

# Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

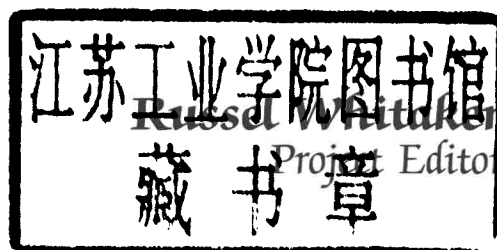
**NCLC**

**139**

Volume 139

# Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

*Criticism of the  
Works of Novelists, Philosophers, and Other  
Creative Writers Who Died between 1800  
and 1899, from the First Published Critical  
Appraisals to Current Evaluations*



THOMSON  
★  
GALE



## Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism, Vol. 139

### Project Editor

Russel Whitaker

### Editorial

Jessica Bomarito, Jenny Cromie, Kathy D. Darrow, Jeffrey W. Hunter, Jelena O. Krstović, Michelle Lee, Ellen McGeagh, Joseph Palmisano, Marie Tofft, Thomas J. Schoenberg, Lemma Shomali, Lawrence J. Trudeau, Maikue Vang

### Indexing Services

Synapse, the Knowledge Link Corporation

### Rights Acquisitions and Management

Peg Ashlevitz, Edna Hedblad, Sue Rudolph

### Imaging and Multimedia

Robert Duncan, Lezlie Light, Kelly A. Quin

### Composition and Electronic Capture

Kathy Sauer

### Manufacturing

Rhonda Williams

© 2004 Thomson Gale, a part of The Thomson Corporation. Thomson and Star Logo are trademarks and Gale is a registered trademark used herein under license.

### For more information, contact

Thomson Gale  
27500 Drake Rd.  
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535  
Or you can visit our internet site at  
<http://www.gale.com>

### ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No part of this work covered by the copyright herein may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution, or information storage retrieval systems—without the written permission of the publisher.

This publication is a creative work fully protected by all applicable copyright laws, as well as by misappropriation, trade secret, unfair competition, and other applicable laws. The authors and editors of this work have added value to the underlying factual material herein through one or more of the following: unique and original selection, coordination, expression, arrangement, and classification of the information.

For permission to use material from the product, submit your request via the Web at <http://www.gale-edit.com/permissions>, or you may download our Permissions Request form and submit your request by fax or mail to:

### Permissions Department

Thomson Gale  
27500 Drake Rd.  
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535  
Permissions Hotline:  
248-699-8006 or 800-877-4253, ext. 8006  
Fax 248-699-8074 or 800-762-4058

Since this page cannot legibly accommodate all copyright notices, the acknowledgments constitute an extension of the copyright notice.

While every effort has been made to secure permission to reprint material and to ensure the reliability of the information presented in this publication, Thomson Gale neither guarantees the accuracy of the data contained herein nor assumes any responsibility for errors, omissions or discrepancies. Thomson Gale accepts no payment for listing; and inclusion in the publication of any organization, agency, institution, publication, service, or individual does not imply endorsement of the editors or publisher. Errors brought to the attention of the publisher and verified to the satisfaction of the publisher will be corrected in future editions.

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NUMBER 84-643008

ISBN 0-7876-6927-X  
ISSN 0732-1864

Printed in the United States of America  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## Preface

Since its inception in 1981, *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (NCLC) has been a valuable resource for students and librarians seeking critical commentary on writers of this transitional period in world history. Designated an “Outstanding Reference Source” by the American Library Association with the publication of its first volume, NCLC has since been purchased by over 6,000 school, public, and university libraries. The series has covered more than 450 authors representing 33 nationalities and over 17,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical reaction to nineteenth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as NCLC.

### Scope of the Series

NCLC is designed to introduce students and advanced readers to the authors of the nineteenth century and to the most significant interpretations of these authors’ works. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of this period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. By organizing and reprinting commentary written on these authors, NCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in NCLC presents a comprehensive survey of an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of NCLC is devoted to literary topics that cannot be covered under the author approach used in the rest of the series. Such topics include literary movements, prominent themes in nineteenth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

NCLC continues the survey of criticism of world literature begun by Thomson Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (CLC) and *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC).

### Organization of the Book

An NCLC entry consists of the following elements:

- The **Author Heading** cites the name under which the author most commonly wrote, followed by birth and death dates. Also located here are any name variations under which an author wrote, including transliterated forms for authors whose native languages use nonroman alphabets. If the author wrote consistently under a pseudonym, the pseudonym will be listed in the author heading and the author’s actual name given in parenthesis on the first line of the biographical and critical information. Uncertain birth or death dates are indicated by question marks. Single-work entries are preceded by a heading that consists of the most common form of the title in English translation (if applicable) and the original date of composition.
- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The genre and publication date of each work is given. In the case of foreign authors whose works have been translated into English, the list will focus primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting



those works most commonly considered the best by critics. Unless otherwise indicated, dramas are dated by first performance, not first publication. Lists of **Representative Works** by different authors appear with topic entries.

- Reprinted **Criticism** is arranged chronologically in each entry to provide a useful perspective on changes in critical evaluation over time. The critic's name and the date of composition or publication of the critical work are given at the beginning of each piece of criticism. Unsigned criticism is preceded by the title of the source in which it appeared. All titles by the author featured in the text are printed in boldface type. Footnotes are reprinted at the end of each essay or excerpt. In the case of excerpted criticism, only those footnotes that pertain to the excerpted texts are included. Criticism in topic entries is arranged chronologically under a variety of subheadings to facilitate the study of different aspects of the topic.
- A complete **Bibliographical Citation** of the original essay or book precedes each piece of criticism.
- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
- An annotated bibliography of **Further Reading** appears at the end of each entry and suggests resources for additional study. In some cases, significant essays for which the editors could not obtain reprint rights are included here. Boxed material following the further reading list provides references to other biographical and critical sources on the author in series published by Thomson Gale.

## Indexes

Each volume of *NCLC* contains a **Cumulative Author Index** listing all authors who have appeared in a wide variety of reference sources published by Thomson Gale, including *NCLC*. A complete list of these sources is found facing the first page of the Author Index. The index also includes birth and death dates and cross references between pseudonyms and actual names.

A **Cumulative Nationality Index** lists all authors featured in *NCLC* by nationality, followed by the number of the *NCLC* volume in which their entry appears.

A **Cumulative Topic Index** lists the literary themes and topics treated in the series as well as in *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism*, *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800*, *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, and the *Contemporary Literary Criticism Yearbook*, which was discontinued in 1998.

An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *NCLC*, with the exception of the Topics volumes. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Thomson Gale also produces an annual paperbound edition of the *NCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

## Citing Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism

When citing criticism reprinted in the Literary Criticism Series, students should provide complete bibliographic information so that the cited essay can be located in the original print or electronic source. Students who quote directly from reprinted criticism may use any accepted bibliographic format, such as University of Chicago Press style or Modern Language Association style.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a bibliography set forth in *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 14th ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

Guerard, Albert J. "On the Composition of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 8, no. 1 (fall 1974): 201-15. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 119, edited by Lynn M. Zott, 81-104. Detroit: Gale, 2003.

Berstein, Carol L. "Subjectivity as Critique and the Critique of Subjectivity in Keats's *Hyperion*." In *After the Future: Postmodern Times and Places*, edited by Gary Shapiro, 41-52. Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1990. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Vol. 121, edited by Lynn M. Zott, 155-60. Detroit: Gale, 2003.

The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 5th ed. (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1999); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

Guerard, Albert J. "On the Composition of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*." *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature* 8, 1 (fall 1974): 201-15. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Ed. Lynn M. Zott. Vol. 119. Detroit: Gale, 2003. 81-104.

Berstein, Carol L. "Subjectivity as Critique and the Critique of Subjectivity in Keats's *Hyperion*." *After the Future: Postmodern Times and Places*. Ed. Gary Shapiro. Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1990. 41-52. Reprinted in *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism*. Ed. Lynn M. Zott. Vol. 121. Detroit: Gale, 2003. 155-60.

## Suggestions are Welcome

Readers who wish to suggest new features, topics, or authors to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions or comments are cordially invited to call, write, or fax the Project Editor:

Project Editor, Literary Criticism Series  
Thomson Gale  
27500 Drake Road  
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535  
1-800-347-4253 (GALE)  
Fax: 248-699-8054

## Acknowledgments

The editors wish to thank the copyright holders of the criticism included in this volume and the permissions managers of many book and magazine publishing companies for assisting us in securing reproduction rights. We are also grateful to the staffs of the Detroit Public Library, the Library of Congress, the University of Detroit Mercy Library, Wayne State University Purdy/Kresge Library Complex, and the University of Michigan Libraries for making their resources available to us. Following is a list of the copyright holders who have granted us permission to reproduce material in this volume of *NCLC*. Every effort has been made to trace copyright, but if omissions have been made, please let us know.

### **COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN *NCLC*, VOLUME 139, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING PERIODICALS:**

*British Journal of Sociology*, v. 25, June, 1974 for "The Meaning of Feuerbach" by Allan D. Galloway. Copyright © 1974 *British Journal of Sociology*. Reproduced by permission of Taylor & Francis Books, Ltd.—*Cambridge Quarterly*, v. 30, 2001 for "Children, Monsters, and Words in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*" by Ben Silverstone. Copyright © The Editors. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press and the author.—*Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review*, v. 11, 1972. Reproduced by permission.—*ELH*, v. 68, winter, 2001. Copyright © 2001 The Johns Hopkins University Press. Reproduced by permission.—*Evangelical Quarterly*, v. 44, January-March, 1972 for "Ludwig Feuerbach: Still 'A Thorn in the Flesh of Modern Theology'?" by Robert Banks. Reproduced by permission of the author.—*Interdisciplinary Journal for Germanic Linguistics and Semiotic Analysis*, v. 6, spring, 2001. Reproduced by permission.—*Interpretation*, v. 13, September, 1985 for "Individuation and Commonality in Feuerbach's 'Philosophy of Man'" by Kit R. Christensen. Copyright © 1985 *Interpretation*. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.—*Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, v. 6, March, 1985. Reproduced by permission.—*Journal of Religion*, v. 56, October, 1976. Copyright © 1976 by The University of Chicago. Reproduced by permission.—*Legacy: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Women Writers*, v. 8, spring, 1991. Reproduced by permission.—*Michigan Germanic Studies*, v. 19, spring, 1993. Reproduced by permission.—*The New England Quarterly*, v. 69, 1996 for "'Promoting an Extensive Sale': The Production and Reception of *The Lamplighter*" by Susan S. Williams. Copyright held by *The New England Quarterly*. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.—*Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, v. 33, December, 1978 for "Memory in the Alice Books" by Lionel Morton. Copyright © 1978 by The Regents of the University of California. Reproduced by permission of the publisher.—*Nineteenth-Century Literature*, v. 41, September, 1986 for "Alice the Child-Imperialist and the Games of Wonderland" by Daniel Bivona. Copyright © 1986 by The Regents of the University of California. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.—*Philosophical Forum*, v. 11, winter, 1979-80. Reproduced by permission of Blackwell Publishers.—*Philosophy and Literature*, v. 20, 1996. Copyright © 1996 The Johns Hopkins University Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—*Policy Studies*, v. 26, September, 1978. Reproduced by permission of Blackwell Publishers.—*Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, v. 82, fall-winter, 1999. Reproduced by permission.—*South Carolina Review*, v. 32, fall, 1999. Copyright © 1999 by Clemson University. Reproduced by permission.—*Studies in American Fiction*, v. 30, autumn, 2002. Copyright © 2002 Northeastern University. Reproduced by permission.—*SubStance*, v. 22, 1993. Copyright © 1993 The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—*Tennessee Studies in Literature*, v. 27, 1984. Copyright © 1984 by The University of Tennessee Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of The University of Tennessee Press.—*Yale French Studies*, no. 43, 1969 for "What is a Boojum? Nonsense and Modernism" by Michael Holquist. Copyright © Yale French Studies 1969. Reproduced by permission of the publisher and the author.

### **COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL IN *NCLC*, VOLUME 139, WAS REPRODUCED FROM THE FOLLOWING BOOKS:**

Barnes, Elizabeth. From *States of Sympathy: Seduction and Democracy in the American Novel*. Columbia University Press, 1997. Copyright © 1997 Columbia University Press, New York. All rights reserved. Republished with permission of the Columbia University Press, 61 W. 62nd St., New York, NY 10023.—Baym, Nina. From *Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*. University of Illinois, 1993. Copyright © 1993 by The Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois. Reproduced by permission of University of Illinois Press.—Beaver, Harold. From "Whale or Boojum: An Agony," in *Lewis Carroll Observed: A Collection of Unpublished Photographs, Drawings, Poetry, and New Essays*. Edited by Edward Guiliano. Clarkson N. Potter, 1976. Copyright © 1976 by Edward Guiliano. Repro-

duced by permission of Clarkson Potter/Publishers, a division of Random House, Inc.—Cohen, Morton N. From “Lewis Carroll and the Education of Victorian Women,” in *Nineteenth-Century Women Writers of the English-Speaking World*. Edited by Rhoda B. Nathan. Greenwood Press, 1986. Copyright © 1986 by Hofstra University. Copyright © 1984 by Morton N. Cohen. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Goshgarian, G. M. From *To Kiss the Chastening Rod: Domestic Fiction and Sexual Ideology in the American Renaissance*. Cornell University Press, 1992. Copyright © 1992 by Cornell University. All rights reserved. Used by permission of Cornell University Press.—Irwin, Michael. From “Alice: Reflections and Relativities,” in *Rereading Victorian Fiction*. Edited by Alice Jenkins and Juliet John. Palgrave, 2000. Copyright © Macmillan Press Ltd 2000. All rights reserved. Reproduced with permission of Palgrave Macmillan.—Kelly, Richard. From *Lewis Carroll*. Twayne, 1977. Copyright © 1977 by G. K. Hall & Co. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of The Gale Group.—Masterson, Patrick. From *Atheism and Alienation: A Study of the Philosophical Sources of Contemporary Atheism*. Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1971. Copyright © Patrick Masterson 1971. Reproduced by permission.—Miller, Edmund. From “The Sylvie and Bruno Books as Victorian Novel,” in *Lewis Carroll Observed: A Collection of Unpublished Photographs, Drawings, Poetry, and New Essays*. Edited by Edward Guiliano. Clarkson N. Potter, 1976. Copyright © 1976 by Edward Guiliano. Reproduced by permission of Clarkson Potter/Publishers, a division of Random House, Inc.—Newberry, Frederick. From “Male Doctors and Female Illness in American Women’s Fiction, 1850-1900,” in *Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature, 1830-1930*. Edited by Monika M. Elbert. The University of Alabama Press, 1990. Copyright © 2000 The University of Alabama Press. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Polhemus, Robert M. From “Lewis Carroll and the Child in Victorian Fiction,” in *The Columbia History of the British Novel*. Edited by John Richetti. Columbia University Press, 1994. Copyright © 1994 Columbia University Press, New York. All rights reserved. Republished with permission of the Columbia University Press, 61 W. 62nd St., New York, NY 10023.—Schueller, Malini Johar. From *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790-1890*. The University of Michigan Press, 1998. Copyright © by the University of Michigan 1998. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Schwab, Gabriele. From “Nonsense and Metacommunication: Reflections on Lewis Carroll,” in *The Play of the Self*. Edited by Ronald Bogue and Mihai I. Spariosu. State University of New York Press, 1994. Copyright © 1994 State University of New York. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission of the State University of New York Press.—Sigler, Carolyn. From an Introduction to *Visions and Revisions of Lewis Carroll’s Alice Books: An Anthology*. University Press of Kentucky, 1997. Copyright © 1997 by The University Press of Kentucky. All rights reserved. Reproduced by permission.—Tatarkiewicz, Wladyslaw. From *Nineteenth Century Philosophy*, First Edition. Translated by Chester A. Kisiel. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1973. Copyright © 1973 by Wadsworth, a division of Thomson Learning; www.thomsonrights.com. Reproduced by permission.—Wartofsky, Marx W. From *Feuerbach*. Cambridge University Press, 1977. Copyright © Cambridge University Press 1977. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.

#### PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATIONS APPEARING IN NCLC, VOLUME 139, WERE RECEIVED FROM THE FOLLOWING SOURCES:

Dodgson, Charles L. (Lewis Carroll), photograph. AP/Wide World Photos. Reproduced by permission.—Feuerbach, Ludwig, circa 1870, photograph. AKG Images, London. Reproduced by permission.—Tenniel, John, illustrator. From *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, written by Lewis Carroll. Copyright © Bettmann/Corbis. Reproduced by permission.—Title page for *The Essence of Christianity*, by Ludwig Feuerbach. J. Chapman, 1854. Translated from the second German edition of *Wesen des Christentums*, by Marian Evans. Special Collections Library, University of Michigan. Reproduced by permission.—Title page for *The Lamplighter*, by Maria S. Cummins. J. P. Jewett & Company, 1854. Special Collections Library, University of Michigan. Reproduced by permission.



# Thomson Gale Literature Product Advisory Board

The members of the Thomson Gale Literature Product Advisory Board—reference librarians from public and academic library systems—represent a cross-section of our customer base and offer a variety of informed perspectives on both the presentation and content of our literature products. Advisory board members assess and define such quality issues as the relevance, currency, and usefulness of the author coverage, critical content, and literary topics included in our series; evaluate the layout, presentation, and general quality of our printed volumes; provide feedback on the criteria used for selecting authors and topics covered in our series; provide suggestions for potential enhancements to our series; identify any gaps in our coverage of authors or literary topics, recommending authors or topics for inclusion; analyze the appropriateness of our content and presentation for various user audiences, such as high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, librarians, and educators; and offer feedback on any proposed changes/enhancements to our series. We wish to thank the following advisors for their advice throughout the year.

**Barbara M. Bibel**

Librarian  
Oakland Public Library  
Oakland, California

**Dr. Toby Burrows**

Principal Librarian  
The Scholars' Centre  
University of Western Australia Library  
Nedlands, Western Australia

**Celia C. Daniel**

Associate Librarian, Reference  
Howard University  
Washington, D.C.

**David M. Durant**

Reference Librarian  
Joyner Library  
East Carolina University  
Greenville, North Carolina

**Nancy Guidry**

Librarian  
Bakersfield Community College  
Bakersfield, California

**Steven R. Harris**

English Literature Librarian  
University of Tennessee  
Knoxville, Tennessee

**Mary Jane Marden**

Collection Development Librarian  
St. Petersburg College  
Pinellas Park, Florida

**Heather Martin**

Arts & Humanities Librarian  
University of Alabama, Sterne Library  
Birmingham, Alabama

**Susan Mikula**

Director  
Indiana Free Library  
Indiana, Pennsylvania

**Thomas Nixon**

Humanities Reference Librarian  
University of North Carolina, Davis Library  
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

**Mark Schumacher**

Jackson Library  
University of North Carolina  
Greensboro, North Carolina

**Gwen Scott-Miller**

Assistant Director  
Sno-Isle Regional Library System  
Marysville, Washington

**Donald Welsh**

Head, Reference Services  
College of William and Mary, Swem Library  
Williamsburg, Virginia

# Contents

Preface vii

Acknowledgments xi

Literary Criticism Series Advisory Board xiii

<b>Lewis Carroll 1832-1898</b> .....	1
<i>English novelist, poet, satirist, and mathematician</i>	
<b>Maria Susanna Cummins 1827-1866</b> .....	159
<i>American essayist, and novelist</i>	
<b>Ludwig Feuerbach 1804-1872</b> .....	231
<i>German philosopher and theologian</i>	

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Author Index 355

Literary Criticism Series Cumulative Topic Index 453

NCLC Cumulative Nationality Index 465

NCLC-139 Title Index 469

# Lewis Carroll

## 1832-1898

(Born Charles Lutwidge Dodgson) English novelist, poet, satirist, and mathematician. For further information on Carroll's life and career, see *NCLC*, Vol. 2; for a discussion of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* and *What Alice Found There*, see *NCLC*, Vol. 53.

### INTRODUCTION

Dodgson produced several essays on mathematics and symbolic logic as an Oxford lecturer in mathematics, but it was under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll that he published his most famous works, the fantasy novels *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1872). Originally intended for the amusement of children, the *Alice* stories, as well as Carroll's highly imaginative poetry, have been subjected to intense scrutiny and widely varying interpretations by scholars around the world since their publication.

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The third child and the eldest son of eleven children, Carroll was born in the parsonage in Daresbury, Cheshire on January 27, 1832. In 1843, his father, a country clergyman, accepted a more lucrative position in Croft, Yorkshire, a post that also provided a larger parsonage for the family of thirteen. Carroll's childhood was apparently a happy one, and he spent hours entertaining and caring for his many siblings, particularly his sisters. He began writing at an early age, producing poems and stories for the amusement of his siblings as well as a series of illustrated magazines for his family. Carroll's formal education began at the Richmond Grammar School, where he spent a year and a half; this was followed by three years at Rugby, after which he attended Christ Church, Oxford, where he took a first in mathematics, earned a bachelor's and a master's degree, and remained for the rest of his life, first as a lecturer in mathematics and later as curator of the Senior Common Room. He produced a number of scholarly works on mathematics and symbolic logic and tutored countless students, including young women denied admission to the all-male university, in both subjects. In 1861, he became a deacon in the Church of England but decided not to take holy orders. After the death of



his father in 1868, Carroll assumed responsibility for his unmarried sisters, establishing a home for them in Guildford in Surrey.

Carroll never married and had no children of his own, but he was devoted to a succession of little girls he had befriended. The most famous of these was Alice Liddell, the daughter of the Dean of Christ Church, who provided the model for the fictional Alice and for whom Carroll wrote *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, which he illustrated himself and never published, presenting it instead as a gift to Alice Liddell. It provided the basis for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass*. Both works were published under the name Lewis Carroll, a pseudonym Carroll adopted in 1856. He published all of his poetry and fiction under that name, although he continued to produce scholarly texts under his own name. At the same time, he became fascinated with the emerging field of photography and earned a considerable reputation as one of the first art photographers and the nineteenth-century's

most celebrated photographer of children. Carroll died at the age of sixty-five in Guildford.

## MAJOR WORKS

Carroll's best-known works, all produced under the pseudonym Lewis Carroll, were his fantasy novels, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. Famously innovative for their unconventional use of language, the stories were also among the first non-didactic, non-moralizing texts aimed at children. Carroll's nonsense verse, most notably *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876) and "Jabberwocky" (from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*) are usually considered related to his prose works by virtue of the similarity of language. His serious verse, published in several collections, is considered uninspired and is largely forgotten today. The later novels *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893) were his only fictional works aimed at an adult reading audience. Far more serious and didactic than the *Alice* stories, the two texts have often been treated by critics as a single, two-volume work, and occasionally as a fairly conventional Victorian novel. Far less famous than his fictional works are Carroll's writings on mathematics and symbolic logic. They include *A Syllabus of Plane Algebraical Geometry, Part I* (1860), *An Elementary Treatise on Determinants* (1867), *Euclid and His Modern Rivals* (1879), and *Symbolic Logic, Part I: Elementary* (1896).

## CRITICAL RECEPTION

Carroll's publications as Lewis Carroll, particularly the *Alice* stories, were enormously popular with juvenile readers at the time of their publication and have since attained an assured place in the canon of children's literature. They have been reprinted countless times in a wide variety of editions and have been translated into virtually every modern language. The two books were originally considered nonsense for the amusement of children and were considered unworthy of analysis by serious scholars. Beginning in the 1930s, however, the *Alice* stories and the nonsense poem *The Hunting of the Snark* have attracted increasing attention from literary critics and philosophers. Psychoanalytic critics in particular have for many years been preoccupied with the details of Carroll's life, particularly his sex life. In addition to the much-documented phallic and womb imagery of his fiction, his extreme fondness for pre-adolescent girls—he often took them on overnight outings and photographed many of them nude—made Carroll a suspicious character in his own time and even more so today. Morton N. Cohen confronts speculation about Carroll's relationship with his young friends, claiming that the author was a "model Victorian" who

never acted on whatever erotic impulses he may have harbored for the young. As Cohen puts it, "Carroll knew that, given his preference for the friendship of children, if he once succumbed to any temptation, he would never be able to befriend them again. His own uncompromising standards, his forthright, pious nature would not permit it. Besides he loved innocence so, how could he ever violate it?" Robert M. Polhemus seems to agree: "Freudians have had grand times analyzing the kinks in Charles Dodgson's personality, but the striking irony is that psychoanalysis and its theories . . . seem to flow right out of Carroll's wonderland." Michael Irwin also acknowledges that "the *Alice* books, of course, are a gift to the Freudian, proliferating as they do in holes, tunnels, doors, locks, keys, fluids and size-changes." Nonetheless, Irwin claims, "that game is all too easy." Daniel Bivona reads *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in the context of nineteenth-century imperialism, referring to Alice as ethnocentric because she assumes that the language and behavior of the creatures in Wonderland operate according to no rules simply because they fail to conform to English rules. "Alice's 'imperialism,' such as it is," contends Bivona, "is a semiotic imperialism: she is incapable of constructing, on a model radically different from her own, the 'system' or 'systems' that give meaning to the behavior of the creatures." Several critics maintain that Carroll's fictional work anticipates modernism and even postmodernism, and his name has been linked with many of the literary figures of those movements. Polhemus reports: "From out of his rabbit-hole and looking-glass world we can see coming not only such figures as Joyce, Freud, Oscar Wilde, Henry James, Virginia Woolf, Kafka, Proust, Artaud, Nabokov, Beckett, Waugh, Lacan, Borges, Bakhtin, and García Márquez, but also much of the character and mood of twentieth-century popular culture." Michael Holquist has examined *The Hunting of the Snark* as a modernist text and concluded that the poem "is the most perfect nonsense which Carroll created in that it best exemplifies what all his career and all his books sought to do: achieve pure order." Carroll's work does not consist of meaningless gibberish, according to Holquist, but is rather "its own system of signs which gain their meaning by constantly dramatizing their differences from signs in other systems." Peter Heath also rejects the idea that Carroll was a nonsense writer and claims that the author should be more properly categorized as an absurdist. Heath maintains that the *Alice* books are rational works "whose frolics are governed throughout, not by a formal theory of any kind, but by close attention to logical principles, and by a sometimes surprising insight into abstract questions of philosophy." Carroll's two later novels, *Sylvie and Bruno* and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, have generally been considered far inferior to the author's earlier works. Edmund Miller, however, believes that the two books should be treated as a whole and suggests that the re-



sulting two-volume work has much in common with the early Victorian novel, particularly Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*. "Both works are infused with the sentiments of the age and yet combine traditional materials in completely original ways," claims Miller.

---

## PRINCIPAL WORKS

- A Syllabus of Plane Algebraical Geometry, Part I* (nonfiction) 1860  
*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* [as Lewis Carroll] (novel) 1865  
*The Dynamics of a Particle* (satire) 1865  
*An Elementary Treatise on Determinants* (nonfiction) 1867  
*Phantasmagoria and Other Poems* [as Lewis Carroll] (poetry) 1869  
*The New Belfry of Christ Church, Oxford* [as D. C. L.] (satire) 1872  
*Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* [as Lewis Carroll] (novel) 1872  
*The Hunting of the Snark: An Agony in Eight Fits* [as Lewis Carroll] (poetry) 1876  
*Euclid and His Modern Rivals* (nonfiction) 1879  
*Rhyme? And Reason?* [as Lewis Carroll] (poetry) 1883  
*Curiosa Mathematica. Part I: A New Theory of Parallels* (nonfiction) 1888  
*Sylvie and Bruno* [as Lewis Carroll] (novel) 1889  
*Curiosa Mathematica. Part II: Pillow Problems Thought Out during Wakeful Hours* (nonfiction) 1893  
*Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* [as Lewis Carroll] (novel) 1893  
*Symbolic Logic, Part I: Elementary* (nonfiction) 1896  
*The Three Sunsets, and Other Poems* (poetry) 1898  
*The Collected Verse of Lewis Carroll* (poetry) 1929  
*The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll* (novels, poetry, essays, satires, nonfiction, and letters) 1936  
*Symbolic Logic, Part II: Advanced* (nonfiction) 1977

---

## CRITICISM

### Michael Holquist (essay date 1969)

SOURCE: Holquist, Michael. "What is a Boojum? Nonsense and Modernism." *Yale French Studies*, no. 43 (1969): 145-64.

[In the following essay, Holquist examines *The Hunting of the Snark* as an experimental work that resists critics' attempts to interpret it as an allegory.]

The other project was a scheme for entirely abolishing all words whatsoever; and this was urged as a great advantage in point of health as well as brevity. . . . An expedient was therefore offered, that since words are only names for things, it would be more convenient for all men to carry about them such things as were necessary to express the particular business they are to discourse on.

Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*

What am I to do, what shall I do, what should I do, in my situation, how proceed? By aporia pure and simple? Or by affirmations and negations invalidated as uttered?

Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*

Because the question "What is a Boojum?" may appear strange or whimsical, I would like to begin by giving some reasons for posing it. Like many other readers, I have been intrigued and perplexed by a body of literature often called modern or post-modern, but which is probably most efficiently expressed in a list of authors: Joyce, Kafka, Beckett, Nabokov, Borges, Genet, Robbe-Grillet—the list could be extended, but these names will probably suffice to suggest, if very roughly, the tradition I have in mind. The works of these men are all very dissimilar to each other. However, they seem to have something in common when compared not to themselves as a class, but to past literature. In casting about for specific terms which might define this vaguely felt sense of what was distinctive and yet shared in these works, two things constantly inhibited any progress. The first was one's sense of the ridiculous: aware of other attempts to define the modern, one knew that it was difficult to do so without becoming shrill or unduly chileastic. There is a group of critics, of whom Ihab Hassan and Nathan Scott might be considered representative, who insist on an absolute cut-off between all of previous history and the modern experience. They have in their characteristically humorless way taken seriously Virginia Woolf's remark that "on or about December, 1910 human nature changed." The work of these critics is easily recognized in the apocalyptic rhetoric which distinguishes their writing, and in the irresponsible application they make of terms derived from modern German philosophy. Some rather thick books on the subject of recent literature could easily be reduced in size through the simple expedient of excising any mention of *Heimweh*, *Geworfenheit*, and that incantatory word, *Angst*. So one thing which made it difficult to get at distinctive features in recent literature was the sense that it was very different from previous literature; and at the same time to recognize that it was not the end of history.

Another stumbling block, much less serious, was the constant recurrence of a phrase, which continually passed through my mind as I would read new works. I would read that Gregor Samsa woke up one morning to discover that he was an *Ungeziefer*, and immediately a

ghostly refrain would be heard in my inner ear: "Aha, for the Snark was a Boojum, you see!" The same thing would happen when in *Lolita*, one discovered that all those strange men following Humbert were Quilty; or when reading in Gombrowicz that there was nothing to identity but the grimace [gęba]; and so on and on—one kept hearing "The Snark was a Boojum, you see." Pausing to reflect on this, the association of Lewis Carroll with modern literature seemed natural enough: his name figures in the first Surrealist manifesto (1924); Louis Aragon and André Breton write essays on Carroll; the former attempts a translation of *The Snark* (1929), the latter includes selections from Carroll in his *Anthologie de l'humour noir* (1939). Henri Parisot publishes a study of Carroll in 1952, in a series called, significantly, *Poètes d'aujourd'hui*; Antonin Artaud tried to translate the Jabberwocky song; Joyce's use of portmanteau words, without which there would be no *Finnegans Wake*, is only one index of his high regard for Carroll; Borges admires Carroll, and Nabokov translates all of *Alice in Wonderland* into Russian (*Anja v strane chudes*, 1923). But such obvious associations of Carroll with modern authors were not, it turned out, the reason why the *Boojum* kept raising its head as I read these men.

Finally, I picked up again, after many years, *The Hunting of the Snark*, and it soon became apparent why its final line kept popping up in connection with modern literature: Lewis Carroll's "agony in eight fits" was not only among the first to exemplify what is perhaps the most distinctive feature of modern literature, it did so more openly, more paradigmatically than almost any other text one knew. That is, it best dramatized the attempt of an author to insure through the structure of his work that the work could be perceived only as what it was, and not some other thing; the attempt to create an immaculate fiction, a fiction that resists the attempts of readers, and especially those readers who write criticism, to turn it into an allegory, a system equitable with already existing systems in the non-fictional world. In what follows, I propose to outline this pattern of resistances in some detail as it exists in *The Hunting of the Snark*, and then, in a short conclusion to suggest the significance the pattern may have for readers of experimental modern fiction. But before looking at the poem itself, it might prove helpful to have some background information.

Lewis Carroll is, of course, a pseudonym. Characteristically for its bearer, it is an acrostic, based on an inversion of the re-Latinized forms of his two Christian names, Charles Lutwidge. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson is a fascinating object of study in himself, but in what follows I propose to mention only those aspects of his career which bear directly on the significance of the *Snark* poem.

Dodgson's whole career can best be understood as a quest for order, in some ways not unlike that of the

White Knight in *Through the Looking Glass*. He begins his career as a student of mathematics, and was for many years a teacher of the subject in Christ Church College, Oxford. In his later years even the precision of Euclidian geometry failed to satisfy his lust for order, and he turned to symbolic logic. There are many anecdotes which further point up his compulsive orderliness: when he had packages to be wrapped, he drew diagrams so precise that they showed to a fraction of an inch just where the knots should be tied; he kept congeries of thermometers in his apartments and never let the temperature rise above or fall below a specific point. He worked out a system for betting on horses which eliminated disorderly chance. He wrote the director of Covent Garden telling him how to clear up the traffic jams which plagued the theater; to the post office on how to make its regulations more efficient. And after having written all these letters (more than 98,000 before he died), he then made an abstract of each, and entered it into a register with notes and cross references. When he saw the first proofs of *Alice in Wonderland*, he refused to accept them because, as his illustrator Tenniel had pointed out, they were not clear enough, a scruple which, however, did not keep him from selling the 2000 copies of this rejected printing to an American publisher, for whose colonial audience he felt the plates were adequate. When going over the plates for the illustrations to his last books, *Sylvie and Bruno* and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*, prepared by the artist Harry Furniss, Dodgson put them under a microscope in order to count the lines in the etchings. And then, in a gesture that is pure Nabokov, he compiled an index for these novels, complete with listings for "crocodiles, logic of" and "frog, young, how to amuse," all arranged from A ("Accelerated velocity, causes of") to W ("wilful waste, etc., lesson to be learnt from"). It should be clear that Dodgson's life, in the large outline of his whole career and in the smallest details of his everyday existence, was dominated by the quest for a more perfect order. I will return to the significance of this point in a moment. But one further aspect of Dodgson/Carroll's existence should first be mentioned. It concerns the necessity of the slash or hyphen which one must use when referring to this author. That is, he is both Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, student (or Fellow) of Christ Church, and Lewis Carroll, author of books of nonsense.

Queen Victoria herself became aware of the split when, having been delighted in 1865 by *Alice in Wonderland*, she asked that a standing order be left for the author's next book; in 1866 she was not amused when she was given Dodgson's formidably technical *Condensation of Determinants*. Another revealing story is told by one of the child friends from Dodgson's later years, Isa Bowman, who grew up to write a book about her benefactor. As a young girl he took her to see one of those static panoramas so beloved by the Victorians. It was a diorama of Niagara Falls, with the figure of a dog in

the foreground. Dodgson amused her by spinning a tale in which the dog was really alive, but trained to stand motionless for hours on end. He “. . . added other absurd details about the dog, how, if we waited long enough, we should see an attendant bring him a bone, how he was allowed so many hours off each day when his brother, who unfortunately was rather restless, would take his place, and how this badly behaved animal on one occasion jumped right out of the panorama among the onlookers, attracted by the sight of a little girl's sandwich, and so on. Suddenly he began to stammer and looking round in some alarm, I saw that a dozen grown-ups and children had gathered around and were listening with every appearance of amused interest. And it was not Mr. Carroll but a very confused Mr. Dodgson who took me by the hand and led me quickly from the scene.”<sup>1</sup> Much has been made of this dichotomy between Mr. Carroll and Mr. Dodgson, and psychoanalytical studies, such as Phyllis Greenacre's *Swift and Carroll* (New York, 1955), suggest that the man was simply a schizophrenic who found a unique means of adjustment.

A more balanced view has been provided in what are probably the two best studies of Carroll: Elizabeth Sewall's *The Field of Nonsense* (London, 1952) and Alfred Liede's *Dichtung als Spiel* (Berlin, 1963, 2 vols.). These two critics have suggested that the split between Dodgson and Carroll is only an apparent dichotomy, quickly resolved if one sees that there is a common pursuit at the heart of each avatar, a *Drang nach Ordnung* which Dodgson/Carroll sought in mathematics and logic, in the strictly ordered life of an Oxford scholar, in the severely proper existence of a Victorian gentleman—and last but not least, in nonsense. In fact it was in nonsense that Dodgson's compulsion toward order found its most perfect expression, a point that has also been made by a professor of logic at Leeds University, Peter Alexander.<sup>2</sup> I would further add that the most nonsensical nonsense which Carroll created is *The Hunting of the Snark*. There is an ascending progression toward the apex it represents in 1876, from the first Alice book (1865) through the second (1872); and all the work after the *Snark* was a decline, a falling away which is painful in the last books, *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893).

The *Snark* is the most perfect nonsense which Carroll created in that it best exemplifies what all his career and all his books sought to do: achieve pure order. For nonsense, in the writings of Lewis Carroll, at any rate, does not mean gibberish; it is not chaos, but the opposite of chaos. It is a closed field of language in which the meaning of any single unit is dependent on its relationship to the system of the other constituents. Nonsense is “a collection of words of events which in their arrangement do not fit into some recognized system,”<sup>3</sup> but which constitute a new system of their own. As has

recently been said, “what we have learned from Saussure is that, taken singly, signs do not signify anything, and that each one of them does not so much express a meaning as mark a divergence of meaning between itself and other signs . . . The prior whole which Saussure is talking about cannot be the explicit and articulated whole of a complete language as it is recorded in grammars and dictionaries . . . the unity he is talking about is a unity of coexistence, like that of the sections of an arch which shoulder one another. In a unified whole of this kind, the learned parts of a language have an immediate value as a whole, and progress is made less by addition and juxtaposition than by the internal articulation of a function which in its own way is already complete.”<sup>4</sup> My argument here is that *The Hunting of the Snark* constitutes such a whole; it is its own system of signs which gain their meaning by constantly dramatizing their differences from signs in other systems. The poem is, in a small way, its own language. This is difficult to grasp because its elements are bound up so closely with the syntax, morphology, and, fleetingly, the semantics of the English language.

Some illustrations, taken from Carroll, may help us here. In the book which most closely approximates the completeness of the system in the *Snark*, *Through the Looking Glass*, Humpty Dumpty says in a famous passage: “‘When I use a word . . . it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.’ ‘The question is,’ said Alice, ‘whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.’ ‘The question is’ said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master—that’s all.’” This last remark is a rebuke to Alice, who has not understood the problem: it is not, as she says, to “make words mean so many *different* things.” It is to make a word mean just *one* thing, the thing which its user intends and nothing else. Which is to be master—the system of language which says “‘glory’ doesn’t mean ‘a nice knock-down argument’” or Humpty who says it does mean that, and in his system, only that. Nonsense is a system in which, at its purest, words mean only one thing, and they get that meaning through divergence from the system of the nonsense itself, as well as through divergence from an existing language system. This raises, of course, the question of how one understands nonsense. It is a point to which I will return later; for the moment suffice it to say that if meaning in nonsense is dependent on the field it constructs, then the difference between nonsense and gibberish is that nonsense is a system which can be learned, as languages are learned. Thus the elements of the system can be perceived relationally, and therefore meaningfully, within it. Gibberish, on the other hand, is unsystematic.

What this suggests is that nonsense, among other things, is highly abstract. It is very much like the pure relations which obtain in mathematics, where ten remains ten, whether ten apples, ten horses, ten men, or ten Bander-

snarks. This is an important point, and helps to define one relationship of nonsense to modernism. For it suggests a crucial difference between nonsense and the absurd. The absurd points to a discrepancy between purely human values and purely logical values. When a computer announces that the best cure for brain cancer is to amputate the patient's head, it is, according to its system, being logical.<sup>5</sup> But such a conclusion is unsettling to the patient and absurd to less involved observers. The absurd is a contrast between systems of human belief, which may lack all logic, and the extremes of a logic unfettered by human disorder. Thus the absurd is basically play with order and disorder. Nonsense is play with order only. It achieves its effects not from contrasting order and confusion, but rather by contrasting one system of order against another system of order, each of which is logical in itself, but which cannot find a place in the other. This distinction may help to account for the two dominant modes of depersonalization in recent literature. The absurd operates in the theater, where the contrast of human/non-human serves to exploit the presence of living actors on the stage. Nonsense, understood as defined above, dominates in prose fictions, where the book may become its own hermetic world, its own laboratory for systematic play, without the anthropomorphizing presence of actors. Thus the difference between, say, Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, and the same author's *Comment c'est*.

Lewis Carroll is one of the most important figures in the movement Ortega y Gasset has called the "dehumanization of art." Kafka was not the first to reduce his hero to an integer; his K has an earlier analogue in one of the many essays Dodgson wrote on Oxford university issues. In 1865 the Regius chair in Greek fell vacant, and Dodgson used the occasion as an inspiration for a little paper called "**A New Method of Evaluation of  $\pi$** ": "Let U=the university, G=Greek, and P=professor. Then GP=Greek Professor; let this be reduced to its lowest terms and call the result I. Also let W=the work done, T=the times, p=giving payment,  $\pi$ =the payment according to T, and S=the sum required; so that  $\pi=S$ . The problem is to obtain a value for  $\pi$  which shall be commensurate with W . . ."

"Let this be reduced to its lowest terms . . ." What Dodgson has expressed here in satire is a fundamental principle of his nonsense. For to reduce a word to one meaning is surely to reduce language to its lowest terms. The effect is to create a condition of what the Russian critic Viktor Shklovsky has called *ostranenie*, or "making it strange." But, again like so much modern literature, the effect in the *Snark* is not just to estrange a character or an event, but to estrange language itself. The technique is usually employed to render some familiar action unfamiliar by describing it naively, as if perceived for the first time. And this is what nonsense does to language. But it has a purpose for doing so, one

which Merleau-Ponty has hinted at in another context: "If we want to understand language as an originating operation, we must pretend never to have spoken, submit language to a reduction without which it would once more escape us by referring us to what it signifies for us, [we must] *look* at [language] as deaf people look at those who are speaking."<sup>6</sup> Or, it should be added, *look* at language as children or Lewis Carroll *look* at language.

In order to understand "language as an originating operation" we must, in other words, see it as a process, as a system in itself. By so doing, one becomes aware of its capacity to present us with something new. But in order to achieve this state of radical linguistic innocence it is necessary to put aside all expectations which arise from the habit of creating meaning through systems other than language. Perception has recently been defined as being "primarily the modification of an anticipation."<sup>7</sup> The unfamiliar is always understood in terms of the familiar.<sup>8</sup> This may seem a bit opaque, but it is really quite simple, and an operation we engage in and see performed every day around us. The most common example of it in literary criticism is found in the work of critics who bring to bear on any given text a procrustean system, the sort of thing T. S. Eliot had in mind when he referred to the "lemon-squeezer school" of criticism. A rigidly Freudian critic will never perceive a dark, wet setting as anything but a womb symbol, or an object which is slender and vertical as anything but a phallic symbol, regardless of the fact that, in the system of the text he is treating, the former is a bower in a forest, say, or the latter a cane or spear. This critic has not seen bowers or spears in the one system because his expectations are a function of another system. In order to see a new thing we must be able to recognize it as such, and this is done by the willed inhibition of systems we have learnt before coming upon the novel object, an act performed in the service of learning new systems. If this is not done in literary criticism, all texts become allegories. The *Odyssey* ceases to be an epic system with properties peculiar to it alone, and becomes an Allegory of Quest; *Gulliver's Travels* ceases to be a satiric structure with its own distinctive features, and is turned into an allegory of Swift's psychological development, an orgy of Freudian Analogy; Dostoevsky's novels become equally orgiastic allegories of Sin and Redemption.

Critics of Lewis Carroll have possibly developed this allegorical urge to its ultimate limits. Phyllis Greenacre, a practicing psychiatrist, cannot forget that Dodgson loved to photograph little girls in the nude, with results for her interpretation of the Alice books which are as predictable as they are unfortunate.<sup>9</sup> Louis Aragon, in a 1931 article in *Le Surréalisme au service de la révolution* does a Marxian interpretation of the Alice books, notable for such insights as: "in those shameful days of



massacre in Ireland . . . human liberty lay wholly in the frail hands of Alice . . .” William Empson has combined Freudian and Marxian techniques in his reading, “The Child as Swain.”<sup>10</sup> Alice experiences birth trauma, and her tears become amniotic fluid; commenting on the famous scene at the end of *Through the Looking Glass* where Alice pulls off the tablecloth, sending plates, dishes, and guests hurtling to the floor, Empson remarks, “It is the High Table of Christ Church we must think of here . . .”<sup>11</sup> A. L. Taylor makes the Alice books into that easiest to find of all allegories, the Christian.<sup>12</sup> I have argued that the Alice books are less perfect nonsense than *The Hunting of the Snark*; therefore they are less hermetic, less systematic in their own right, and thus more porous to other systems.

But even the *Snark* has not escaped the allegorist. Alexander Taylor sees it as an anti-vivisectionist tract<sup>13</sup> and Martin Gardner, in his otherwise fine annotated version, suggests a crude existentialist reading, full of *Angst*’s, and in which the Boojum somehow becomes the atomic bomb.<sup>14</sup> A former dean of the Harvard Business School has argued that the poem is “a satire on business in general, the Boojum a symbol of a business slump, and the whole thing a tragedy about the business cycle.”<sup>15</sup> I will not go into F. C. S. Schiller’s theory, which states that the *Snark* is a satire on Hegelian philosophy, because Schiller presents his theory as a send-up. But even W. H. Auden has said that the *Snark* is a “pure example” of the way in which, “if thought of as isolated in the midst of the ocean, a ship can stand for mankind and human society moving through time and struggling with its destiny.”<sup>16</sup>

Now there is something remarkably wrong about all this. Dodgson himself would be astounded. We have his word that “I can guarantee that the books have no religious teaching whatever in them—in fact they do not teach anything at all.”<sup>17</sup> It may be that, knowing how drearily and relentlessly didactic Victorian children’s books were, readers have not been able to accept that the most famous representative of the class is without uplift of one sort or another. However a quick comparison of *Alice* or the *Snark* with Charles Kingsley’s *The Water Babies* (1863) should be enough to convince any unprejudiced reader of the fact. Kingsley’s book, it will be remembered, ends with Tom, the erstwhile fairy, “now a great man of science [who] can plan railroads and steam engines, and electric telegraphs and rifled guns, and so forth.” Not content with this, the author adds, to his little readers in the attached “Moral,” “. . . do you learn your lessons, and thank God that you have plenty of cold water to wash in; and wash in it, too, like a true Englishman.”

Lewis Carroll does not cloy in this way because he had a very sophisticated image of his audience. One may be highly specific about what the word child meant to

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. It meant first of all a girl; further, a girl between the ages of ten and thirteen, who belonged to an upper-middle class family; was beautiful; intelligent; well dressed and well behaved. Anything else was not a child. Now it is obvious that such a restricted view of children cannot be the same one which animates Lewis Carroll the author. Rather, this audience is conceived not in terms of chronology, but as a state of perceptual innocence and honesty. Children are the proper audience of nonsense only to the degree that they let strange things remain strange; to the degree they resist forcing old systems on new, and insist on differences rather than similarities. The allegorists who have written about the *Snark* without having *seen* it are obviously long past such a state of open potentiality.

The best argument against the *Snark*’s allegorization remains, of course, the poem itself. The interpretation which follows is based not only on the poem itself, but on the various ways in which it *is* itself. That is, the poem is best understood as a structure of resistances to other structures of meaning which might be brought to it. The meaning of the poem consists in the several strategies which hedge it off as itself, which insure its hermetic nature against the hermeneutic impulse. Below are six of the many ways by which the poem gains coherence through inherence.

1. The dedication poem to Gertrude Chataway appears at first glance to be simply another of those treacly Victorian set pieces Dodgson would compose when he abandoned nonsense for what he sometimes thought was serious literature. But a second reading reveals that the poem contains an acrostic: the first letter of each line spells out Gertrude Chataway; a third reading will show that the initial word in the first line of each of the four quatrains constitute another acrostic, Girt, Rude, Chat, Away. This is the first indication in the poem that the words in it exist less for what they denote in the system of English than they do for the system Carroll will erect. That is, the initial four words of each stanza are there less to indicate the four meanings present in them before they were deployed by Carroll they at first convey (clothed, wild, speak, begone) than they are to articulate a purely idiosyncratic pattern of Carroll’s own devising.

2. Another index of the systematic arbitrariness of the poem is found in the second quatrain of the first Fit: “Just the place for a Snark! I have said it twice: / That alone should encourage the crew. / Just the place for a Snark! I have said it thrice: / What I tell you three times is true.” The rule of three operates in two ways. First of all it is a system for determining a truth that is absolutely unique to this poem. When in Fit 5 the Butcher wishes to prove that the scream he has heard belongs to a Jubjub bird, he succeeds in doing so by repeating three times. “’Tis the voice of the Jubjub!”