman 312-316). In The Crucial Decade—and After, Eric Goldman mentions that Life magazine did a series of articles entitled “Crisis in Education” (314) that criticized the American educational system for its low standards, overcrowded schools, underpaid teachers, and inability to cultivate students’ minds effectively. These articles, along with other news items, changed the American public’s attitude “towards learning in general and toward science in particular. The Soviet schools, Americans were being told, were tough, purposeful, heavily emphasizing science in every year from the fourth grade up, ruthlessly ready to separate the mediocre from the outstanding students and to push the latter” (Goldman 313). Lora

suggests that many Americans believed that their educational system had to be reformed so that it would “return education to its historic role as moral and intellectual leader” (241).

³ A. S. Neill conducted his famous Summerhill school experiment, in which children were free to do as they pleased. He believed in letting children initiate their own learning and discover their own potential. He documents his Summerhill experience in Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Child Rearing, in which he states his belief that education should be “a preparation for life” (24), and criticizes the textbooks that “do not deal with human character, or with love or with freedom, or with self-determination. And so the system goes on, aiming only at standards of book learning—goes on separating the head from the heart” (26). Instead, he believes in instilling a sense of worth and pride in children by giving them the freedom to play, instead of instilling particular behaviors and ways of thinking through a structured academic curriculum (24-26).

Ten years after its publication, several prominent educators voiced their opinions about Summerhill in Summerhill: For and Against. Opinions ranged from the extreme poles of Max Rafferty, who criticized Summerhill as a place which “degrades true learning to the status of a disorganized orgy” (22) and Neill as an “educational prostitute” (20), to John M. Culkin, who saw Summerhill as “a holy place” (27).

⁴ Robert Marcus’s A Brief History of the United States Since 1945 is useful for its overview of the major changes in the United States from 1945 to the end of the Nixon era in 1974. Marcus cites statistics that reflect the dramatic growth that was characteristic of 1945-1960. The American population grew rapidly from 1945 to the mid-1970s; in the first five years after the war, the population increased by 12,000,000. During the 1950s, there was an 18.5% increase in the population, which brought the population to over 179,000,00 in the 1960s (83). Marcus notes that “the general fertility rate—annual births per 1000 females aged 15 to 44—rose from 80 in 1940 to 106 by 1950, peaking at 123 in 1957” (83).

The United States also expanded geographically through its acquisition of Alaska (in 1868) and Hawaii in 1959. The two states added about 600,000 square miles to the United States, creating a geographic size of more than 3,600,000 square miles. Geographical expansion of urban and suburban areas also occurred as the baby boomers’ demands for homes rose and blacks migrated north from the southern states from 1940-1970 (84-91). Carl Abbott’s Urban America in the Modern Age: 1920 to the Present surveys the development of urban areas and the impact of migration and immigration on their economic and social development.

Labour productivity also rose due to increased mechanization and efficiency: “output per man-hour rose over 95 percent from 1947 to 1960” (84).

⁵ In Inventing Reality: The Politics of News Media, Michael Parenti discusses the development of the American news media and suggests that it helped to shape public opinion (117) during the Cold War, “downplaying Soviet overtures for negotiation.” (117) and “hail[ing] Truman’s cold war declarations with an avalanche of articles and stories about the ‘international communist menace’” (117). In Chapter 12, “Methods of Misrepresentation,” he analyses the various means by which the media distorts the news to encourage a particular opinion, using such techniques as selectivity and deliberately omitting certain aspects of the news, ordering of the news stories to give particular emphasis to certain news items, and bending the truth to support certain opinions.

Chapter 5

¹ In the questionnaire that I sent to Stewart, he replies: “The elements in the Thought Boxes—the poverty of the third world, anorexia, greed, propaganda, etc.—were, of course, all put there deliberately.”

² The tradition of progressive education in Britain’s primary schools prevailed after the war with “the construction of imaginative primary buildings in some areas, and the evolution of new methods and emphases in reading, movement, and even, in the early 1960s, the teaching of modern languages” (Lawson and Silver 450). Progressive education had international roots that found supporters in England as well as America and other European countries. John Dewey was one such proponent who promoted “individuality, to base education on the concept of children as children, not as future adults, on the idea of growth in children as an end in itself, not as a preparation” (Lawson and Silver 398). There was also growing interest in children’s creative writing, and teachers experimented with innovative approaches to teaching, including “new approaches to the primary school timetable, open-plan school designs, experiments with family grouping, the increasing abandonment of fixed rows of desks, [and] the conception of rooms as workrooms rather than classrooms” (Lawson and Silver 452).

³ With respect to the educational system, what Stewart says in the questionnaire I sent him is worth quoting at length:

...I do feel there is far too much emphasis on academic success these days. Children are pressured into achieving more than either of us were. I think the British educational system, in particular, penalizes boys.

a) Formal education begins too early for them. They mature later than girls and are demotivated in the classroom situation because they are not developmentally able to perform certain tasks which the girls can do.

b) The table-led classroom structure is disruptive for boys, who perform better (according to studies) in a silent environment, at certain times of the day.

c) Nearly all primary school teachers are women which leads to the subconscious belief that books/reading are for women/girls, apparently.

As a father, I have always read with my son, to counter this growing perception. As a writer, I think my books have become more boy-oriented.

Interestingly, Stewart mentions that he specifically wrote his more recent fantasy novel Beyond the Deepwoods for nine- to thirteen-year-old boys “who need turning away from the Playstation” and need to be encouraged to read.

⁴ During the 1980s, there was growth in poverty and inequality in Britain. Under the Thatcher government, there was extensive privatization of public sector resources controlled by the state, including water, health, and education: “most of the nationalized industries passed into private ownership” (322). Several adverse consequences of this included a widening gap between the rich and poor, with the rich having an increased share of total income (Rentoul 47), and the shifting of the tax burden from “the rich and very rich to those on lower or middle incomes—and the total burden has become heavier as those on lower and middle incomes support rising numbers of those on incomes paid out of taxes” (Rentoul 48).

The record of environmental protection for Britain was also very poor in the 1980s, as it fell behind the standards set by the EEC. The EEC attempted to

force the British government to respect environmental concerns and observe higher standards. For years the British resisted international pressure to protect the ozone layer, the diminution of which had begun to lead to a higher incidence of skin cancer. Britain also broke EEC law by failing to keep her water supplies free of pesticides, and by continuing to dump sewage and industrial pollutants into her rivers and the North Sea. (Pugh 319)

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