'But they would not teach her to play': Child Heroines, Fantasy, and the Victorian Debate on Female Education

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‘But they would not teach her to play’: Child Heroines, Fantasy, and the Victorian Debate on Female Education

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ABSTRACT

For England, the nineteenth century was a time of transformation. The landscape of England changed rapidly as industrialization and urbanization took hold of the nation. The population boomed, and children overpopulated cities and towns. With so many youngsters running about, mass education became a major public concern. By the mid-nineteenth century, the sad state of the nation’s public education system had been exposed by the Newcastle Committee, and reforms were beginning to take place.

In particular, the education available for females came under scrutiny. Many lower class girls left school unable to read, write, or perform basic mathematics, while middle and upper class girls were merely trained to be social hostesses, learning accomplishments to please company and showing that their families were able to afford an expensive private institution. Advocates for female education argued that the existing education was poorly structured, if structured at all, and shallow in its goals.

As this paper intends to show, children’s literature, which was emerging as a mass market during the Victorian era, played a role in shaping the educational system of England during the nineteenth-century, serving as a subtle method of persuasion, designed to convince parents and children of the importance of a substantial education for females. For instance, as debates about female education were being considered, Lewis Carroll published Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (1865). The story of Alice and her adventures down the rabbit-hole has delighted many generations of children and adults alike. Scholars have made numerous attempts to unravel the “true meaning” behind Carroll’s nonsense tale, but very few have considered the story within the context of the
Victorian debate on female education. Indeed, as shown in this paper, Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and its equally successful sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1872), point out many of the flaws in the existing education available for young girls during the mid-Victorian era and offer a new type of education for girls, one developed through real-life experiences and playful interactions.

This paper also explores two Victorian female writers’ reimaginings of the Alices: Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) and Augusta Webster’s *Daffodil and the Croäxaxicans: A Romance of History* (1884). These women use the *Alice* tales as a springboard to argue for their own notions of effective female education. Like Carroll’s tales, their nonsense-style fantasies feature female protagonists who find themselves thrust into unfamiliar worlds, and the experiences of these child heroines show the effect of education on young women. While Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) pushes for a moral education for girls, Webster’s *Daffodil and the Croaxicans: A Romance of History* (1884) argues for an education that allows girls creative freedom, intellectually rigorous coursework, and the possibility of going on to higher education.
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Introduction

With the rapid rise of industrialization and urbanization during the nineteenth-century, England underwent massive social and political change. The population rapidly increased by the millions, and as small towns turned into burgeoning cities, the needs of the country shifted, especially regarding the needs of its youth. In the span of sixty years between 1841 and 1901, the population of England grew from 15.9 million to 32.5 million, and within that 32.5 million, one in three people was fifteen years old or younger (Horn 1-3). With so many children inhabiting the country, debates about education came to the forefront of public discourse.

Female education was increasingly a focus of debate. Lower class girls received terribly poor education. When the Newcastle Commission set up its investigation of the public education system in 1858, the state of the system was considered “sadly deficient” (Kamm 158). The Commission cited that girls were unable to read, write, or do basic mathematics. Even their needle skills were useless, as they had not been taught to mend tears, sew hems, or do anything of practical use (Kamm 158). Furthermore, attendance was a serious issue. Lower class children often missed days or even weeks of school in order to work, and they usually left school at an early age (Horn 72).

Even for the middle and upper classes, female education was insufficient. The goal of educating a daughter was to maintain the appearance of social status. If one could afford a well-respected private school, then one was regarded as higher up on the social ladder (Horn 80). Up until the mid-1800s and even after, middle class women’s education was inconsistent and comprised mostly of learning “accomplishments” and etiquette (Burstyn 36). Little of what was taught, however, actually afforded girls a true education.
For example, Pamela Horn cites national illiteracy rates from Eric Hopkins' *Childhood Transformed*. She writes, "On a national scale in 1871...26.8 per cent of females were still unable to sign their name when they married, but that was a major improvement on the position thirty years before, when the respective failure rates had been...48.9 per cent for women" (73). Middle class female education was meant to prepare girls to fulfill the role of the ideal Victorian woman, the quiet "Angel of the House;" thus, there was no need to prepare them for anything outside husband-hunting. Joan Burstyn explains, "With support from their parents, girls were taught how to behave as contenders in the marriage market, and as social hostesses; most were given neither systematic intellectual training, nor instruction in the skills of housekeeping and childcare" (22). Most of this education went on in the privacy of the home, and the function of educator was usually performed by the mother or another family member (Gorham 23).

For this purpose, courtesy books and conduct manuals were created, as well as strongly didactic literature, including lessons in the form of catechisms and cautionary tales. There was a great amount of literature devoted to the education of young girls. These books and manuals, however, offered little intellectual substance. At best, girls could learn a bit about household management, but one would never find lessons in basic mathematics, spelling, or history. Many mothers and medical men were willing to share their advice on educating females, but no real "experts" existed. Dr. John Gregory, for instance, wrote *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters* after the death of his wife, which outlines everything from how young ladies should behave to what books are suitable for them. He states that "The domestic economy of a family is entirely a woman's province..." (52). Though Gregory encouraged his daughters to read history books if they
felt inclined to read, he recommends little else that would be considered intellectually rigorous by today's standards, as is typical of most of the conduct books of the time. Jonathan Swift also felt compelled to advise young ladies on education. In his *Letter to a very young Lady on her Marriage*, he writes, "those who are commonly called learned women, have lost all manner of credit by their impertinent talkativeness, and conceit of themselves. But there is an easy remedy for this, if you once consider, that, after all the pains you may be at, you never can arrive, in point of learning, to the perfection, of a school boy" (qtd. in Kamm 117). Though not all of these conduct manuals argued against educating girls, a large quantity certainly aimed to dissuade girls from becoming "bluestockings." They insisted that it was better for a woman to be well-mannered than well-educated.

Governesses were also employed to educate girls in the home. Unfortunately, these governesses, though hired to teach, were often poorly educated and merely looking for a way to make an income. In her book *Women at Oxford: A Fragment of History*, Vera Brittain explains that in 1848, Mr. Laing, the Vicar of Holy Trinity, Kentish Town and Secretary of the Governess Benevolent Institution attempted to create "a registry of teachers to help employers to discover the limits of their governesses' knowledge" (27). What Laing found was that the knowledge was indeed very limited. Brittain writes, "A plan to give diplomas to the more competent led to a series of examinations, which revealed an ignorance so abysmal in those who struggled to instruct the young that the need first to provide them with instruction for themselves appeared obvious and urgent" (27). This "abysmal ignorance" resulted in the *Lectures for Ladies* courses, an initiative of one of Queen Victoria's ladies-in-waiting who sought to amass funds to support female
education. The lectures began in 1847 with the assistance of Charles Kingsley and others from King's College (Brittain 27). In 1848, the lecture series evolved into Queen's College for Women, where a diverse group of women, including Jean Ingelow, gathered together and learned, paving the way for women's entrance into the university (Brittain 28).

By the latter-half of the nineteenth century, reforms were taking place as proto-feminist activists rallied against the shallowness and inconsistency of education for girls. Furthermore, as industrialization swept the nation, the need for women prepared to deal in business outside the home emerged. In addition to the reforms in young girls' education, higher education for women was also being hotly debated. Women were gradually being allowed into higher education institutions. As of the 1880s, women were allowed to attend Cambridge University and were even being awarded degrees at the University of London (Kamm 261).

These transformations could not have taken place without support from the public, however, and educational reformers often attempted to rally up support through print publications. Women's magazines and newspapers were often outlets for such causes. For instance, in 1859, an article titled “Are Men Naturally Cleverer than Women?” appeared in The Englishwoman's Journal, a feminist Victorian women’s magazine. The anonymous author declares, “Were this reform in education carried out, women would be found to possess more reasoning minds and greater powers of calculation than they get credit for, and something would have been done towards raising them to a mental equality with men” (64). Suffrage Society members also published their
own material. More subtly, however, this debate snuck into the pages of children's literature, which was emerging as a largely successful consumer market.

In 1865, Lewis Carroll, also known as mathematician Charles Dodgson, published the ever-popular *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which was followed by its equally successful sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, in 1872. The tales of young Alice and her interactions with the strange residents of Wonderland was an instant success, and like many of today's pop-culture sensations, the success of the novel sparked multiple reimaginings, including Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) and Augusta Webster's *Daffodil and the Croâxaxicans: A Romance of History* (1884). These texts also feature female child protagonists who fall into other strange fantasy worlds where they are faced with unusual challenges.

While at first glance the *Alices*, *Speaking Likenesses*, and *Daffodil* may appear to solely be escapist entertainment, they serve a far greater function. The purpose of these stories is not merely to delight small children or to influence the behavior of the little girls who would read them (or to whom they would be read); it is also to persuade the parents, who would be choosing texts for their children and reading them to their children, to consider their roles as educators. In essence, these texts argue for the implementation of specific pedagogical practices, including an emphasis on critical thinking, Evangelically-influenced moral education, and what education scholars would now call experiential education. Placed outside the safety of the domestic space, these young heroines learn and adapt to survive. Unrestricted by Victorian gender roles, these girls learn more than accomplishments and etiquette: they learn to think morally and critically without the supervision of an authority figure. Their journeys enable them to
mature as young women. Despite each story’s unique approach to female education, they all reveal that the existing education available to young ladies is shallow in its objectives and ineffective in producing women with sound reasoning minds.

To reveal these flaws in female education, each story begins with a reminder that these little girls must be educated: Alice’s older sister must teach Alice her lessons; Maude, Clara, and Ella are to be educated by their aunt; and Daffodil’s parents want to teach her to be “good.” Each book also seems self-aware of its own storytelling function and of storytelling’s relationship to education. There are often layers of storytellers (such as frame narration), or at the very least, a reminder that the little girls will share their experiences with her future offspring, showing the cyclic nature of education. One carries on the lessons she or he has learned, but it is not possible to educate the next generation without learning the lessons oneself. By teaching others about the failures of female education and revealing new techniques, these books acted as catalysts to Victorian educational reforms.
Alice's Uneducation: Lewis Carroll's Alice Stories

In July 1865, Oxford-educated mathematician Charles Dodgson – better known as children's author Lewis Carroll – published his first book for children under printing mega-house Macmillan & Co., Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. The book is a revision of Alice's Adventures Under Ground, a story Carroll wrote specifically for his childhood friend Alice Liddell, daughter of Dean Liddell of Christ's College (Ayres 153). The ever-popular Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is often noted as a key work of Victorian Children's Literature and part of the Golden Age of Children's Literature (Carpenter 69). Unlike earlier texts for children, which were written mainly in catechistic or didactic modes, the Alice stories were created for entertainment rather than educational purposes and lack an obvious moral lesson for child readers (Watson 20).

Despite this lack of a moral structure for children, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and the other Alice stories seem to suggest a moral for adults who would most likely be reading these stories to their children: dull, unthinking education is pointless. The Alice tales are rich with commentary on educational practices. Indeed, as Deborah Thacker explains, "In general, it is the rationalist urge to inculcate adult values in the education system and the moralistic texts of the time, which was seen to militate against the growth of natural innocence and a 'childlike' engagement with the natural world" (22). Alice's Adventures in Wonderland opens with a tableau from a classic Victorian girls' educational text; Alice sits by her older sister on the bank of a river (in the "natural world"), watching her read a lesson book, one "without pictures or conversations" (19), in which Alice can find no pleasure. From this very first image of Alice and her sister, Carroll's evident disdain for the cut-and-dried, because-adults-say-so
education system becomes apparent. Alison Lurie writes, "As one might expect from an
Oxford don, the most thoroughgoing satirical attacks in the Alice books are directed at
education. All the adults, especially those who resemble governesses or professors, are
foolish, arbitrary, cruel, or mad" (104). Traditional education continues to be satirized in
the series of following episodes that occur in Wonderland. As Alice goes about her
journey, she is uneducated; each principle of her upper-middle class Victorian girls'
education is made ridiculous in her interactions with the Wonderland creatures. Lessons
are useless; morals are arbitrary; logic is irrational. Jean Webb writes, "What Alice
discovers is that her course of action is inappropriate. The manners she has learnt are
inapplicable to her needs in this world [Wonderland], a discovery to be reinforced as she
wanders through Wonderland" (65). She must reevaluate everything she believes she
knows in order to survive.

No subject area is safe from Carroll's critical gaze. To begin, as Alice falls down
the seemingly-never-ending rabbit hole, she begins (incorrectly) reciting geography facts.
She spews out the words "latitude" and "longitude" because they sound important, not
because she understands their value as navigational tools. Carroll comments, "Alice had
learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the school-room, and though this was
not a very good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen
to her, still it was good practice to say it over...." (20). At school, knowing and using
these big words would earn a student the teacher's favor; practical application is not
necessary.

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1 I refer to the narrator as Carroll because Alice's Adventures in Wonderland was intended
to be Dodgson's story for Alice Liddell. Lewis Carroll is, therefore, a literary mask as
well as a pseudonym for Dodgson.
The problems with Alice's geography lessons continue to be made apparent as her descent deepens. As she falls, Alice wonders what will happen if the hole she is falling through lets her out on the other side of the world, which she believes is either New Zealand or Australia. Alice is clearly miseducated. She calls the Aborigines the "antipathies" (21), and realizes she does not know how to tell the two countries apart. Though she has memorized a map and some trivia, Alice knows nothing about these other cultures. She is not concerned by this, assuming she will be able to locate a sign which will signify to her which country she has fallen into when she arrives. She is concerned, however, with appearing proper: she practices her curtsy while falling through the air and decides she will not ask which country she has fallen into when she arrives so as not to appear ignorant. She assumes that good manners and appearances will win her favor, as they would in a classroom.

Alice is, of course, just as much as subject of satire as the education system. As a representation of middle-class Victorian girls, Alice is overly concerned with propriety, status, and maintaining appearances, and in being so, she often comes across as rude or outspoken. Aside from believing her English propriety will make her acceptable in New Zealand or Australia, Alice becomes irritated and sometimes aggressive when her English mannerisms fail to find praise. For instance, as the Mock Turtle shares his schoolday history, Alice interrupts him to brag that she attends the “best school,” one “with extras,” attempting to match or better him in social status. When he attempts to show his education was actually better, Alice simply criticizes it for being ridiculous. The White Rabbit, the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, and the Mouse are also subject to Alice’s criticisms and interruptions.
It is also evident that Alice has been spoiled and sheltered. When chasing the White Rabbit, Carroll reveals that “In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again” (20). Alice gives no thoughts to the dangers of jumping down wells after rabbits or running away from the safety of the riverbank. She is a silly, impulsive child. Alice is also completely unaware of the harsh realities of working-class life. She fears finding herself to be Mabel, her lower-class schoolmate because she does not want to “live in that poky little house, and have next to no toys to play with, and oh, ever so many lessons to learn!” (Carroll 29). Alice’s only fears are living in a small house, not having toys, and being made to sit through lessons. It’s clear that no concerns about going hungry, unsheltered, or unclothed have ever crossed her mind, and the terrors of labor and industrialization are, for Alice, unimaginable. Moreover, Alice decides that should she learn she is Mabel, she will be too ashamed to return above ground. Rather than showing sympathy for her less-fortunate classmate, she shows disgust. She, as most children are, is self-centered and selfish. Alice is only concerned with material possessions and appearances, the two components necessary to being a candidate for a good marriage. This frame of mind is, of course, encouraged by the education system, which privileges those with money and status and makes it difficult for working-class children to attain an equal education.

Of course, many of Alice’s flaws are a product of her education. Alice’s education is performance-based, and this is a problem; once the performance is complete, the lines can be forgotten. Of course, this is precisely what happens next. When Alice tries to repeat a lesson, the words come out "not quite right" (Carroll 53). She has forgotten her lesson, and instead recites a very subversive one, "How doth the little crocodile." In his
book *The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition* (2000), Gardner explains that Carroll often parodies popular poems and songs for children. Alice's recitation in this particular scene satirizes Isaac Watts' poem "Against Idleness and Mischief" from *Diving Songs for Children* (1715) (*The Annotated Alice* Gardner n.5 23). The poem attempts to encourage children to work hard and avoid laziness, insisting that idleness is the catalyst of sin. In this way, as well as in several others, Carroll's Romantic influence shows itself. Thacker explains:

The severity and moralising tone of *Divine Songs* (1791) by hymnist Isaac Watts, were considered by more radical thinkers of the [Romantic era] to be detrimental to inborn tendencies toward good. It was as if the very act of imposing knowledge or enforcing ideologies destroys primary knowledge of transcendent truths, which are thus hidden from the conscious mind. (22)

Carroll's Alice is in many ways a very innocent and idealized image of a little girl. She seems in these respects to be derived from the Romantic tradition; however, it appears to be the influence of adult lessons which provoke her to act snobbishly towards the Wonderland characters or feel a sense of entitled superiority. As Jan Gordon observes, Wonderland is "a world that, though dissimilar from the adult world above ground, quickly becomes filled with adult institutions, including obnoxious tea parties and trials" (21). These institutions, especially education, are the ones which corrupt perfect little Alice and give her those imperfections, such as haughtiness, which prevent her from
being an entirely ideal girl. These didactic moral lessons, explain Gorham, were also much more prevalent in the literature used to educate little girls' than that for young boys, who were more often directed towards "worldly success" in their literature (74).

Educating girls by forcing them to memorize and repeat didactic poems actually strips them of their innocence, which was cherished by the Romantics and Victorians alike, and especially by Carroll.

Furthermore, while it is clear that Alice is concerned that she is unable to correctly repeat the original poem and is unhappy with her inability to perform, she shows little concern that the actual purpose of the lesson has been lost. She is only worried about appearing stupid. Gardner explains, "Carroll has chosen the lazy, slow-moving crocodile as a creature far removed from the flying, ever-busy bee" (The Annotated Alice n.5 24). In some ways, it seems to reflect the idealized "dream-child" Alice, who is too lazy to even make a daisy chain. Thus, despite having "learned her lessons," Alice has really not learned anything from having to memorize Watts' poem.

The promise of a fantastic adventure, however, motivates the little girl in a way where the

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2 In her book, *Men in Wonderland: The Lost Girlhood of the Victorian Gentleman*, Catherine Robson recounts Dodgson's reaction to an 1885 expose titled "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" by investigative reporter W. T. Stead of the *Pall Mall Gazette*. The article exposed the underworld of child prostitution in an effort to push the Criminal Law Amendment Act in Parliament, which would raise the age of consent from thirteen to sixteen. Dodgson was notably offended by the piece, and even wrote an editorial response signed by Lewis Carroll, a name he usually kept separate from his personal life. Carroll's reaction to the article comes with a similar response to that of the sternly moralized literature; while he says nothing about the age of consent, Carroll finds it that the journalist would corrupt the image of the pure little girl with his scandalous (yet very real) photographs of child prostitutes. Robson writes, "To this writer at least, it is clear that the furor alters all little girls: although the well-to-do darlings of Carroll's world are in no danger of being violated in brothels, he is all too painfully conscious that the widespread sexualization of public debate has the power to transform the very concept of girlhood" (182). Carroll avoids the issue of the sexualization of little girls, which may have seemed to close too his own admiration of them (183).
preaching poem has failed, though this adventure probably would have been considered idleness as well by Watts' standards.

This seems to be the general foundation for Carroll's educational critique, which denies the success of performance-based education and stern moralization in favor of imaginative or experiential learning. Carroll's critique extends into the teaching of foreign languages. Language lessons fail Alice in her first interaction with a Wonderland creature the Mouse. She decides to use her brother's Latin grammar book to address the Mouse. When Latin fails to get the response she desires, Alice then decides the Mouse must be a "French mouse, come over with William the Conqueror" (31). Alice, who clearly sees French as another task of school-enforced memorization, decides to use the first phrase she can remember from her French lesson book, "Ou est ma chatte?" (Carroll 30). Of course, this phrase means "Where is my cat?" in English, and the Mouse is extremely offended by such a rude question; cats eat mice, after all. Alice is not concerned with the quality of her conversation, though. To her, it is only important that she makes some small talk and that she appears well-bred. This seems to be an effect of her education. As Joan Burystn explains, "With support from their parents, girls were taught how to behave as contenders in the marriage market, and as social hostesses; most were given neither systematic intellectual training, nor instruction in the skills of

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3 In a letter to his niece, Edith Dodgson, written March 8, 1891, Dodgson reiterates the idea of an experiential education, encouraging his niece, who had just failed her examinations at school, to continue to aspire to be college-educated. He writes, "your father has, I think, not quite understood the object for which I advised a sojourn of 2 or 3 years in Oxford. He seems to think it was that you might acquire a great mass of knowledge. But the object I really meant was education, which is a very different thing: I should define it as a cultivation, to the utmost degree of perfection they are capable of, of whatever powers God has given you; so that, whatever work in life He may mark out for you to do, you may be ready to do it. Life among girls of your age & older & specially girls who are really aiming at the same object, would, I thought, be a great help to you, not only in improving your own powers, but also in acquire all those habits needed for making the best of your life."
housekeeping and childcare" (22). Alice, therefore, must only be entertaining. There is no need for her to provide substantial, intelligent conversation.

History instruction has flaws, as well. In the episode "A Caucus-Race and a Long Tale," Alice and a group of Wonderland critters attempt to dry themselves after Alice's flood of tears has soaked them all. The Mouse uses "the driest thing [he] knows" to help resolve the situation (Carroll 34); he begins reciting history. The history of William the Conqueror which the Mouse recites confuses all of the others and leaves them bored. Indeed, no one learns anything from the history lecture, and they quickly leave off for more "energetic remedies" (Carroll 34). The problem seems to be that the history is made to seem separate from the present and completely irrelevant. It is taught as a list of names and places that must be memorized rather than a series of events which have influenced the present day and can be used to help solve modern dilemmas.

Through each of these episodes another shortcoming of the Victorian education comes to the forefront: it does not encourage any self-exploration. Carroll captures this in several instances, most notably in Alice's meeting with the identity-challenging Caterpillar. In this enchanting episode, Victorian educational practices are obviously satirized. The chapter is titled "Advice from a Caterpillar," and the Caterpillar himself is an image of this didactic and seemingly useless literature.⁴ Though the Caterpillar insists on incessantly asking Alice, "Who are you?" (Carroll 49), he can offer her no help in coming to a conclusion, which seems also to be a failure of the lesson-book-based,

⁴ According to Elaine Ostry's article "The Conduct Book and Victorian/ Edwardian Fantasy," "the body's growth [in Victorian conduct books], particularly into the transition to adulthood, is often described in conjunction with other natural phenomena, such as the metamorphosis of butterflies" (31).
overly-moralizing education system. Alice's response of "I hardly know, Sir, just at present...." (Carroll 49) only elicits more demands of "explain yourself" from the Caterpillar. He completely rejects the idea that growing and changing can be a confusing experience, much like the adults who were writing for children during this time who assumed efficient child-raising was merely about structure.

The Caterpillar also demands that Alice repeat a lesson, "You are Old Father William," which is a parody of Robert Southey's (1774-1843) "The Old Man's Comforts and How He Gained Them," a poem which encouraged moderate behavior in youth in order to preserve health in old age (Gardner n.3 49). Like the first attempted repetition, this lesson too comes out "not quite right" (Carroll 53). Instead of the man of moderation described in Southey's "The Old Man's Comforts," Alice's Old Father William is a crazy old man who enjoys balancing eels on his nose and standing on his head. Carroll attacks the Victorian notion that age is to be revered by producing a ridiculous image of parenthood, and again, simply by showing how easily forgotten these morally prescriptive lessons learned by repetition are.

"The Mock Turtle's Story" episode sheds further light on typical Victorian schooling. As the Mock Turtle shares his personal history with Alice, he reminisces on his youth and his days at a school "with extras" (Carroll 92). From the very beginning, the Mock Turtle makes it clear that he feels that he had "the best of educations," which Alice feels compelled to compete against, saying that she also went to as school with extras (Carroll 92). Of course, her school did not have Washing as a subject as the Mock Turtle's did. This petty argument exposes more flaws in the Victorian education system; only the wealthy could afford to be fully educated. The Mock Turtle, for instance, though
he is able to go to the best school under the sea, could not enroll in Washing courses because he could not afford it. He "only took the regular course" (93). Furthermore, as Alice points out, one would never actually need to learn Washing, when living under the sea. This reflects the arbitrary nature of these "extras" or "accomplishments" that the rich and middle-class members of Victorian forced their daughters to learn. Though these accomplishments did not enhance their child's education, they were a mark of social status.5

Besides failing to be useful in practical application, these lessons deter children from wanting to learn more. Alice clearly dislikes them. While stuck in the rabbit's home, grown too large to escape, she thinks aloud, "shall I never get any older than I am now? that'll be a comfort, one way- never to be an old woman-- but then-- always to have lessons to learn! Oh, I shouldn't like that!" (Carroll 42). Alice finds formal lessons so irksome that she would rather become an old woman than be instructed everyday of her life.

Among many other flaws of the education system exposed by Carroll, the teachers are also at fault. Carroll mocks teachers who use big words for the sake of sounding smart. During "The Caucus Race," the Eaglet tells the Mouse, "Speak English!....I don't know the meaning of half those long words, and what's more, I don't believe you do either!" (34). The sense of performance in the classroom is, therefore, modeled for the students by their own teacher, not just by cultural influence which

5 In her essay, Making Good Wives and Mothers, Ellen Jordan explains that these accomplishments were usually the arts, including department, dancing, and needlecrafts. The middle -classes were apt to send their daughters to schools which taught these accomplishments in order to make their daughters better candidates for marriage. It was also an attempt to establish themselves in as closely as possible to gentility.
demands success. Furthermore, this performance is meant to make the children feel inferior, instilling adult authority and superiority rather than encouraging learning.

The Caterpillar is at fault for doing just this. He demands that Alice repeat her lessons and "explain herself," knowing that she most likely will fail, in an attempt to reassert his authority over her. Of course, this is ironic because the Caterpillar is a child himself; were he an adult, he would be a butterfly (Ostry 37). Like Alice, who scolds herself, boxes her own ears for cheating, and demands of herself that she repeat lessons, the Caterpillar has begun to internalize the ways in which adults acquire power over children, and he uses it make Alice feel inferior. This may also reflect the notion of elder sisters educating younger siblings. It appears impractical for adults to insist children need guidance to learn proper behavior, but yet leave the task to other children. For Carroll, this situation might have been a good one, if the child did not insist on pretending to be an adult.

Victorian girls did not only learn their "lessons," however. Burstyn explains, "Faced with an increase in leisure and the need to behave with elegance in order to make the best possible marriage, many young women in the early nineteenth century sought an education in accomplishments...." (36). Through parodies, Carroll offers his critique on this emphasis on etiquette instruction and the teaching of "accomplishments." Dance, for instance, was one of these accomplishments, and Victorian dances were carefully composed series of movements. In "The Lobster Quadrille" episode, the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon introduce Alice to the dance learned in their boyhood at school, an obvious play on the complex dances Alice would have learned as part of her Victorian education. In fact, as Gardner reveals, "the quadrille... was one of the most difficult of the ballroom
dances fashionable at the time Carroll wrote his tale. The Liddell children had been taught the dance by a private tutor” (The Annotated Alice fn1 100). The Lobster Quadrille is a ridiculous and very difficult dance which requires non-lobster partners to throw their lobster counterparts out to sea, swim after them, somersault, and change lobster partners, obviously making fun of the rigid structure of Victorian dances that children were forced to learn. By the time the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle have finished their display of the Lobster Quadrille, Alice is very happy that the dance is over.

These accomplishments were meant to prepare little girls for their debut into society and their entrance onto the marriage market. Etiquette was also part of this social education. Though, as Alice points out, manners are not taught in school, little girls were required to learn proper etiquette, often from mothers, governesses, or older sisters, and indeed, Alice seems to have been taught manners. When arriving at the Duchess's house, for instance, Alice feels the need to knock on the door before entering because she has been taught that this is polite and necessary behavior. As the frog Footman explains to her, however, "There's no sort of use in knocking...I'm on the same side of the door as you are... they're making such a noise inside, no one could possibly hear you" (Carroll 59). Alice is at a loss when the Footman tells her this. She cannot figure out how she could possibly enter into the home without knocking, and thus she is left outside the house waiting and wondering until the opportunity to enter fortunately happens to present itself. Alice held back by holding rigidly to social rituals that hold no importance outside her own culture.

Nothing seems to challenge Alice's notions of proper etiquette, however, more than the Mad Hatter and the March Hare. Proper tea-time etiquette was particularly
essential to a British girl's upbringing; eventually, these little girls would be hosting the social events (The Mad Hatter and the March Hare's tea party confronts all of Alice's notions of propriety. They ask her unanswerable riddles, constantly interrupt, and make critical remarks about Alice. Alice is appalled by their behavior and scolds them for being rude, for making "personal remarks," and for being "very uncivil" in general. Alice, of course, is being somewhat hypocritical; she did sit down for tea uninvited after all. The silly rules of politeness are useless in Wonderland, though, and because Alice is unable to come to her own conclusions and relies so heavily upon the lessons of her above-ground England, she fails to have any real interaction with the Mad Hatter, March Hare, and Door Mouse. Instead, Alice looks down her nose at those who she believes are rude, classless beings.

Many of these lessons that Alice so relies upon were, of course, taught through the use of literature. There were conduct books and advice manuals which instructed girls on proper social behavior, as well as mothers on how to instruct their daughters (Myers "A Taste for Truth and Realities" 118). There were also didactic stories with implicit morals written into them. Through the Ugly Duchess, Carroll directly parodies both. Most of those stories and conduct guides were written by mothers, like the Duchess, not by experts. In other words, almost anyone who wanted to advise others on child-rearing could do so as long as they could find a publisher. The Ugly Duchess is a horrible mother who beats and screams at her baby, but still feels she is in the position to give advice to the young Alice. The Ugly Duchess tells Alice, "Everything's got a moral, if only you can find it" (Carroll 87). She then proceeds to tell her several ridiculous morals that she has haphazardly derived. For instance, Carroll writes:
'The [croquet] game's going on rather better now,' [Alice] said....

'Tis so,' said the Duchess: ' and the moral of that is-- 'Oh, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round!'

'Somebody said... that it's done by everybody minding their own business!'

'Ah well! It means much the same thing,' said the Duchess...'and the moral of that is--- 'Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves.' (87)

These morals are forced, as they are in the instructional stories for children. It is obvious, however, that regardless of the conflicting morals that the Duchess gives, they are all meant simply to put her in the authority position, like most Victorian adults. As one quickly learns, the Duchess is incapable of raising a child; her baby boy turns into a pig. She is in no position to be directing a young lady on morality when she herself fails to live morally and corrupts the child she for which she is responsible.

When lesson after lesson fails to be useful in Wonderland, stripping Alice of her basic guiding principles, Alice must begin to look inward. She can no longer rely on the authority and wisdom of adults or the power of her status as a middle-class girl. Her entrance into the garden rests on her ability to think beyond classroom repetitions and social rituals. She must navigate foreign terrain and strategize to succeed. Even in the simple act of eating the correct amount of Wonderland food to achieve the size she wishes to be, Alice displays her ability to problem-solve.

In *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), the sequel to *Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland*, Carroll's criticism of girls' education advances. Though Carroll still mocks lessons and instruction in accomplishments, *Through the
Looking-Glass delves further into the issue and begins at the root of the problem, the foolishness of the adult enforcers. The story traces Alice's adventures in the Looking-Glass World. This time, however, Carroll's tale for his beloved Alice is not a completely light-hearted adventure, as Alice's Adventures in Wonderland seems to be. Instead, the tale begins and ends more somberly and sincerely. Gardner suggests that Through the Looking-Glass may be Carroll's farewell to Alice Liddell (Signet Introduction vii).

Indeed, there seems to be bitterness against the adult world, which has sadly miseducated, and thus corrupted, his ideal little girl by inflicting adult desire on childhood innocence and imagination. The notion that imagination is a childish thing that is to be left behind once one reaches adulthood is a crushing one for Carroll. After all, it is imagination that allows Alice to experience Wonderland and the Looking-glass world and gives her the power to learn, adapt, and survive in unfamiliar territory. By teaching Alice that which will insure that she marries well and instilling in her an unconscious sense of entitlement, her parents and teachers have destined her to become just another middle-class woman concerned with social status and propriety, too proud to involve herself in the nonsense of children.

'The question is... which is to be master—that's all'

Through the Looking Glass begins with the "Author's Preface," which includes a poem, "Child of the pure unclouded brow." A sense of gloom lingers over the poem in which an adult narrator speaks to a young child, telling her that "No thought of my shall find a place / In thy young life hereafter—" (Carroll 9-10). According to Thacker, "A growing consciousness of the distance between a childlike apprehension of the universe
and adult experience lent a mood of melancholy to much writing about childhood at the time" (Imagining the Child 21). The poem is crafted with images of sunny days turned dreary, summer turned to winter, and happiness that will inevitably be lost; for the speaker, this seems to be the ill fate of all children, referring to adults as "older children...who fret to find [their] bedtime near" (23-24). There appears to be more at work in Carroll's poem than sentimental longing for childlike apprehension, however; something is awry with adult apprehension. Adults are not only as incapable of making decisions as they claim children to be, but they also appear to envy youth, which leads adults to thoughtless treatment of children.

Unlike Wonderland, Through the Looking-Glass does not begin immediately with Alice. Instead, Dinah, Alice's cat from Wonderland, is tending to her two kittens, including an innocent white one and a mischievous black one. In his narration of the cat interactions, Carroll's misgivings about the authority of adults and their abilities to "know what's best" for children appear. Carroll writes:

The way Dinah washed her children's faces was this: first she held the poor thing down by its ear with one paw, and then with her other paw she rubbed its face all over, the wrong way, beginning at the nose: and just now, as I said, she was hard at work on the white kitten, which was lying quite still and trying to purr-- no doubt feeling that it was all meant for its good. (127)

Like many Victorian girls, the white kitten has been taught that adults are always right and that children should always respect the judgment of adults. Of course, the narrative commentary leads one to believe that Dinah was treating her child roughly, without true
concern for the best way to care for her kitten (perhaps similar to the Duchess's treatment of her little boy); it was simply the most obvious and easiest method.

Dinah is not the only character from Wonderland to have grown up. Alice has clearly matured since her first adventure down the rabbit hole. Though Alice is now "seven and half, exactly" (176), a mere six months older than she was in Wonderland, she has evolved. In this early scene, watching Dinah and her kittens, the character of Alice appears as a much crueler figure in some ways than she had been in Wonderland. When the little black cat causes some mischief, Alice designs punishments for the kitten's misdeeds, punishments which she never dreamed of doling out to any of the Wonderland characters (though she had scolded herself and boxed her own ears). Alice assumes the role of the adult when dealing with the black kitten.

The conversation about punishment continues later with the White Queen, who asserts that it is better to punish crimes and faults before they are committed. This seems backwards to Alice, but the White Queen's logic does not sound much different from the purpose of the didactic moral tale: both attempt to scare children into behavior before they have the opportunity to misbehave. By introducing these adult faults to children, however, it is possible that adults only succeed in making children aware of, and thus able to be tempted by, these evils. Punishment, however, as one learns from Alice's behavior with the black kitten and the White Queen's desire to see punishment enforced seems to be enjoyable to adults. They derive a sense of pleasure from forcing others into submission, never minding the repercussions.

This same idea of the reckless adults' desires ruining the lives of children is displayed in Carroll's poem "The Walrus and the Carpenter." In this poem, the
manipulative Walrus and Carpenter, both adult males, convince little oyster children from their bed to enjoy a day on shore and their lazy older brother gives them permission to go. Once they have led them away from home, luring them with adult intrigues like "shoes—and ships—and sealing-wax... cabbages—and kings" (164). The two then proceed to devour all of the oysters. The Walrus claims to "deeply sympathize," like most adults do with children who they must punish. Sympathy, however, is not empathy or kindness. The Walrus and the Carpenter feel no remorse for their acts.

Though Humpty Dumpty does not commit any acts of violence against Alice, he shares this lack of empathy for children and is wholly committed to maintaining his authoritative adult role. He declares that words mean whatever he decides they should, ignores Alice when it suits him, and acts as if he is a superior being. He clearly does not understand what children like. He merely wants to show off his ability to "repeat poetry as well as other folk" (Carroll 191). Rejecting "Jabberwocky" as literature too difficult for a child like Alice, Humpty Dumpty repeats his poem, created entirely for Alice's amusement, which of course, Alice doesn't understand or like at all, again reflecting the adults' inability to choose or create literature for children.

The unraveling of Alice's English education culminates with an examination, the Queen's Examination. The Queen's Examination, given by the Red Queen, is a list of arbitrary questions with answers that are nearly impossible to conclude, but the outcome of the examination determines whether or not Alice is really a queen. This includes questions like: "What's one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one and one?" (Carroll 222); "How is bread made?" (Carroll 223); and "What is the cause of lightning?" (Carroll 224). The examination, of course, has no
bearing on the future outcome. Alice has been made a queen by circumstance, castle and all, showing the useless nature of examinations which test children on their ability to memorize useless trivia which will do nothing to enhance their critical thinking, ethical development, or identification of self.

In the end, Alice's upper middle-class British education seems to fail her. All academic subjects are problematic since adult teachers have given little thought the development of children when structuring the curriculum. Memorizing rigid morals or learning multiplication tables does not enable a child to develop character, identity, or true ethical judgment. Carroll seems to suggest that adults cannot provide an education for children unless they have an empathetic understanding of the child; the performance-based, adult-in-training method inevitably fails to make the child a critical thinker or allow her to seek out an identity, which is what occurs during childhood. For Alice, the rational theories of her Victorian education do not apply to this ludicrous world below, and so, if she wants to successfully accomplish her quests to find the garden of Wonderland or to arrive at the eighth square of the chess board and become a Queen in Looking-Glass world, she must adapt; she must revise the set of rules she has come to believe and follow without thought and begin to use her mind, to question, to explore, and to use that curious imagination that all children are graced with.

Furthermore, Carroll's Wonderland and Looking-Glass characters and their antics are caricatures of Victorian English culture, suggesting this same new educational criteria for success is not one which merely enables a child to succeed in fantastic lands, but one that allows her to succeed in ordinary life. A little girl who can appreciate the existence of alternative lifestyles, make her own moral judgments, and solve problems on her own
will eventually make a good mother. These Wonderland lessons prepare Alice for life rather than merely making her marketable for marriage, which was one of the major flaws educational reformers sought to ameliorate.

'Who are you?'

Of course, despite being uneducated in Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world, Alice does attain new knowledge. There are some moments of true learning in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, though one would hesitate to call them instances of formal education. In fact, they may even be credited to the uneducation of Wonderland. From Alice's experiences in Wonderland, Donald Rackin concludes,

Alice, as the mythical representative of all her fellows above ground, acts appropriately and appropriately is unaware of the meaning of her actions. Although Alice's quest for meaning is unfulfilled, and she consciously learns nothing, she does survive because an instinctual "lesson" takes over at the moment of supreme danger. Unlike the artificial, illusory lessons of her nursery reading, schoolroom, or elders, the innate and unconscious drive for identity and self-preservation cannot be perverted by either Wonderland or the world above. (325)

Rackin is correct in asserting that Alice is motivated by larger drives than nursery lessons and that her Wonderland experiences expose her instinctual nature; however, it seems to take this trip to Wonderland to reveal this "innate and unconscious" desire to Alice. It is only after her adult-taught foundational principles are destabilized, through her
interactions in Wonderland, that Alice is able to move forward and begin to think for herself.

More recently, Elaine Ostry made a similar observation:

Carroll takes the morality of former children's literature and of the conduct book and satirizes it. He mocks the adult world in general, the adult guide in particular. By doing so, he grants much more independence to the child: through Alice, we get children who raise themselves instead of being cultivated. (40)

By the time Alice goes on her trip through the looking-glass, a more independent, less indoctrinated girl has emerged, one more willing to consider the impossible as normal and to consider what she would have called flaws of the Wonderland characters as cultural differences when in Looking-glass world.

It seems that Alice's adventures engage Alice in philosophical inquiry rather than trivial "lessons" and "accomplishments." None of her lesson-performances or good British manners allow her to accomplish her goals in Wonderland or Looking-Glass world. Instead, Alice's focus shifts away from appearing bright by reciting facts to using critical thinking. She learns to consider what makes her who she is and to seek out the reasons for why things are the way they are, rather than to simply accept things because adults say it is so or to impress others. This learning process happens through her own experience, however, not from the "lessons" that the Wonderland characters attempt to teach her.

Identity and ethical development are the factors highlighted in Alice's Wonderland and Looking-Glass World experiences. In Wonderland, Alice is able to
assert her own independence. Though it takes several tries, Alice does eventually learn that the above-ground rules simply do not apply in Wonderland. As a result, she is forced to consider the rationale behind her behavior and to make decisions based on her own evaluations when faced with a challenge, rather than reacting with a learned response. Moreover, Alice is faced with a very scary, dangerous reality: she must figure out, literally, who she is. The Caterpillar's irritating question of "who are you?" is, thus, one which lingers throughout Alice's adventures (Carroll 49).

Perhaps Alice does not completely address her identity, seeing as she is less than eight years old, but her true nature does begin to emerge in both stories. For instance, when Alice sees the horrible treatment of the Duchess's baby, she begins to rationalize. She debates, "If I don't take this child away with me...they're sure to kill it in a day or two. Wouldn't it be murder to leave it behind?" (Carroll 63). Removing the baby from its terrible mother is Alice's first act of true thought which occurs in Wonderland. It is not based on rules of etiquette or anything she could have possibly learned in the nursery. Like the question of identity, the question of ethics is important and often over-looked when education merely emphasizes performance and superficial accomplishments. When Alice forgets about being a proper guest, she becomes a compassionate, thinking individual.

As Alice goes through her adventures, she does become more aware of the Other, those who she initially felt were inferior to her because they did not abide by her upper middle-class standards of judgment. For the first time, she is able to empathize with those who are influenced by foreign ideological systems. While she belittles Wonderland and Looking-Glass creatures both for their uncivil behavior at first, she does eventually begin
to accept other ways of living. The Unicorn and the Pigeon, for instance, are able to show Alice that she can be seen as a monster. It is only a matter of perspective.

The Pigeon of *Wonderland* calls Alice a serpent, claiming that Alice is out to steal and eat her eggs, and of course, Alice defends herself. Alice tells the Pigeon, "I have tasted eggs certainly... but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know" (Carroll 56). The Pigeon’s response reveals a new world of thinking to Alice. Carroll writes, "I don't believe it,' said the Pigeon; 'but if they do, why, then they're a kind of serpent: that's all I can say.' This was such a new idea to Alice, that she quite silent for a minute or two..." (56). While the Pigeon's line of thinking tampers with the idea of syllogisms, it really unveils new territory to Alice. Alice is then able to view herself through the eyes of Wonderland creature for the first time as a strange, trespassing monster.

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice has a similar experience when she makes the acquaintance of the Unicorn. Carroll illustrates the amusing meeting:

'This is a child!' Haigha replied.... 'We only found it to-day. It's as large as life, and twice as natural!'

'I always thought they were fabulous monsters!' said the Unicorn.

'Is it alive?".....

Alice could not help her lips curling up into a smile as she began:

'Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters, too?"....

'Well, now that we have seen each other,' said the Unicorn, 'if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you....' (201-2)
Alice had never thought of herself as a fabulous monster before, but after this meeting, Alice is able to consider this role reversal. She is able to see herself from the Unicorns’ perspective. It is also another episode which encourages her to believe in that which she is told is impossible.

Alice's adventures, both in Wonderland and Looking-Glass world, help her to dispel her blind acceptance and the idea of perfect consistency. In the early stages, Alice believes that once she has experienced something that is the way it will always be. The best example of this is perhaps in the narrator's explanation of Alice's view of the shore. Carroll writes:

Alice had been to the seaside once in her life, and had come to the general conclusion that, where you go to on the English coast, you find a number of bathing-machines in the sea, some children digging in the sand with wooden spades, then a row of lodging-house, and behind them a railway-station. (30)

Carroll argues against this type of perspective, one that dictates that once one has experienced something, it will always be the same. It prevents creative thinking. Of course, nothing in Wonderland or Looking-glass world is common or usual. This ocean that Alice begins to believe she is swimming in is actually the pool of tears she cried when she was nine feet tall. Moments like this, which occur time and time again in both Alice stories, destabilize the notion of consistency, a notion which Alice’s school lessons have reinforced.

This same idea is expressed in her meeting with the Caterpillar. She offends him, saying, "three inches is such a retched height to be" (Carroll 53). The Caterpillar is, of
course, precisely three inches and does not find it wretched at all. Alice's only response to the Caterpillar's defense of the height of three inches is that she is "not used to it" and wishes that "the creatures wouldn't be so easily offended!" (Carroll 54). For most of the story, especially for the earlier episodes, anything that Alice is unaccustomed to in Wonderland, she looks down upon. Rather than attempting to understand things from the perspectives of the Wonderland creatures, she clings to that which she already knows and declares what she has learned to be the correct way.⁶ This keeps her from being able to progress into the garden that she so wishes to find. Eventually, Alice's experiences force her to reconsider those notions learned in the nursery that she clings to so fervently. She must cope with unpredictable creatures and her own inconstant size. Through this all, Alice discovers that change is constant and inevitable, but even more than that, she learns to survive on her own and to make her own choices without outside validation.

Alice new-found ability to self-validate is demonstrated in the "Queen Alice" episode of Through the Looking-Glass, as Alice questions the Queen's rules. The Queen, who insists on dishing out etiquette lessons as the Duchess dishes out morals, tells Alice that no one should speak until spoken to. This sounds much like the rule enforced onto women and children who should be "seen and not heard," but Alice cannot be confined by the arbitrary rule. She finds the flaws and argues her point, stating that "if you only spoke when you were to, and the other person always waited for you to begin, you see no body would ever say anything...." (Carroll 220). Here, Alice uses critical thinking rather than indoctrinated rules or solutions memorized in school.

Carroll prizes youthful imagination because it empowers children to accept the impossible as possible, and therefore able to progress. Perhaps the Red Queen says it

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⁶ See Donald Rackin's "Alice's Journey into Night" f. pg. 314.
best. She tells Alice, "When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast" (176). Throughout Alice's adventures, both in *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* this idea resonates; one learns little when uninterested, and therefore, by accepting the possibility of the impossible, one can learn much. As Carroll writes, "Life, what is it but a dream?"(239). Dreams offer a space for exploration without real consequences, and of course, dreams can be realized in stories.

Alice, therefore, shows a break from her typical middle-class girls' education when she begins deciding for herself which literature is interesting. Though Alice cannot stand Humpty Dumpty's poem, she does remember "Jabberwocky" line for line, despite having read it much earlier in her adventure and in the midst of great confusion. "Jabberwocky" most reflects Alice's own adventures. It is nonsense that still seems to elicit a powerful draw. While Alice cannot figure out exactly what the poem means, for some reason, she cannot help but feel that it holds some kind of importance. Of course, no Victorian parent would give a little girl an epic like "Jabberwocky," which encourages seeking glory, questing far from home, and domination. That type of tale was reserved for little boys who were pushed to conquer and flourish (Gorham 93). Women would not be allowed to do any of those things. The fact that Alice feels an attachment to "Jabberwocky" shows that she has begun to break away from the private sphere of senseless rules and limitations and desires to explore the world beyond the confines of her home and garden.

In the end, Alice does not seem to make the necessary strides to fully break away from the innocent and unquestioning school-girl despite all of these developments; she
appears to still be something greatly formed from the Romantic ideal child. After
awaking from her curious dream, she seems to be left greatly unaffected. Alice's sister
tells her that she will be late for tea and off Alice goes.

'A Child's More Than a Joke''

Alice never truly evolves as a result of her dream adventures, and as each of the
stories come to a close, one is left with the feeling that Alice is still Carroll’s “dream-
child,” an innocent, unsuspecting little girl who is unprepared to face the realities of the
adult world. For these reasons, several of Carroll's female contemporaries criticized
Carroll's *Alice* stories, particularly for the Romanticized image of the ideal girl offered in
the books and his attacks on moral literature, which was often written by women. Alice's
adventures were all merely dreams with no lasting effects. Despite all that Alice may
have begun to learn about her own character and her own world, it seems to all dissolve
once she awakes from the dreams.

Furthermore, the adventures make formal education, the teaching of
accomplishments, and etiquette training appear ridiculous and unimportant, while, on the
surface, they also appear to offer no alternative form of education. It seems that a little
girl must only play and imagine, never worrying about bigger concerns. In his ideal
world, Carroll's little girl would stay a little girl forever, perfectly lovely and innocent.

Recognizing, however, that this could not be reality, Carroll argues for the next
best thing, an education which allows his girl to grow into a child-like woman. His ideal
Victorian woman is as close as possible to the little girls he so admired, an image
captured through the imagination of Alice's older sister in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

Lastly, she pictured to herself this same little sister of hers would, in the after-time, be herself a grown woman; and how she would keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood; and how she would gather about her other little children, and make *their* eyes bright and eager with many a strange tale, perhaps even with the dream of Wonderland of long ago; and how she would feel with all their simple sorrows, and find a pleasure in all their simple joys, remembering her own child-life, and the happy summer days. (118)

The women writers who criticized him believed that this ideal would only lead a little girl to poor intellectual and maternal development, making her a poor candidate for marriage, motherhood, or even a professional career later in life. For Carroll, Alice must only grow to be a loving, emotive woman in order to be a good mother. She should maintain her simplicity, be aesthetically pleasing and childlike. Conduct book education or training in accomplishments were not important to a girl's development, only imagination and heart, which she should also encourage in her children.

Like *Wonderland*, *Through the Looking-Glass* offers an image of girl-become-woman. As the White Knight sings Alice his melancholy tune, Carroll offers a glimpse into her future:

Of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly. Years afterwards she could bring the whole scene back again, as if it had
been only yesterday.... all this she took in like a picture, as, with one hand shading her eyes, she leant against a tree, watching the strange pair, and listening, in a half-dream, to the melancholy music of the song. (214)

Carroll imagines Alice becoming a gentle, delicate woman without the haughtiness of her young self. She is leaning against a tree in an almost-pastoral setting. Like the adult Alice of Alice's sister's vision, Alice is again envisioned as this childlike woman with an appreciation for the fantastic. In this way, the adult Alice, and any Victorian girl exposed to a similar experience, would retain her innocence and imagination in her adult years, never being corrupted by adult moral lessons, the emerging capitalist system, the adult notions of class entitlement, or sexual development.

It is easy to understand why Victorian women writers felt the need to revise the *Alice* stories. For Evangelist women, Carroll's message was sinful; it encouraged all play and no work, and idleness encouraged sin. There seemed to be no moral instruction in the fantasy. For the New Woman, both the Romanticized little girl and Carroll's vision of perfect motherhood appeared sexist. The woman-Alice can be viewed essentially as a child, simple and uneducated, or at the very least still submitting to the Romantic vision of the ideal woman who was pleasing to men at all times but of little substance. Thus, women, such as Christina Rossetti and Augusta Webster, took up the fantastic style of the *Alice* stories, recreating their little girls as little women-in-training who were in need of a new form of education; these women wanted something different from the eternal icons of girlhood that Carroll turned into a cultural fetish.
'Eight years old to a minute, and not yet awake.': Christina Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses*

Ann Higonnet explains in her book *Images of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* that at the time of its inception, the Romantic idea of a separate age of childhood was new, and therefore, required art to help the public internalize it (8). She also notes that "as it was being commercialized, the image of the child was simultaneously being feminized" (9). It is no wonder, then, that women writers were often the artificers of children's books. Like the feminized innocent child, they, too, were oppressed by being "feminized," defined as feminine according to male standards of ideal womanhood. The patriarchal ideology that declared women were only fit for domestic duties and child-raising of the "private sphere," gave the role of children's story-writers to women because these stories were, in essence, just another way of educating the children, a role they would have been performing in the home anyway. Christina Rossetti was one of these women.

Rossetti, however, was not a Romantic, immersed in the sublime. She wrote in Victorian England at a time when uncertainty, not sensibility, was at the forefront of social consciousness. The industrial revolution disrupted the English class system and traditional family structures, and Darwin’s theory of evolution forced many to consider the validity of their Christian faith. Rossetti was not searching for perfection or a return to bliss; she was trying to make sense of the paradoxes in her unstable world. Unlike

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7In his book, *Secret Gardens: The Golden Age of Children’s Literature*, Humphrey Carpenter outlines the shift that occurred during the Romantic period, influenced by what Carpenter calls “the Rousseau school of child nurture,” or the movement away from viewing children as small adults to viewing childhood has a distinct and special time for learning (7) This shift, he explains, can be seen in Blake’s *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* in which childhood is portrayed as a separate and sublime age. A child is believed to see the world from a perspective that is no longer accessible to adults because of their inherent innocence (7).
Carroll's work which seems rooted in a Romantic notion of childhood, seeking a return to innocent youth, Rossetti's depictions of female childhood are much more Victorian, in the sense that they present the opposing forces constantly at work in her universe. In her first work of children's literature, her collection of nursery rhymes *Sing-Song* (1872), Rossetti's observations of Victorian childhood were first unveiled. These observations continued to evolve in her famous poem "Goblin Market" (1862) and her collection of poems *The Prince's Progress and Other Poems* (1866), though these works were not intentionally written for children. Children emerge in these literary works as simultaneously innocent and sinful, stuck between the two Evangelical images of children.

In 1874, Rossetti added to her works of children's literature publishing what she called "merely a Christmas trifle, would-be in the Alice style," otherwise known as her prose book *Speaking Likenesses (The Letters of Christina Rossetti)*. Like Carroll's works and her earlier works, *Speaking Likenesses* was initially published by Macmillan & Co. in London. It was also produced in America by Roberts Brothers of Boston, Massachusetts. The book was not nearly as successful as the *Alices*, however, and received much negative critical feedback.

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8 Rossetti's other works of children's literature include *Sing-Song, A Book of Nursery Rhymes* (1872), scrapbooks which she donated to children's hospitals, and contributions to the children's magazine, *St. Nicholas*.

9 In a letter dated December 21, 1875, Rossetti wrote a letter to Edmund Gosse correcting oversights in a published critique of *Speaking Likenesses*. He had written that all of the characters had been dreaming, while Edith and Maggie's stories are woken adventures. She mocks him, "have I not caught you napping?" (II:631). The same problem unfortunately still occurs more than a hundred years later. Though the story is perhaps more appreciated today as work of literature, critics still fail it as much more than a simple "Alice style" text and thus often commit oversights. As a less-important revision, information has been incorrectly printed. While conducting research, I was appalled by criticism that referred to *Speaking Likenesses* as a book solely about Flora (which it is most certainly not) and criticism that incorrectly addresses Maggie's Dame Margaret as her "loving Aunt" rather than her grandmother.
This negative criticism may be attributed to the major differences between the *Alice* stories and *Speaking Likenesses*. Rossetti's tale, despite being partly inspired by Carroll's *Alice* stories, are very different from his light-hearted nonsensical adventures. Julia Briggs writes:

> With inexplicable sourness, Rossetti (or her narrator) attacks the new child as exemplified in Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, the arbiter in a world of delightful play. She criticizes the middle-class child, encouraged to play in the walled rose garden and protected from any knowledge of the poverty and deprivation beyond. (212)

Indeed, *Speaking Likenesses* awakens children to very real and very dark prospects such as severe poverty, child mortality, and children who are inherently cruel. Furthermore, where Carroll's stories are written for the amusement of a little girl, Rossetti's work, which shows Evangelical influence, is written for her "Dearest Mother, in grateful remembrance of the stories with which she used to entertain her children" (dedication). Rossetti's piece seems to directly confront young girls and their families with ideas about the influence of literature in a child's education, calling attention to its ability to mold a young girl's mind and the consequent dangers of purposeless, unsupervised fantasies, as well as the necessity for moral instruction.

Like Carroll's work, though, Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* also provides commentary on existing female education practices, one with which it appears Rossetti was unhappy. As Anthony H. Harrison explains in his introduction to *The Letters of Christina Rossetti, 1874-1881*: 
A number of letters... like her poems of this period, expose Christina Rossetti as an activist despite her semireclusiveness. To the extent that her verse nearly always has religious subtexts (even if not openly devotional), it is designed to influence readers; her poems reflect the same rigorously applied Anglo-Catholic ideology that informs her books of prose nonfiction and that led her to embrace particular moral and ethical causes with missionary fervor. (xix)

One of these "moral and ethical causes" was education reform. A revision of the female education system is made visible through Speaking Likenesses, one that replaces an education in frivolous accomplishments with instruction that will prepare them for the challenges of motherhood and encourages productivity and the teachings of Christianity.

Speaking Likenesses captures scenes from a typical Victorian girl's education: an aunt teaches her five nieces how to sew as she tells them stories. The Aunt is the narrator for the three sub-stories in Speaking Likenesses. It is, of course, necessary that the nieces continue to be productive, making handkerchiefs and completing drawings as the Aunt tells her tales, as idleness can corrupt even the purest soul.

Of course, Rossetti's child heroines, including the five nieces, are far from the pure Romantic ideal of childhood. The children of Speaking Likenesses are rude, sometimes cruel, and careless, often disregarding Christian teaching. These characterizations are not without purpose. They are meant to reveal children as imperfect,

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10 Rossetti was notably involved with Governess Benevolent Institution, which provided pensions for "displaced or impoverished" governesses on a competitive basis. Rossetti donated funds to the cause and also rallied for those individual candidates whom she felt were deserving (Harrison The Letters of Christina Rosseti: Volume 2, 1874-1881 xx).
real beings rather than Rousseauian images of lost bliss. In her own letter to Alexander Macmillan, Rossetti wrote,

    I really must adopt 'Speaking Likenesses' as my title, this having met with some approval in my circle. Very likely you did not so deeply ponder upon my text as to remark that my small heroines perpetually encounter 'speaking (literally speaking) likenesses' or embodiments or caricatures of themselves or their faults. (19)

Indeed, the story is full of mirror images, both literal and figurative, as the child heroines confront the worst in themselves. Furthermore, rather than shifting the focus to the idiosyncrasies of adults and English culture as Carroll did, Rossetti turns the spotlight on children. Their faults are not the flaws of adult ideology, but rather their own selfish and irrational behavior, especially caused by lack of adult supervision and occupation. To correct these faults, Rossetti's Speaking Likenesses offers a moral education to the girls who would be reading her book and urges parents to consider Christian teaching a vital part of a girl's education.

'Was it fact? Was it fancy?'

The first story the Aunt tells her nieces is about Flora, a birthday girl with a bad attitude. As Flora awakes on her eighth birthday, she embodies the image of the perfect Romantic child. Rossetti writes:

    Whoever saw Flora on her birthday morning, at half-past seven o'clock on that morning, saw a very pretty sight. Eight years old to a minute, and not awake yet. Her cheeks were plump and pink, her light hair was all
tumbled, her little red lips were held together as if to kiss some one; her
eyes also, if you could have seen them, were merry and blue, but for the
moment they had gone fast asleep and out of sight under fat little eyelids.

(2) This scene presents a silent, beautiful image of childhood. With her soft and delicate
features, Flora is a little sleeping angel.

Higonnet explains that "Innocence suggests violation. Innocence suggests
whatever adults want to imagine. If childhood is understood as a blank slate, then adults
can freely project their own fantasies onto children, whatever those fantasies might be"
(38). Similarly, Catherine Robson states, "The very act of creating a pure, asexual, blank
child produces sexual desire: the emptiness cries out to be filled. The child, then, was
created as the infinitely desirable Other" (10). In this sleeping state, Flora is able to be
overpowered, sexualized, and manipulated imaginatively by adults. Flora is beautiful
because she is silent, and thus, compliant. She represents a moment in time that is longed
for by the adults who have now passed this stage of life, never able to return. Alice
perhaps falls into this trap as well. She is clearly an innocent little girl, unaware of the
true dangers of life. She seems to have spent most of her life in the sanctity of the nursery
or the peaceful retreat of the riverbank. Even when her journey to Wonderland has ended,
she never fully confronts the horrible truths she faced. Carroll's depiction of little girls in
his photography, his relationships with female child-friends, and especially his
fascination with Alice Liddell have all been questioned for this depiction of attractive
innocence. While some argue that Carroll was sexually attracted to these girls, others
such as Opie and Opie and Catherine Robson believe that this Romantic and idealized
depiction of girlhood was simply a way for Carroll to get back in touch with his own
colorhood, which the Romantics had feminized. For him, childhood was an unattainable
ideal, just as is Alice, and writing about it was the way to restore his connection with this
lost period of happiness. There appears to be much less gray area when it comes to
Rossetti’s children, though.

Through Flora’s interactions during her birthday party, the true nature of the
Rossetti’s child begins to show, one that is not completely pure. Flora’s sense of
entitlement, among other faults, becomes more obvious and worsens as the day goes,
destroying the image of perfect innocence. The sense of entitlement that Flora possesses
is the only the first of many flaws, but it is also a common one in many middle-class
children. The Aunt directly addresses her nieces with this thought, saying, "To be eight
years old when last night one was merely seven, this pleasure: to hope for birthday
presents without any doubt of receiving some, this also is pleasure. And doubtless you
now think so, my children...." (Rossetti 4). For Rossetti, it seems that this unquestioned
sense of comfort is a fault that must be challenged, for it only serves to create spoiled,
self-centered children.

Flora does sense that she is privileged, just as Alice does, and expects to be
treated as such. She offers no “thank yous” to those who brings her birthday gifts or to
those who shower her with compliments. Instead, she often gloats. When introduced by
Flora’s cousin Emily, Serena, practicing good manners, declares Flora to be "the most
charming girl she had ever met" (Rossetti 6). She constantly fawns over Flora, her
lifestyle, and her possessions. This only serves to inflate Flora’s ego. The Aunt tells her
nieces that "for the moment silly little Flora felt quite tall and superior, and allowed
herself to be loved very graciously" (Rossetti 6-7). The Aunt's commentary makes Flora appear ridiculous for allowing herself to feel so above Serena. It is clear that Flora enjoys being the center of attention and that this is to be frowned upon. Of course, this seems to be a reflection of her upbringing, which has encouraged her to see herself as a privileged individual, one who should be respected and may force others into servitude.

Though Flora may be unaware that she is a member of the upper middle class, she does know that she is entitled. One of the very small offering of words by Flora's mother reiterates this. She tells Flora, "You are to be queen of the feast, because it is your birthday...." (Rossetti 5). As a “birthday queen,” Flora is to be showered with gifts and honored simply for being born eight years earlier. Flora uses the phrase, “It's my birthday,” to get whatever she wants, regardless of whether or not she has earned it (Rossetti 13). She uses her status as “birthday queen” to manipulate of her cousins and most obviously, lower class Serena.

Rossetti, however, advocated the notion of the strong helping the weak, a principle influenced by her devout Christian beliefs (Burlinson 184). Aside from her work with the Governess Benevolent Institution and her fervor for the antivivisectionist movement, Rossetti also volunteered at the St. Mary Magdalene Penitentiary in Highgate (Marsh 218-19). St. Mary Magdalene's Penitentiary helped young prostitutes who no longer wanted to live a life of sin to reform themselves, offering “training and spiritual instruction in the Sunday School manner” (Marsh 223). She also compiled scrapbooks for children's hospitals and wrote for *St. Nicholas Magazine* and *Wide-Awake*, two magazines that encouraged their middle-class subscribers to remember the less fortunate
Flora’s middle-class sense of entitlement would have been out of touch with Rossetti’s devout belief in this basic Christian principle. Aside from feeling entitled, Flora is also completely ungrateful for that which she receives, as are the other middle-class children with whom she shares her birthday celebration. For instance, Flora’s parents have a large birthday meal prepared for the birthday guests, but instead of showing appreciation, the children find fault with every piece of the meal: "Meat underdone, potatoes overdone, beans splashy, jam tart not sweet enough, fruit all stone; cover clattering, glasses reeling, a fork or two dropping on the floor" (Rossetti 8). The Aunt narrator makes it clear that the complaints are made because the children are being spiteful and not because the meal is actually poorly prepared.

The parents seem at least partially to blame for the children's poor behavior. Aside from waking their daughter, giving her birthday presents, and encouraging her to be the "queen of the feast," Flora’s parents are absent from the rest of the Aunt’s tale, as are almost all of the parents in Speaking Likenesses. The children, especially Flora, are thus given free rein to behave as they like.

'The Apple of Discord'

Instead of being guided through useful pastimes which would teach them Christian values, the children in the Aunt’s story about Flora’s birthday are left to their own devices, and as Victorian moralists warned, idleness is the devil's playground. Ultimately, the children choose to play games that have disastrous outcomes. During these games, the children show their potential to commit several of the cardinal vices, revealing the true dangers of idleness and a lack of adult, Christian guidance.
The first game the children attempt to play is blind-man's bluff, a game in which the Aunt reminds her nieces, "toes have been trodden on, hair pulled, and small children overthrown" (Rossetti 9). The game results only in pouting and false accusations of cheating. Flora accuses Alfred of tripping her when she falls. Richard says that his brother pretended not to be caught. Anne claims that Susan is able to see, though she is blindfolded. Attempting to maintain their own pride and vanity, the children lie and cheat. There is nothing good gained from this experience, not even pleasure.

After blind-man's bluff, the children attempt hide-and-seek, which goes no better. Serena pretends to be afraid of the forest so that Alfred will accompany her, and Flora, envious of the attention Alfred shows Serena, fakes being in need of assistance. When Alfred feels torn between the two girls, Flora whines, "It's my birthday!" (Rossetti 13), exhibiting again her sense of entitlement and self-centeredness. More than any other game, this one produces wrath, resulting in a scuffle between the two younger boys, George and Richard. Only Susan, the older sister, is thoughtful enough to collect berries for her friends and relatives as she hides. This game, too, fails to be productive. It only causes anger and grief; there is no pleasure, and certainly, nothing learned which would enable them to grow into mature adults. It only encourages each child to look after her own interests, taking no heed of the others.

The last game-playing attempt, running races, tries the patience of even the older children, Susan and Alfred, who had hitherto attempted to maintain harmony within the group. Anne fakes being hurt to get attention. Flora sulks because she was winning, and with Anne crying, no one notices. Then, the two younger boys make faces at the little girls. It is all chaos and discord with children hurting each other. Eventually, Susan and
Alfred force the younger children to take a walk through the park, leaving off the
dreadful games entirely.

The games leave Flora so disgruntled that when Susan tries to tell her the story of
the frog who did not know how to boil the kettle (which later becomes the Aunt's story of
Edith), one from which she could perhaps learn a useful lesson, Flora has "no heart to
listen, or to care about the frog" (16). She ends up alone, in the shadow of the woods, the
scariest place of all in fairy tales, the place where her adventures will begin.

Like Alice, Flora appears to haphazardly wander into her adventure, led by her
sense of childish curiosity. She opens a door whose knocker shakes her hand and lets her
into the mirrored palace of the Birthday Queen, reminiscent of the talking door of Queen
Alice's castle in Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*. At first, the mirrored palace
appears charming. The furniture follows Flora about, trying to make her comfortable, and
the looking-glasses present Flora with an opportunity to admire her own beauty. The
Aunt says, "she thought it quite delightful, and took a long look at her little self full
length" (21). The fantastic fun is quickly cut short, though, when the other-world children
enter the scene.

The room Flora enters is filled with children. There, Flora gets the attention she
wants; all eyes are on her. Not one of the children looking at her, however, invites Flora
to join them for tea, making her feel awkward and unwelcome. When she sits down by
herself and begins to eat a strawberry with whipped cream, the Birthday Queen comes
and snaps them away, stating, "it's my birthday, and everything is mine!" (Rossetti 25),
obviously reflecting Flora's earlier behavior at her own birthday party. From that point
on, Flora is made to inferior and in danger.
While characters and circumstances may have appeared threatening in *Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, such as the cook who throws pans and knives at the Duchess and her baby, they also appeared ridiculous; eventually, one could mock the threat. The Queen of *Wonderland*, for instance, sentences characters to executions, but as the Gryphon explains, they are never actually carried out. Rossetti's threats, however, are much more plausible than laughable.

The games the children play in this mirror palace perhaps best illustrate the threatening nature of Rossetti's story. To begin, the five children who attempt to play with Flora are exceedingly frightening. The boys are “Angles,” “Fish-Hooks,” and “Quills.” The girls are “Sticky” and “Slimy.” Each name represents what makes up the children. Their special makeups give them physical advantages over poor, defenseless Flora. Clearly, and quite unlike in the *Alices*, the threats Flora faces do not derive from adults attempting to reestablish their authority over children, but from other children.

In playing their games, they use their powers to take exploit the weak. The first game the children choose to play is Hunt the Pincushion, chosen by the Birthday Queen herself. The game is described as follows:

Select the smallest and weakest player (if possible let her be fat: a hump is best of all), chase her round and round the room, overtaking her at short intervals, and sticking pins into her here or there as it happens: repeat, till you choose to catch and swing her: which concludes the game. Short cuts, yells, and sudden leaps give spirit to the game. (Rossetti 23)

Ella, one of the nieces listening to the Aunt's tale, is horrified by this explanation, and asks her Aunt whether such a terrible game could actually exist; however, Aunt explains,
"I have seen before very rough and cruel play, if it can be termed play at all?" (Rossetti 23). Again, reiterating resistance to the idea of play as a positive outlet for children.

This game is followed by Self Help, a game where the boys would use their natural advantages to capture the girls, marking them with visible symbols of ownership. Again, the nieces are horrified by the idea of such a game in which Hooks tangles his captives in fishhooks, Angles uses "sustained pressure" to leave his mark, and Quills uses his needles to engrave his mark into his victims. The Aunt explains, "my birthday party is being held in the Land of Nowhere. Yet who knows whether something not altogether unlike it has not ere now taken place in the Land of Somewhere? Look at home children" (Rossetti 36). She makes it clear that the horrors of these games are merely reflections of real life, where children, though perhaps not made of fishhooks, still beat on the weaker and the boys attempt to dominate the girls.

The final game is left unnamed, but it is no less dangerous or cruel-intentioned. In this game, the children build fortresses out of glass bricks and then hail stones at one another, attempting to shatter each other's structures. Flora is somehow built in with the Birthday Queen who hails the largest stone of all, causing the whole world to come crashing down, and also waking Flora from her horrible dream. In Speaking Likenesses, play is not an educational tool as it is in Carroll's Alice stories. It isn't even true entertainment; instead, it is an immoral waste of time.

'Reflections of reflections'

Despite the children's "speaking likenesses," Rossetti's depictions of children are not completely negative. It remains ambiguous throughout Rossetti's texts whether
children are innately evil or innately good; regardless of which it is, however, children do still appear to be have the potential to be good. Even as Flora and her cousins, friends, and siblings fight, the Aunt tells her nieces that "with all their faults these children did really love each other" (5). *Speaking Likenesses* seems to reflect what Jan Marsh calls Rossetti's "Lost Sheep guiding principle," the idea that all those who sin are "reclaimable lambs" (226). Though referring to Rossetti's work in the St. Mary Magdalene Penitentiary, the same principle applies to the children in *Speaking Likenesses*. In order to become a functional and morally-upright member of society, they need of some moral guidance. With this moral guidance, however, they can succeed and be saved from evil.

Flora's dream adventures help to clarify this. Like Alice's adventures, Flora's adventure is a dream. Rossetti, however, does not leave her little girl unaffected by her dream. Though Flora does return home for tea after her she awakes just as Alice does, Flora comes to new revelations as a result of her experiences. Rossetti writes:

> Before tea was over, [Flora] had nestled up close to Anne, and whispered how sorry she was to have been so cross.

> And I think if she lives to be nine years old and give another birthday party, she is likely on that occasion to be even less like the birthday Queen of her troubled dream than was the Flora of eight years old: who, with dear friends and playmates and pretty presents, yet scarcely knew how to bear a few trifling disappointments, or how to be obliging and good-humoured under slight annoyances. (48-49)

While Alice merely tells her sister of her wonderful dream and leaves her sister lusting for her own adventure, Flora's adventure does not lead her to continue pretending and
being curious. Instead, it teaches Flora a different lesson. It shows her an image of what she does not want to become, a tyrannical birthday queen. Her adventure leads her to an apology and an appreciation for those things for which she has been ungrateful, one which she will maintain even until her ninth birthday.

'Tell us the story of the frog who couldn't boil the kettle'

The second story the Aunt tells her nieces is about Edith, a story which evolves from Susan's attempted tale for Flora. Edith, unlike Flora, is not content to be a child excited for the pleasures of birthdays. As the Aunt explains, "Edith was a little girl who thought herself by no means such a very little girl, and at any rate as wise as her elder brother, sister, and nurse" (Rossetti 51). Immediately, Edith's biggest flaw emerges; she believes herself above her elders and in no need of guidance. Julia Briggs explains:

Edith is a child so young that she cannot yet distinguish between fact and fantasy, between toys, pets, or animals that talk, who has not yet realized that she cannot do everything that adults can, or identified the skills and experiences that distinguish them from her. It is a very small incident, but on its own terms it offers a graphic fable of pride followed by a fall, a warning of the strict limitations of the child's control over her fragile world. (225)

Edith is clearly still a very little girl, though she does not like to admit it, and this denial leads her into danger. A little girl who still plays with dolls is in no position to run her own life as she pleases.
Like Flora, Edith, too, has a mother who is preparing a gathering for family and friends, a "gipsy tea" in the woods, and as a result, she is too busy to pay attention to Edith, as is Edith's father. For most of the story, the parents are absent, and it is this lack of guidance and parental interaction seems to be the cause for Edith's boredom, idleness, and eventual mischief. With mother and father gone, she must entertain herself. Edith, later, acts as a "speaking likeness" of these absent parents, who are too concerned with their social lives to partake properly in child-raising. She forgets her doll in the kitchen as she goes outside to boil water in a fancy kettle, the most important part of the "gipsy tea" gathering. Edith does not know much about preparing for parties or lighting kettles, and she is punished for what Briggs calls her "Promethean hubris" (225). Furthermore, Edith's desire to light the kettle is not a desire to help her parents prepare, but a call for attention. She wants to be fawned over for a job well done.

Despite her aversion to being advised, it becomes evident that Edith truly is in need of guidance. After failing to light the kettle and expending almost all of her matches, Edith is left to rely on the advice of animals. They are all useless, however, and this is extremely frustrating to Edith. She tells the pigeons who attempt to help her light her kettle, "I wish you'd advise something sensible, instead of telling me to fly without wings" (63). This statement also applies to girls who would attempt the duties of motherhood after an education which that has prepared her only to be a competitor in the marriage market. Edith needs someone to teach her lessons that will help to be an efficient homemaker and mother, but instead she is left to do as she pleases. Later, when the last attempt to light the fire beneath the kettle fails, Edith cries, sadly reminded how
much assistance she does truly need. In the end, she must be rescued by a concerned adult.

Edith's story ends with Nurse finding her in the forest with the items necessary for boiling the water in the kettle, declaring that Edith's family has been searching everywhere in the house for her and the Cook has been desperately wanting her kettle. Had Edith only been willing to pause and listen to the Cook, who had tried to warn her that lighting the kettle required knowledge and skill, she would have enjoyed the company of her family rather than spending a day alone and miserable in the woods.

The tale of Edith does not offer as much closure as the tale of Flora, however. When the Nurse finds Edith, there are no revelations. Though Edith may have learned not to wander in the woods with a tea kettle (although even this is uncertain), the story ends abruptly with Nurse's directions. There is no “happily ever after,” suggesting that the real problem in the story, the lack of parental guidance, still remains and that Edith ultimately will meet with negative consequences as a result. Furthermore, Edith never does learn how to perform the simple domestic task of boiling water in a kettle, suggesting that the middle class girl will remain a useless meddler. Though she is rescued from the woods, Edith is still a victim of her upbringing.

'Put away your pout and pull out your needle'

As I have previously stated, Rossetti's Christian beliefs lead her to frown upon idleness as a catalyst for sin. The mischievous nature of idleness that Carroll pokes fun at in Wonderland, however, is brought to the forefront here and appears to be a certain evil. Those who are idle, like Flora and Edith, are often led astray.
Flora and Edith's stories are told within a frame, however; it must not be overlooked that an Aunt is narrating stories to her young nieces. While the heroine of each the Aunt's tales meets with her "speaking likeness," the tales themselves are "speaking likenesses" of the middle-class, sheltered, spoiled nieces to whom the stories are being told. Briggs writes:

One function of the Aunt within the story is thus to bring into her narratives some question of what her nieces, like Flora and Edith within their respective tales, have taken for granted, their own privileged and untroubled existence, to introduce to them what the enclaves of middle-class childhood might otherwise have rendered invisible, the existence of the poor beyond the gates and of transience beyond apparent security....

(228)

The Aunt's nieces are ignorant, mercurial, and rude, often interrupting their Aunt's stories with silly questions that, according to the Aunt's responses, they should already be able to answer for themselves. They are oblivious to and shocked by the cruel actions of the mirror-world children and the Mouth-Boy, yet they never question Flora or Edith's behavior. Furthermore, it seems that the girls have no responsibilities, only leisure time. Their aunt must force them to sit down and be literally productive, making some sew and others draw.

The girls are clearly unhappy with being forced to work. When the Aunt tells her nieces they must continue on to new projects if they have finished their work from the previous day, Maude complains, "But we got through our work yesterday" (Rossetti 50), Ella would rather be playing music than sewing buttons. The Aunt, of course, has some
words to say about this laziness. She scolds her nieces, saying, "no help no story. I have
too many poor friends ever to get through my work" (Rossetti 50). She will not tell
fantastic stories unless there is work being done by all. Rossetti's story, therefore, not
only shows the negative influences of idleness and play, but also pushes girls to be
industrious, a quality which is emphasized further in the Aunt's final tale. While idleness
is at the center of Rossetti's social critique, Speaking Likenesses is about much more than
refraining from idleness; it is about social responsibility. Rossetti emphasizes the
importance of helping those who cannot help themselves.

The final tale reiterates the importance of productivity and social responsibility.
Maggie, a poor but very caring little girl, is the heroine of this tale. Unlike the earlier
stories, including the Alices, the story of Maggie is a winter tale instead of one that takes
place in the summer. The setting is gloomy, and the little girl, so cold that she wants to
sleep (and die), is reminiscent of Hans Christian Anderson's The Little Match-Seller
(1846). It is vastly different from the simple nonsense of Wonderland, Looking-Glass
world, or the warm nursery of the five nieces. The main characters of this story are not
upper or middle-class individuals with leisure time and money. They are working class,
and as such, they are models of productivity.

The story of Maggie offers a female adult figure who is to be revered, unlike any
of the characters of Wonderland or Through the Looking-Glass. Dame Margaret is
Maggie's grandmother, who took her in when her parents passed away. While Dame
Margaret is clearly a figure distinct from those females in the Alice stories, she is also
distinct from any of the adults in Speaking Likenesses. She is the sole woman who offers
words of guidance to the child in her care, and the only one who offers a truly Christian
example for the young girls to follow. In Aunt's description the Dame Margaret's charitable nature is revealed:

Dame Margaret was no fine lady, but a nice simple old woman who wore plain clothes, and made them last a long time: and this it was that over and over again she found money to give or lend among her needy neighbors. If a widow's cow died, or a labourer's cottage was burnt down, or if half-a-dozen poor children were left orphans, Dame Margaret's purse would be the first to open, and the last to shut; though she was very cautious as to helping idlers who refused to help themselves, or drunkards who would only do more harm with more money. (72)

The way in which Dame Margaret is described is a key to the morality Rossetti was attempting to enforce through *Speaking Likenesses*. She appears to be the Aunt's "speaking likeness" of herself. Though not a rich woman, Dame Margaret is willing to help those less fortunate than herself. She is hard-working, and rather than enjoying leisure time, she attends to the patrons of her shop. She also uses her money to help less fortunate individuals, rather than spending her earnings on lavish parties or expensive fashion trends. A follower of the Christian ideal of helping those in need, Dame Margaret is also Rossetti's ideal maternal figure. While Dame Margaret forms this ideal maternal figure, she is not actually a mother, as the Aunt is not either; however, she performs a role that Flora and Edith's mother clearly do not. Dame Margaret offers Maggie an education in Christian principles, leading by her own example. This is, of course, also what the Aunt intends to do.
One learns that Dame Margaret finds enjoyment in being able to assist others. Of course, as much as Dame Margaret finds pleasure in serving her customers, Maggie, too, finds it a "delight to run up steps and reach down goods from high shelves" (Rossetti 73). It is this desire to please others that leads Maggie to her adventure. When the Doctor's daughters forget tapers for their Christmas tree, Dame Margaret gives Maggie permission to assist her by taking the far trip to the doctor's house to make a delivery. In other words, Maggie does not stumble on her quest in quite the same way that Flora and Edith do. It is duty, not idleness that leads Maggie on her dangerous adventure, though she does hope to see a Christmas tree.

Of the three girls, Maggie is the best prepared for her adventure, using her grandmother's words as a moral compass to get her through her trials. First, she avoids the horrible game-playing children of Flora's dream by remembering her promise to her grandmother to make haste. Then, unlike Flora who remained quiet and compliant, Maggie does not lapse into silence and attempt to appease the poor behavior of Mouth-Boy, whose rude actions resemble those of the Birthday Queen. Instead, she scolds him for lying about being a starving beggar and attempting to steal chocolate which does not belong to him, stating "I'm hungry enough myself, but I wouldn't be a thief!" (Rossetti 86). Dame Margaret's own behavior serves as a model for this, as she is willing to help the truly needy, but does not offer money to those who will not help themselves. Maggie's actions actually change the Mouth-Boys behavior, rather than allowing it to continue unchecked. The Aunt says, "when [Maggie] spoke so resolutely and seemed altogether so determined, it was he that hung his head, shut his mouth, and turned to go...." (Rossetti 86). As a result, Maggie emerges a strong maternal figure who defends
her livelihood, both physical and economic, and teaches the unruly Mouth-Boy a moral
lesson which will perhaps allow him to live a better life. Thus, Rossetti suggests that one
good maternal figure creates another, and so on.

Though there are some fantastic threats, the biggest threats to Maggie are real--
cold and night. Maggie's journey through the forest is long, continuing on into the night,
and she becomes tired. The Aunt reminds her nieces, however, of the consequences
should Maggie give in to her longings. She says, "Do you know, children, what would
most likely have happened to Maggie if she had yielded to drowsiness and slept out there
in the cold?...Most likely she would have never woke. And there would have been an
abrupt end to my story" (Rossetti 87). The nieces, up until the Aunt's explanation, had
been rather ignorant to this harsh reality, as they are upper middle-class children who
need not concern themselves with work or cold. They are safely sheltered. For Maggie,
however, death is a very real possibility. Even when she sees others in the woods
sleeping comfortably by a fire, her promise to make haste pushes her to complete her
mission to deliver the Doctor's package rather than stop for a rest.

Maggie believes that when she completes her mission she will be rewarded both
with an invitation into the Doctor's warm home and an opportunity to see a Christmas
tree. The Doctor, a middle-class man, offers little sympathy to the little girl who has been
wandering the cold all day to deliver him some trifles. She risks her life for him to
receive something material and clearly unimportant, but rather than taking care of the
poor girl, he takes the package inside with a quick "thank you" and closes the door on
her. He symbolizes the ignorant and sheltered middle class, void of Christian principles.
While the Doctor is fortunate enough to be in a position of wealth, he offers nothing to
the little girl who has so kindly offered to bring his things to him, despite the threats of night, cold, and forest. Maggie, however, does not allow this to embitter her. She still proceeds to be a kind and caring soul, taking a basket full of animals in need back home with her. Even with her few resources, Maggie is still willing to give them shelter and food, which the Doctor, with his many resources, has denied her.

In the end, Maggie is the only one of the three girls who does not need to be rescued from her adventures. While Flora could only awake from her nightmare and Edith had to be found and brought home by her nurse, Maggie successfully completes her quest and returns home, suggesting that her upbringing has been the most effective. Her ability to act morally and selflessly allows her to accomplish her goals and to make a few new friends along the way.

Maggie is not self-centered. She exhibits self-control, takes advice, and cares for the weak. She does not show wrath, envy, or any of the middle-class selfishness of the other stories' children. These are the qualities that allow her to succeed. Of course, Maggie is not perfect either. She is still a child learning about right and wrong and figuring what really matters in life. Her desire to see a Christmas tree at the Doctor's house, for instance, endangers her. Maggie does learn from her experiences, however. Her misguided actions are forgivable, and she may actually learn and grow from them.

It should also be noted that Rossetti almost immediately regretted the way in which her book was initially printed by Macmillan. In a November 4, 1874 letter to Alexander Macmillan, Rossetti writes, "I ought to beg a cancel of the titlepage.... the List of Illustrations treats my subjects as I should not have treated them: the word "fairy" I should altogether have excluded as not appropriate to my story" (30-31). In her article,
"'A Taste for Truth and Realities': Early Advice to Mothers on Books for Girls," Mitzi Myers states, "Fairy tales...suggest that since events happen inexplicably and effort does not determine reward, perhaps the best response is just to let events sweep one along" (120). Fairy tales, thus, are in direct opposition to the values Speaking Likenesses attempts to inculcate, the idea that a girl must work hard and think of others if she wants to be rewarded (perhaps with eternal salvation) in the end.

Rossetti ends both Maggie's story and Speaking Likenesses with the following lines: "Dame Margaret and Maggie followed the good example set them, and went to bed and to sleep" (96). Maggie seems to have learned her lesson. She is content to stay within the home, no longer desirous of material possessions, and she no longer exhibits an Alice-like desire to stray. Instead, she retires in a warm and peaceful home, having made new friends amongst the animals.11 She becomes an ideal candidate for motherhood. Furthermore, unlike the Alices, Rossetti's tale ends with a girl who has been truly changed for the better rather than a girl who has been unaffected by her terrifying, dream-like journey, which is also perhaps why she chooses to conclude with Maggie rather than the Aunt and her nieces.

'With enchanting expectation'

The differences are seemingly clear, then, between the Alices and Rossetti's Alice–inspired story. Speaking Likenesses still utilizes moral didacticism, intended to

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11 Rossetti herself was very fond of animals. Harrison explains that she often enjoyed trips to the zoo and observing animals in the park. Kathryn Burlinson also writes about Rossetti's involvement with the antivivisectionist movement in her essay "Frogs and Fat Toads: Christina Rossetti and the Significance of the Nonhuman." Burlinson explain, "[Rossetti's] championing of the small, weak, and grotesque challenges to the point of near threat those who condone or ignore the sufferings of others. She is not directing her remarks solely at scientists, but any person who frightens, endangers, or harms a frog, or "such like." (185).
instruct rather than to offer simple pleasure. Its style is not the Alice style as much as the cautionary tale style. As is made evident through her treatment of game-playing and the lackadaisical lives of middle-class female children, Rossetti believes that a pleasure-centered childhood with ample time to remain idle will only endanger children, leading them into chaos and sin. Thus, though Rossetti seems to have enjoyed the tale, a story like Alice could not wholly satisfy Rossetti because it encouraged wanderlust and offered no apparent words or wisdom for girls attempting to become young ladies. Her revisions needed to offer something more substantial to these girls, who were experiencing a time of great uncertainty and a need of moral guidance. Rossetti was a firm believer, however, that women should remain in the home, that this "private sphere" of domesticity was their God-given place, and so, like Carroll, her little girls are still very much a part of this private, middle-class life style in the end.

Though Rossetti appears to argue against the tradition middle-class education of accomplishments and fact-memorization, her revised model is not radical. One could argue that this educational model still subordinates women to the patriarchal dominances, implying female inferiority and preventing women from becoming intellectual equals with men. Burstyn writes:

As Christians these women [writers] had been taught to resign themselves with humility to a subordinate role; instead they fought against it and urged other women to do the same. The conflict between their religious upbringing and their ambition in some cases generated anxiety and guilt that handicapped their efforts at reform. (146-7)
Indeed, a conflict between religion, which placed her exclusively in the domestic sphere, and her desire to be part of the literary marketplace, which placed her in the public sphere, seems to have plagued the devout Rossetti. Though she clearly saw a need for certain socio-cultural and political reforms, she was only willing to work within the structure established by her High Anglican belief system. This conflict becomes apparent in her letter to Augusta Webster, written in 1878. Rossetti writes, "I do not think the present social movements tend on the whole to uphold Xtianity, or that the influence of some of our most prominent and gifted women is exerted in that direction: and thus thinking I cannot aim at 'women's rights'" (159). Here, Rossetti denies the women's rights movements as a worthy cause and refuses to sign a petition in support of women's voting rights. In an earlier letter, however, Rossetti had written:

if female rights are sure to be overborne for lack of female voting influence, then I confess I feel disposed to shoot ahead of my instructresses, and to assert that female M.P’s are only right and reasonable. Also I take exceptions at the exclusion of married women from the suffrage,—for who so apt as Mothers—all previous arguments allowed for the moment—to protect the interest of themselves and of their offspring? I do think if anything ever does sweep away the barrier of sex, and make the female not a giantess or a heroine but at once and full grown a hero and a giant, it is that mighty maternal love which makes little birds and little beasts as well as little women matches for very big adversaries. (750)
This letter, in contrast to following letter, shows Rosseti's inner-conflict. Though she was unwilling to break out of the existing structure, Rossetti still had trouble admitting to complete female inferiority. Furthermore, as a female writer, this God-given power structure was not so black and white, being active in the literary marketplace required Rossetti to have a foot in man's "public sphere."

Though they are beyond the scope of this paper to discuss in full detail, this same conflict between the private and public spheres and the agency of females emerges in many of Rossetti's works, most notably, "Goblin Market." Indeed, Rossetti seems to be struggling continuously with this idea of the woman's "private sphere," though she claims to deeply value it. Though it appears completely didactic, Speaking Likenesses also questions this idea of the safe garden, the little girl's own very private sphere. The Aunt's fairy tale girls are unable to learn much without venturing into the wilderness, after all. Though they follow their curiosity to dangerous adventures, they are all the better for their brushes with chaos outside the comfortable "private sphere."

In the end, however, Rossetti's devout Christian belief undeniably restrained her from aiming for radical changes in the socio-ideological view of womanhood and the ways in which a girl becoming a woman should be educated. While Rossetti would only go as far as to suggest a reform in girls' education that adhered to religious and moral standards, Webster had begun to fight the more radical fight for women's voting rights and higher education for women.
‘They’ll learn someday’: Augusta Webster’s *Daffodil and the Croäxaxicans: A Romance of History*

In an obituary in the *New York Times*, Augusta Webster (1837-1894) was remembered as "ranked by some critics as being second to Robert Browning as dramatist and poet." It is obvious that Webster's work was admired by many in her day, notably by William Michael Rossetti, who wrote an introduction to Webster's incomplete *Mother and Daughter* (1895) sonnet sequence. In addition to her poetry, plays, and translations of Greek dramas, Webster was also well-known for her witty columns in *The Examiner* that she later published in their entirety as *A Housewife's Opinions* (1879). Yet, ask a student, professor, or enthusiast of English literature today which of Augusta Webster's works she or he likes best and nine times out of ten a blank stare will be the answer. Those who are familiar with her work, though, often greatly admire her.

Webster's exclusion from the canon until recently may, in part, have to do with her atypical upbringing and her feminist endeavors. Webster was not the generic "Angel in the House," and those wishing to draw a line between the modern era and that of the old-fashioned, priggish Victorians may not have known how to classify Webster's career-woman lifestyle or writing, which was stylistically and thematically more modern than that of other "Victorian poetesses." She blurred the line that scholars so love to draw

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12 Rossetti writes in his introduction to Webster's *Mother and Daughter* sonnet sequence, “In calling The Sentence the one supreme thing I was speaking of its position in Augusta Webster's own work: but I must in candour go beyond this, and express my conviction (I have done so once before in print) that it is the supreme thing amid the work of all British poetesses. Taking into account its importance in scale and subject, and its magnificence in handling, it beats everything else” (13).

13 *The Angel in the House* (1862) was a poem written by Coventry Patmore that was inspired by his wife. The poem illustrates the ideal Victorian woman, one who is a constant source of love and praise to her husband, who is gentle and dutiful, and who is unshakably faithful. In 1931, Virginia Woolf delivered a speech called “Professions for Women,” which discussed the conflict that existed between being a woman writer and fulfilling the gender roles defined for her by her Victorian ancestors. She famously stated, “Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer.”
between literary periods. In life and in writing, Webster’s voice was neither passive enough to be that of the modest Victorian lady, nor aggressively feminist enough to be considered that of the modern New Woman. She danced on the cusp of intellectual revolution.

Born Julia Augusta Davies, Webster was an Admiral’s daughter who spent most of her childhood aboard the ship *Griper* and at Banff Castle in Scotland, a British naval base (Boos 280). After her father became chief constable at Cambridgeshire, Webster settled down with her mother in Cambridge at the age of fourteen, where she intended to begin life as a school teacher (Boos 281; Rigg 36). Of Webster’s own education, Patricia Rigg writes, “Webster’s education was typical for her time and her class in that she lived vicariously through the educational experiences of her husband, brothers, brothers-in-law, and nephews who attended Cambridge” (38). Webster clearly had a desire to be educated. She taught herself Latin and Greek to help a younger brother, learned Italian, Spanish, and French, and traveled to the Continent to learn more about the world (Boos 281). She was also very fond of art, and later, attended the South Kensington Art School in London, though she was expelled for her “spirited attempt at whistling” (Bianchi 876).

As an adult, Webster played an active role in the London Suffrage Society and acted as the first female officer of the London School Board (Boos 156; 236). She was a member of the Kensington Society and executive of the Central Committee of the National Society for Women’s Suffrage (Rigg 101; 168). Less radical then some of her

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14 In her book *Julia Augusta Webster: Victorian Aestheticism and the Woman Writer*, Patricia Rigg writes that as early as 1890, Webster’s exclusion from the canon was already being established, citing Christina Rossetti’s disappointment with Webster’s exclusion from Gladstone’s “list of poets to whom he wished to pay tribute.” Rossetti wrote to her brother, William Michael, “By-the-by, did not Mr. Gladstone omit from his list of poetsesses the one name which I incline to feel as by far the most formidable of those known to me, Augusta Webster? I did not notice the omission at the moment, but suspect it in retrospect” (qtd. in Rigg 242). Rigg concludes that “the woman who had earned so much critical praise from her peers had essentially disappeared long before Margaret’s [Webster’s daughter] death” (268).
peers, Webster believed in the “wedge” approach, supporting voting rights first for single women, believing this would spark a catalyst to attain rights for married women (Rigg 101). Though her fellow Women’s Suffragist committee member, Helen Taylor, ran for the London School Board with every intention of bringing the message of the movement to the board, Webster was primarily concerned with the mission of public education, especially the question of the how to best serve the poverty-stricken students. Rigg states:

Indeed, Webster made her commitment to run for a seat on the board at a meeting of the Central Auxiliary Committee for promoting the candidature of women for the London School Board, but her board record suggests that she motivated less by the politics of the women’s movement than by her desire to participate in the formulating principles of public education.

(187)

During her nine years as an executive board member of the London School Board from 1879-1888, Webster served on the School Management Committee, the Educational Endowment Committee, the By-Laws Committee, the Special Committee on the Inspection of Board Schools, and the Chelsea division of the Special Committee of Representation (Rigg 192-94). Through these committees, Webster was able to oversee the hiring, appointment, and promotion process, the certification process, and the action taken against the parents of truant students.

This is not to say, however, that Webster became a silent by-stander, no longer concerned with the women’s suffrage movement because of her goal to improve education for children of both sexes. She was outraged when the board proposed to do away with married women teachers. Some claimed that a woman who was a wife and
mother was needed at home and that a teaching profession took away from her ability to
do her domestic duties. Webster pressed her fellow boardmembers to oppose this ban of
married women teachers by explaining, as Rigg puts it, that the board would "injure
education by eliminating the element of motherhood" because mothers have a better
sense of children’s need (239).

Webster campaigned for the education of girls as well during her time on the
London School Board. She opposed the vote to increase instruction in domestic skill for
girls and advocated for physical training and lessons in mechanical drawing to scale,
lessons boys were already being taught (Rigg 192). In A Housewife’s Opinions, Webster
urges her readers to support a standard of education for girls. She writes, "Hitherto the
educational career of young lady students has been too much like the Wonderland
‘caucus-race,’ in which all the runners began when and where they liked, and left off
where they happened to be...." (101). The lack of qualified educators and a unified
curriculum were top concerns. She believed girls deserved the same structure and quality
of education that boys were already receiving, including competitive exams and
opportunities for higher education. Webster also rallied for college education for women,
and she wanted the opportunity for female students not just to attend college classes and
take examinations, but to receive college degrees for their efforts like their male
counterparts.

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15 Paul S. Deslandes explains in his book Oxbridge Men: British Masculinity and the
Undergraduate Experience that the Education Act of 1870 made it mandatory for girls to
be educated, and that, furthermore, the Girls’ Public Day School Trust, initiated in 1872
made secondary education available to some of them. In the higher education field,
Girton College in Cambridge and Newnham College had begun to open their doors to
g female students. Oxford and Cambridge, however, continued to prohibit women from
receiving degrees, though they were allowed to attend classes. (185)
'Very much doing nothing feels like such a waste of time'

Aside from campaigning for basic education, college degrees, and voting rights for women in *A Housewife's Opinions*, Webster spends a good deal of time addressing child-rearing and the emerging children's literature market. She is especially critical of the children's literature market, mostly because adults are left to write and purchase these texts. Webster writes:

in what reckless fashion do most purchases pitch upon their purchases--one cannot talk of choice, unless the butterfly's action is choice when he alights upon one flower instead of another. A large majority of tales for children directly aim at instilling into them religious or moral precepts, nay, in some cases, religious dogmas. Even if the moral lessons could be taken for granted as infallibly judicious and, what is as important and still more rare, judiciously conveyed, the religious lessons must vary with the authors. Yet these tales are given to the young readers indiscriminately....(115)

Though Webster mainly speaks in this essay on her dissatisfaction with thoughtless choice of books and the problems inherent in didactic literature, she does outline several other shortcomings of the children's literature market. Despite her criticism, however, Webster was clearly still intrigued by it. In 1884, five years after the publication of *A Housewife's Opinions*, Webster went on to publish her own children's book, *Daffodil and the Croaxaxicans: A Romance of History*. 
*Daffodil and the Croãxaxicans* is the story of Daffodil, a sheltered, middle-class girl who, in an attempt to find the fairy river people of her governess’s stories, ends up in the frog kingdom of Croãxaxica. The story, like Carroll’s *Alice* and Rossetti’s *Speaking Likenesses*, was published by Macmillan & Co., both in England and the United States.¹⁶ At the time of its release, *Daffodil* was greeted with mixed reviews. The September 5, 1885 issue of Boston’s *The Literary World* claimed that "Mrs. Webster's style of writing is always good, but the story in itself is rather too dull and prolix to meet the tastes of young readers." That same year, *The Irish Monthly* stated in its "Notes on New Books," "Mrs. Augusta Webster, the greatest, probably of all women-poets, at least living, has given 'Daffodil' to the fanciful literature of childhood" (48). Given that *Daffodil* provides not only nonsense style fantasy, but Webster's criticism of the existing English socio-cultural ideologies, it is not difficult to understand why the reviews are mixed.

*Daffodil* is a fairy tale, a genre in which Webster had never written. Referring to the fairy tales in which princes rescue princesses, Angela Leighton writes:

[I]t is characteristic of Webster to reject such fairy-tale formulas altogether. Sleeping beauties, in her works, are only ordinary girls who are waiting, while appearing not to wait, hoping while appearing not to hope. Their sleep is a figure, not for poetic dreams, but for the hypocrisy and resulting mental paralysis of trying to do and think two contradictory things at once; for being both dedicated sexual objects and innocently blank sexual subjects. Webster's journalism, like her poetry, is ultimately concerned with the political truths behind life's pleasing myths, with the

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¹⁶ All three authors dealt directly with Alexander Macmillan. Their correspondences can be found in the Macmillan Archive at the British Library in London, England.
In *Daffodil*, however, Webster does not reject the fairy tale form, but embraces it in her unique way. She adapts it; rather than creating another "sleeping beauty," Webster's young heroine is a questing hero, a role typically reserved for males. Daffodil leaves the home, the domain of the damsel awaiting a prince's rescue, and ventures off in search of the fairy people with her elf-cup flower talisman in hand. Along her quest, Daffodil learns more about herself than she could have ever done by appeasing her parents' wishes to become a "good little girl," one who would someday please a husband. Daffodil faces an army, saves lives, and avoids imminent death while subtly battling her social destiny, this contradictory status of "dedicated sexual object and innocently blank sexual subject." In the end, Daffodil becomes a productive member of the Croaxaxican society and eventually her own.

**‘Do it by proxy’**

In many ways, Lewis Carroll's Alice and Webster's Daffodil are very alike. As daughters of middle-class families, Alice and Daffodil share a similar education, a performance-based one that is meant to prepare them for their debuts in the marriage market. The lessons they learn, which rely on the memorization of facts and accomplishments, are intended to make the girls pleasant in parlor interactions. Neither girl is taught how to think critically or deal with the world outside the home. Furthermore, neither girl is taught skills that would be useful to raising children or maintaining a household. This lack of substance leaves both girls anxious for something
more. While Daffodil seems less bored with her lessons than Alice, both girls are infatuated with the prospect of the impossible being real. Daffodil loves to imagine the fairy people, and Alice loves to pretend. Their imaginations lead them astray, taking them from the safety of familiar riverbanks and into grand adventures.

Indeed, much of Webster's novel seems to have been influenced by the *Alice* tales, especially *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Webster mimics Carroll's playful, nonsensical style of writing and borrows some basic plot structure--including, but not limited to falling into a new world, an irrational Queen, and satirical representations of adult behaviors. Despite these similarities, Daffodil's adventure is still very different from Alice's. For example, Daffodil actively seeks her adventure. Her mission to find the river people prompts her to jump into the river. Her adventure is not the result of a haphazard tumble down a well.

Daffodil's adventure commences when she finds a flower near the riverbank. Her governess, Keziah, explains that the flower is a magic elf-cup which, on the right day, will grant her access into the land of the river people. Desirous of finding the group that has inspired so many of her stories, Daffodil does some detective work to figure out the correct day, searching through her father's daily logs for information. When she settles upon the right day, Daffodil takes her elf-cup flower and, as advised, jumps into the river. Perhaps, finding the elf-cup was a stroke of luck, but her quest is not simple fairy-tale magic; she must put in the effort to make her dreams come true. Though Daffodil initially sets out on a quest to find the fairy people of the river, she ends up somewhere very different. After falling through the river, then through the bed of the river, Daffodil
crashes straight through the ceiling of Croæxaxica’s Great Throne Hall, where the royal family of Croæxaxica reigns.

Croæxaxica, like Wonderland, is a place that pokes fun at the prevalent socio-cultural ideology and ritualistic behaviors of Victorian England. It is here that Carroll’s influence on Webster is perhaps most obvious. Unlike Christina Rossetti’s Alice reimagining Speaking Likenesses, which demonizes its antagonists, such as the evil birthday queen and the nasty boy made of pins, Webster lightheartedly parodies everything from the government and the military to fashion and gardening in Daffodil. Her style is similar to that of a caricaturist. Rather like Carroll’s characters, Webster’s characters are well-meaning, but ignorant, not simply cruel. While the frogs of Croæxaxica are blindly ethnocentric and overly concerned with social rituals, they are peaceful and mostly well-mannered. For example, the large army of frogs assigned to capture and watch over Daffodil’s are made silly by their excessive hopping rituals and the awkward and unnatural posture they have been taught to maintain. They are clearly a respectable group of frogmen, though, because each of the soldiers follows a strict code of honor, never harming nor publicly humiliating Daffodil for sadistic pleasure. Many of the characters are well-intentioned in their desires to help Daffodil and their fellow frogs, but miss the mark because they are consumed by the social ideology of their world, just as the Duchess who tries to educate Alice through haphazard morals.

Webster takes Carroll’s comical style of satirical fantasy in a new direction, however. Croæxaxica is not merely a dreamland, but a real place. Daffodil lives through her experiences in this foreign and terrifyingly exhilarating subterranean world. Thus, when threatened by the Croæxaxicans, the threats are real. This is best reflected in the
similar endings of both tales. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Daffodil*, both girls are tried in a ridiculous fashion and given execution sentences. Their crimes are both the same, upsetting the Queen, and their trials are both unfair, as both of them are given a “sentence first—verdict afterwards” and then seen by a biased, dull-witted jury. The trials are clearly just for show. It is obvious that the court always sides with the Queen. However, when Alice is in danger of losing her head, she simply wakes up, while Daffodil is sentenced to death by State Boa Constrictor, a fate she awaits in a prison cell. Daffodil is left to contemplate her life, her crime, and her plan of action alone. Alice runs in for tea, unaffected. Though Daffodil does escape the Boa, she is thrown into his pit and believes she will die. She knows that the threats of Croæxaxica will not disappear when she wakes from sleep; injury and death are real possibilities.

Webster seems to mock the dream escape of Alice's adventures. She writes, "'Dear me, what an odd dream!' [Daffodil] said, rubbing her eyes. But, the more awake she grew, the plainer she saw the frogs and the green hall she was in. 'It actually must be real, and not a dream,' said she" (35). As the story comes to a close, Daffodil's adventures are still maintained as reality. If Alice's adventures are just dreams, then there is no reason to heed the lessons learned as real and useful; they are not applicable to the real world. Like Christina Rossetti and other females who attempted to re-imagine the *Alice* tales, Webster wanted her story to make a statement. She wanted her message to stick--girls need to experience the world and to receive an education equivalent to that of their male counterparts. An escapist fantasy would simply not do because it would have allowed for her new vision of womanhood to be consider “just a dream” or effective only in a dreamworld.
Webster's desire to convey an underlying message, a call for experiential education for females, rather than telling a tale merely for pleasure is reiterated in the time frame of the story as well. Daffodil's adventure does not happen in a day; it happens over years. There is a real commitment involved in crossing the riverbed border into Croäxaxica. During her experience, Daffodil must become a member of the Croäxaxican community in order to survive. She cannot simply be a passer-by or an observer like Alice. She cannot simply spout her English doctrine and then move on when a frog is "mad" as Alice does. To succeed, Daffodil must assimilate into Croäxaxican culture. She must learn the language, the economy, the law, and the customs of the Croäxaxicans; in essence, she must become one.

Moreover, Daffodil cannot succeed as a child, and she is not treated as one. From the moment Daffodil learns to communicate with the Croäxaxicans, she is treated as a grown woman. Her parent's stifling bubble of safety, created to preserve the Romantic ideal of innocence in childhood, is not applicable in Croäxaxica. While Alice remains that unaffected little girl who runs in for tea after waking from Wonderland, Daffodil and her parents seem to evolve as a result of their experiences. Daffodil is transforming from the Romantic's Angel into a New Woman, while Alice remains a sheltered Victorian girl.

'Llittle day-dreamer'

Introducing Daffodil, Webster writes, "There was once a little girl who was born with such shining yellow hair that her father and mother said it was bright as the yellow daffodils, and therefore they gave her the name of Daffodil" (1). Deborah Gorham explains that during the Victorian era, "The image of the ideal middle-class daughter was
that of the sheltered flower, a creature whose role in the home was to adorn it and assist in its maintenance...." (11). Thus, Webster draws an instant parallel between this ideal Victorian image of girlhood and her little heroine by naming her after a flower, a garden variety one none the less.

This parallel extends into the relationship between Daffodil and her parents. Daffodil's parents are concerned with "teaching her everything good for a little girl to know" (1). Her parents fear tarnishing their little girl so much that they completely isolate her within the home. She is even restricted from playing with other children because her father "wanted to see his little girl grow up thoughtful and good and that some of the children were not thoughtful and good, and, as he could not tell which were so, he was forced to keep her from them all" (1). While Daffodil's parents are good people who want the best for their young daughter, they stifle her ability to grow and develop as an individual by trapping her within the home. In their efforts to make her "good," they prevent her from acquiring her own sense of moral judgment, critical thinking skills, and creativity. This desire to protect her from the "bad" prevents her education from being a truly useful one. Moreover, it is problematic that Daffodil's parents are only concerned with teaching Daffodil that which is "good for a little girl to know," as Daffodil will not remain a little girl forever. At ten years old, Daffodil's childhood is almost over.

Daffodil's parents also have an aversion to play, perhaps the one thing children may do that adults often may not. Webster writes, "they did not teach her to play; because they did not know how themselves; for they were grave very wise people; and they did not like her to go with other children, there was nobody to teach her that" (1). Play, however, allows children to learn to make ethical and strategic judgments and to
creatively solve problems in a safe atmosphere. Webster is clearly an advocate for play. She writes in her essay "Children's Toys and Games,"

Children do learn much from games and toys, and ought to learn much. But it is of another kind from science or literature. It is what the lessons of life teach their elders; such things are the lessons of life. Promptness, attention, making the best of failures, putting up with an uncomfortable concussion or so, forbearance, fairness, these make part of Hunt the Slipper and Post and Beggar-my-neighbour and such aimless pastimes, although facts get into the background and information is nowhere or topsy-turvy. (125)

Through play, children learn skills which will allow them to succeed in the real world. By preventing Daffodil from playing, Daffodil's parents are actually thwarting her from learning the "lessons of life."

This limited education does not protect Daffodil or prepare her for the real world as her parents intend; instead, they put her directly in harm's way by fostering a state of ignorant naivety. As Webster explains, "you cannot Bowdlerise life... To keep a child's mind inert and vacuous is to expose it to far more real risk of contamination" (Housewife's Opinions 120). While Webster does not advocate allowing children to read any book or play at any game which "confuses right and wrong," she does believe that it is necessary to allow children to develop "robust intellects" (Housewife's Opinions 116). Experience is far more desirable than innocence in an adult, especially if that adult should find herself a mother.
Experience was also vital to survival in a nation that was rapidly transforming. More and more often, middle class girls and women were finding it necessary to enter the world of industry. Gorham explains:

In reality, the nature of most middle-class incomes meant that the role of sheltered flower, of ornament in the household, was unattainable for many, perhaps for the majority, of middle-class girls. Conflicts between the role and the reality could arise within the family itself; daughters, like wives, could experience an incongruence between the need to appear genteel, and need to perform real work. (11)

Webster was keenly aware of this incongruence. It was an internal conflict she suffered as a woman writer and wife that is revealed in many of her personal letters. A more rigorous course of education for girls, one that helped to define a girl as a woman with skill and intellect rather than a husband-pleaser or socialite, was one possible resolution to this incongruence. As Webster writes in her essay “The Domestic Economy Congress, 1878,” “Under whatever name the work of women who have to fill domestic offices in their husbands’ or fathers’ homes, or as servants, is to be taught, there is no doubt that at present it needs teaching and is not taught” (282). This dilemma finds its way into Daffodil, as many of the values Daffodil's parents attempt to instill within her are useless in light of Gorham’s observation. These values aim at cultivating a “sheltered flower,” while this ideal that no longer exists in the real world and possibly never has. The reality is that with the rise of industrialization and capitalist culture, Daffodil may very well have to deal with the dangers of the public sphere, the man's world of business. It will not be enough to have a simple understanding of domestic life and useless trivia.
While Daffodil's parents try to keep her from the harsh realities of the real world, Keziah, who appears to be a governess or nurse of sorts, entertains Daffodil with harmless fairy stories. These stories, however, are far less harmless than they seem. They plant ideas in Daffodil's head and encourage an insatiable wanderlust, a desire to flee the predictable safety of home. Keziah's stories serve to do two things: firstly, to show the dangers of allowing untrained governesses to teach children; and secondly, to show the failings of this sheltered lifestyle, which inevitably leaves a girl wanting to experience something more than the home-bound position of wife or mother.

Though she denies any desire to play, Daffodil clearly wants something more than the secluded upbringing she has been granted. She is fond of learning new things and of creating her own fairy-stories. Her story-telling even wins her favor with the elf-people that her parents insist do not exist. The narrator explains that her parents, who are philosophers, "after much study and research, had come to the conclusion that the elf world with all belonging to it was nothing but nonsense, or imagination, which, as you may have heard, is the same thing" (2). Webster states in *A Housewife's Opinions* that "Imagination is the wings of the mind" (213). Imagination, though Daffodil's parents would disagree, is for Webster a necessary and wonderful gift which allows any individual "not simply to re-present to itself former conceptions...but to arrange them in fresh combinations" (*Housewife's Opinions* 214). It is a valuable skill and is much more useful than learning "the truth" as dictated by authoritative sources. *Daffodil's* narrator mocks the parent-philosophers for their close-mindedness, stating that the elfin people keep away from philosophers especially because they are afraid that "if the philosophers were to catch them, they would put them through a competitive examination" (2). This
statement shows the dull nature of a standard of education based on trivial facts. If one is only preparing for exams and not for life, then there is no practical use for education; it's merely all for show.

Daffodil, despite her parents' aversion, cannot help but exercise her imagination. She often spends time telling stories to the river and they sky, claiming that they inspire her tales. The river and the sky both symbolize the infinite unknown that Daffodil desires to learn more about, but is prevented at every turn from doing so. Her imagination allows her to escape the confines of dull facts and explore a world of endless possibilities. It can be assumed that Daffodil's powerful imagination and her acceptance by the river people are signs that she is destined to achieve something great.

'It can't help it: it's nature.'

Webster uses Daffodil's adventures as a vehicle to show the flaws inherent in the existing female education system and to argue for an education which relies on hands-on experience, creative freedom, and social interaction with diverse groups of individuals. The initial problem with Daffodil's education is that Daffodil's parents are preparing her to become the ideal Victorian woman. She was to be a soft, sweet, nurturing woman who oversaw the household and raised the children. Her goal in life was to insure family morality, and therefore, she should remain separate from the taint of man's public sphere of business and sin. Furthermore, the ideal Victorian woman was expected to be both aesthetically pleasing and obedient to her husband.
This image of womanhood was, of course, not conducive to succeeding in a rapidly transforming industrial nation and, more specifically, to pursuing a higher education. Joan Burstyn explains:

A learned woman...lost the very essence of her femininity....No father wanted to be accused of educating his daughter so as to make her unsuited to marriage and motherhood; better to ignore the possibility of her remaining unmarried and in need of supporting herself than to run the risk that her very education would make her an old maid. (38)

Without marriage, a woman had very few options for life-long financial stability. This ideology, therefore, made a college education dangerous to a woman's welfare.

Paul Deslandes has noted that during the nineteenth century and before, the university world of England was a separate space for men. The University was a man's world, and the undergraduate experience was one that defined a boy's sense of masculinity; women in the university threatened the established domain of masculinity (186). He explains, "the incursion of women into male spaces threw into question traditional ideals and practices of imperial power and male authority and challenged the physical and psychic separateness that 'otherness' so often necessitated" (186). Thus, women entering into a university did not just act outside their traditional gender role, but threatened the patriarchal power structure by invading male territory.

Daffodil, though she seems to be educated, is not a threat to this masculine space before her trip to Croäxaxica. Even though Daffodil's parents allow her an education, it is an education which polishes her as middle-class woman and makes her marriage-worthy. There is nothing in her education which would prepare her to run a household, handle her
own finances, or interact in the real world. She is clearly not trained for a profession either because, as the narrator states, "she was not a boy and she never did anything you could call work" (2). The goal of Daffodil's education is not make her intelligent or prepared to deal with the hardships of life, but to make her a conventional middle-class wife and mother. This, of course, is a problem, as it leads Daffodil to stray from home in search of adventure and place herself in potential danger.

This "angel in the house" idea is well-represented in *Daffodil*. For example, facing the possible of becoming a bachelor king, Prince Brekekex explains to his mother and brother that:

One needs a well-trained angel by one's side
The two halves of one's ills to bear with pride,
To laugh at all one's jokes, shake at one's rages,
Praise, serve, admire one, and save servants' wages. (124)

This directly reflects the English sentiment of what a wife should be. Described time and time again as inferior to men, especially under Christian doctrine, women were meant to be the delicate, moral, sentimental balance to the brutal, logical nature of men. A wife was forced to laugh even when her husband's joke was not funny, to praise her husband even when he deserved none, and to put up with all his faults no matter how terrible. Nowhere in Brekekex's description does it say a wife is someone with whom he can discuss matters of business, poetry, or any concept with which a well-educated woman would be familiar. Though Daffodil often helps Brekekex to complete many of his poems with her ability to rhyme creatively, he fails to mention imagination or any kind of education as a desirable factor in a marriage partner. Those were not the makings of a
good Croæxaxican wife, nor an English one. The Queen and the Crown Prince are only too happy to agree with Brekekex's description of the ideal wife.

Eventually, Daffodil is considered the perfect bride for Brekekex simply because it would allow the Croæxaxican Royal Family to remain in power. Of course, this marriage arrangement would force Daffodil to surrender her position as Dressmaker Plentipotentiary, one which her creativity earned her and which she enjoys. Knowing that she and Brekekex are incompatible as husband and wife, she rejects the marriage proposal. This is a gesture that the Queen cannot fathom. According to the Queen, marriages are established to preserve status and power, and a woman's desires for romance or companionship need not be considered. The Queen believes Daffodil should simply be honored and worship Brekekex for his willingness to sink below his rank as future King of Grachidichika and marry a foreign girl of no particular status.

Furthermore, the Queen believes that Daffodil is adult enough to be married and so she should be, but Webster would have advocated Daffodil's objection to the marriage. In her essay "Matrimony as a Means of Livelihood" from A Housewife's Opinions, Webster writes:

The moral harm which comes to any woman who not only has taken marriage as a means of livelihood but who knows that she has done so, is that which must overtake anyone, man or woman, who enters on a worthy office from an unworthy motive, it is the savour of conscious yet now compulsory hypocrisy henceforth clinging to the mind even in its frankest impulses; it is the growing steadily down from the best one could have been to the best one may be with the least trouble, which overtakes any
person who embraces a self-sacrificing profession for the sake of its material advantages. (232-33)

If Daffodil chose to marry for money, she would have been using marriage literally as a means of livelihood, trading her services as a wife for money and shelter, and as a means of survival, for the consequence of her rejection is execution.

Daffodil’s moral righteousness and reluctance to marry are foiled through Queen Chacharereroncaxa of Grachidichika, the sister kingdom of Croaxaxica, also known as the Royal and Matrimonial House. The sole purpose of the Grachidichikan royalty is to bear children for the Croaxaxican royalty to wed, so that Croaxaxica remains in the hands of the royal family. Queen Chachareraroncaxa is the perfect ”angel in the house,” and in many ways, also represents Daffodil’s fate, had she allowed herself to remain sheltered by her mother and father. Grachidichika is completely isolated from Croaxaxica, as Daffodil’s house is from the outside world. As Daffodil had not been allowed to go into town to interact with other children, those who live there are not allowed to enter Croaxaxica, except on very special and rare occasions. The frogs that live there are economically impaired and completely reliant on Croaxaxican support to function as a kingdom, again reflecting Daffodil’s own status as a dependent, whether it be on her father’s income or that of her eventual husband. As a woman, Queen Chacharereroncaxa is completely obedient to her childish husband, a man she married to fulfill social duty. She fulfills the angel role, keeping up morality, entertaining guests, and brushing off her husbands’ faults, even when he beats her on a whim. Isolated in the domain of Grachidichika, however, and adhering rigidly to Croaxaxican ideology, Queen Chachareraroncaxa is doomed. Her husband’s actions, and her inability to take a stand,
eventually result in her death. She dies of head injuries after he launches a chair at her head for no reason. Queen Chachareroncaxa’s fate is seemingly that of any woman who marries for status, especially to a man who has learned that women are servants of men. It is particularly disturbing that Grenoulcrawk carries around a large doll to fill the void of his murdered wife. He, like Brekekex, sees a wife as nothing more than a servant who is meant to dote on him and entertain him. Of course, Queen Chachareroncaxa’s marriage was arranged, and she had been taught to obey, as Daffodil was being prepared to do. Queen Chachareroncaxa’s death at the hands of her husband, King Grenoulcrawk, however, shocks Daffodil so terribly that she begins to resist the ideology that she had grown up in all along. She says she would prefer to spend her life in the Workhouse for Failures rather than be forced into marriage like that.

Interestingly enough, it is marriage, the very thing that middle-class girls were being educated for, that almost leads Daffodil to death. When Daffodil refuses to marry King Grenoulcrawk, the King Regnant of Granchidichika, Queen Raucacoäxine is prepared to sentence Daffodil to death for treason. The Queen can, of course, see no reason why Daffodil would not want to marry a man of such wealth and status, even though he is old enough to be her great, great grandfather and not of the same species as Daffodil. Daffodil, however, is appalled by the old frog whose violent behavior led to the death of his wife, Queen Chachareroncaxa, and clearly disturbed by his reference to her as his “big fine doll.” Later, when the marriage to King Grenoulcrawk is clearly no longer an option, Daffodil again has a marriage proposal forced upon her. Queen Raucacoäxine tells Daffodil she must marry or Brekekex or be considered a traitor. Though Daffodil explains to Queen Raucacoäxine that "it must be wrong to get married
when you know it would make you hate your husband with your whole heart" (220), her refusal stills earns her the sentence of execution by the State Boa Constructor.

The harsh treatment of Daffodil by the Croaxaxican Queen, the death of the Grachidichikan Queen at the hands of her husband, and the poorly arranged marriages seem to suggest that Webster presents the institution of marriage simply as a detriment to women, but this is not truly so. Rigg suggests that from Webster's writing and personal life one can assume that Webster is not against marriage or against leading a separate lifestyle from men, as were the more radical feminists (24). Rigg also explains that Webster and her husband, Thomas Webster, enjoyed a companionate marriage. He allowed Webster the freedom to campaign in the London School Board elections, participate in the London Suffrage Society, and work as a writer and editor, and she allowed him to act as her literary agent and manage her business affairs (39). Daffodil's critique is not of the institution of marriage per se, but against the prevailing patriarchal ideology that dictated that women must subscribe to introverted lives of servitude and never aspire to be financially or intellectually as capable as their male counterparts.

‘He had come to know all about everything the moment he thought upon it’

Though Croaxaxica is in many ways a satirical, subversive reflection of late Victorian England, it also is representative, in many ways, of the domain of higher education, one that is full of obstacles for women attempting to obtain college degrees. The "angel in the house" ideology may have made many women feel guilty or unfeminine if they chose to leave the home in search of a higher education, and those who felt themselves able to go on to college faced real opposition. Male professors and
medical men often stood in the way. These two figures are represented in *Daffodil* as the Regius Professor of Everything and the Head Royal Physician.

To this day, Regius Professor remains a position at universities across the United Kingdom. These Regius Professors are, in a sense, academic royalty. Each university, including Cambridge and Oxford, has several Regius Professors, each from a different discipline. Of course, the Croæxaxican Regius Professor is better than all of the British Regius Professors because he is not simply master of one subject area, but of them all; he is the Regius Professor of Everything.17

The Regius Professor of Everything is clearly a satirical figure, as Webster shows the arbitrary nature of the actions which make him an authority. From the very first description of the Professor, this concept emerges. The narrator describes him at first as follows:

> He was by nature cheerful, but laughing is not professorial and therefore had always to be remarkably serious, and the habit of drawing down the corners of his mouth, to avoid smiling, had finally stiffened them in a downwards curve, so that no Professor of any country has ever surpassed him in a sad and ponderous aspect. (20)

The Regius Professor of Everything puts on airs to make himself appear more serious and academic, and these simple acts enable him to maintain the appearance of an educated man.

17 Patricia Rigg suggests that the Regius Professor may actually be a representation of Charles Kingsley, author of *The Water Babies*, who acted as Regius Professor of modern history at Cambridge from 1860 to 1869 (236).
The Regius Professor of Everything also believes he is an important authority figure. He recounts his entire history to Daffodil, claiming that it is a vital part of her understanding of Croåxaxican culture. Unfortunately, "the story of the Regius Professor of Everything's life was very long, and it did not appear that anything had ever happened to him" (26). Webster writes in her essay "Dull People" that:

A discreet amount of dulness [sic] will pass off any sane man for the possessor of great practical judgment; and, if his face be the shape that smiles, he will be understood to be a shrewd and cautious observer. He can have a reputation for deep success in any department of learning or science or connoisseurship to which his taste may lead him; or he may wear the character of a general philosopher with thoughts that lie too deep for words. (258)

These words describe the Professor's personality and his academic success almost perfectly. His dryness and his boringness are considered representations of his great intelligence. Sadly, these performed behaviors convince the Croåxaxicans that he is a figure worthy of authority. Of course, this reflects back on British academic practice in the nineteenth-century. These Regius Professors were the historians, philosophers, and mathematicians who were defining the "facts" of life and thus forging the national ideology, as the Regius Professor of Everything does for Croåxaxica. Daffodil puts into question this great power given to these men as a reward for their actions and social connections.

As the authority on practically everything, except perhaps medical science, it is assumed that the Regius Professor of Everything knows how to best handle Daffodil
when she lands in Croäxaxica, and he is set to the task of educating her. His pedagogical practices, however, are flawed. He exhausts Daffodil, bores her, and makes learning a subtle form of torture, keeping her eyes pried open with pieces of rush stuck between her eyelids. To teach Daffodil Croäxaxican, the Regius Professor of Everything has her repeat his treatise on the origin and use of speech over and over again for twelve hours. He also considers anything pleasurable, such as food, a distraction from her education and denies her access to anything but text books and his lectures. As he is denying her, however, he indulges himself, stating that he is so learned that distractions no longer affect him, much like the British male academic authorities who claimed themselves far superior to the women attempting to earn degrees.

When Daffodil meets the Queen, she is so exhausted from cramming facts and a lack of sleep that she begins hallucinating, babbling, forgetting all of her instruction, and offends the Queen. Her education, which was begun to please the Queen, completely fails in its shallow mission, making it quite obvious that the existing style of instruction needs reform. The men in charge are clueless as to what women really need and how to educate them properly. Furthermore, an education designed to enhance status or create women who are merely pleasing in social situations seems useless. It fails Daffodil miserably, and she only manages to recover through hands-on training alongside the working and middle classes of Croäxaxica.

The role of the other wise man of Croäxaxica, the Head Royal Physician, reiterates the ignorance of the male academics in regards to female education. He represents the medical men who attempted to keep girls and women confined in the home and out of the schools and universities. Deborah Gorham writes:
In the late-Victorian decades, when the movement to improve the education of middle-class girls had begun, the views of medical men about the dangers of female puberty were used as a weapon in the battle to oppose that movement. Brain work was held to be dangerous to girl’s health, and also to her future capacity to bear children. The competition that was introduced in the new girls’ schools, and that a young woman would unavoidably encounter should she go on to pursue higher education, was held to be physically damaging, and there were doctors and others who opposed the strenuous games and exercises that were often engaged in at the new girls’ schools and at women’s colleges. (90)

The Head Royal Physician, like the Regius Professor of Everything, is concerned more with appearing to be an expert than to actually being one. He is unwilling to learn new things and sticks with his old tried-and-true ways.

When Daffodil drops to the floor in exhaustion due to the Regius Professor of Everything’s fatiguing lessons, the Queen calls upon the Head Royal Physician to treat Daffodil. Of course, he believes he knows what is best for her, just as the Regius Professor does. He tells the Queen that “the creature [is] in a feverish and excitable state and [requires] sleep, and that it must at once take a composing draught to put it to sleep....” (33). In Victorian England, an excitable, agitated condition was proclaimed to be one of the symptoms of over-stimulation that medical men associated with rigorously educating women, and these men often published their scientific findings in medical journals and public pamphlets (Gorham 90). Webster makes a mockery of this medical discovery. As stated earlier in the novel, Daffodil may have been hot to the frogs, but she
would have been considered cool to a human. She has no fever and is far from excitable. In fact, she is completely fatigued.

The draught that is prescribed by the Head Royal Physician is most likely meant to mock the medical profession as well. Draughts were often prescribed to children to cure ailments, and many times these draughts were deadly, or in the least, ineffectual (Horn 131). The Head Royal Physician’s draught does not put Daffodil to sleep. It actually causes her to choke and rub the rushes out of her eyes, which were keeping her lids pried open so she could not sleep. It is her removal of the rushes that allows her to finally rest and rejuvenate, not the Head Royal Physician’s cure. Thus, like the Regius Professor of Everything, the Head Royal Physician’s self-proclaimed expertise is really unfounded. Neither has a clue as to how to properly educate or treat a girl, reflecting back to the ignorance of Webster’s own male-centered society.

For the two frog wisemen, success is about recognition by the Queen and being glorified by the public. They want to be renowned as the greatest, the master, the wisest frog in the world, and in order to do so, they must subtly beat down the reputation of the other. Webster writes:

For the Head Royal Physician and the Regius Professor of Everything, while each sincerely revering the other as the second greatest sage the world could boast, and even avowing that the other excelled him in some special branches of science of a technical nature or of limited importance, were each a little afraid the other thought too much of himself. (34)

The two frogs are ambitious for fame and the power of authority, not to mend the problems of their Croâxaxican kingdom. They want to be praised by the Queen and spend
more time trying to outdo one another than actually using their intelligence to produce anything that would significantly impact their fellow frogs in a positive way. For instance, when the Head Royal Physician almost discovers a solution to the wilting wedding dress lily that prevents Daffodil and Brekekex from being married, the narrator notes that “[the Regius Professor of Everything] had felt a little jealousy at the good fortune of the Head Royal Physician in offering such valuable advice, and now it flashed on him as an inspiration that he might be able to find some great expedient too” (190). Of course, neither of their solutions to superficial lily-dress tradition are successful. Again, this directly reflects the competitive nature of British system of education, where students and professors continuously competed with each other publicly, students through exams and professors through lectures and publications.

Attempting to outshine the competition, the Regius Professor of Everything and the Head Royal Physician prevent Daffodil from receiving credit for her problem-solving abilities, and claim her successes as reflections of their own wisdom. Meanwhile, it is actually Daffodil who eliminates many of the problems that they have been called upon to resolve. Daffodil, unlike her frog friends, wants to make a difference in the lives of those she has come to know and love, which Webster-- and similarly Christina Rossetti--advocate as the goal of a true education for girls and women. Daffodil is not concerned with being heralded as the best. She merely wants to provide the best solutions for the Croäxaxicans, with whom she has formed friendly attachments. This includes finding a way for her friend Croässaquagha to avoid banishment to the Workhouse for Failures after her position as Dressmaker Plentipotentiary has ended, helping Queen Chachareraroncaxa rebuild the economy of the Royal Matrimonial Kingdom of
Grachidichika, and arranging the best possible marriage for King Brekekex based on political and companionship needs. With the right goals in mind—helping those in need, nurturing relationships, and encouraging moral behavior—Daffodil is able to achieve much greater things than these male academic authorities, who boast of their methods of education and training.

Unfortunately, it is these methods of training which have been used to education the upper class of Croâxaxica, as well as the middle and upper classes of England. Croâxaxica, though it has no formal college of its own, clearly has an education system that goes beyond Daffodil’s language lessons, and as far as female education goes, Queen Raucacoâxine is at the top of the class. Webster writes, "the Queen had been instructed by the Regius Professor of Everything and was the most learned woman in Croâxaxica...." (14). She is not well-educated, however. Queen Raucacoâxine’s education, however, is akin to that of many English ladies-in-training. She has learned all facts and accomplishments. Webster states, however, that young ladies “need to be trained and ought to be trained, and that requirement is not met by even the best opportunities for acquiring ‘fluent French and German’ and a facility upon the piano” (A Housewife’s Opinions 96). The Queen’s English lessons exemplify this. Her English-speaking skills are clearly just for show. After making a minimal effort to understand Daffodil, the Queen quickly sends her away to learn Croâxaxican because she can’t bear to communicate in Daffodil’s ugly and base language. Furthermore, Queen Raucacoâxine hardly solves any of her nation’s problems or her personal problems on her own. As a result of her superficial education, she cannot make a decision without consulting her husband, the Head Royal Physician, the Regius Professor of Everything, and her two
sons, yet she prepares her court for parties and wedding celebrations without seeking advisement. Queen Raucacoäxine's two daughters are raised in much the same fashion, and like the Queen, both exhibit a dependence on others. They are also overly concerned with trivial things, such as being seen in the latest fashion, but lack a sense of social responsibility.

There is more than one learned woman in Croäxaxica, though. While the Queen is proclaimed to be the most educated person in all of Croäxaxica, it is the Dressmaker Plenipotentiary who is considered a genius. The narrator recounts:

>The Dressmaker Plenipotentiary of Croäxaxica was a person of such remarkable gifts that...she was recognised as the first and far peerless genius in the world. This did not interfere with the just renown of the Regius Professor of Everything or the Head Royal Physician...for genius, they felt, is a matter of chance, and their wisdom was the result of perfected study. (47)

Though her genius is respected, it is still considered somehow inferior to the textbook knowledge of the Regius Professor of Everything, Queen Raucacoäxine, and the Head Royal Physician by the Croäxaxicans. Furthermore, genius, for the Croäxaxicans, seems only to apply to artistic endeavors, such as dressmaking or poetry, not to "real" subjects that require scholarship.

Despite the Croäxaxican standards, the narrator advocates the Dressmaker Plenipotentiary's genius over the book-bound education. The Dressmaker Plenipotentiary is the highest position of honor after royalty, responsible for maintaining the Royal Wardrobe and creating clothing. In contrast to the Head Royal Physician and the Regius
Professor of Everything, the Dressmaker Plenipotentiary does not seek recognition for her creative masterpieces. Furthermore, she is willing to learn from Daffodil, while others simply ignore Daffodil because she is a lower life-form. The Dressmaker Plenipotentiary states, "genius is known by being ever a learner, and the more it is the more it knows it isn't" (50). This is educational stance is, of course, is direct opposition to everything offered by the current educational model of Croäxaxica and Victorian England, which are based on mastery (e.g., the Regius Professor of Everything).

The Dressmaker Plenipotentiary also seems representative, in some ways, of the early female undergraduates. Deslandes explains, "Students at the women's colleges frequently capitalized on their separate existence from and inferiority to the men's colleges to emphasize their own sense of specialness and commitment to a parsimonious and almost completely unostentatious existence" (188-89). Indeed, the Dressmaker Plenipotentiary, despite designing lavish outfits for the royal family, dons the plainest clothing available and stays out of the limelight. She believes that "Inspiration must be free from the trammels of self" (48), and that her clothes needed to be functional rather than decorative. Furthermore, she recognizes that she must continue to achieve despite the lack of outside recognition for her success, as did the female undergraduates. The Dressmaker Plenipotentiary explains to Daffodil, "Genius pines, and toils, and bleeds, apart, and a ruthless world waits not for the treasures it would give it, but goes on never missing them and -- enjoys itself" (93). In other words, one should learn for the sake of learning, not to command authority, find social acceptance, or be materially rewarded. Later in the story, Daffodil comes to fulfill the role of Dressmaker Plenipotentiary, which again shows Daffodil's potential for greatness.
Nothing about Croäxaxica is without complexity, however. Despite the narrator's seeming favoritism toward the Dressmaker Plenipotentiary's genius rather than book-taught wisdom, like that of the Regius Professor of Everything and the Head Royal Physician, the Dressmaker Plenipotentiary is sometimes self-indulgent. She often complains to Daffodil about the great responsibility and the pain of labor that comes with being a genius. Later, the Dressmaker Plentipotentiary jumps at the opportunity to rise to royalty when offered a chance to marry Prince Brekekex, who will become King of Grachidicka. Moreover, when Daffodil notifies the Dressmaker Plentipotentiary that one of her employees has been gossiping about her, the Dressmaker Plentipotentiary tells Daffodil not to deter Under Royal Wardrobe Maid Seventy Seven and a Half from doing so, stating that "True greatness likes to be gossiped about. It has not to fear the loss of its brilliancy by being looked at in all its phases" (118). Thus, while Daffodil clearly satirizes those who declare themselves "intellectuals" based on an ability to memorize "proven facts," the tale criticizes anyone who uses their intellectual accomplishments to make others feel inferior or emphasize their own grandeur, especially when those others have been denied an equal opportunity to receive an education.

The idea of authority, especially academic authority, becomes nothing more than a social myth in Daffodil. Those in charge maintained power by performing the behaviors necessary to present the image of an educated individual, and they made sure to spotlight their accomplishments. Even facts are exposed as mere public fiction. For instance, Croäxaxican history is clearly a lie. The Regius Professor of Everything recounts that the Croäxaxicans shut themselves into the underground world of Croäxaxica because they defeated the enemy and did not want to associate with the lower-class upperworld beings.
Meanwhile, this history seems to be an elaborate cover-up constructed to conceal the defeat of the Croäxaxicans that forced them into hiding. Defeat, of course, would ruin the powerful presence of the Croäxaxican Royal Family and army; they would be considered losers, not a point of national pride.

Similarly, Prince Brekekex composes his national epic to make it seem as though his mother successfully had Daffodil executed so that she is seen as infallible ruler. Meanwhile, he helps her escape death by State Boa Constrictor, and the Queen even comes to learn that Daffodil was never executed. They even help to Daffodil return to the world above ground and bid her a happy farewell. The narrator reveals that, "the crime of the strange being who became Dressmaker Plenipotentiary and the betrothed of the famous Brekex, and perished the minute before his marriage to her successor, is to this day related in Croäxaxica" (250). Generations of Croäxaxicans come to believe this story as truth, when it is clearly not. All history, in this light, seems to be nothing more than a "romance of history," a story told to preserve the nation as an ideal place and people. Thus, an education in history and facts is of little value when compared to an education which prepares a student to think ethically, critically, and creatively. Furthermore, one which demands mastery is unnecessary because truth is relative and always changing to suit the needs of those in power. In Daffodil, real education begins to be defined as an understanding of multiple perceptions and the development of moral judgment.

'I took my journey alone'

Though the formal education system of Croäxaxica fails Daffodil, she does learn many skills as a result of her adventure that go beyond the trivial accomplishments of the
usual female education. She learns to survive in a foreign country without depending on a male figure. She learns the valuable skill of dressmaking and leads a large team of employees in order to carry out her creative visions. Her actions are often diplomatic and always well-thought out. She quickly concludes from her interactions with the Croâxaxicans, "I won't say what I'll do, till I have a good while to think by myself" (148). Unlike Carroll's rash Alice, Daffodil is a character who has learned to think before she speaks and to consider new concepts, rather than cling to her English doctrine, in order to survive. It is the freedom to exercise her imagination in Croâxaxica that allows Daffodil to accomplish great things. Since Daffodil later returns home and does not merely awake from a nightmare, one can infer that her education is useful in the real world.

One of the most important lessons that Daffodil learns in Croâxaxica is that "People of different countries have different views on some things...." (31). Daffodil comes to recognize that what she had been taught is not necessarily the only truth or resolution. She becomes culturally sensitive, which is important in a world that is being globalized by trade and industrialization. This awareness of the existence of multiple perspectives also forces Daffodil to consider, on her own terms, which view is best. To do so, she must establish her own standard of ethics, evaluate the credibility of information and its source, and think ahead to the outcomes of actions. These are skills which prepare her for life in the real world where consumer culture pushes the language of advertisement in the faces of women on a daily basis and ideologies are called into question as the nation rapidly evolves. Within the safety net of her over-sheltered home,
where she was forbidden to even play with the neighborhood children for fear of contamination, Daffodil would never have acquired these skills.

Daffodil also learns to rely on her own instincts and abilities without outside validation. The Croäxaxicans have Croäxaxican interests at heart, not English ones or even Daffodil’s most times. As a result, she must navigate between what she knows and what she learns and decide for herself what is truly right. It is the words, “It will depend on yourself” that come to Daffodil in a dream which she carries with her through the remainder of her ordeals in Croäxaxica. When a problem comes along, whether it is struggling with undesirable marriage proposals or finding a way to return to her world, Daffodil does not ask her frog friends to find her a solution. She takes to solving them on her own by considering her options and choosing the one that will establish the greatest good. What is more, in searching for a solution, Daffodil goes through great lengths to avoid hurting her Croäxaxican friends or putting them in harm’s way.

By the time Daffodil's ordeals in Croäxaxica have come to a close, Daffodil is exposed as a truly gifted individual, capable of performing not only the tasks allotted to Croäxaxican women, but also those reserved for the Croäxaxican men. Daffodil designs haute couture for the royal family, saving the Queen and the Dressmaker Plentipotentiary from public embarrassment. She helps Prince Brekekex to finish his poems. She resolves the Croäxaxican heir dilemma, arranging marriages which enable the Croäxaxicans to carry out their dynasty and are based on mutual companionship. She even discovers a way for Grachidichika to replenish their fallen economy and figures out a way to return home to her parents. Most remarkably, Daffodil remains humble despite all of her accomplishments.
'She will never give up her own way'

As Daffodil finally leaves Croaxaxica, she cries while looking at "faces that she knew she could never see again" (278). Like childhood, Croaxaxica is a place that Daffodil may never return to, and she recognizes this. While Daffodil laments the loss of her friends, she knows that it is time for her to return home. She makes the adult decision to move forward with her life. Daffodil has learned all she needs to know from Croaxaxica, and therefore has no need to cling to it. She is ready to return home and enter fully into adulthood.

Though her initial quest was to find the river people, Daffodil, like most quest heroes, is unable to achieve her goal without the lessons learned on her journey. The journey is more important that the object of the quest because it helps the hero to grow as an individual and develop a sense of self. It is not until after her experiences in Croaxaxica, where Daffodil learns to believe in the impossible, to consider the relative nature of truth, and to understand her own beliefs and values that she is able to meet the fairy people of the river. Their acceptance of Daffodil suggests that she has become something more than the average little girl; she is a heroine.

Without her experiences in Croaxaxica, Daffodil would most likely have remained the "sheltered flower" that Gorham describes, a girl so wrapped up in her family's fantasy of an ideal home that she never experiences life. Croaxaxica allows her to develop her identity away from the restrictive gender roles of Victorian society. As an affect of the laissez-faire lifestyle Daffodil lives in Croaxaxica, she becomes like the flowers she admires in Grachidichika. Webster writes, "The plants, seemingly left to
grow their own way, had a natural freedom, and were mingled with a haphazard grace, that delighted her, and the vivid and delicate colouring of their blooms surpassed anything of Croâxaicâca..." (113). Left to mature on her own, she is no longer the garden-variety middle class Victorian Daffodil; she has become the rare and valuable exotic flower, far superior to those cultivated by man.

Despite blossoming into a more independent young woman, Daffodil returns home, not full of wanderlust or resenting her small society of family and friends, but fully content to be back with her family and in the safety of the place where she grew up. She actually desires to be home. The narrator explains, "the joy of the father, mother, and daughter, when they were together again, I shall not say anything, for everybody who has had a father and mother and everybody who has had a child will know about it without my telling" (280). Since strong family values were important to Webster's Victorian society, this conclusion is vital. Webster shows that allowing a girl to receive an education outside the home and to experience life on her own terms will not destroy the family structure, but make it stronger.

Webster is clearly advocating experiential education, as Carroll had in his Alice tales, but tempers this call for reform with a message of ethical and social responsibility as Christina Rossetti does in Speaking Likenesses. This type of education, as Daffodil illustrates, will create women with real skills and real knowledge who have no cause to envy their male counterparts or resent their role within the home. Experiencing the world in their youth and having the freedom to express their creativity, they will now be ready to share their wisdom with their children, accepting the importance of their roles as mothers and educators rather than social hostesses. As Rigg tells us, Webster considered
her daughter, Margaret, to be her "greatest creative achievement" (21). Women educated as recommended by Webster, through hands-on experience allowing for creative freedom with an emphasis on social responsibility, will become New Women, capable of making educated decisions for themselves and their children and ready to take on the trials of the world.
Conclusion

Though 145 years have passed since *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* first graced the shelves of bookstores across England, Carroll’s tales still continue to be reprinted and reimagined. It was just this year that Disney’s latest *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) film, directed by Tim Burton, blew up the box office, earning $41 million on opening day (Goodman). Alice’s story of finding herself in a foreign world in which she must struggle to survive is universal; everyone can relate to facing the unknown. For many, Alice remains the quintessential child heroine. The little girl and her wild experiences represent all that is ideal about childhood—imagination, possibility, and freedom from the cynicism developed with age and experience.

If one glances from Carroll’s Victorian period into the 20th century, though, it is no wonder Rossetti and Webster saw a need to revise Carroll’s tales only a few years after they had been created. This feminized notion of ideal childhood, as depicted in stories like *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, led to complications for future generations of females and their quest for a new identity. According to Cynthia Port, the ideal woman of the early 20th century was not a woman at all, but a “sexualized adolescent girl” (149). Unlike their Victorian ancestors, who had followed the example of Queen Victoria, twentieth-century women would never be able to attain satisfaction in their roles as aging matrons due to this new ideal of ever-lasting youth. Carroll, of course, sets his Alice up to become this child-woman. In *Wonderland*, the parting image of Alice as an adult is one that is troublesome, as she seems to be merely a girl grown taller. She is sweet, full of nonsense stories, and retains a child-like innocence. Of course, for a woman who really is aging, she is caught in an uncomfortable position, not able to move forward into complete
adulthood nor backwards into childhood. With the ability to freeze time in photography (an artistic passion of Carroll's), the increase of visual media's influence, and the booming cosmetic industry, this phase of uncertainty in which Alice becomes caught is the same place women would inevitably find themselves trapped in, wondering "who am I?" for decades to come. Today, this issue of female identity is unresolved, as the Western media continues to idealize youth and promote "remedies" to postpone aging. Girls learn from an early age, like Alice, that they should not want to stay children forced to learn their lessons forever, but they should fear becoming old maids even more.

Unlike Alice, Rossetti's and Webster's heroines reach a state of experienced maturity. They are not dainty, naïve little girls after their ordeals. While Rossetti and Webster both enjoyed Alice, as evidenced by their personal correspondences with Carroll and others, they clearly saw a need for more morally-sound, intellectual, creative heroines to represent the ideal girl of their day. They needed to prove that a female was a person worthy of a true education, and in writing their stories, they succeeded. Their child heroines begin to develop into strong maternal figures, who fill their minds with rational thoughts rather than whimsical stories and are always certain of their identities. These girls are taught to be generous, diplomatic, strategic, and socially responsible. In essence, Rossetti's and Webster's stories helped to establish the role of women in society as providers and educators rather than the eternal uncertain child. They made it possible for the public to understand the importance of, and thus fight for, quality education for females by showing the trials and successes of their heroines when they are allowed to learn. Of course, without Carroll's Alice, Rossetti's and Webster's tales probably would
have never come to fruition. The *Alices* were, and still are, a springboard for many satirists and writers of fantasy.

Sadly, these women's stories are relatively unknown today. They are out of print and difficult to come by, unlike the *Alices*. Perhaps, because of the great strides in women's education, there is no longer a need for them, or maybe nostalgia for childhood, that period in life to which adults may never return, creates a distaste for anything with an obvious political agenda, an agenda a child would never have. Reflecting on the most recent Disney *Alice*, though, it is obvious that current Western society no longer envisions the ideal child heroine as rash, inconsiderate child. Our child heroine is more like those of Rossetti and Webster; she is smart, strong, caring, and willing to do the right thing even if it is not fashionable. She may struggle with the inevitability of aging, but she is not the shallow product of an education in accomplishments and etiquette.

Though reforms have clearly taken place in female education since the early Victorian era, and largely in part to writers like Carroll, Rossetti, and Webster, women still have a way to go before they are equal with their male counterparts, and thus, the *Alices* will continue to be reinvented, reflecting the existing notions of female education and reminding audiences of the magic of childhood. In the meantime, though, one can still learn much from little Alice, who reveals the arbitrary nature of "fact" and the importance of believing in "at least six impossible things before breakfast," or Maggie, who is brave enough to scold a monster much bigger than herself, or Daffodil, who always considers her options before acting.
Works cited


