PARENTHETICAL DISCOURSE WITHIN AND WITHOUT *ALICE*

PARENTHETICAL DISCOURSE WITHIN AND WITHOUT ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the notion of parenthetical discourse, which I here define as the discourse excluded from contributing to the unity of a text. The three main examples of parenthetical discourse that I examine are the parenthesis, the pseudonym, and the appended letter, all of which I find in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. To supplement my reading, I turn to the texts of Jacques Derrida, the poststructuralist thinker whose concept of the parergon--the frame around an ergon or work--provides me with a theoretical model for understanding the relation between parenthetical discourse and the text proper. Generally regarded as subordinate and exterior to the literary work, parenthetical discourse nevertheless is a necessary condition of all literature in that it defines what literature is not and, in doing so, defines what literature is. Parenthetical discourse is the repressed difference or opposition against which a literary work forms its boundaries.

And yet I also discover that the parenthetical devices in Alice in Wonderland occupy other positions with regard to the text, positions which displace their status as extra-textual. They may be said to rest not only on the border between literature and the outside, but also inside that actual border. Hence, the parenthetical is just as much a part of the text as the narrative; the appended letter, the pseudonym, and the parenthesis mirror the text proper by

throwing into relief the difficulty in determining the nature of genres, as if both the inside and the outside were themselves unsure of what constitutes the inside and the outside. In the end, my examination corroborates Derrida's claim that there is a concept of the frame, but no actual frames--simply because the frame itself puts into question the whole notion of a stable center surrounded by fixed margins.

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Deserving much more than a parenthetical remark, special thanks go to my supervisor whose patience, diligence, insight, and encouragement made writing this thesis a rewarding supplement to my education. As well, I would like to thank my mother and my grandparents for the support they have given me over the years. But most of all I thank my God whose faithfulness knows no bounds and whose word is "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

> The preface is a necessary gesture of homage and parricide, for the book (the father) makes a claim of authority or origin which is both true and false. (As regards parricide, I speak theoretically. The preface need make no overt claim--as this one does not--of destroying its pre-text. As a preface, it is already surrendered to that gesture.)
>
> --"Translator's Preface" to Of Grammatology

To parenthesize. To place in parenthesis. To think in parenthesis. To read in, read through, read around the parenthesis. Juxtaposing another preface--a saying before-hand--with our preface, I have installed an epigraph about prefacing on one hand and parenthesizing on the other. Gayatri Spivak, the writer behind our epigraph, makes the claim that a preface destroys its book and then, spinning around suddenly, makes the counter-claim that she made no such claim of destroying Derrida's translated book. This counter-claim is in parenthesis. Undoubtedly, Spivak's preface makes an overt claim of destroying its pre-text, because her entire discussion on the question of the preface is prompted by the event of her own preface. Nevertheless, the comment in parenthesis contradicts the comment in the surrounding text. Whose authority are we to observe here at this place where the parenthesis strikes against the text proper? To add to the complication, Spivak discusses the way in which the preface undermines

its book, an undermining taking place as we read her preface, but, at the same time, her discourse demonstrates how the preface is disrupted from within: the parenthesis, yet another example of a prefatory device, undermines her preface and so, in undermining a preface, really undermines itself. Which preface are to believe, the one without or the one within parenthesis? Homage or parricide; self-aggrandizement or suicide?

Like a preface, the three extra-textual devices which my thesis examines occupy a strange space in relation to the text they seemingly frame. That space is what interests me in the chapters to follow. Although these extra-textual devices occur at different points throughout Alice Adventures in Wonderland they, all share the common property of having their readers exclude them from contributing to the construction of the text proper or primary discourse, "primary" and "proper" meaning the narrative. The parenthesis, the first extra-textual device examined, denotes the bracketted aside in Alice in Wonderland, a comment contained within parenthetical punctuation marks. The pseudonym, the second extra-textual device, denotes nothing more than nom de plume, namely "Lewis Carroll". And the letter, the third extra-textual device, denotes a message written in the epistolary form, our example being "An Easter Greeting", the letter appended to Alice in Wonderland. I will also discuss in a round-about way introductory poems, epigraphs, and signatures, as well as other letters from Carroll's correspondence, although I do not devote entire chapters to these extra-textual devices. At any rate, to call the strange space

these devices inhabit "extra-textual" almost presumes that it is situated outside, not coming within the scope or the field of the text, that it is something extra to, on top of, and in addition to that real ground, considered stable; thus, we will call the space "parenthetical" instead of extra-textual, not because we know where it is situated, but, rather, because we have no idea at all where to situate it.

As illustrations of parenthetical discourse, then, the parenthesis, the pseudonym, and the appended letter have traditionally been regarded as secondary or minor to the text, proper and primary. It seems logical to think that if it had not been for the text, these parenthetical devices would never have been inscribed; otherwise, when inscribed, they are mere accidents, dependent texts whose meaning and value is granted to them by the text proper. In Alice in Wonderland the traditional reader is compelled to glance at these devices and then look away. However, my project will eventually question the accidentality often associated with parenthetical discourse and confirm Spivak's assertion that the parenthetical commits parricide by destroying the fatherly proper (and no doubt we will revoke such assertions). Beneath the subordination of parenthetical discourse there lies a purpose and an intentionality that offer us a greater understanding of what a text constitutes and of how language as textuality needs to suppress itself in order for it to yield meaning.

The principal theoretical principles underlying, or rather overlaying, this thesis originate from the texts of Jacques Derrida, a French poststructuralist philosopher who challenges the concepts of

origin, unity, and identity--concepts of principality. The strategy he turns and returns to over and over again is that of first overturning the relationship between two terms or concepts arranged in a hierarchical order and then displacing this entire system with a concept which describes why both relationships depend upon each other. His texts turn concepts inside out so as to put in the center that which for good reason had been relegated to the margins, since this exclusion is what constitutes the inside as the inside and the outside as the outside. (Dissemination 128). Because Derrida writes on the boundary between parenthetical and primary discourse, he will serve as our Charon to ferry us back and forth across rivers like the Styx, which divide the underworld from the land of the living, divide literature from reality. What his texts yield to this thesis is the notion of the parergon, the frame, whose relation to the ergon, or work, begs many questions. In this thesis his strategies become not so much a source as a discourse, a resource, a replaying, a reenactment that is by no means the same as the first performance of his play, his act.

I will here outline my own thesis' borders and, as Spivak contends, pay "homage" to the thesis' authority and unity:

1. As much as it seems natural to think that the parenthesis epitomizes the core of parenthetical discourse, furnishing me with an archetype or paradigm for understanding other parenthetical devices, I find that within and without Alice in Wonderland the parenthesis unwrites itself and, when texts try to define it, slides in between these imposed definitions. The OED teaches its students to glance at

the parenthesis and then to look away, to identify the parenthetical as extra-textual, as insignificant, and then to forget about it. Alice in Wonderland teaches us otherwise. For Carroll the parenthesis signifies a stamp of ownership, a signature that he wants his reader to remember.

2. The pseudonym, a textual sliver often overlooked, implores us to be its affectionate friend. Do we make friends with it? How is it to be read? What is its relationship with the proper name whose place in the text has been written over? In the text, the odd frame of the pseudonym is a poor container for literature.

3. Just when the reader thinks Alice in Wonderland has come to a complete close, he turns the page and finds that another portion of text awaits him. A strange letter hovers outside of Alice in Wonderland--a letter that refrains from punning and parodying. How should we take a greeting which purports to be serious and common-sensical in the shadow of a narrative that bubbles over with nonsense? Might not this parenthetical device be an extension, even a sequel to the linguistic lawlessness abounding in the text? "An Easter Greeting" then compels us not only to look more closely at the epistle-form but also to pay more attention to the line which traditionally separates literature from other types of discourse.

4. And finally, why choose Alice in Wonderland as the arena in which to wrestle with parenthetical discourse? Apart from answering that any text may have sufficed for exploring such phenomena, I would argue that Alice in Wonderland loses itself in frames, passe-partouts, outlines, borders. A frame usually connotes order and control;

nonetheless, this text's profusion of frames results in the degradation of meaning--interpretive entropy. Parenthetical discourse seems to have a particular affinity for nonsense and linguistic chaos. (Anyway, if someone were to say that Alice in Wonderland is only an excuse for examining parenthetical discourse, I would respond accordingly: yes, only an excuse).

Chapter One

THE PARENTHESIS WITHIN AND WITHOUT ALICE'S ADVENTURE'S IN WONDERLAND

--the phenomenon had not been worth a parenthesis.--

--Tristram Shandy

Exergue

Had John de la Casse in composing Galateo been as prolific and as discursive as any dull-witted clerk, he, according to Tristram Shandy, would have produced a treatise unworthy of even mentioning in a digression. Tediously spanning "the age of Methuselah" in sheer length, this imaginary version of Galateo would, no doubt, squander readers' precious time and, in effect, would be less edifying than its most trivial part, its most trivial part being the interruption, the insertion, the aside. For my purposes, the above epigraph, no longer just a line lost in the middle of an eighteenth-century novel and no longer just a thread interwoven into a narrative fabric, stands alone; amongst other roles, it functions not only as the first parenthetical mark in my thesis, but also as a telling commentary on literature's

attitude to the bracketted aside. If the reader assumes the epigraph illustrates the rhetorical figure of hyperbole, an exaggerated statement, then modifying the sentence's syntax seems to betray Tristram Shandy's opinion of the parenthesis: the parenthesis is not worth the least of "phenomena".

Needless to write, the epigraph depends on the reader's perception of worth for much of its meaning. Let us say 'worth' is a relative concept and can be determined by arranging the three texts--the Galateo, the imaginary Galateo, and the parenthesis--in an economic order of value. In lacking worth to the extent that it even lacks unworthy worth or cheap worth, the "phenomenon"--the imaginary Galateo--occupies a position two removes from true worthiness. The hierarchical structure implied in the epigraph and in the surrounding passage confers upon the real Galateo the highest degree of worth, the Galateo being a species of what we will term "primary discourse", discourse outside of the parenthetical comments in a text. Next in the epigraph's implicit hierarchy comes interruptive discourse, the "parenthesis". And finally occupying the position of least value comes the discourse of the imaginary Galateo; however, again, if this epigraph is indeed exaggeration, then the "parenthesis" really occupies that inferior position on the totem pole which Tristram Shandy in a hyperbolic gesture consigns to the "phenomenon". So, within the order of worth here outlined, I will rewrite the epigraph: the parenthesis is not worth pence; the parenthesis is not worth dross, not worth slag, refuse, debris--waste. If the rewritten epigraph is couched in the colloquial vernacular, it may correspond to a popular idiomatic

expression: the parenthesis is not worth a shit.

Whether or not it is a hyperbolic figure, Tristram Shandy's denunciation of the imaginary version of Galateo represents an appropriate epitaph for the parenthesis as well as all dead, unread literature, epitaph meaning here for us an inscription putting to rest the buried, the unseen, a judgement which makes texts 'dead' as much as it identifies them as such; in fact, the parenthesis and the phenomenon appear inseparably bound, each signifying the other's epitaph, each, as a blacklist, depreciating the other's worth. Just as inferior literary discourse should be bracketted off from proper literary discourse--should be only mentioned in a passing remark--the parenthesis is associated with rambling, long-winded, incoherent works, works, unlike the real Galateo, which fail to comprise an unified whole. Furthermore, Tristram Shandy's denunciation accommodates a similar yet less prosaic interpretation, when we consider an alternate definition of "parenthesis"--meaning "round brackets". To authors, no criticism is more disturbing than the comparison of their discourse to meaningless marks, those diacritical slashes incapable of evoking speech. Linguistic dumbness highlights literary dumbness and vice versa. The parenthesis becomes a sign for books whose signs merit silence, while books whose signs merit silence become a sign for the parenthesis.

Although after a first reading the epigraph seems to be an epitaph for worthless, unread literature, designating the death of the parenthesis, it also initiates and extends the parenthesis' life, doubling as the crucial words in its christening. We may give the epigraph a second reading which conflicts with the first: in a manner

of writing, a name-day ceremony interferes with the liturgy of what had seemed to be a funeral service. The epigraph's apparent denunciation of the parenthesis is itself expressed through a parenthetical construction which immediately incites the reader to re-examine the situation. Besides its own containment within dashes, the epigraph is drawn from a digression in the midst of another digression (Tristram Shandy 366-7). While discussing his father's attempt to write a Tristra-paedia, a system of education for himself, Shandy launches into a short exposition concerning his reverence the Archbishop John de la Casse. In the midst of the exposition, he then briefly imagines what kind of treatise would have been conceived had the Archbishop not been a genius. Arguably, both interludes bear no significance to the overall narrative scheme, but these occurrences are not uncommon, because Tristram Shandy possesses little narrative scheme to bear any significance to. The text unfolds by infolding digression within digression ad infinitum, and, as a result, the reader becomes more and more entangled, confounded, bemused, until he cannot distinguish between primary and parenthetical discourse. The pièce de résistance of the literary parenthesis, Tristram Shandy compels us to discard the rewritten epigraph. Because the epigraph is expressed through a parenthesis, then, in one respect, the "phenomenon" is worth a "parenthesis" and thus both the "phenomenon" and the "parenthesis", and the relationship that is articulated between them, require a new interpretation. But, more importantly, because the text seems to organize itself around the elemental structure of the digression, the epitaph may be read as an understatement--the rhetorical figure of the

litote. It, therefore, follows that the parenthesis occupies the highest position on the totem pole of worth and signifies the hallmark of all worthy literature; otherwise, Tristram Shandy's denunciation of the parenthesis also denounces Tristram Shandy[1].

However, before we hastily inscribe another epigraph, we must exercise some hermeneutical caution. Although the second reading of the epigraph (the epigraph as an epitaph) conflicts with the first (the epigraph as a christening), to claim one reading is false and the other is genuine, or--less dogmatically--one reading lies closer to the truth, does not solve the problem. Although we might think we are superimposing the christening over the epitaph, the epitaph is still clearly visible. So, does the premise that both readings are equally acceptable lead us to the conclusion that each annuls the other and that, consequently, the read line loses its capacity to communicate? Unlike two equal physical forces which oppose one another in such a way that a stasis ensues, two antithetical readings never erase the read text, reducing it to a blank space on the page. Who is to say what is

[1]By way of a footnote, I should point out that my own thesis is fully implicated by this entanglement, displaced and interrupted as it is by a parenthetical discussion on Tristram Shandy. It seems such discussing bears no relevance to the matter at hand, when, in truth, as we shall see, it is the only matter at hand. In my thesis, Alice in Wonderland is nowhere in sight, not because of a capricious, irresponsible writing style, but because of a parenthesis introducing the device of the parenthesis. The problems readers encounter in literature always find their way into critical discourse. Since language permits us to speak about it, we often forget that discourse on discourse or discourse discussing discourse, cannot escape the system of which it is part, cannot view everything clearly from above. We like to think that theorizing can freeze the play of language, failing to consider that the play of language is always already disrupting such theories. Hence, I proceed parenthetically.

the resultant force of a number of readings? Are not these other readings more texts to extract more readings from? Despite my readings, the signs of the epigraph will always remain inscripted: contradiction should not be confused with cancellation. If I physically erase the inscribed word, then meaning is cancelled, gone. A reader cannot arrest freeplay otherwise. Nevertheless, by professing that either reading of the epigraph is possible, I install a third reading which the reader may also neither totally accept nor totally reject. Our original epigraph resists our rewritings, but not our rereadings.

Suspiciously enough, in the case of the parenthesis, there is a long history of a privileged reading. This reading, though, originates not so much from literature as from a parenthetical discourse around and within literature--critical discourse, literary history. Take for example, The Harper Handbook to Literature, whose purpose is to instruct the student on how to handle literary texts. The handbook defines the parenthesis as follows: "a word or words included as a deviation from or addition to the primary flow of thought in a sentence or paragraph, usually set apart by parentheses" (336). An obstacle or hindrance to the primary flow of thought, the parenthesis diverts the reader away from and out of the text. The parenthesis is thus defined against this "primary flow" (336). If we seek a further explication for the notion "primary flow" (which the handbook does not define at all), we might identify it with the notion of unity which the handbook does define: "the quality of an artistic work that allows it to stand as a complete and independent whole, with each part related to each

other part and no part irrelevant or superfluous" (476). Appealing to Plato's Phaedrus because it first proposed the principle of aesthetic unity as a representation of the organic unity found in nature, the handbook implies that the parenthesis interferes with and is, therefore, outside the text's primary flow, the text's organic oneness. For the many readers who regard it as if it were its own epitaph, the parenthesis signifies dead text, an appendage to the work which is neither vital nor functional, an appendix which instead of contributing to organic unity only stores toxic waste, a solute which defying homogeneity clouds the solution's transparency--the intrusive adjunct which readers quickly skim over to return to live text. As we observed in Tristram Shandy, discerning between primary and parenthetical discourse soon turns into a problematic venture, once the reader realizes that apparent digressions acquire pivotal positions in advancing certain images, motifs, and ideas. After exposure to such complexity, how can the reader confidently dismiss the parenthesis as merely accessory? If parentheses are as worthless as our first reading of the epigraph indicated, why are they, nonetheless, included in all types of discourse? My epigraph, which embodies both attitudes toward the parenthesis, again lends us insight into the dilemma; it inhabits a different context in the capacity of an intragraph. It shows up inside a text, not--as in our thesis--outside. That text is the OED.

The problem, then, is one of definition, of coming to terms with what the parenthesis is--without ensnaring oneself in a privileged reading that promulgates opinions or biases about the parenthesis. Although the thought that the dictionary codifies the first and the

last word on any given word comforts those who have no time to bother with "semantics", the dictionary's institutional status does not protect it from a critical cross-examination: the accusation here brought against the bulwark--perhaps, bull-work--of the English language, the OED, is that through selecting value-laden quotations it entrenches a particular but widely accepted reading around the parenthesis. Like The Harper Handbook to Literature, the OED tells us to regard the parenthesis as an insignificant deviation. For every entry in the OED, quotations, arranged chronologically, support each of the listed significations in order to "illustrate the forms and uses of the word" (OED xxxii). Now, under the first signification for "parenthesis", the last three quotations in particular promote a strong prejudice by depreciating the value of the parenthesis. The first of these is lifted from Burton's Diary: "You see the inconveniency of a long parenthesis; we have forgot the sense that went before." Bothersome and troublesome, a plain nuisance, the parenthesis obstructs reading by inducing temporary amnesia in its readers; the inconvenience divides meaningful passages in two, distancing text from context, distancing the immediate past from the present (and yet, maybe, the parenthesis is really distancing that "sense" which is the real inconvenience). The third and final quotation, the only one representing the nineteenth-century sense of the sense of the parenthesis is a patchwork of bits and pieces from Muirhead's Gaius: "What is illegible.., but..obvious from the context.., is in italics, within marks of parenthesis ()." Muirhead sweeps into the parenthesis all that is undecipherable, inscrutable, unreadable. But in the

"context", that is in primary discourse, the meaning is quite clear. (Is it not a telling irony that the OED appeals to the authority of two sources which in their own right have been parenthesized within the body of common knowledge?)

Of course, a reflexive accusation may arise from ours, attacking us for not separating the definition of the definition (a word's meaning) from the definition of the connotation (a word's associative value): who cares if the quotations communicate a pejorative sense, because their function is solely to employ the word in a sentence? Unfortunately, the distinction between denotation and connotation is not grounded out somewhere for us beforehand, especially when we consider that the OED is quite capable of fabricating its significations out of the very quotations which strike us as so pejorative:

> It is to be distinctly borne in mind that the quotations are not merely examples of the fully developed use of the word or special sense under which they are cited: they have also to illustrate its origin, its gradual separation from allied words or senses, or even, by negative evidence, its non-existence at the given date. (OED xxxii)

Reading a passage for its connotative meaning and then for its definitive meaning is one and the same activity. All of language looms behind each sign. The reader must sift through language, selecting those signs he thinks best represent the particular sign he is defining.

The penultimate quotation in the series is none other than a line from Tristram Shandy, although it is most assuredly not our epigraph; however, at a glance it does appear to be the same quotation. But because the line has been revised, the OED's quotation is not the

same as either the complete sentence from Tristram Shandy or my epigraph. Unlike the quotation from Gaius, whose ellipses indicate missing sections of the sentence, the quotation from Tristram Shandy has undergone editing without any notification to the reader: "The phenomenon had not been worth a parenthesis." The OED, dispensing with its scrupulous attention to detail, not only capitalizes the "the" but most importantly of all leaves out the dashes. The signs have been tampered with; the line has been rewritten--the line has been rewritten. And with the rewriting, a possible reading has been omitted. The statement is now not contained within a parenthetical apparatus. The OED retains the parenthetical remark but represses the parenthesis as such.

On the authority of the OED's findings, the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries as represented by the quotations dismiss the parenthesis together as if its inferiority were a universal truth. Similarly, even in the act of transcription, the OED executes its overall judgement. But might this omission, this exclusion, this barring, expose a linguistic complex or phobia? A fear of the parenthesis? Suspiciously enough, can the entry for "parenthesis" cast aside the parenthesis and remain a credible, valid definition--if such a thing exists? If it can remain a definition, does it not cast itself aside? What does the OED suggest without intending to suggest, state without wishing to state, if we reread the entry in terms of the parenthesis' logic? But, first, where is such logic found? It is naturally found in the entry. Within the etymology's brackets, we ironically chance upon a point of departure. In Greek, "parenthesis"

means "to place in beside", an expression of relation open to valorization according to our perception of the prepositions. With regard to this definition, the entry's format opens itself up to an entirely different reading. The relationship between the first signification and its subsequent quotations, or, should we write, the relationship between the set of quotations and its preceding signification, raises the problem of which passage appeared first on the page. Which passage is "placed in beside" the other, serving the latter as a mere adjunct? Although neither passage is framed in parenthetical punctuation marks, the etymology does not indicate that a passage requires a certain kind of punctuation mark in order for it to qualify as a parenthesis. Each passage differs from the other to such a degree that one must be the insertion placed beside; one must be the foreigner who has invaded the text. Certainly, the signification holds no grammatical connection to the set of quotations: each quotation, a full sentence, is a member of the overall set or list, whereas the signification, not even a clause, is only an extended phrase. Based on type size, the relationship appears to designate the signification as stable text, but, based on passage length, appears to favor the quotations. A bold face number introduces the signification, while a bold face date introduces the quotations. Our decision may take into account the introductory numbers, depending on whether or not the historical order carries more value than the numerical order of lexicography carries. Notwithstanding these considerations, the questions remain. Is the OED only a collection of quotations attended by accessory quotations? Or, is it a collection of quotations attended

by accessory significations? Perhaps we have no choice but to accept both choices: the examples are the definitions and the definitions are the examples. Otherwise, our reading will never get underway.

On one hand, if we visualize parenthetical marks around the quotations, then, they (like our epigraph) acquire an added dimension. Because they themselves are now parenthesized comments, should we accept their advice, and, therefore, at the same time, reject all they have to say? Since the authority with which they posit their claims undermines itself--since they deem themselves inconvenient, worthless, illegible--what they actually maintain consolidates opposing positions: they express the inconvenient, the worthless, the illegible with the inconvenient, the worthless, the illegible, that is with the parenthesis. The parenthesized passage, becoming unreliable, loses its marks. Consequently, because the signification identifies the parenthesis as an explanation and a qualification and the parenthesis, in contrast, only explains and qualifies its inability to explain and qualify, the signification invalidates itself, thus transforming itself into a parenthesis--if we assume the quotations are correct. On the other hand, if we initially visualize parenthetical marks around the signification, the quotations, now the primary discourse, dismiss the significtion altogether. Hence, in both instances, the dictionary meaning of "parenthesis" is parenthesized, but not for long. As soon as the meaning becomes inconvenient, worthless, and illegible, a cloud of indeterminacy spreads over the entire entry. No longer reliable, the signification cannot help us read the quotations. Without a signification, the quotations lose their own ability to communicate,

and we are back where we started. In order to communicate the worthlessness of the parenthesis, the OED must detach itself from its context and parenthesize, place-in-beside. And consequently, each time we inscribe the marks of parenthesis, they disappear. Each time we designate one type of discourse as superior to the other, the other becomes superior and these values dissolve.

My point is this: to expect a conclusion as to whether the entry's list of quotations or the entry's signification is inserted beside the other is to misunderstand the workings of the parenthesis. From one reading, the OED ridicules and patronizes the parenthesis by selecting pejorative illustrations, yet, from another, relies heavily on its use. Despite turning to Burton's, Sterne's, and Muirhead's denunciations, the OED nonetheless has full recourse to parenthetical apparatus including square brackets for etymologies and round brackets for dates, various explanations, and all pronunciations. Still another reading suggests that when we read the entry for the parenthesis in terms of the parenthesis--the Greek etymology in parenthesis--we do not know whether or not to place the signification of "parenthesis" within parenthetical marks, which is enough to say we do not know how to define the "parenthesis". It lacks value. True, our approach might unfairly expect the signification to conform too closely with the etymology; but, then of course, this observation only broaches another problem: does the etymology possess less authority than the signification does?

Thus far, whether adequate or not, a definition of the parenthesis has been in operation during our discussion. It more or

less has signified an explanatory insertion or digression which may or may not have parenthetical marks setting it off from the text. But this provisional meaning hardly exhausts the possibilities, for, according to the OED, "parenthesis" also signifies an interval, an interlude, a hiatus; a grammatical or rhetorical figure; and--more commonly--"the upright curves () collectively, used to include words inserted parenthetically" (OED emphasis mine). The last signification, for the moment, begs examination insofar as it communicates a rather striking redundancy. If the reader does not consult the other significations, the adverbial derivative of parenthesis, far from contributing to the defining process, frustrates, thwarts, and suspends signification. Drawing the reader into an infinite loop, a kind of semantic möbius strip, "parenthetically" takes its meaning from the sentence of which it is part, while the sentence takes its meaning from "parenthetically". The confusion illuminates a common problem in reading the parenthesis as well as "parenthesis": does the word signify just a certain kind of punctuation mark, or the text which the marks bound, or both marks and text, or simply a digression--parenthetical text? Faced with these overlapping, contradictory meanings, how does a reader identify the parenthesis in a text? To complicate matters even more, the first signification in the OED entry asserts that square brackets, dashes, and commas usually mark off parenthetical comments also; hence, the parenthesis may appear in writings more frequently than we would expect. Perhaps, in seeking to define the parenthesis, we should not analyze "parenthesis" but rather examine examples of the phenomenon as they occur in literature. Beginning at the most basic

level, we should examine not the parenthesis, but the (parenthesis)[2]--the marks themselves.

The (Parenthesis) as Punctuation

Apart from the signs it encloses, this pair of bowed marks may represent a host of things. If grouped under the heading of punctuation, are (parentheses) nothing but diacritical mutations--enlarged, planed curves, or upright, curved dashes, or rounded-out square-brackets? Perhaps misguided in approach, our examination should shift its center to the comma or a similar type of mark, which may indeed be a possible archetype of the (parenthesis). Anyhow, punctuation, only haunting writing, does not possess phonetic value since speech can by no means indicate a "!" or a "?" or a "." In the Derridean sense of the word, speech differs from writing: the reader must recognize that these punctuation marks are significantly different from the signs which represent them, for punctuation is strictly graphic. Whereas words may be replaced by other words in discourse,

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[2]In this thesis "parenthesis" will be bound in parenthetical punctuation marks until we know for certain what it signifies; hence the marks will be our special way of italicizing the uncertainty around "parenthesis". As well, the marks will constantly remind us that this concept itself undergoes a repression, a parenthesization within the reading of literature.

what word can replace an example of punctuation in written discourse? On one hand, we may spend hours describing a question mark, but, when inscribing a question, can we substitute a word for the mark at the end of the sentence? On the other hand, invaluable as punctuation is, can we communicate in it alone? Would a series of explanation marks, periods, and hyphens, convey anything intelligible? Hence, just because the (parenthesis) never occurs in speech, does not mean it is outside the domain of language or meaning. The signs in and around the (parenthesis) depend on it for their meaning, and, conversely, the (parenthesis), like an linguistic sign, depends on the adjoining signs for its meaning.

It is true that the (parenthesis), like the other punctuation marks, cannot appear in speech, yet because of this similarity should we read the (parenthesis) strictly as punctuation? Since graphic distinctions between homophones are not registered in speech, resulting in a confusion as to which meaning to attribute to the spoken homophone, may we not postulate that these distinctions are punctuation too? Moreover, all written signs even on a phonemic level are never the sounds themselves: the graphic patterns serve as mnemonic devices to evoke the sound (or, rather, the sounds serve as mnemonic devices to evoke the graphic pattern). Thus, when we read the mark the sounds we have been conditioned to associate with it are "par-en-the-sis". Those are the sounds we utter. And really as for punctuation, let us in written discourse replace such marks with their signs, for we are used to accounting for the extra significations of a word when determining its meaning: it might take some adjustment comma but how frequently do

we use words like "question mark" or "exclamation mark" question mark So, what prevents us from reading the (parenthesis) as any other linguistic sign? Why can we not read this punctuation mark as we would another word?

In the first example from Alice in Wonderland, after the (parenthesized) text intervenes, the line of text continues onwards as if there were no interruption.

> So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid) whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her. (Alice 23-24)

Although divided in two, the line, without the interruptive marks and the text they enclose, still constitutes a complete grammatical structure. Considering again that this mark signals a separation between two different texts, an independent grammatical structure and a dependent grammatical structure (a word, phrase, or clause which modifies the independent one), we may read the (parenthesis) as though it were a trope for a barrier (trope meaning metaphor). Just as the period demarcates the termination of a sentence and quotation marks differentiate dialogue from narrated text, the (parenthesis) forms a boundary between two types of discourse. But if we read the marks as a trope for a barrier, a limit or line separating two different texts, then what is the precise function of that barrier? What type of barrier does it represent?

A less complicated illustration of parenthetical punctuation marks may be found in a terse poem by E. E. Cummings. Stressing for us the great weight of meaning which comes to bear on the marks, the poem

encourages the reader to take into account the figure of the barrier:

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Despite the spacing and the vertical arrangement of its letters, this text is simply the word "loneliness" with a sentence "a leaf falls" in (parenthesis). But reading the text is no simple matter, for the way in which the reader interprets the marks determines the meaning of the other words. When likened to fences, shields, palisades, breastwork, or other similar barriers, the marks present the quandary of whether they prevent text from intruding into or escaping out of their enclosed space. Fortifications surround prisons as well as keeps. In both edifices, wherever the citizens reside, walls serve to confine the dangerous alien within either an outside or an inside. Thus, are the marks bastions which provide sanctuary for a (parenthesized) comment under siege or are they bars which imprison linguistic criminals, textual rogues? Is Cummings protecting "loneliness" or "a leaf falls" from the attack of the other? Does loneliness threaten the poor leaf or vice versa? The value the reader invests in "loneliness" and the falling leaf depends on the trope of the barrier. But these tropes

exemplify only walls. Far from obstructions in the tangible sense, partitions, screens, and curtains also fall under the rubric of barriers. Contingent on social conventions for their effectiveness, bed-curtains, shower partitions, and dressing screens do not repel physical force but rather visual intrusion. They may help express, in many places, a culture's concepts of privacy and moral decency, hiding from sight nakedness, sexual difference, sexual practice, or possibly shame, embarrassment, guilt, sin. Maybe the falling leaf is true loneliness, the loneliness of dying which everyday loneliness, the conventional loneliness outside of the marks, cannot bear to acknowledge. The (parenthesis) covers up the tangible, palpable, painful reality of death, while "loneliness" represents the common way of dealing with the specific: it is a generalization, a customary word that tries to make the specific less painful, less threatening. According to this trope, the (parenthesized) text signifies a private world that society wishes to cover up, to repress: a veil masking an Arab's feminity. To tear off the veil, to push over the dressing screen, to pull back the bed-curtain would be to transgress the moral code. To take away the (parentheses) would be to taint the righteousness and purity of primary text: the primary text must not be exposed to the (parenthesized). In contrast, the reader may easily reverse the moral values in "1)a" by changing the trope of the barrier ever so slightly. Instead of veil, say the marks represent a curtain. Solomon's temple divides the Holy of Holies from the Holy place with a sanctified curtain. Preventing all except the high priest to enter the inner most and most sacred shrine of the Jewish Tabernacle, this barrier preserves

the ark of the covenant from the eyes' of sinners--sinners unfit to behold the resting place of the Mosaic code. Before our eyes, the (parenthesized) text becomes sacred text, and the falling leaf becomes a purer form of loneliness, a more natural form that normal "loneliness" will never be able to understand.

So, when we read "l(a" we are on both sides of the barrier. It seems for every such trope which excludes, banishes, and exiles (parenthesized) text, there is another which does the same to primary text. But then again, what conditions us to favor this trope at the expense of others?--for if we read the mark as if it were a lens, then, most certainly, it magnifies and filters text, allowing free passage much like a colon. This approach seems pointless, and yet in searching for a definition of the (parenthesis), the reader should not regard word associations lightly. To state that the (parenthesis) is not subject to metaphorical substitution neglects the complexity of the problem and sets the (parenthesis) outside the movement of language as though it belonged to another system entirely--as though it carried the weight of a stable, solid meaning. To consign the marks to the category "punctuation" cannot satiate our desire for further signification, because is "punctuation" not just another metaphorical substitute? What first of all is punctuation (could it not be the master sign that unmasks the identities of those marks under its jurisdiction as signs?)? What signs may we replace this sign with? And yet on the other hand, the graphic difference that the (parenthesis) manifests in escaping verbalization cannot go unnoticed; appropriately, "punctuation" designates this graphic difference.

Caught between the concepts of linguistic sign and diacritical mark, we can only acknowledge both and write (parenthesis), unsure of its orientation. Let us examine the (parenthesis) in relation to that which it actually separates. What does the boundary bound? What does the division divide? What is the difference between (parenthesized) and primary text?

The (Parenthesized) Text in Alice

In many ways parenthesized by the canon of English Literature, Alice in Wonderland is often referred to as a children's book or as a work of nonsense. Whatever label we may stamp on Alice in Wonderland, this text furnishes us with an excellent supplement or appendix to the OED. Certainly, our discussion will cover the literary gamut, spanning from common sense and word-sense to nonsense, from the staid truths of lexicography to capricious and fanciful story-telling; yet, at one supposed extreme, the dictionary, delighting in anecdotal illustrations, vainly pursues wisps of wisps, traces of traces, shadows of shadows, and, at the other, the children's book studies inverted syllogisms, complex paradoxes, and sophisticated word games. Regardless of whether we move from logic to logic or from alogic to alogic, we simply turn to another text. Moreover, if all dictionaries are no different than any other text in the sense that they rely on a language which was made already before they were and if all dictionaries, rather than defining language, are defined by it, then really all texts in a certain sense may be termed dictionaries.

Because we may read the OED in terms of its quotations, relegating the privileged signification to the role of an illustrative quotation, why can we not find our own quotations, when determining a word's meaning? In much more than a manner of speaking, Alice in Wonderland will thus be our lexicon.

In contrast to its surrounding sentence which explains Alice's thoughts, the first (parenthesized) comment describes the effects the weather has on her overall mental activity:

> So she was considering in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid) whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble of getting up and picking the daisies, when suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her. (Alice 23-24)

While the narrative uncritically follows her musings, the (parenthesized) comment leaves doubts with the reader as to whether or not she can sustain rational lucid thinking. When the rabbit suddenly appears sporting formal attire, the reader cannot help but question the reliability of primary discourse when juxtaposed with (parenthesized), because it is the latter which anticipates the hallucinatory experience. The former heedlessly depicts Alice's perceptions, without discriminating between fantasy and reality. The voice of consciousness, wakefulness, and sanity, the (parenthesized) comment belongs to the world in which Alice inhabits before descending to Wonderland; hence, at those places where the (parenthesized) comment competes with the narrative, we should privilege the comment as the final authoritative word on reporting what is true and false in the immediate context. Near the end of the chapter, a similar episode occurs: "She generally gave herself very good advice, (though she very

seldom followed it herself), and sometimes she scolded herself so severely as to bring tears to her eyes" (31). Whereas the narrative, content with value judgments and half-truths, naively accepts what appears to be good about Alice's character, the (parenthesized) information, probing beneath the surface and revealing a fuller view, exposes her as undisciplined, hypocritical, weak-willed, possibly schizophrenic. By itself, the initial statement would encourage us to respect her; with the (parenthesized) addition, it acquiring a newer, truer meaning serves to incriminate her. Redirecting our interpretation, the (parenthesized) comment subverts its context and constructs an accurate account free from fancy. Question answered. A sound reading.

When intent on valorizing the (parenthesis) favorably, a reader may jump to such superficial conclusions; but the remainder of the fifty-six (parenthesized) comments suggests otherwise. Encountering uneventful dialogue within the (parenthesis) as well, we cannot universalize the theory that radically different types of discourse straddle the mark. When Alice, having just fallen down the rabbit-hole, searches for a way into the beautiful garden and comes upon a little bottle, the line, "("which certainly was not here before" said Alice,)" hardly undermines the context in the manner that the previous examples appear to do (29). In fact, dialogue pervades the entire text and comes to represent, as the narrative progresses, the preferred mode of discourse. All the major scenes involve characters conversing. To (parenthesize) speech somehow detracts from the distinctions of the barrier, affiliating primary discourse with

(parenthesized)--especially when brief, trivial instances slide without disturbance into their context:

> First it marked out a race-course, in a sort of circle, ("the exact shape doesn't matter," it said,) and then all the party were placed along the course, here and there. (45)

And:

> "You may not have lived much under the sea--" ("I haven't," said Alice)-- "and perhaps you were never even introduced to a lobster--". (129)

Although indeed contradicting their context, both remarks are made by characters, not by the narrator. When the text in (parenthesis) contradicts the text outside, then the reader faces some unsettling questions; but, when characters contradict each other in (parenthesized) speech, the reader still reads on, confident that a consistent narrator presides over the polyphony. In addition, Alice's sensory perceptions often come packaged in the (parenthesis); for example, during the chapter "A Little Bill", "(Sounds of more broken glass)", "(He pronounced it "arrum")", and "(a loud crash)" occur along with other un(parenthesized) noises such as whispers, shrieks, voices talking, and "a rumbling of little cart-wheels" (57-58). Only confirming the similarities between primary and (parenthesized) discourse, "more sounds of broken glass" occurs again a page later but this time unbounded, prompting the question once again: what is the difference between these two types of discourse?

From a more comprehensive, comparative perspective, a frequent pattern recurs. Out of fifty-six instances of the (parenthesis), thirty four enclose comments which either refer to Alice directly or involve something closely associated with her person--such as the memory of Dinah her cat (26) and the taste of the potion she drinks

(30). This observation should not surprise readers, since Alice never departs once from any of the narrative's many scenes. Forming a potential basis for further examination, this observation does, however, offer a distinction between (parenthesized) and primary discourse. Mentioning scenes and events that take place outside of Wonderland and, therefore, outside the narrative action, the (parenthesized) remarks within the first two chapters betray an intimacy with Alice, a knowledge and a rapport the reader does not share. Besides the isolated flashes into another existence, we as readers possess no background information on her everyday life. Where does she live? Who are her parents? Why is she sitting on a bank alongside her sister? Thus to a qualified extent, agreeing with our initial proposal, (parenthesized) text does in fact represent the real and normal and tame world, that land without wonder. Only when awake does Alice marvel at the oddities from her fantastic adventures: "(when she thought it over afterwards, it occurred to her that she ought to have wondered at this, but at the time it all seemed quite natural)" (24). The (parenthesized) remark comes from another time frame to which the reader has no access. Restricted to Wonderland, he or she will never encounter Alice's "afterward" thoughts but only hear that they exist somewhere else, at some other time. On the next page, a similar remark informs the reader of that other place--exterior to the narrative action:

> (For, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the schoolroom, and though this was not a very good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practise to say it over). (25)

This time harking back to Alice's past, the (parenthesized) remark may be read as excluding her conscious life from the text, and yet may also be read as emphasizing the reader's exclusion from ever fully seeing her previous life. Unlike the primary text engrossed in Wonderland's charms and magic, the (parenthesized) text affords a glimpse of that other Alice, whom we will never know in detail or at length in the manner we know "our" Alice. A distant background, a frame, this land without wonder safely contains Wonderland within the bounds of sanity.

As we continue through the narrative, we notice that (parenthesized) knowledge about Alice's real life gives way to (parenthesized) knowledge about Alice's ignorance. Critical and derisive, the comments initially seem to encourage the reader to hold an ironic distance from her as a protagonist; they signal us to distrust her as a narrative spokesman. After she asks herself what "latitude" and "longitude" she "has got to", a (parenthesized) remark exposes her confusion as to what these words actually mean: "(Alice had no idea what Latitude was, or longitude either, but thought that they were nice grand words to say)" (25-26). Directly afterwards she mispronounces "antipodes", and immediately another sarcastic remark pounces upon her second linguistic faux pas: "(she was rather glad there was no one listening, this time as it didn't sound at all the right word)" (26). In each case, the parenthesized remark draws our attention to a catachresis--an incorrect use of words--or rather a malapropism, which Alice innocently commits: each points out an abuse/misuse of language.

By demonstrating for us a counter attitude to (parenthesized)

text, the beginning section of Alice in Wonderland reverses the values covertly installed by the OED. Privileged above the narrative, (parenthesized) comments in the first few chapters hold not only a special proximity to the heroine's other life, but also a critical superiority to her understanding. But it is easy to dismiss this as playful, teasing discourse, for we might contend that Alice's slippages establish early on her youth and naïveté and lend humor to her first bizarre ordeals. They require little justification as to their purposes. By averring that Alice is actually corrected by the text, the subsequent comments in (parenthesis) appear dogmatic, patronizing, and, most of all, redundant; for example, Alice, in child-like fashion, simply cries, "curiouser and curiouser" after growing to gigantic proportions, and a corrective comment intercedes: "(she was so much surprised, that for the moment she quite forgot how to speak good English)" (33). Should little girls, especially those who frolic in a dream world, be expected to speak flawlessly, especially after undergoing an especially horrific biological transformation? Really, the comments should not be taken seriously. Carroll is just poking light, ironic fun at her, for, after all, she is just a little girl.

However, we may also regard the corrective comments in another light. The initial (parenthesized) comments pass judgement not so much on Alice as on what she--aside from other possible tropes--represents. Later on, no similar comments morally condemn her behavior or her thoughts, even when she violently kicks Bill out of the Rabbit's house and even when, storming upon the mad tea party uninvited, she demands royal treatment, complaining and scolding ill-manneredly. Her

behavior escapes censure throughout the text; the (parenthesized) comments we are discussing neither suggest moral judgments nor instruct with didactic intent. But surely, when Alice's language sways, swerves, and errs from the standards of proper English, the (parenthesized) comment, with impeccable timing, enters the scene to right the linguistic wrong; it does not amend a little girl's mistake. Hinting at a similar notion, the two (parenthesized) comments about Alice outside of Wonderland establish the background of another world and also the possibility of another Alice. These comments make reference to a future Alice looking back on her fantastic adventures in Wonderland and a past Alice having learnt several things in the schoolroom. A girl in a narrative, which is to say, a girl's dream, a girl's fantasy, a girl's narrative, a girl's language is what Alice signifies. Accordingly, at the novel's conclusion, Alice relates her adventures to her sister: she retells a story not about her own adventures but about her dream (159). Thus the Alice we follow through most of the narrative is not the real Alice, but a dream Alice. Alice is herself text and, at times, according to (parenthesized) comments, abnormal, deviant, perverted text. Identifying the malapropism--an incorrect use of words--as not an authentic error, that is not a malapropism committed unconsciously by the text, (parenthesized) comments, like white blood cells which attack and destroy foreign elements, render the dangerous invaders harmless. They assure the reader that linguistic and grammatical chaos has not really infiltrated the narrative; on the contrary, a voice from the normal world supervises Wonderland, a higher sentient force restrains the discourse

from leaping the bounds of readability and thus from losing the reader's trust. For good reason then, these assurances occur at Alice in Wonderland's beginning. Permeated with puns, paradoxes, and faulty logic--the bane of secure, safe reading--Alice in Wonderland prepares us for the forthcoming playfulness, by persuading us not to worry: a sane power is monitering these aberrations: "sit back and relax for the narrative is just fun" (Ah, how sweet and soothing is the sign "just").

Up until now, a common rhetorical figure has slipped unacknowledged into our discussion. Personification--that figure of figures which lends a consciousness and an intentionality to concepts helps express how (parenthesized) text operates within Alice in Wonderland. So, besides ourselves, who hides behind the personifications we employ? If (parenthesized) remarks are assertions of control over language, whose assertions are they? Written in third person, Alice in Wonderland may have a narrator whom we might label conveniently a "limited third person" designating that he enters into only Alice's thoughts and follows only her perceptions. This persona remains anonymous, for readers do not glean one iota of information concerning his background. Of course, it would be impossible to consider any connection between the narrator and the author: a common strategy in literary criticism is to avoid equating these two figures. Only the naïve reader commits this blunder. Say we disregard the designation "third person narrator" with the question, "why do critics and writers alike feel the necessity to insert between the author and text this interceding sign?" Really, are not author and narrator the same term? (A solution might stem from the desire to protect the

author from the text: literary contradictions and dilemmas often bewilder biographical research. Another solution might stem from the need to animate the concept of the author.) However, we will not discard the sign of the "narrator" altogether, because our problem consists in somehow aligning "Carroll" with (parenthesized) text. Where can we turn for help: poetry, diaries, letters, greeting cards? Fortunately, a single letter does come to the rescue; but it in a manner of writing is not exterior to the text. In Alice in Wonderland the only "I" outside of quotation marks appears within (parenthesis): "(And, as you might like to try the thing yourself, some winter day, I will tell you how the Dodo managed it [the Caucus-Race])" (45). A tiny tear in an otherwise well-knitted fabric, the "I" to some readers hardly merits the slightest scrutiny. The "I" is a trivial detail whose very triviality imbues it with significance. Like the flaw a Persian craftsman weaves into his carpet in order to please the perfect gods, it is an intentional, deliberate difference serving an intentional, deliberate purpose.

Signaling what will follow, the (parenthesized) statement with the "I" seems to reveal the "reason" behind the other (parenthesized) remarks in the text. Strange necessity that, at this particular moment, Alice in Wonderland decides to explicate why a particular passage is a part of the narrative--strange necessity. The difference cannot lie in the uniqueness of the Caucaus-Race's description, because the text never once relies upon such an explication when it embarks upon the descriptions of other elaborate games, such as the croquet-match which Alice plays with hedgehogs and flamingos; the lobster

quadrille which the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon perform for Alice; and the trial, another nonsensical type of playing, which the King has for his son. The difference seems to lie in the statement's strong subject, the first person pronoun. "I" will tell how the Dodo organized the race, distinguishing itself from everything else to which the reader might mistakenly attribute the story's telling, everything else being Alice, the Dodo, a third person narrator--in short, everything else being the text. The (parenthesized) statement claims to wrest the story's telling away from whatever we thought was previously telling the story. Nonetheless, the assertion of control, mastery, power, possession, is never made again; the "I" does not return without quotation marks to the text. And yet (parentheses) return time and time again.

Had the "I" no other referent than our idea that it relates to the author's name, we would have ended the discussion in a blind alley, faced with the possibility that it was only inserted on a whim. But I have neglected to mention a source of information that hovers on the outskirts of Alice in Wonderland, not knowing whether to include it within the text or to banish it to the outside. Preceding chapter one, seven stanzas of verse without a title supply us with an adequate argument for understanding the lonely "I". Generally, this prologue describes how the tale's "quaint events were hammered out": one "golden afternoon", while entertaining three girls on a rowing excursion, the speaker charms them with the "dream-child moving through a land of wonders wild and new" (21). Informing us that originally a captive audience listened to the tale, the poem's speaker suggests the text is

also narrated by him. Even though the poem, appearing to exemplify the topos of affected modesty, represses the "I" and employs "we", the last stanza offers the reader the "childish story" as a gift to "lay where childhood's dreams are twined"--as if the story were the speaker's to give away (22). Like a signature, the poem is a stamp of ownership, a seal of possession. The author subtly asserts his position as narrator, providing a ground on which to base the lonely "I".

However, in our discussion, we have forgotten that the the majority of the (parentheses) in the text share nothing in common with the few examples we have so far selected to build our argument. As mentioned earlier, when in (parenthesis), additional information and snippets of dialogue are both indistinguishable from regular narrative. Again considering The Harper Handbook to Literature, the (parenthesis) is arguably the writer's out (and a very important out) in situations where he cannot risk sullying the structural purity of his art; it simply allows him to insert minor explanations or qualifications not worth integrating grammatically into the novel's body. It is merely an irritating afterthought.

Well that may be true, but if the (parenthesized) comment is just an insertion which has no grammatical connection to the text, why did the author not spend the time to integrate the lazy fragment properly? Have those authors who employ the (parenthesis) never heard of second drafts? Even if the writer inserts the (parenthesized) comments later on, why can he not change the entire passage so that it will accommodate these afterthoughts? And, then again, if they are not worth integrating into primary text, why bother to insert them at all?

Whether afterthoughts or beforethoughts, the (parenthesized) comments are lodged in the text. Lacking the editorial power of the OED, we cannot erase the (parentheses); thus they remain a part of the text, and thus they must be accounted for. By the same token, though, how can we account for "(a loud crash)", "("I haven't", said Alice)", and "(she knew)" (58,129,160), all three of which seem so trivial that indeed they are not worth mentioning? Quite easily--after asking the right questions of course. Why emphasize the triviality of the trivial with (parenthesis)? Why stress, mark, and accentuate the pettiness of the petty, the paltriness of the paltry? The act of inscribing (parentheses) around apparently useless information defeats the intentions of marginalization, simply because the insignificant does not require italics to signal its insignificance. Is not the trivial a testimony to its triviality? By placing it in a spotlight, by making it stand out from so called primary text, we turn the trivial into the significant; we draw attention to it, even when we intend otherwise.

At least from this one reading, how does Alice in Wonderland--our lexicon--define the (parenthesis)? Whatever type of information (parentheses) contain, they along with this information seem to interrupt the narrative quite decisively, quite intentionally. Creating an opposition to primary text, the (parenthesized) comment divides their host-sentence into two, suspending the promise of meaning and deferring a grammatical sense of closure. These comments communicate a sense of control over the text, establishing their authority earlier on. No matter how brief or how marginal, every (parenthesized) comment in the text solipsistically diverts attention

away from the narrative unto itself; no doubt, it asserts the author's presence as though he were stating, "do not forget I tell the story and I may intervene at any time I please". The (parenthesis) indicates this abrupt transition in written discourse. Outside the (parenthesis), the story occults the author, but inside the author represses the story. The (parenthesis) is the author's private, personal set of quotation marks; it is in this sense his signature.

To exercise control over language, to own a text: to inscribe a signature, to place a (parenthesis). Unfortunately for Carroll, the same signing, the same placing, is the first motion in confiscating that which he thought was "his". "(To sign something is to attempt to detach it from a context and by so doing to give it a unity.)", writes Culler in On Deconstruction (194), attempting the same sort of detachment through the inscription of the (parenthesis). "Carroll"'s folly grows out of the confusion of signing something with simple signing, placing a sign. To sign something is nothing other than to sign--for we cannot detach ourselves from that which was never coherent, or, for that matter, from that which we were never attached to in the first place. We cannot possess a word, two words, many words, spoken, written, signed or otherwise. Nonetheless, "Carroll" makes the motion to sign the text, and thereby strives to transform it into an object, "his" object.

Carroll's Epigraph and the Parergon

Another "signature" in Alice in Wonderland supplies us with

further insight into our subtle signature, the (parenthesis). An introduction, a prologue, a preface, an ante-script, as well as a parenthetical construction, the seven verses without a title stand seemingly outside, before, and in front of the first chapter, assuming the role of epigraph--literally "upon writing". The story about the story's telling before the story, Alice in Wonderland's epigraph lends itself quite readily to deconstructive analysis in that it functions much like a parergon. As Derrida writes, "A parergon comes against, beside, and in addition to the ergon, the work done [fait], the fact [le fait], the work, but it does not fall to one side; it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside" (The Truth in Painting 54). Distinguishing itself from primary text through its stanzaic format and its lack of a title or a chapter heading, our particular parergon presents a metafictional tableau wherein an interior network of boundaries runs: it is the text's frame, yet, being a text itself, is also framed within and without. The first and last stanzas frame the epigraph on the inside, while, outside, the entire Alice in Wonderland text, or just chapter one, may be read as the frame too. Once we bring into play the concept of the parergon, we must observe that like the trace[3] it flickers throughout the whole of

[3]Spivak in her translator's preface to Of Grammatology affords us with an explanation of this Derridean term: "Derrida, then gives the name "trace" to the part played by the radically other within the structure of difference that is the sign [the sign is composed of two parts, the signifier and the signified].... It is the mark of the absence of a presence [in a sign, this absence is the conventional signified], an always already absent present, of the lack at the origin that is the condition of thought and experience (xvii).

language and never stops quantifying, first dividing and framing the text, then dividing and framing itself on and on and on. The search for the parergon is highly problematic, for, as far as reading is concerned, we do not know where to begin to draw the frame around a text, let alone where to find a central text. Is the parergon, for instance, a part of the thing it frames or something completely disconnected from it? Because an interior always requires an exterior to imbue it with interiority, interiors are never simply interiors removed from exteriors, but exteriors as well when seen from a new inside. In addition, such questions presume there is a text to frame, because often when we designate a parcel of signs as "parergon", we unthinkingly acknowledge with that designation the identities of text and author. Thus my own thesis becomes (and already became) involved in the search for a center so much so that we should dispense with the word "thesis" and use (parenthesis) to describe how my project itself exhibits a parergon-like movement.

Alice in Wonderland's epigraph, our frame for as long as we keep from looking beyond or backwards, qualifies the text as Carroll's, claiming to step outside the writing to the time of the telling. Outlining the origins of Alice in Wonderland, it makes no mention of a book, a writing, or a text, but rather emphatically repeats "tale" three times and "story" once. Riddled with tropes of speech, it argues under the pretense of description that the text's origin is oral discourse. Yet, in chapter one, before the "story" even has a chance to unfold, Alice's first thoughts work against the aesthetics depicted in the epigraph: "what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without

pictures or conversation?" Alice in Wonderland's dialogues and illustrations, the reader soon discovers, dominate the other modes of discourse in the text as though Alice's decree influences the book she inhabits. We may grant the text dialogue for the time being, but illustrations? Surely, the epigraph forgot to inform us that the speaker brought a pencil and an easel along with him on that golden afternoon? And the same may be asked of the (parenthesis)? Like Alice's thoughts on the ideal book, the (parenthesis) too appears on the first page. How did the speaker signal to the girls these graphs? Did he have paper on board? So, over and above the thesis that it represents the author's personal set of quotation marks, what does the (parenthesis) supplement for oral discourse? What lack does Carroll think he's filling in Alice in Wonderland? The answer may be found in the parergon.

Impressing upon the the reader a textual birth, a textual natal scene, the epigraph avoids tropes which evoke either reading or writing, and carefully joins the speaker to the spoken. The story emanates from a person:

> Ah, cruel Three! In such an hour,
> Beneath such dreamy weather,
> To beg a tale of breath too weak
> To stir the tiniest feather!
> Yet what can one poor voice avail
> Against three tongues together. (21)

"A tale of breath": what could this possibly mean?--Will the speaker be relating a story about or on breathing? While signifying Carroll through a synecdoche, "breath" implies that the tale is just as much his possession as the air that sustains his life; but, as a trope for speech, it indicates that the tale is a product of inspiration, thus

alluding to the literary convention of divinely inspired art. As spontaneous as a man's breath, as natural as a day's unnaturally fine weather, the tale is poured into the speaker by three childish muses, or, rather furies, whose dictates cannot be resisted. The topos of inspiration accounts for the birth of Alice in Wonderland, suggesting that the tale, if not originating from a divine source, is at least a magically collaborative effort:

> Imperious Prima flashes forth
> Her edict "to begin it"-
> In gentler tone Secunda hopes
> "There will be nonsense in it!"-
> While Tertia interrupts the tale
> Not more than once a minute. (21)

Like a holy triad of cherubs, the girls watch over the tale's development, each conferring on it her own personal blessing. Comparable to a spiritual revelation which exhausts the prophet, and having "drained the wells of fancy dry", the story leaves the speaker "faint" and "weary".

What the topos of inspiration reinforces for Carroll in the epigraph is the spontaneity of oral discourse. On a leisurely afternoon the story suddenly flows out of the speaker, and, like the boaters' course, glides and meanders under the weak direction of the children, until "beneath the setting sun", the speaker tired, the excursion finished, the day over, "the tale is done". The story above all belongs to the voice and as its possession may be turned off and on at will:

> And faintly strove that weary one
> To put the subject by,
> "The rest next time--" "It is next time!"
> The happy voices cry. (21)

For the storyteller, spontaneity--the act of interrupting, embellishing, breaking, and terminating the telling--is his power over the listener as well as the narrative. To the delight or, more often than not, to the chagrin of his audience, the storyteller may suspend the story at any time he chooses, assuring himself that his voice, not just the story, captivates the audience's attention. Within oral discourse, contends the epigraph, the story is a slave to the whim of the voice; even other voices may arrest the forward march of the story:

> While Tertia interrupts the tale
> Not more than once a minute. (21)

Culler again provides us with a frame in which to place Alice in Wonderland: "Framing can be regarded as a frame-up, an interpretive imposition that restricts an object by establishing boundaries" (On Deconstruction 196). Affectedly modest and inconspicuous, the epigraph protects the identity of Carroll from/in the text. Before the reader encounters the narrative with its panoply of psychotic storytellers, this framing device establishes on the outside the figure of the arch-storyteller from whose voice the story originates. This framing device, imposing on Alice in Wonderland the concept of the story and all the other accompanying tropes of full presence, tells us how to read the text: we should read it as Carroll's work. This framing device assures Carroll that his voice has control over the text. This framing device provides a referent for the (parenthesized) comments, granting them the title of parergon as well. And this framing device begins "Carroll"'s epitaph which in whole might be called Alice in Wonderland and which in part may be called the (parenthesis).

The (Parenthesis) as a Rhetorical Figure for Spontaneity

"Writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body of writing". So writes Barthes in "The Death of the Author" (142). The (parenthesis), along with the epigraph, is a ploy to preserve Carroll's voice which was never ever present in the text in the first place. When Barthes in "The Death of the Author" proclaims that "writing is the destruction of every voice", he means writing is the destruction of every intended meaning, every meaning the author supposedly had in mind when he composed the writing. Indeed, as Plato notes in the Phaedrus, the act of writing implies an actual physical separation between writer and reader. And so the inscripted words do not constitute the scriptor's voice but rather words without a voice, words we might say in search of a voice--a voice to give them meaning. Hence, the (parenthesis) supplements the unpremeditated interruption that storytelling loves to use; however, there is nothing spontaneous about the (parenthesized) comment, no matter how conversational, trivial, or digressive it appears. In writing to say that the (parenthesized) comment interrupts, intervenes, intrudes is to confuse the voice with the text. Neither intentionality nor spontaneity produces the signs inscribed on the page. Interruptions do not exist in written discourse. We may put the text down and resume reading another time; that is an interruption, a

suspension. But in literature no such thing exists, for a text is both an uninterrupted flow of interruptions and a broken line of intentions. When the scriptor puts the pen to the paper, the signs inscribed do not vary in degree of spontaneity or intentionality, nor do they become closer to or farther away from the "author"'s way of thinking: "a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash...the text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture" (Barthes 146). Remembering our OED entry, we should align the (parenthesized) comment with the signification "rhetorical figure". Like the topos of inspiration, this rhetorical figure vainly tries to ground the text in the concept of the author, signing the text as his object with the illusion of spontaneity. It is the oldest trick of inscribing presence the text has to offer us. But Carroll nevertheless needs the marks of the arch-storyteller; otherwise, the text will escape his possession falling into the hands of the other storytellers' in the text. Yet all "he" has managed to do is to inscribe "himself" as another character, another figure, another text, adding "himself" to the general cacophony of mute signs, adding "himself" to the narrative.

Perhaps, the motive behind the OED disparaging the (parenthesis) lies in the strategy of avoiding all language which exudes a spontaneity, a freedom to digress from the matter at hand. The (parenthesis) seems to interrupt and usurp primary discourse with the personal voice, a voice which asserts its command over language. The OED requires--it thinks--the death of the Author in order for it to engrave its significations, in order for it to arrest the movement of

the trace (an arresting, by the way, nothing can effect). Meaning to the OED cannot be inspired, owned, or controlled by the individual; it can only be universalized into public property, whereas, in the solopsistic world of the scriptor, he needs the (parenthesis) to obscure the writing with the delusive relationship of story and storyteller. He needs to somehow inscribe in the text a breaking out, an emancipation from the tyranny of the narrative. The futility and vanity lie in the gesture of breaking out, because the gesture is always a breaking into, always an addition to the text, never an escape. A valuable commodity, the (parenthesis) to the scriptor is the last hope for saving his role as author. It is the last sign to protect his identity and the first one to attack. He can never protect or contain within writing his voice--but then again who is to say he ever had one? In contrast, the (parenthesis) is worthlessness to the OED: subjectivity, connotation, ambiguity. The OED must dissipate the illusion of subjectivity so that the illusion of objectivity will be preserved.

If we read the (parenthesized) comment as a rhetorical figure whose purpose is to deceive the reader with the delusion of interrupting, then that leaves the (parenthesis) without a definition once more and with the possibility that it is redundant; for what really distinguishes a (parenthesized) comment from, say, an epigraph? A parenthetical construction in its own right, an epigraph does not require marks of any kind, and overall, if the scriptor wishes to "interrupt" the text, he may do it with dashes, commas, or no marks merely changing the topic. The (parenthesis) tries to signify an

interruption, spontaneity, the "author" intruding, but may as well signify smooth transition, free passage, another sequence integrating into the text. So what good are the marks? If we assume the (parenthesized) comment is no different from regular text, the marks signify the scriptor's futility in trying to delineate boundaries, definitions, readings. Readers install parergons; scriptors may try, but the meaning behind the sign is always the reader's to summon. If the (parenthesis) is a barrier at all, it is not the barrier that divides text from context or (parenthesized) from primary discourse but rather the barrier that divides the "author" from what "he" thought was his own--the text. Thus we will put back into play "parenthesis" divesting it of its round brackets, not presuming to define it for the reader. As for Carroll's lexicon, it, unlike the OED, appears to privilege the parenthesis--whatever that means. And so, we will conclude our examination with the judgement--the phenomenon had not been worth a parenthesis--.

Chapter Two

A DOUBLE EXPOSURE OF AFFECTIONATE FRIENDS: THE PROPER NAME AND THE PSEUDONYM

The Riddle outside of Alice in Wonderland

Inscribed prior to the novel's beginning but most certainly neither outside the text nor outside the field of interpretation, loitering around Alice's Adventures in Wonderland as if ready to deride the title's firm injunction that a "book" will follow, the nom de plume "Lewis Carroll" obscures, obfuscates, and obstructs our reading as an error insignificantly significant, harmlessly harmful. The scriptor has allowed the wrong signature to introduce the text, for where is the proper name Charles L. Dodgson?--a proper name whose function in literature is to connect a human subject to a work, leaving no space for any vestiges of ambivalence, equivocation, or fiction to detract from the factual deliberation of the cover and the title page. Instead, "Lewis Carroll" interposing itself between Dodgson and the text teases us into accounting for its brazen mediation: a secret alias or a proxy's seal or a self-inflicted sobriquet.... "Why change a name?": the first riddle Alice in Wonderland poses to the reader occurs pages before he enters Wonderland. In his article "Dodgson and

Carroll", Evelyn Waugh refers to this riddle as something abnormal, something extra-terrestrial, extra-textual: "The mystery is the transition by which Dodgson became 'Lewis Carroll', one of the great imaginative writers of the language" (Waugh 511). Much more than just a nom de plume--the name of/from the pen--"Lewis Carroll" signifies an alter ego, a rival personality which spawns a distinct type of writing. Because for Waugh "Lewis Carroll" exists independently of the book, are we to believe that Dodgson was Carroll before he wrote a text with "Carroll" introducing it? Perhaps pseudonymous literature reveals in its authors a secret, subtle schizophrenia, which would never have made itself fully known had it not been for writing. Or perhaps literature is a virus which transmits the disease of schizophrenia: if Dodgson, instead of tempting the muses, had been satisfied with geometry and algebra (he was a mathematician), he might never have suffered from a split personality and thus a split name. But can this form of schizophrenia be so consciously deliberate? If the changed name indicates a different personality, then does the transformation into Carroll take place exactly when Dodgson decides to compose an imaginative work, the ink or the written words reacting to Dodgson's psyche in the same way the potion changes Dr. Jekyll into Mr. Hyde? As well as inscripting for us more riddles, Waugh's articulation of this riddle personalizes the phenomenon of "Lewis Carroll", as if the changed name were a window on Dodgson's psyche. To Waugh, this particular pen name lives a life of its own separate from the text it identifies. Such a posture assumes that the riddle of "Lewis Carroll" is indigenous only to Alice in Wonderland or at best to the terrain of

his literary canon; nevertheless, from the perspective of the convention of the nom de plume, "Lewis Carroll" is a very old joke, a riddle which riddles literature. Dodgson was not the first to pen a pen name. So, because Alice in Wonderland, one amongst many pseudonymous texts--and not Dodgson's psyche--will ask us the riddle, it may be articulated as a cross between "How have readers read the changed name?" and "How can we read the changed name?" We will approach the changed name as if it were text. And truly is it not just another riddle which belongs more to Alice in Wonderland than to some nebulous portrait of Dodgson? We cannot slip heedlessly past the cover without considering the absence of the proper name, because somehow the rest of the text is implicated in this crime, this forgery.

Pseudonym, a common name for the name of a name, may lend meaning to the rationale behind the substitution "Lewis Carroll". Distancing Alice in Wonderland from the real name, the pseudonym, the false, specious, counterfeit name, seems to imply that the author repudiates all ownership of and responsibility for the text. If we heed the wisdom of the pseudonym, taking the signature for a counterfeit--a breaching of the law as well as the truth--then the book which follows may be termed a counterfeit book. Why should the reader trust a book with which the author is unwilling to associate his name? As Derrida writes, "a written signature implies the actual or empirical nonpresence of the signer" (Margins 328), who--I may add--in signing affirms that the document signed meets with his approval to such an extent that he is willing to stand behind its signs. And so, by tampering with that signature, the signer indicates a desire to obscure

his identity so that he will not have to vouch for the document's signs. Therefore, the book "Dodgson" has seen fit to disavow may contain information he does not subscribe to. However, for Dodgson, the act of signing a signature may instead demonstrate the signer's acceptance of patriarchal society: in signing, the signer perpetuates his father's surname and, in effect, aligns himself to all that the father represents, whether it be authority, tradition, power etc.. Rewriting that signature into a pseudonym then accommodates the possibility that the signer in fact accepts the signs written but rejects his previous surname and thus the authority it represents; or simply it accommodates the possibility that he is revolting against both manifestations of authority: the signs and the father. In Dodgson's case, because "Lewis Carroll" is a transformation of only his given names, we may approach the surname from two more different directions. (Dodgson derived his pseudonym from taking his own names "Charles Lutwidge", translating them into Latin as "Carolus Ludovicus", then reversing and retranslating them back into English (Britannica 902).) We might write that Dodgson respects his last name and all that it represents. "Lewis Carroll" then is confined play, a half-hearted manipulation that stays clear of patriarchal edifices such as the surname. On the other hand, by leaving the surname out of the transformed signature, Dodgson has also ignored the force of patriarchal authority: he subtly renounces his filial obligation to perpetuate his father's name. He has repudiated his affiliation with patriarchal society, deliberately excising his name from the father's legacy altogether. The disposal of the surname is a disposing of

heritage, a refusal to acknowledge the present's debt to the past. Yet from still another perspective, Dodgson does filter his given names through the medium of the Latin language. In choosing this classical language as a mirror in which to reflect his names, he may imply a desire to encode himself in academic discourse or to make himself a part of the past that Latin symbolizes for him. Yet, the riddle still stands: why change a name? Echoing the King of Hearts who cross-examines the Knave, we might return to "Carroll" a part of his text in order to incriminate him: "If you didn't sign it that only makes the matter worse. You must have meant some mischief, or else you'd have signed your name like an honest man" (Alice 154).

No doubt that charge would hold good, except that Dodgson, unlike the Knave, does sign something to his document. And, no less importantly, for us to sign pseudonym underneath "Lewis Carroll" leaves us with a shifty, shifting evidence which vindicates the accused as much as it betrays. Within the well-travelled regions of literature, "Rev. C.L. Dodgson" is a stranger, an outsider whose existence only becomes known--if known at all--after his famous double has paraded through the streets. Within the well-travelled regions of literature, "Rev. C.L. Dodgson" is a rare yet extraneous embellishment to standard, common, literary knowledge; it is the improper name for "Lewis Carroll". Working against its definition, the pseudonym quickly evolves into the authentic signature, meanwhile usurping the proper name which is relegated to the status of a pseudo-pseudonym, a false false name: over the last century every biography written on Dodgson has in its title "Lewis Carroll", as if "Dodgson" were the name of some

other writer (Gray 431-432). The pseudonym, or rather the proper proper name, reigns as the rightful heir to the text, whereas the proper name, excluded from propriety, dwells in exile, a name which might have ruled a text once upon a time. What banished names can possibly challenge the authority of such potentates: George Orwell, Mark Twain, George Eliot, Novalis, Voltaire, Molière? "Carroll" has signed his name like an honest man and indeed, perhaps, the pseudonym is the most honest of all signatures, if we read it as demystifying the proper name, which resolutely protects the time-honored figure of the author from philosophical inquiry. (A small knot confounds our discourse: as for newly published texts, how do we determine whether the signature across the binding is a pseudonym or not? For all that we know, the name in this initial context signifies propriety. Only after the proper name has pushed its way onto the scene by the appeals of "exterior" texts is the pseudonym born--only after the uninformed--ill-informed?--reader is told to read the name otherwise. Technically, Alice in Wonderland, the text in front of us, does not suggest at all that "Lewis Carroll" is pseudonymous. And if, on the other hand, the propriety of a name requires an external authority to confirm itself, might there not be pseudonyms still lying dormant underneath what we suppose to be proper? (Yet these interruptive thoughts must be contained within parentheses or else our subsequent arguments, which require the concept of the pseudonym for a foundation, may collapse.)).

The Most Honest of Signatures

By convention the proper name props up literality and resolutely signifies the subject--a truth not to be challenged. But with the pseudonym comes difference, comes--as Derrida writes--violence; the proper name is now opposed, its privileged identity clearly contrasted and contested. Derrida's dismantling of Western metaphysics' enshrinement of the notion of propriety offers an opposite starting point. In "The Violence of the Letter", a chapter in Of Grammatology, Derrida violates traditional conceptualization by tracing out the splitting, bifurcating structure of concepts at their assumed origins:

> the proper name has never been, as the unique appellation reserved for the presence of a unique being, anything but the original myth of a transparent legibility present under the obliteration;... the proper name was never possible except through its functioning within a classification and therefore within a system of differences, within a writing retaining the traces of difference" (Of Grammatology 109).

In light of Derrida's passage, the pseudonym name that other disruptive concept to which he here gives no name.

A paradigm for every metaphysical concept and every referent, the proper name yields up its identity in and of itself to its opposite, an opposite it requires in order to posit "itself": a central principle of deconstructive analysis is that propriety would never had made itself known to us, if we had not known impropriety. Because concepts like propriety exist in a binary opposition, that is in a system of differences, there is no such thing as an original concept or an original, pure identity; rather, the entire system of differences

has always existed, and so, since every concept depends on its opposite, its other, to posit itself, we might reverse the hierarchical order and claim that the opposite of propriety, pseudonymity, is the proper concept. Rather than writing that impropriety transgresses propriety, we might instead write propriety transgresses impropriety, pseudonymity.

If we read the proper name as a common inscription of the subject, we see that the pseudonym, in removing the proper name from the title page, alerts the reader to the forgery or falsehood of the subject's ontological stability. Again Derrida provides us with a background for understanding the riddle that Alice in Wonderland poses to its readers. In his seminal essay "Différance", he points to the relationship between language and the concept of the subject by way of Saussure's Course in General Linguistics:

> Now if we refer, once again, to semiological difference, of what does Saussure, in particular, remind us? That "language [which only consists of differences] is not a function of the speaking subject." This implies that the subject (in its identity with itself, or eventually in its consciousness of its identity with itself, its self-consciousness) is inscribed in language, is a "function" of language, becomes a speaking subject only by making its speech conform--even in so-called "creation", or in so-called "transgression"--to the system of the rules of language as a system of differences. (Margins 15)

Even our self-consciousness, that which we like to think is under our total control, must abide by all "the rules of language as a system of differences", differences that precede us and therefore construct us. No different than any other chain of signs, subjectivity obeys and is subject to the movement of language which, never attaining closure, is forever off-centered. The honest signature, the pseudonym, thus,

informs us about the uncertainty of the subject, by reminding us to search for the author beyond the proper name. Faced with this enigma, the reader soon comprehends that what lies outside of the book is by no means less open to hermeneutical scrutiny than what lies inside. In short, the pseudonym not only disconnects the subject from his canon with an arbitrary name--signs that possess no immediately meaningful relation with regard to the proper name, or the book, or the author--but also debilitates the concept of the subject, substituting itself, the unexpected, the nonsensical, the joke, for the proper sign of the subject, the sign which we are conditioned to expect on the cover. The name no longer points confidently to an individual, concept or person. Referentiality as a model for describing language no longer works, for the text is now centerd on language, if that may be called a center. The pseudonym effaces the given, writes itself across the assumed, forces us to pause over that which we would normally pay scant attention to. Everything the proper name says but cannot say because of the uncontested assumption that it is unquestionably proper, the pseudonym graphs quite honestly, quite disruptively.

"Lewis Carroll" and its Critics

My remarks have neither been a paean to the pseudonym nor a sardonic paean, a disguised diatribe attacking "Lewis Carroll" for its inferiority to the proper name, but rather a questioning of all paeans, all discourses, devices, and figures which seek to enclose the text within a determined genre; and yet when consulting Waugh, who also

raises the riddle of the pseudonym, we would think to find the proper name elevated above impropriety. Since the pseudonym draws attention to the instability of the subject, should not more traditional writers attempt to protect the proper name? Instead, Waugh sets the pseudonym apart from the proper name as a special signifier. Nevertheless, his review of The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll, "Dodgson and Carroll", is precisely the kind of paean to the pseudonym that I speak out against. His paean recovers the difference as an identity: a manoeuvre that employs the pseudonym to consolidate and entrench the concept of the subject.

Waugh accuses the Nonesuch editor of The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll for failing to unweave the silk woof from the woolen warp: "'Everything Lewis Carroll wrote appears in this volume', he [the editor] jauntily announces, ignoring a distinction which Dodgson himself was at constant pains to observe" (Waugh 511). For Waugh, "Lewis Carroll" is the golden seal which its "author scrupulously preserved for a unique species of work" (511). Calling upon himself his own indictment, Waugh makes no attempt to clarify what he means by "a unique species of work", although he does mention the types of writing that have no legitimate claim to the pseudonym: "extracts from common-room memoranda, illustrations of logical forms, essays in academic controversy, light and serious, religious and political opinions" (Waugh 511). We might describe this list as circumscribing those texts which are concerned with conceptual and didactic matters; this inference is that the texts which deserve the pseudonym come under the category of imaginative literature and work toward delighting and

entertaining the reader. Wrong in transferring the source of the problem from these ambivalent texts to the Nonesuch editor, Waugh, nonetheless, must account for writings like the preface to Sylvie and Bruno which indubitably has impressed on its cover "Carroll". As far as traditional forms are concerned, the preface reads rather well as an "essay in academic controversy", proposing to the reader a series of educational projects: a Child's Bible with selected passages and pictures, a collection of scriptural pieces suitable for memorization, a book of Shakespearean verse, and a censored version of Shakespeare's plays appropriate for the perusal of girls form ten to seventeen (Complete Works 258-260). Did Carroll compose Sylvie and Bruno and then suddenly disappear, Dodgson writing the introductory piece to the novel for the absent Carroll and in the process inserting his own religious opinions? Furthermore, if Dodgson had been at constant pains to observe the distinction of the pseudonym, why in the name of literature would he sign "Carroll" to a text dealing strictly with symbolic logic? How can we corroborate Waugh's thesis that Dodgson, the Oxford geometer, mathematician, and educator, inhabits an altogether alien plane from that of his pseudonym when "Carroll" dedicates Symbolic Logic to the memory of Aristotle? "Any one, who has to superintend the education of young people (say between 12 and 20 years of age), must have realized the importance of supplying them with healthy mental recreations....The best possible resource, no doubt, is reading" (preface to Symbolic Logic): this cannot be the same Carroll who infected literature with the plague of nonsense! When we choose to designate the pseudonym as a seal marking off a silk text, there is a

strong sense that a woolen text has secretly been interwoven into the precious fabric: the proper name seems to creep back into the domain of the pseudonym. In spite of Waugh's reasoning, we cannot distinguish a Carroll-work from a Dodgson-work, and, with the Nonesuch editor, might as well inscribe "Lewis Carroll" on all the miscellaneous texts, simply because none of these texts stands out as either pseudonymous or proper.

Responding to the same Nonesuch publication with a short essay, Virginia Woolf locates the difficulty of disentangling Carroll from Dodgson in the life of the Oxford don, who, according to her, never fully divested himself of childhood's fancies but at the same time still wore the straight-laced forms of a clergyman. Notwithstanding her humanistic argumentation, the essay observes insightfully an oft-repeated pattern running through the texts of Dodgson; had she written quotation marks around "Lewis Carroll", her observation would have been even more accurate for our purposes:

> Lewis Carroll ought once and for all to be complete. We ought to be able to grasp him whole and entire. But we fail--once more we fail. We think we have caught Lewis Carroll; we look again and see an Oxford clergyman. We think we have caught the Rev. C. L. Dodgson--we look again and see a fairy elf. (Woolf 70)

What Woolf perceives as indistinct and inseparable in Carroll's discourse is his character, his beliefs and attitudes. However, what if Carroll had never signed a pseudonym to his text? If the pseudonym had not alerted Woolf to the split, would she have written this essay? Can we not say inconsistencies in attitudes riddle all texts whether the writer employs a pseudonym or not? Yet it took the pseudonym to spell out the distinction: we perceive the differences in character

because of the difference in names. Opposing Waugh, she, therefore, furnishes us with an observation that appears to tells us about Carroll's character while really telling us about his pseudonym. Woolf's observation is indeed corroborated by Dodgson's correspondence which, curiously enough, exhibits a flickering, alternating movement between the two names. Ending his letter to Edith Jebb on Dec. 20, 1874, "Ever your affectionate friend, C.L. Dodgson" (The Letters of Lewis Carroll 216), he, nevertheless, signs a letter to her four months later, "Yours half-fiction-ately, Lewis Carroll" (222). And with Agnes Hull, whom he treats much more intimately, he concludes, "Ever lovingly yours, C.L. Dodgson" (354) and then two days later concludes in another note, "Your ever loving friend, Lewis Carroll" (355). This apparently random exchange of the proper name for the pseudonym is a common occurrence within his correspondence. Would Waugh have upbraided the editor of The Letters of Lewis Carroll for neglecting to separate the two types of letters and for grouping them both under the pseudonym? Had he done so, he would have been hard-pressed to classify a third type of letter which does not slide into either of these envelopes and which tells us why the pseudonym can never be a special signifier.

The Double Exposure

Written ten years after Alice in Wonderland was first published, the letter is just as much addressed to our project as to a certain Magdalen Millard, an eight year old girl whom Carroll only

wrote to once. The letter may be termed a piece of letterature, because, even though conforming to the prescriptions of a conventional epistle, it very strangely preoccupies itself with a fantastic meeting between the narrator and his two selves. Supplying an excuse for not having paid Magdalen a visit, the narrator "I" explains that on his way to her house he was detained by people in the street, amongst whom were "me" and "myself":

> I thought it was rather like me, so I fetched a large looking-glass to make sure, and then to my great joy I found out it was me. We shook hands, and were just beginning to talk, when myself came and joined us, and we had quite a pleasant conversation. I said, "Do you remember when we all met at Sundown?" and myself said, "It was very jolly there; there was a child called Magdalen," and me said, "I used to like her a little; not much you know--only a little." (The Letters 236)

In a way that anticipates the theories of the self advanced by Lacanian psychoanalytic theory[1], the text displays rather forcefully the concept of the split subject: the child's entry into language invariably produces a division between the subject who speaks and the subject who is encoded in the discourse. Belsey in Critical Practise explains Lacan's theory for us: "The child's [and later the adult's ongoing] submission to the discursive practises of society is challenged by the existence of another self which is not synonymous with the subject of discourse" (Belsey 85). In the letter, the narrating "I" bifurcates first into "me" and then into "myself", a double replication that compounds three differing selves, each with its

[1]For a fuller discussion of Lacan's theories consult Ecrits and The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, both translated into English by Alan Sheridan.

own stance toward Magdalen. Apologetic and sensitive, "I" goes to great lengths to explain his absence of the previous day and, during his conversation with the others, mentions Sandown, a holiday-spot familiar and no doubt pleasing to Magdalen. "Myself" recalls the "jolly" time spent there but seems remote from her despite connecting her with a pleasurable memory: "there was a child called Magdalen" (236). To "myself", she is a creature of the far past who has no value in the present. "Me", more emotional than "myself" yet less caring than "I", speaks his mind about Magdalen: "I used to like her a little; not much, you know--only a little" (236). Constrained by the social norms to assume a thoughtful, kindly voice, the scriptor juxtaposes with the "I" the frigidly indifferent voices of "me" and "myself", selves which seem no less authentic and which probably contributed to his negligence the day before. They surface under the guise of playfulness. However, what is especially fascinating about the text's depiction of the split subject is the casual manner in which the narrator relates the entire episode. Belsey argues that in literature a character who discovers the rip between himself and the self discourse articulates for him usually enters upon a time of crisis (86-88). Compare the condition of the divided subject in Wordsworth's Prelude, whose narrator recalls how he once drank "visionary power", how a former self, a past self, would stand beneath rock and listen to "the ghostly language of the ancient earth". The separation between this former self and his present self impresses upon him an ambivalent, nostalgic feeling:

> but that the soul,
> Remembering how she felt, but what she felt

> remembering not, retains an obscure sense
> of possible sublimity.
> (The Prelude, 1805, II, 326-37)

In marked contrast, "Dodgson"'s awareness of the changing subject of discourse does not incline him to censure or to favor "me", "myself", or "I". Where is the conflict, the yearning for a stable self? Each of the distinct personae at the end of the text seem united in purpose as they go off to the train. Notwithstanding their individual identities, they accept one another's company without any friction. The three friends strike up a pleasant conversation and then depart together for the station. At the station, the party comes across a pair whom "I" wagers Magdalen would never guess:

> They were two very dear friends of mine,
> who happen to be here just now, and beg to be
> allowed to sign this letter, as
>
> Your affectionate friends,
> Lewis Carroll,
> and
> C. L. Dodgson
> (The Letters of Lewis Carroll 237)

Contradicting Waugh's insistence that the pseudonym "Lewis Carroll" accompanies a unique species of work distinct from propriety, the letter to Magdalen Millard portrays a subject differing and deferring right to the close, a fragmented subject which does not declare one fragment friendly and one hostile, one proper and one improper; no, the proper name and the pseudonym are one and the same.

Quite fittingly, we now invoke Dodgson's identity as an accomplished photographer to freeze the pseudonym in photographic tropes: like a double exposure which records the interference of one image with another and thereby exposes the illusion/delusion of

photographs which fallaciously report a stasis in the scene photographed, the letter captures the movement of the pseudonym. Disparaging the first picture we developed in our discourse, it shows that the pseudonym had not been a sincere rebel fighting against the abuses of such concepts as propriety and referentiality. For all to see, the double exposure exposes doubly the complicity between "Lewis Carroll" and "C. L. Dodgson". They are secret friends, silent partners, double agents, twin dopplegangers who ceaselessly double the other who really never ever was the other but the same in cognito. The letter to Magdalen, an aporia not only in Dodgson's texts, but in pseudonymous literature as well, demonstrates that a text is doubly signed whether a second signature is inscribed on the cover or not; "in fact", The Dictionary of Pseudonyms pronounces, "it is no uncommon thing for both the true name and the nom de plume to appear upon the title" (iv). Hence, the pseudonym fails to represent a unique type of text not so much because the various discourses evade consistency--which they obviously do--but because it, removed from the idea of uniqueness, is split itself. "Lewis Carroll" is part proper name, and "C. L. Dodgson" is part pseudonym, just, as in the letter, "I" is "me" and "me" is "myself". Less ambiguously, they are interchangeable because this proper name since the very beginning of our discussion has been inscribed within "Lewis Carroll" rather than inscribed without, Charles transforming his given names into the pseudonym, Lewis violating the propriety of the proper name from the inside. In a manner of writing, we may speculate that "Lewis Carroll" is a looking glass image of his proper name. And so, the pseudonym contains within

itself the possibility of the proper name insofar as a reflection requires an object in order to exist: we would never know of a false name had there not been an authentic one to falsify. The double bind comes when we ponder whether "Lewis Carroll" figures forth as the reflection or the reflected, for, conversely, every proper name contains within itself the possibility of the pseudonym. "Dodgson" must be exposed to transgression; otherwise, the reader would have never known it as the proper, unique, individual name that it aspires to be. As children breed monstrous nicknames from drab, banal names, Dodgson delivers out of his name the nominal offspring of "Lewis Carroll". Every proper name is pregnant with a nom de plume.

Returning to Alice in Wonderland, we linger around the pseudonym, hesitant, even afraid to continue reading. "Lewis Carroll", a veritable neon sign, flickers on and off with propriety--straight then ironic, referential then rhetorical, true then false, present then absent, passive then disruptive. In French, the pseudonym, contrary to what we would expect, is not called nom de plume, but instead nom de guerre, the name of war. And a warring name it is. Yet it is in conflict not so much with the external proper name than with the proper name inscribed within itself, the horizon of propriety against which its impropriety is necessarily, differentially calculated. Again we should watch our words carefully, for our discourse is eating its tale. Let us abrogate our responsibility of defining the meaning of either the pseudonym or the proper name outside a particular context, since each name in having the other written across itself makes any sort of defining apart from the other impossible. We should not write then,

'Lewis Carroll flickers between meanings', when these meanings, these names, are in turn doubled over and over ad infinitum. Therefore, against our will, we will provisionally rephrase the summary statement: "Lewis Carroll" with regard to signification is a double exposure of a neon sign, a blurred name naming a proper name which is equally blurred.

Returning to Alice in Wonderland with a blank slate, we will try to forget that "Lewis Carroll" ever crossed our paths, trusting and hoping it will never do so again during our lifetime. Nonetheless, "Lewis Carroll" does bid us farewell in those editions which reproduce "An Easter Greeting" (162), a letter appended to the 1876 publication. Alice in Wonderland is signed twice, once at the beginning and once at the end. As though to remind us who--or what--presides over the text, "Lewis Carroll" is the alpha and the omega of Wonderland. Whether for a crime or a gallery, Alice in Wonderland has been framed. A pseudonymous frame, a proper frame, the borders of a territory which are not really borders at all, the two names/non-names furnish the text with a linguistic parenthesis which traps/frees the text in/from the book. Yet the second time around, when the master of ceremonies re-enters center stage to close these mad presidings, this nonsensical circus, Carroll, showing much formality attempts to make interpretive peace with the reader, by putting himself in non-threatening terms: "Your affectionate friend LEWIS CARROLL" (Alice 163). In its immediate context, the pseudonym closes the epistle that "Carroll" addresses to "EVERY CHILD WHO LOVES Alice". Punctuated by a gravity not to be found within the text proper--or text pseudonymous--the letter invites the

reader to a conversation, not a reading. Despite the accompaniment of an intimate tone, how can "Lewis Carroll" ever be our affectionate friend? Up until now, the pseudonym, like the Hatter's riddle which possesses no solution, has played with the reader mercilessly, almost cruelly. Thus, when the letter wishes us a Happy Easter and assures us that an even happier Easter is ahead of us, how are we to read its seemingly didactic declarations with regard to a signature which also represents a discourse opposed to literality, honesty? If the reader cannot trust the pseudonym's oscillating meanings, should he assume that the greeting which is connected to this blurred uncertainty expresses a clear, picture-perfect message? We will examine this question in the next chapter, but for now let us turn inside.

The Riddle Inside of Alice in Wonderland

The inscription of the pseudonym on the title page and on "An Easter Greeting" does not constitute a riddle outside of the text, but instead mirrors an activity already going on in the text proper. It seems Wonderland has spilled out of its container and stained the label so thickly that the markings are illegible. These two pseudonyms allow Alice in Wonderland to escape the containment of the proper name: they intermix the inside with the outside, reality with literature, as if to suggest that 'we do not know where Wonderland stops and Dodgson begins, where nonsense stops and the subject begins'. For you see, Alice also receives pseudonyms throughout the narrative. The first one she acquires is self-imposed: failing to remember her school lesson, she

convinces herself that she is not the girl whom she thought she was, and, with tears in her eyes, claims, "I must be Mabel" (37). Later on when having just scared the Caucus-race-participants away, Alice runs into the White Rabbit, who calls out to her in an angry tone, "Why, Mary Ann, what are you doing out here?" (52). And still later on, having grown to gigantic proportions, Alice towers over the tree-tops with an elongated neck and soon enough frightens the Pigeon, who blurts out in fear and contempt, "Serpent!" (74). In this case, the Pigeon not only is identifying Alice with a certain type of animal, but is also giving her a pseudonym. The text, implying that the Pigeon calls her a name, capitalizes serpent two more times: "Serpent, I say again!" (74) and "Ugh, Serpent!" (75). These false names expose "Alice" to the same double exposure to which Dodgson exposes himself.

Moreover, Alice in Wonderland does not simply manipulate the name of its heroine. In The Annotated Alice Martin Gardner points out that the Dormouse's yarn provides pseudonyms for the three Liddel sisters, the girls to whom Carroll originally told the story. Coerced into telling a tale by the Mad Hatter and the March Hare, the Dormouse begins, "Once upon a time there were three little sisters, and their names were Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie" (100). The three little sisters are obviously the three Liddel sisters: Elsie is L.C. (Lorina Charlotte); Tillie refers to Edith's family nickname Matilda; and Lacie is an anagram of Alice (Gardner 100). Gardner mentions that this is the second time Carroll has punned on the word "Liddell", the first time appearing in the prefatory poem's first stanza where "little" is used three times to refer to the "cruel Three" of the next stanza (21).

The pseudonym then invades both the title page and the greeting from the inside, destroying the frame of the proper name that divides literature from actuality. "Lewis Carroll" is the first and the last in a series of riddles that run through Alice in Wonderland. Together with the closing command "The End"--the signal to arrest reading at the conclusion of the narrative--the proper name under a book's title forms the parenthesis which prevents the text from diffusing into and mixing with and shaking up actuality, reality. Yet as readers we rarely realize our real proximity to the books stacked neatly and systematically on our shelves, because this palliated parenthesis serves to reinforce the privileged duality of reality/literature. Believing speech to be centered on referentiality, the traditional reader regards discourse which has no apparent referent as literature, as the fantastic lie capable only of providing an entertaining diversion, a break from reality. Referentiality, the one to one correspondence between word and object, begins for the person with the proper name, the sign of "myself", whose supposed a priori nature deceives him into thinking that all objects--which we know as the concept of objects--exist before language and bear their own natural names. Indeed, the sign makes the "object" in the sense that the sign frames it--whatever "it" happens to be designated--off from its surroundings, simultaneously granting it identity and reducing everything around it to context. According to Derrida, referential or literal discourse rests on and falsifies the same structure/non-structure literary or figurative discourse rests on.

In "The Death of the Author" Barthes argues that "to give a

text an author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (147). We might go so far as to say that the proper name stamped imperially on the text's cover helps manufacture the construct of the author whose authority establishes the autonomy of the book--in fact, the artefact, art and fact. Against the fact of art: to place a pseudonym is to move in the direction of anonymity, to refuse to acknowledge the title "book", to disown the personal ownership of meaning. The pseudonym suggests to the reader that the proper name has always contained the possibility of impropriety, pseudonymity, literariness. After having read Alice in Wonderland with regard to the pseudonym, we see that the proper name has belonged just as much to a narrative as to a title page, and that the narrative has belonged just as much to the proper name. The mark of an iconoclast, the pseudonym dissipates the hallowed halos of the author and the book which encircle the text; casting the text into that un-numbered and unlabelled mass of texts we call writings or écriture, freeing the text from the author-ity of the biographical context, it penetrates the archetypal frame of literary discourse, the author's proper name. It signifies that the author is lost, nowhere to be found--that the text belongs to no one. It lifts the autocratic limit of the author who within poststructuralist thought is just as much a product of textuality as "his" text, thereby exploding the contexts both outwardly and inwardly.

However we may read "Lewis Carroll", the concept of the proper name has still been transgressed. Such a transgression does not bother us so much when we first see "Lewis Carroll" as much as when we see it

the second time. To sign a letter, the epitome of decorum and personal communication, with a manipulated signature--the infringing of the social boundary, the violation of the law--is to alert the reader to the destructive capabilities of language, that flux of meaning which cuts across the unblemished face of more traditional hermeneutics, for, if "Lewis Carroll" does not necessarily refer to anyone but a transgression, a violence, then who can say whether the letter whose authority relies on the signature is not a product of similar transgressions? By substituting the pseudonym for the proper name as if it were merely another signifier, Dodgson has exposed his letter to the vertiginous spin of rhetorical substitution. If we with Derrida characterize the bad reader as someone who predestines his reading, who fearing the different is in a hurry to find the familiar, then "Lewis Carroll" is everything but the reader's "affectionate friend"; it marks the transgression and transformation of the letter into literature.

Chapter Three

THE STRANGE LETTER

"Is this a strange letter to find in a book of nonsense?"

--"An Easter Greeting"

Re-inscribing the Subject

After Alice returns to the bank where her sister sits with a book and after the narrative signals its termination with "The End", "An Easter Greeting" intrudes upon our sense of closure, imploring us to continue reading--for even if the story is done the text has much more to say. The end and then "An Easter Greeting". It does not precede the narrative to caution, but succeeds the narrative to explain. A salutation out of place: why does Carroll inscribe a greeting in the space where he should be signing off "An Easter Good-bye"? Has not Alice in Wonderland already gone through the motions of welcoming us? In general functioning far beyond the limits of its innocent title, "An Easter Greeting" insists that we regard it as an apology vindicating Carroll and Alice in Wonderland from moral censure:

> For I do not believe God means us thus to divide life into two halves--to wear a grave face on Sunday, and to think it out-of-place to even so much as mention Him on a

> week-day. Do you think He cares to see only kneeling figures, and to hear only tones of prayer--and that He does not also love to see the lambs leaping in the sunlight, and to hear the children, as they roll among the hay? (Alice 163)

Of course, it seems superfluous to send an apology to the children who love Alice, for apologies are usually written to one's attackers, not one's allies. A "speech in defense", the apology is not only on one front--maybe a façade--a defense against those who attack Alice in Wonderland for revelling in too much nonsense, but, over and beyond that, a defense--a fence around that same nonsense, which, if unfenced, would threaten Carroll's values and his concept of the individual. For you see, contradicting what he declares in the aforementioned passage, Carroll does divide life into two halves right before our eyes. Besides not even mentioning God once in the text proper, he forms a division between literature and reality, primary discourse and parenthetical, the inside and the outside. The sudden almost shocking shift from the apparent form of the nonsense novel to that of the letter cuts the text into two. As if to feign innocence, and thereby remove our critical guard, this supplementary chapter, this appendix to the narrative, this story outside the story, seems to abandon the punning, the parodying, the word-play. The narrator discusses topics related to dreams, childhood, and religion and forgets about the convoluted linguistic configurations he wove around us not pages before. Carroll carefully draws the line between the text proper and the text parenthetical. Why the shift, the reverse, the relapse, the forgetting? An answer may be found in the text proper itself.

Foregrounding language at the expense of all other values, Alice in Wonderland puts into question the notion of the subject.

At the Mad Tea-Party, Alice expresses her frustration at the Dormouse's yarn, when he mentions a rather strange detail:

> The three little sisters "drew all manner of things--everything that begins with an M--"
> "Why with an M?" said Alice.
> "Why not?" said the March Hare.
> Alice was silent. (101)

The scene communicates quite clearly that the letter precedes the action or the identity, that language dictates the subject matter. Alice cannot understand why the sisters would only draw things beginning with an M; however, within Alice in Wonderland itself, this foregrounding of language is nothing out of the ordinary. Indeed, throughout the narrative, Alice confronts the problem of language in relation to her-self; for example, the existential crisis in which Alice does not know if she is Mabel or not arises from her inability to draw upon her personal repertoire of knowledge. She tries to recite one of Issac Watts' Divine and Moral Songs and meets with failure, only able to utter a grotesque parody of the original song which encodes essentially the lesson of working hard and reaping what you sow:

> How doth the little busy bee
> Improve each shining hour
> And gather honey all the day
> From every opening flower.
>
> How Skilfully she build her cell;
> How neat she spreads the wax,
> And labours hard to store it well
> With the sweet food she makes.
> (Introduction to Alice 17)

In brilliant contrast, the parody Alice recites belongs more to a collection called Demonic and Immoral Songs than to Watts' collection:

> How doth the little crocodile
> Improve his shining tail,
> And pour the waters of the Nile

On every golden scale!

How cheerfully he seems to grin,
  How neatly spread his claws,
And welcome little fishes in
  With gently smiling jaws. (37)

The parody substitutes the emblem of the bee, an insect conventionally represented as industrious, disciplined, and skillful, with the emblem of a loathsome reptile, whose ingenuity allows him to prosper without exerting any energy. By focusing on a crocodile, the parody reveals the viciousness and vanity the emblem of the bee had elided in its depiction of the value of hard work. Yet more significantly for us, Alice's crisis also reveals how dependent we are on linguistic constructs which no matter how sweet-sounding or how pleasantly versified (as Watt's songs tend to be) are subject to the play of language; they always store in themselves their hiding opposite, an opposite which exercises just as much power over the way we transcribe, speak, think. We need only to change the positive figure of the bee to the pejorative figure of the crocodile in order to see how the value of hard work loses its moral lustre: by exploiting the weak little fishes, the crocodile can live an easy life on the Nile, shining his tale and stroking his vanity. Because Alice had based her self-image on the little poem and now can only remember a distorted version of it, she believes she is another person: "I'm sure those are not the right words,... I must be Mabel after all" (37). Unfortunately, Alice does not know that there are no right words for articulating the subject, since the right words depend just as much on the wrong words, the pseudonymous words, for their identity: there are only right/wrong words, for, as stated in my previous chapter, propriety is

differentially calculated against the horizon of propriety. For Alice this crisis is but one of many awakenings to language's readiness to disrupt identity.

During her visit with the Caterpillar, who demands that she "explain herself", she apologizes, "I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir, because I'm not myself, you see" (66). Disoriented and discouraged by her failed attempts at controlling her discourse and at understanding the discourse of her interlocutors, she realizes she is not the girl she thought she was. She is not herself because she cannot explain, codify, and articulate her-self as confidently as she once could. Similarly, during her visit with the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon, she explains timidly, "It's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then" (134). To prove her point she endeavors to repeat another one of Watts' songs called "'Tis the Voice of the Sluggard", and, once more, "the words come out very queer indeed" (135). Amazed at the changes the poem has undergone, the Mock Turtle exclaims, "but it sounds uncommon nonsense" (136). Consequently, all Alice can do is despair--despair mutely: "Alice said nothing; she had sat down with her face in her hands, wondering if anything would ever happen in a natural way again" (137). Within language, no value is natural, safe or secure. So when her discourse slips, her self slips too.

Having little faith in the concluding episode's capacity to re-establish linguistic order, it could be argued that Carroll thinks he can restrain Wonderland's nonsense from contaminating his values by closing Alice in Wonderland with "An Easter Greeting", for this letter

reads very much like a work of criticism, a statement of aesthetic purposes subtly categorizing the text as a literary recreation in order to defuse the text of its potentially destructive, malignant knowledge about the subject:

> And if I have written anything to add to those stories of innocence and healthy amusement that are laid up in books for the children I love so well, it is surely something I may hope to look back upon without shame and sorrow. (163)

The letter places the text within the corpus of children's literature as if the hermeneutic confusion Alice encounters is a problem a person eventually grows out of. From outside the text, the letter in effect re-inscribes the subject which has undergone displacement and destabilization within the text. So operating as a deus ex machina, "An Easter Greeting" brings in a saviour who was absent throughout the narrative and at last saves the subject from dissolving into randomness and disorder: a perfect vehicle for repressing the decenterd nature of language, the conventional letter refrains from making reference to itself in an attempt to help the reader forget the absence of the writer--in an attempt to promote the tone of a personal straight-forward conversation. The epistolary genre never questions the ontological validity of the self, simply because its structure requires the self to be in place. A message from one person to another presupposes that the sender and the sendee possess fixed identities. And so by way of the letter, Carroll consoles the reader and himself that the human subject is still intact, that the scenes wherein Alice loses her identity in a maelstrom of signs exist only in fiction's Wonderland. In assuming the unity of the subject, "An Easter

Greeting"'s epistle-form promises us that communication is not threatened; however, as we compare the greeting with the conventional letter, such promises appear less and less convincing. If Carroll does in fact resort to a letter to restore a tone of controlled deliberate communication, we might say this letter communicates communicative problems of its own.

Addressing the Subject

From a recent issue of Yale French Studies devoted to examining the correspondence of well-known French writers, we notice an epistolary characteristic or convention which "An Easter Greeting" does not observe: in the foreword to this special issue, the editor Charles A. Porter states that the "typical letter remains essentially a private communication between two persons"[1] (Porter 2), an author known or

[1]Porter contemplates the theoretical and historical background of the epistle in hopes of generating a working definition that will prepare the reader for the volume's subsequent examinations. He broaches his discussion with a provisional model--"a message-bearing object delivered from one person to another"--upon which he develops his further descriptions enumerating what, he calls, the letter's "almost invariable" characteristics.

Despite his original aim, by the end of the discussion, we still have not reached a satisfying definition of the letter: his points skirt around the concept of the message he started with and diffuse into a disjointed, discursive examination which buries a network of relationships beneath separate arbitrarily made issues. After he declares the typical letter conveys a message, he goes on to maintain that it commonly "has a precise intention" (3), without clarifying the differences between the two concepts. Do they possess separate meanings or do they overlap each other? Does a writer ever intend a communication or does he communicate an intention? All things considered, is the intention not just another message, maybe the message behind the message? Or is the message the obvious intention masking the subtler intention good readers eventually unearth with effort? In adding the characteristic of "a precise intention" to the

readily identifiable and an intended reader or readers likewise known or identifiable. As we discussed at length in the previous chapter, the pseudonymous signature "Lewis Carroll" throws into relief the displacement of the proper name in every day discourse and, by and large, brings problems of its own to the greeting; for the time being, the intended reader or sendee interests us with newer problems. Carroll addresses his letter "to Every Child who Loves Alice", a superscription that does not intend a special reader so much as it provides the possibility of not intending one. Because the superscription makes the reader into a conditional being, a child who loves Alice, for all intents and purposes, there may not be a single addressee, every child despising the book, and, therefore, the letter has a chance of becoming no communication at all. To impose a condition on the type of reader one's letter requires indicates a certain amount of meticulousness, fussiness. What if no child loves Alice as much as Carroll expects? Or, on the other hand, there may be far too many addressees, every child indeed loving Alice, and, therefore, the letter has a chance of becoming a public communication, words addressed to no one in particular, no different than a newspaper article or an advertisement. In this respect, the superscription seems much closer

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definition, Porter unwittingly complicates and confounds his undeveloped concept of the message. Moreover, after asserting the prescription that the author be readily identifiable, he mentions that "the "I" refers to its author" but "is to some extent a fabrication or "fiction", not necessarily identical to its author" (2). Well what is it? How can the letter be essentially both a letter and literature, exhibiting both an addresser and a narrator? If the "I" may not necessarily be identical to its author, what implications does this ambiguity have on the message being transmitted to the addressee? Apart from articulating the letter's protocol or formalities, Porter keeps on straying into the literary domain.

to the title of a novel, essay, or poem than to the address on a missive: who has ever seen a letter introduced by such a heading? Whatever the case may be, to address a letter to a conditional reader departs significantly from the convention Porter lists, departs to such a degree that it questions the possibility of writers ever having their own readers, and, like the text proper, questions the possibility of the subject.

Had Carroll never tampered with the addressee in an epistle ever again, we might have been in a position to pass by the superscription, proclaiming confidently that "An Easter Greeting"'s departure from convention is not so much a disruption in the text as device to bring the reader into a warm intimacy--had Carroll never tampered again. But Carroll does tamper again. He tampers in a letter to Agnus Hull, a child-friend to whom he wrote often. This letter's opening eliminates the proper name, and then explains at length why the change occurs:

> Hateful Spider,
> (You are quite right. It doesn't matter a bit how one begins a letter, nor, for the matter of that, how one goes on with it, or even how one ends it--and it comes awfully easy, after a bit, to write coldly--easier, if possible than to write warmly. For instance, I have been writing to the Dean, on College business, and began the letter, "Obscure Animalcule," and he is foolish enough to pretend to be angry about it and say it wasn't proper style, and that he will propose to the Vice-Chancellor to expel me from the University: and it is all your fault!)
>
> (The Letters of Lewis Carroll 424: emphasis mine)

Bearing no immediate connection to the rest of the letter which concerns a precious book Carroll did not send to Agnus, the opening affords us a parallel text with which to interpret the "An Easter Greeting". Much more than a matter of improper style, the changed

names--the surrogate addresses of spider and obscure animalcule--pull the proper names of Agnus Hull and the Dean into pseudonymity, exposing them to the effect of double exposure, that over-exposure of the subject we observed in the previous chapter. And how does Carroll justify his manipulation of the reader's sign? "It doesn't matter". It does not matter to him because the letter has no boundaries or borders, the beginning, middle, and end each abiding by the rule of no rules. And so "An Easter Greeting", with its child who is no child and its nom de plume which inhabits propriety and impropriety, departs from convention to observe Carroll's bizarre definition of the letter. The greeting's addressee draws its readers into the game of the pseudonym, the game with no rules, the game of the letter: he calls the reader "Child" (162). At any rate, "An Easter Greeting"'s opening not only forces us to re-consider the idea that it recovers and re-constitutes the concept of the autonomous subject, but also forces us to consider the idea that it may not in fact be a letter as such. In Carroll's canon, both the letter and the subject slide. (But here we pause at this text to ask, why the parenthesis? Why can the discourse on the hateful spider not go unbounded? Perhaps, Carroll is making a double gesture, at once an unleashing of the spider, the decenterd subject, and a binding. Right after the parenthetical remark, he takes up a discussion with Agnus, forgetting about the spider until the subscript "Ever scornfully yours, C.L.D.".)

The Letter and its Context

Never given the respect and consideration that other kinds of texts invariably receive, correspondence has always operated as a parenthetical discourse within literary studies. Only after academia deems a writer worthy of in-depth circumspection do scholars publish his letters. Value is ascribed to his correspondence solely on the basis of his other writings; as well as this, when correspondence does receive more than usual attention, it is merely for the purposes of biographical research, supplying and supplementing us with historical commentary to further our knowledge about these other writings. Only in the last ten years have complete editions come out of the correspondence of Voltaire and Rousseau; editions on Flaubert, Zola, and Proust have yet to be finished (Porter 12). Carroll's correspondence has been published only as recently as 1979. Set against this background, "The Easter Greeting" is excluded from literature twice over in that The Letters of Lewis Carroll seems to consider it unworthy of inclusion within his correspondence. It is situated in a textual no-man's land, trapped between the borders of two genres which will not have any dealings with it--doubly marginalized by Alice in Wonderland's narrative and Carroll's correspondence. But we write audaciously and impetuously. How can we posit that the greeting fails to display the qualities of the letter, with only consulting The Letters of Lewis Carroll and without first delineating the boundaries of this type of writing? Easier written than done, for where do we acquire the services of a cartographer who can map out the letter's

territory for us?

In her book On the Margins of Discourse: the Relations of Literature to Language, Barbara Herrnstein Smith situates the letter in relation to other discourses, not trespassing as Carroll does into the literary domain; for now, we will dispense with Carroll's description of the letter in Agnus Hull's letter: the letter described as textual carte blanche. In contrast, Smith's dialectic is built around the opposition she makes between natural and fictive discourse. By "natural discourse", she means all utterances that are performed as historical acts and taken as historical events, the letter exemplifying a written expression of this type of utterance; and by "fictive discourse", she means an utterance whose principle effort "is to create its own context or more accurately, to invite and enable the reader to create a plausible context for it" (Smith 33). Because fictive discourse, she claims, is never "performed" and does not "occur" in the historical universe, some of its meanings are "historically indeterminate", and therefore the reader has no alternative but to seek its meaning elsewhere. Within her scheme, the letter is thus defined by a natural or historical context, a field of referentiality, whereas literature is literature by virtue of its lack of a context.

When we bring Smith's categories to "An Easter Greeting", we find a stylistic hybrid. As attested to by the affixed date, the greeting belongs to a specific historical locale: Carroll, we may posit, sat down one Easter and composed a written salutation to his young readers. Yet, the primary experience or event he relates within his salutation cannot be identified as historically determinate,

because he describes the happening in both the second and third person, a description whose historical context is not known:

> Do you know that delicious dreamy feeling when one first wakes on a summer morning.... It is a pleasure very near to sadness, bringing tears to one's eyes like a beautiful picture or poem. And is not that a Mother's gentle hand that undraws your curtains.... (Alice 162)

He universalizes a mother's reveille for her child, representing not his own or another's experience but a subjunctive or hypothetical one for the reader's benefit. Employing Smith's terms, we see in the greeting fictive discourse framed by natural discourse. And so how can we explain those natural utterances which contain speculations about the future, or references to nature and history in the subjunctive mood, or wild fantasies about "indeterminate" as well as "determinate" things? The greeting itself puts Carroll into the future looking back on Alice in Wonderland's effects on literature and later on projects how the Second Coming would feel not just to him but to the reader. No doubt, Smith would agree that a letter may digress into fictive discourse but would also argue that such a letter, hardly a threat to her categories, remains a letter because of that natural discourse which nevertheless establishes it within a fixed, grounded context: as Smith argues, "The context of an utterance, then, is best thought of not simply as its gross external or physical setting, but rather as the total set of conditions that has in fact determined its occurrence and form" (16). Again using Smith's terminology, we might appoint a context for the greeting. Obviously, Alice in Wonderland constitutes a possible context, being one major "condition that has in fact determined [the greeting's] occurrence and form".

Before we continue, let us provide a context for "context", a term worn-out by Smith through constant usage yet no less a discourse left outside of the designations "natural" and "fictive". Derived from Latin, "context"'s etymon signifies a weaving together, something interwoven. In relation to "text" then, the context is the other textus, the other fabric or structure that, being woven into and setting itself against, completes or borders the original text. Strange to say, when a context is interwoven with a text, do we include within the context its context? Or, in other words, does a text include the framing devices which constitute the text? Because the con-text merely constitutes another text, a text-against, how do we know when the search for contexts is finally over? Again the search for the parergon enters into my discussion. As Derrida rightly points out, "This is my starting point [and no less everyone else's]: no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context permits saturation" ("Living On" 81). Smith likes to think she can cut the fabric after the first weaving. Neglecting to account for those instances of natural discourse which have as their context fictive discourse, she disregards the "text" in "context", wielding a theoretical discourse which seeks to detextualize all contexts as well as the concept of context. She overlooks the parergon.

But strangely enough, Carroll in contrast to Smith does not pretend to detextualize the greeting's context and so comments quite explicitly on the bizarre interweaving between text and against-text:

> Are these strange words from a writer of such tales as Alice? And is this a strange letter to find in a book of nonsense? It may be so. (162)

These two questions may as well have been left unanswered, for the reply given is couched in the subjunctive mood--an answer and not an answer. Neither is it so, nor is it not so. It may be so. That is all. Nonetheless, the questioning does indicate an undecidability about the extent of Alice in Wonderland's influence on the greeting's composition, an influence which may affect the greeting's stylistical status, even its very words. Carroll poses the questions in such a way as if to ask, "Can the words in this letter actually disassociate themselves from the words in the previous text? Can this letter exempt, extricate, excise itself from the book of nonsense to which it belongs?" What seems to be at stake here is the quality of strangeness which the words and the letter will not acquire if Alice in Wonderland penetrates the greeting's borders; in this case, "strange" signifies the possible difference the greeting manifests when juxtaposed with Alice in Wonderland. Strange word, "strange": "Are these strange words from a writer of such tales as Alice?" (162). Even more strange, how can there be strange words in a nonsense book? In nonsense books, are not all words "strange"? Unless Carroll seems to think the words of nonsense somehow possess a normality and banality under whose light everyday discourse appears weird, eccentric, uncommon, uncanny, not everyday. And yet, as soon as we christen a text "nonsensical", how do we distinguish between nonsense and sense? Like bringing into play the concept of irony, the christening of Alice in Wonderland confers on all its words a certain strangeness, a certain undecidability--a hesitation of whether to take a word for its surface or underlying meaning. Is the word serious or just joking? So if, within the book of nonsense,

all words are strange, why would Carroll then have recourse to a tautology? Perhaps, he really means the greeting is just as much a part of Alice in Wonderland as any other strange verbal device, and, therefore, we must read it accordingly. A throwback to the text proper, the two questions imply that the narrator may indeed be assuming a subversive posture with regard to the reader. Might not these questions be a continuation of the ironic playful voice of the narrator who guided and misguided us through Wonderland earlier:

> The question the Dodo could not answer without a great deal of thought, and it sat for a long time with one finger pressed on its forehead (the position in which you usually see Shakespeare, in the pictures of him). (46)

Has a shift really occurred between the text proper and the text parenthetical? Along with ourselves, the letter knows not how it stands in relation to its context. The context seems to invade the letter, polluting the natural discourse with fictive discourse. Instead of rendering--as Smith would have it--a total set of conditions, our chosen context, a rather obvious example of fictive discourse, provides the greeting with no context, a contextual lack, void, or, even better yet, a contextual vista stretching off into the uncharted nether regions of literature: Alice in Wonderland does not define its letter but highlights the difficulty of defining in general.

To summarize the argument thus far, "An Easter Greeting" evades categorization not because it is not an authentic letter, but because it demonstrates quite sharply the difficulty of determining what constitutes an authenticity or inauthenticity in understanding a letter--derailing Smith's terms whose balance is contingent upon

overlooking the textuality of context, context's status as a writing. The greeting's proximity to Alice in Wonderland is not a deviation from epistolary norms, but rather a closeness to literature, a nearness made possible through contextuality and a nearness afflicting every letter whether written beside, over, under, beyond, below, in front of, or behind literature. Carroll's questions direct us to literature's interpenetration of the letter in general, to context which is before anything else textual, another text, the text-against. Despite the apparent shift to another genre, the greeting still cannot lose the garb of literature which entangles it as a net entangles its careless fishermen. If we dispense with the letter, the greeting accommodates a literary reading most readily.

The Retractatio

Through "The Easter Greeting", Carroll pays homage to the literary convention known as the retractatio, whose most illustrious specimen haunts The Canterbury Tales. A homiletic benediction delivered to the reader, Chaucer's retractatio holds the tail-end of the tales in order to honor Biblical teachings with the final say, a say otherwise reserved for the epilogue or the peroration. It is not unlike cinematic credits which after the movie thank those who contributed to the film's production, although the older convention leaves a more lasting impression in espousing a Biblical model of history. Just as Chaucer looks forward to the Day of Judgement--a common observance in the retractatio--Carroll endeavors to inspirit

his readership with a meditation on the ultimate Easter, "when all the sadness, and the sin, that darkened life on this little earth, shall be forgotten like the dreams of a night that is past!" Both writers sanctify and seal their texts with the end to end all THE END's, as if somehow this liturgical gesture lent a finitude to the text, warding off demonic critics while enclosing their precious words within the sanctuary of sacred writings. As final and inexorable and unalterable as the apocalypse, the retractatio is the last judgement on the text, rhetorically paralleling Revelation, the final Biblical book which itself concludes with a curse for readers who alter its message: "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book" (Rev. 22: 18). By forming an alliance with Holy Writ, the retractatio borrows all the veneration of an Amen and thereby works to bless all that came before.

And yet the retractatio is not so much a rhetorical device outside a text as a motion or movement or turn in a narrative structure. The Canterbury Tales is an exemplary model for all narrative structures that retract, although we might have turned to The Decameron, The Divine Comedy, Orlando Furioso, 1001 Arabian Nights.... Often rationalized away as connective tissue--the conjunctions with which the author unifies his work--prologues, epilogues, and introductions for many readers only frame Chaucer's tales; however, we cannot ignore the possibility that the tales actually frame these narrative retractions. While on a journey to Canterbury Cathedral, the pilgrims participate in a dialogue which is just as much continued through the tales as engendered by and for the

tales. "The Reeve's Prologue" retracts, withdraws, revokes, cancels, and repudiates "The Miller's Tale"; but then afterwards the Reeve does not simply launch into an entertaining story outside the quarrel. "The Reeve's Tale" extends his initial retraction, until another prologue or tale replaces the Reeve's, cancelling and repudiating either implicitly or explicitly the retractions preceding itself. Each tale cancels or repudiates the previous tales in the sense that the teller struggles to raise his voice above the din of voices competing to be heard. To the pilgrim engaged in telling a story, his story is the last word; since the retractatio acquires its force from the position it holds in a text, each tale may be said to be a retractatio in that the teller tells his tale as if it were the final authoritative say, wresting away from the previous tale its station as the final say. Within this strand of tales, the teller has no choice but to be a retractor by virtue of his decision to add his beliefs and wisdom to the general collection, to compete against all the other raconteurs, erecting his tale or epilogue as the last word, the final say, while displacing the tale that came before his. No matter how courteous the teller is to the previous teller, the act of telling still constitutes a different voice, a different way of perceiving the world that must annul the previous stories, the previous voices, or not be heard.

Returning or perhaps retracting to Alice in Wonderland, Alice moves from storyteller to storyteller sometimes telling her own stories, at all times acting in what we may provisionally call the overall story or stories--which by the way have no overall teller whom we can determine. In this text, the story is no longer just the

telling but the listening, the reading, the interruptions the audience makes in trying to understand the story. How the characters read the stories displaces the actual story as the center of conflict and concern. Alice in Wonderland repeatedly reconstructs the scene staged in the introductory poem where the listeners engage the story teller in verbal combat:

> Yet what can one poor voice avail
> Against three tongues together?
>
> Imperious Prima flashes forth
> Her edict "to begin it"--
> In gentler tone Secunda hopes
> "There will be nonsense in it!"--
> While Tertia interrupts the tale
> Not more than once a minute. (21)

In this poem, the telling of Alice in Wonderland recedes into the background, while the interruptive comments come to the foreground, replacing the actual story with its own interesting conflict.

The introductory poem is clearly a model for the story telling in the text proper; take, for example, the Mouse's tale, the Dormouse's Yarn--much closer to a yawn--and the Mock Turtle's story, all of which fail to reach closure and terminate in medias res, whereas Alice's adventures with these storytellers--her questions about the stories and her criticism of the way in which these storytellers discard logic--seem to compete for the reader's interest. In the scene where the Mouse tells his tale, Alice puzzles over the story, thinking that its actual words are shaped in the form of a tail. Her comments enrage the Mouse who scolds her for not paying attention: "You insult me by talking such nonsense!" (49-50). At the mad tea-party, Alice challenges the Dormouse's assertion that his heroines lived in a treacle-well.

Offended by her disbelief, the Dormouse tells her to finish the story herself, and Alice quickly apologizes, "No, please go on! I won't interrupt again" (100). Nonetheless, Alice interrupts again and again. And, during the Mock Turtle's story, she asks the Turtle why he called his school master a Tortoise, and receives the scoff, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself for asking such a simple question" (125-126). Raconteurs match wits and knowledge with interposing listeners so much so that the drama around the story-telling, the events outside the story being told, is transformed into the real story. Whether it be the Mouse's tale or the Dormouse's yarn, a story being told--despite its promising beginning--becomes the milieu or context in front of which another story, our story, unfolds.

Instead of reinforcing our concept of the story, the excess of stories in Alice in Wonderland smothers anything overtly story-like. The borders around what we think is the central or foundational story break down and reform too erratically for us to designate a point of reference. We do not know where a story begins or finishes or know if an episode is more or less story-like: in the Mock Turtle scene, who is the real story-teller, Alice, the Gryphon, the Turtle, or the narrator? When we do muster up enough courage to delimit the boundaries of a story, we notice retractions framing and interrupting the story. But not for long. Because each story is retracted either in the sense of being withdrawn from the narrative by the storyteller or in the sense of having the listener withdraw his support from the story, the retractions belong as much to the narrative as the retracted story does. For instance, after taking offense at Alice's comments about his

tale, the Mouse, in the first sense of the word, retracts or withdraws himself from his audience before even coming close to finishing, hotly pursued by a chorus of disapproval (50). And in the latter sense of the word, the Caterpillar replies to Alice's recitation of "You are Old Father William" with "It is wrong from beginning to end" and confirms her fears that she is losing her memory (71). Even in the very last episode, we observe that Alice retracts her adventure in describing a dream to her sister whom rather than remaining passive retracts Alice's retraction with a day-dream on Alice's future (159-160). Alice in Wonderland is not a number of detached and distinguishable stories gathered into an anthology and held together by retractions, but obviously an interaction between stories and retractions, between elements which change according to their relations with other elements. Why should a retraction be any less of a story than, say, the Dormouse's yarn?

Now strangely enough, like Chaucer's retractions, "An Easter Greeting" attempts to conclude the narrative with a revelatory flourish only to repeat the retractive gesture once again. But the Amen in Alice and Wonderland soon resounds sourly: the retractatio forces a re-reading, a retracing, a retracking, forces us to retract the retractatio when we consider the retractive narrative structure of Alice in Wonderland. Yet this time it looks as if there is no one to retract the retraction, except maybe the reader. Not so. Carroll retracts "An Easter Greeting" with the poem "Christmas Greetings" and later on retracts this poem with a sequel to Alice in Wonderland, Through the Looking Glass, which in turn after its many retractions is

retracted by another poem and so on and so forth. Each of these texts dispense with the text before it, installing itself as the last say, the final word. Retraction after retraction after retraction, this structure seems to defer closure indefinitely. In conclusion, we might claim that the narrator of the retractatio, far from explicating the author's beliefs, is lost in a potentially infinite series of storytellers, and that the retractatio is in the end an addition to the narrative, another link in a chain of retractions. If this is the case, then we can claim that Alice in Wonderland will never ever terminate and, like all texts, can never ever be terminated, but instead can only be added, annexed, appended to; in the true end, Alice in Wonderland loses its identity as a book, a book with a beginning and an end. It loses its identity in a mass of textuality with no end or no beginning, since, just as there will only be retractions, there has only been retractions. Despite spelling closure, the retractatio cannot but forever spill open, marking the never ending fissure in literature: the fissure of interminableness, of never-ending contexuality which prevents texts from closing. Hence, if we allow "An Easter Greeting" to be absorbed within the text proper, we yield up all notions of a clearly delineated literature.

In this last respect, Alice in Wonderland's shift to the strange letter is more like a stasis, a three-hundred and sixty degree spin, false motion, a return back to literature. Little wonder the first thing Carroll says to us in the greeting concerns how we should go about reading what follows: "Please to fancy, if you can, that you are reading a real letter" (162). Although we have maintained the

greeting contains the possibility of being a salutation, an apology, a work of criticism, a defense against malignant nonsense, a letter, a retractatio, a piece of the narrative, etc. and etc., Carroll broaches and breaches his greeting with still another genre to add to the mess: he implies that it is a false letter, maybe even a pseudonymous letter, a fitting label when we remember the signature at its end. Yet why would Carroll ever be so quick to reveal a shortcoming in his text when, if he so desired, he could have easily stated the opposite? What's more, if he knew he could not inscribe an authentic letter, why bother inscribing a pseudonymous one--or as Carroll writes, "a strange" one?

Occupying strange ground, a no man's land, the greeting keeps the inside from going out and the outside from coming in. It is simultaneously on the threshold of literature and on the threshold of the letter, reminding one of a door-frame or the middle of a window sill, possessing the right to be both inside and outside, possessing enough inside to repel the outside, and enough outside to repel the inside. So why is the letter strange, estranged, alienated? As Derrida points out, "(The parergon also means the exceptional, the strange, the extraordinary)" (The Truth in Painting 58) and, hence, we may postulate that the strange letter gives Carroll the parergon; for as Derrida explains, "Parerga have a thickness, a surface which separates them not only from the integral inside, from the body proper of the ergon, but also from the outside, from the wall on which the painting is hung, from the space in which the statue or column is erected" (60-61). Had Carroll really striven to construct this framing device, he

probably felt--we may say once more again--the necessity to prevent nonsense from contaminating his beliefs and thus required a line or a fence to erect an in between. So the greeting cannot be literature or else Carroll would not be able to communicate his beliefs and opinions to the reader; and so the greeting cannot be a proper letter or else Carroll would jeopardize the discourse of the letter with the dangerous context of literature, a context which threatens to dilute the purity of the epistle-form. Similar to our findings on the parenthesis in the previous chapters, the parenthetical device is the author's way of fabricating a solid literature and a solid reality, a self-enclosed text and a self-enclosed realm of the subject.

The Dialogue between the Inside and the Outside

But yet, despite its role as a parergon, a mediator, an arbiter, "An Easter Greeting" speaks louder than the voice of Carroll we have engineered, insofar as it re-plays and re-forms the central scene in Alice in Wonderland's coda. Let us move to that inside, and determine the pressure it exerts on the greeting. Let us move to a second literary context. The final two chapters of the text take place in the King and Queen of Hearts' courtroom where the knave stands trial for having allegedly stolen a tray of tarts; however, this is no ordinary trial, for, when Alice surveys the assembly, she recognizes her surroundings not because of past experiences but because of her past readings: "Alice had never been in a court of justice before, but she had read about them in books, and she was quite pleased to find

that she knew the name of nearly everything there" (Alice 140). After the White Rabbit delivers the accusation to the judge, the reader should be left with no doubt as to what really stands trial beneath the surface of the token criminal, the Knave. In a manner of writing, literature sits in the witness box over the course of these two chapters, for the Knave of Hearts is none other than the infamous rogue from Mother Goose's Nursery Rhyme and the accusation is none other than the Nursery Rhyme itself:

> "The Queen of Hearts, she made some tarts,
> All on a summer day:
> The Knave of Hearts, he stole those tarts,
> And took them quite away!" (143)

Arising from a piece of evidence the White Rabbit adds to the proceeding at the last moment, the pivotal debate within the courtroom scene occurs between Alice and the Judge, the King of Hearts, who each argue a philosophical position in regard to literature. The purpose of the debate is to determine whether or not the so-called evidence possesses sufficient proof to incriminate the Knave. The controversial evidence in question is an innocuous looking piece of paper which is at once a letter and not a letter. When first commanded by the Queen to identify the type of writing, the Rabbit squeamishly proposes, "it seems to be a letter written by the prisoner to--to somebody" (153).

But then when requested to divulge the person to whom the letter is addressed, the Rabbit revokes his former declaration, stating "It isn't directed at all... in fact, there's nothing written on the outside" (153). Unfolding the paper to peruse its contents, he suddenly exclaims, "It isn't a letter, after all: it's a set of verses" (153). Unfortunately for the Knave, the Judge persists in scouring the

"verses" for references to the Knave's character, hoping to prove him guilty. The King, who refuses to comply with the Rabbit's second critical assessment, reads the verses as he would any piece of correspondence, and Alice, exasperated with his reading, challenges his authority with contempt of court. Inclined as we are to side with Alice's indignation, we cannot ignore the possibility that the verses parody or even aspire to the letter-form, for, if anything, Alice in Wonderland is a compendium of twisted, crooked writings, respectable genres turned nonsensical and irreverent. Engrossed with rewriting popular children's verse, the text contains numerous travesties of didactic poetry and nursery rhymes as if the dream-world of Wonderland warps and distorts every literary familiarity which crosses into its realm. Even the colloquial song "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" does not escape mutilation. In addition to the aforementioned songs by Sir Issac Watts, the text lampoons Southey's poem, "The Old Man's Comforts, and How he Gained Them" with "You are old Father William" (68-71) and Mary Howlett's poem, "Will you walk into my parlour; said the spider to the fly" with "The Lobster Quadrille" (131-132). And so what really stands trial are all written documents which dissemble as something they are not and which invite readers to approach them from two substantially different directions: is the letter literature or is literature the letter? For Alice, the verses do not yield "an atom of meaning" (155), "meaning" probably meaning referential or literal meaning, the meaning of the letter. But, for the King, they seem to convey "some meaning" (155) after all.

Though before anyone can reach a verdict on the evidence, Alice

disavows the sovereignty of the King and Queen by dismissing both them and their entourage as "nothing but a pack of cards" (157). Similar to her dismissal of the evidence, this second dismissal reduces complex figures to a crudely simplified determination, in much the same way a frustrated reader diffuses the threat of a difficult text with the dismissal, "it's just words; its just nonsense literature." It is significant that as soon as Alice rejects the other characters' capacity to signify meaningfully, she wakes to discover that Wonderland is only the airy phantoms of dreams, an entertaining story, a story she later tells her sister. In the narrative, the trial with all the events that precede it becomes a literary figment. Recognizing the letter as devious, delirious literature reinstalls the truth for Alice, identifying Wonderland as a dream-world. And then, without further adieu, a timely "THE END" follows.

But THE END for us is just THE BEGINNING. Just when the reader thinks Alice in Wonderland has reached closure, he turns the page and finds that another portion of text awaits him. After challenged by the controversial trial scene to suspect the validity of a letter, we arrive at an impasse on how we should greet "An Easter Greeting", for nothing leading up to to it persuades us to read it as a simple epistle. In relation to Alice in Wonderland, the greeting mirrors that same controversy which engrossed Alice and the King: the type used to print the letter corresponds exactly to the special type used for those verses the White Rabbit offers to the court as evidence. This correspondence in types is suspicious. Around both strange letters a conflict disseminates. The nature of genres is a mystery not only

outside the text, that is in an "extra-textual" device like the greeting, but also in the actual text. In the courtroom scene, Alice in Wonderland behaves rather like the strange letter in questioning but not determining the boundaries separating genres: the inside and the outside hold a silent dialogue on the nature of the inside and the outside. Which is enough to write: the text and the extra-text are themselves not sure of themselves. And really, if we consider our cross-examination's focus and its order, the parergon is no longer just the line, the extra, the against, the prefix, the preposition, but the ergon over and beyond the so called ergon. We might say "An Easter Greeting" is the/a knave's letter, the evidence that was not recovered in time for the courtroom scene, but evidence, no less, that prolongs the trial for Alice in Wonderland's readers.

CONCLUSION: FRAME AND NO FRAME

If I could grant Carroll an intention, I would say that in Alice in Wonderland he habitually endeavors to break out of primary discourse with parenthetical discourse. Parenthetical devices enable him

1)to stop the nonsense: by way of "An Easter Greeting" and the prefatory poem, Carroll erects a barrier between nonsense and sense, as if these two discourses never come into contact with one another. The text's parenthetical devices suggest that the language in which we express our feelings, beliefs, and ideas is markedly different from the language in which we make no sense at all.

2)to re-inscribe the subject: no different than any other author, Carroll employs various kinds of signatures--"Lewis Carroll", parenthetical remarks, the prefatory poem, "An Easter Greeting"--in order to identify the text as his own. As simple as a pseudonym or as complex as a letter, these seals of ownership re-inscribe the subject or self which the narrative, nevertheless, frequently decenters, displaces. They assure the reader that normalcy and stability and certainty exist not far from Wonderland's wild and stormy interior.

3)to define the text as literature: the parenthetical provides Carroll with an other, a difference, an opposition, which clearly and

distinctly delineates a border around his bizarre text. The border signals to the reader that he is entering the familiar ground of literature.

Contrary to the way in which the OED or The Harper Handbook to Literature characterizes the parenthetical, Derrida argues that a parergon is not an extraneous ornament in a text, but rather the very requirement for a ergon to posit it itself as such:

> What constitutes them as parerga is not simply their exteriority as a surplus, it is the internal structural link which rivets them to the lack in the interior of the ergon. And this lack would be constitutive of the very unity of the ergon. Without this lack, the ergon would have no need of a parergon. The ergon's lack is the lack of a parergon. (The Truth in Painting 60).

Overcompensating for the lack in the ergon, Carroll may be said to have almost a neurotic obsession with parerga. His discourse even parenthesizes the art of another individual. Outside my thesis but equally relevant for analysis, the ninety-two illustrations by John Tenniel play out a silent game of frame and no frame in Carroll's text. Some pictures have a distinct black border and others, rather oddly, have none whatsoever: primary and parenthetical discourse in drawings? I have also not remarked upon the expanded ellipses (Alice 30,32,73) that punctuate the narrative when Alice shrinks or grows from eating Wonderland's magical fare; neither have I remarked upon the calligram which represents the Mouse's long tale (49). Both these examples of printed characters laid out in an uncommon arrangement again enclose portions of the text in frames. Once the reader initiates a search for parenthetical devices, he finds that these devices proliferate to such an extent that in the end he does not know what exactly frames what--

what exactly is the frame and what exactly is the framed.

Despite Carroll's intentions, Alice in Wonderland plays with the parenthetical and demonstrates in general the difficulty in determining the limit of any frame. Is "Lewis Carroll", for instance, outside the text or on the border separating the text from the outside? And how can we account for a frame which frames another frame as in the case of, say, Tenniel's frontispiece? As we observed in the last chapter, "An Easter Greeting" constitutes an exterior in that it resembles an epistle, but, at the same time, constitutes an in-between in that it resembles--as Carroll calls it--"a strange letter", a false or pseudonymous letter distanced equally from literature as from correspondence. However, if perceived as a part of a retractive narrative structure or as a continuation of a debate central to the text proper, "An Easter Greeting" could not be anything less than the inside. Derrida, for good reason, asserts that "there is no natural frame. There is frame, but the frame does not exist" (The Truth in Painting 81). In other words, there is the concept of the frame, but, as soon as a reader identifies a portion of a text as a frame, everything in one way or another acquires a similar identification: frames radiate inwards and outwards in never-ending concentric circles.

The parenthesis, the pseudonym, and the appended letter were chosen as the centers of this thesis because, on one hand, they have nothing in common, but in Alice in Wonderland (or, for that matter, in any text) they, on the other hand, have everything in common. This paradox points to the possibility that the parenthetical is an aporia in all texts, the site where both literature and the subject lose their

respective identities as autonomous, self-sufficient structures; the site where the parenthesis interposes the narrative with an intrusive, lonely "I"; the site where the pseudonym transgresses the proper name; and the site where the appended letter penetrates literature. This is not to say that the concept of ourselves is essentially literary or that literature is essentially a reconstruction of ourselves. Rather, this is to say that both categories or designations confound and displace the borders of the other, leaving us with the uncertainty of what to say, what to think--what to write.

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