

Spring 5-1-2009

# A Crucial Juncture: The Paracosmic Approach to the Private Worlds of Lewis Carroll and the Brontës

Kristin Petrella

Follow this and additional works at: [https://surface.syr.edu/honors\\_capstone](https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone)



Part of the [Other English Language and Literature Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Petrella, Kristin, "A Crucial Juncture: The Paracosmic Approach to the Private Worlds of Lewis Carroll and the Brontës" (2009).  
*Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects*. 430.  
[https://surface.syr.edu/honors\\_capstone/430](https://surface.syr.edu/honors_capstone/430)

This Honors Capstone Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects at SURFACE. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syracuse University Honors Program Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of SURFACE. For more information, please contact [surface@syr.edu](mailto:surface@syr.edu).

## A Crucial Juncture: The Paracosmic Approach to the Private Worlds of Lewis Carroll and the Brontës

### Introduction:

The juvenilia of classic authors has long been the subject of scholarly study, revealing the development of the writing style of notable authors as well as the progression of their creative process. Posthumously published documents spark new criticisms and produce new readings of familiar texts and can inform our understanding of the author's life, point of view, or message. An example of such juvenilia is the early work of Branwell, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne Brontë, amazingly well preserved in miniscule diaries and notebooks, in cramped book margins, and on tiny scraps of paper, on which they told the elaborate stories of the fictional countries Angria and Gondal. Though these texts were not intended for publication and written in a purposely minute italic script, scholars have often mined the early works of the Brontës to gain insight into the origins of *Wuthering Heights*, *Jane Eyre*, and other mature novels. Writing only thirty years later was Lewis Carroll, who, long before his creation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, was writing, editing, and illustrating intricate family magazines for the enjoyment of his ten siblings. But these early writings are no ordinary fiction; the tales of the Brontë children and the magazines

of Lewis Carroll's family represent two of the first documented paracosms (Cohen and MacKeith 3)—imaginary worlds created by children—and thus are of scholarly interest in their own right.

Until now, the specific nature of the paracosm as it was involved in the lives of the Brontës has been largely overlooked, and the writing they did in the worlds of their paracosms has often been misinterpreted as "games," juvenilia in the way of Jane Austen, "short stories," "early fiction," or as "play" or "plays" as Fannie Ratchford refers to them. The same critical stance has been taken in regard to Lewis Carroll's paracosms. The family magazines that he wrote, edited, and illustrated are consistently classified as "juvenilia," and as such, researchers tend to evaluate it based on its level of maturity or predictability of Carroll's future greatness.

This neglects the complex relationship paracosmists have with their paracosms as well as the pervasive nature of the paracosm in their lives, and therefore, their writing. In the past, the early writings of the Brontë children have been approached by critics from three different angles: the biographical, the literary, and the psychological. But these approaches have ignored the space where all three of these methods of analysis overlap. From these perspectives, the work is often flat and inert by standards of technical merit. But for these authors, their paracosms *lived*. As

scholars, we strive to climb inside the author's mind and truly understand their interaction with their world and their work. Looking at the juvenile work of the Brontës and Lewis Carroll as paracosms affords a more three-dimensional view of its importance and influence on their later works.

By recognizing Angria and Gondal as paracosms—as child-development phenomena—we can provide grounds for the authors' intense attachment to them, and understand the true influence it had on their published writing. This increased attention to the blending of the traditional approaches proposes a model for future examination of the Brontë and Carroll work and future work on paracosms in general.

**Paracosms:**

A paracosm is a full-scale imaginary world created by a child that has certain qualities that are different from other types of children's play. This world is often complete with its own language or dialect, history, culture, geography, publications, politics, military, and sometimes even deities. Paracosms are characterized by their completeness and longevity; by the way the child incorporates real-world conventions, or invented conventions, into an often quite sophisticated alternate reality that he or she revisits periodically over years and may still retain as an adult. These worlds are unique in

their thoroughness, their elaborate nature, and the complexity of detail they contain. There are other criterion for a paracosm as set out by Silvey and MacKeith in their defining study, *The Paracosm: A Special Form of Fantasy*, that help us distinguish a paracosm from other forms of play on the one hand, and on the other, from stigma about developmental problems often associated with the idea of “being in a world of one’s own” (Cohen and MacKeith 1). The first important part of a paracosm is that the child must know and acknowledge that their world is fictional. Also of importance is the paracosm’s longevity. The child must have sustained interest in their world, typically lasting for a year or more. Consistency is another defining characteristic of a paracosm. This means that “the child takes a pride in his private world being systematized and attaches importance to it being internally consistent” (Silvey and MacKeith 175). The last defining characteristic is that the paracosmist must “demonstrate pride in and enjoyment of the paracosm, rather than use it as a defensive “escape mechanism” (Bullock). This escapist type of paracosm is classified by Barry Cohen as a “post-traumatic paracosm,” and is a response to a long-term repeating trauma (Woolley). The imagined worlds of the Brontës certainly fit the criteria of a paracosm, while those of Lewis Carroll actually tend

more to those of a post-traumatic paracosm, although the nature and extent of his trauma may never be truly known.

### **Types of Paracosms:**

A child's paracosm usually falls into one of five categories, as discussed by Silvey and MacKeith in 1988 and Cohen and MacKeith in 1992. The first type includes worlds based around toys and animals, and is shared among small family groups. These worlds often begin with toys as the focus of concrete play, but expand once children begin to understand the power of their imaginations. One paracosmist comments, "Once we realized we could draw and write about the characters, we were emancipated from the toys" (Silvey and MacKeith 179). A second kind of paracosm locates itself in particular places and local communities, such as schools and theaters. Another common paracosmic category includes islands, countries and their peoples. The worlds in this category vary widely from the fantastic to the realistic, and in the depths of detail they possess. These worlds have a heavy focus on stories—stories of history, legends, romance, or the biographies of specific characters. They often incorporate some of the elements of the fourth type of paracosm: systems, documents, and languages. Paracosms of this type rely on the development of elaborate systems of government or religion, and the output of

physical documents such as censuses, contracts, maps, and periodicals. They also can incorporate the creation of languages, with varying degrees of difference from actual spoken languages. Although the “countries” paracosms and the “systems” paracosms often overlap, the main distinction between the two is the focus of creation efforts. Paracosms concerned mostly with the elaboration of stories fall into the “countries” division, and those more interested with the creation of structures or the production of documents are “systems” paracosms. The last defined type of paracosm is technological or futuristic worlds. There are a few miscellaneous worlds—examples have been found of unstructured, shifting, and idyllic paracosms—but for the most part children’s imagined worlds fit into these categories (Cohen and MacKeith 22). Cohen and MacKeith’s introduction notes that “the very fact that the ‘worlds’ fall neatly into such categories is interesting because it seems to reflect the different influences on children. Their imagination didn’t work in a vacuum” (Cohen and MacKeith 22).

### **Heterocosms:**

It is important here to delimit the boundaries of the paracosm and differentiate it from the heterocosm. According to M.H. Abrams in *The Mirror and The Lamp*, a heterocosm is a “second nature” invented by an author “in an act analogous to God’s

creation of the world" (272), and as such manifests a microcosm born of the writer's imagination—a complete and fully realized invented world. The poem, story, or play is the vehicle by which the author conveys this invented world to the larger public. In contrast, as suggested by the title of Cohen and MacKeith's collection of paracosm accounts, *The Development of Imagination: the Private Worlds of Childhood*, a child's own imagined world is importantly personal. Paracosms may circulate between siblings (as with the Brontës and Lewis Carroll's family) or within small groups of friends, but they remain largely undisclosed to, or actively kept secret from the general public of schoolmates, teachers and parents. When a fully-imagined world makes it into a published work of fiction, a movie, or the realm of communal knowledge or pop-culture, it is usually a heterocosm. There is a great deal of fluidity between the terms "paracosm" and "heterocosm," the main difference traditionally being the age at which the world was created. Paracosms are developed spontaneously in childhood, while a heterocosm may be created in adulthood and seems to involve more conscious effort of creation than the paracosm. I'd like to contribute to the definition of heterocosm the idea of intent to publish, and the acceptability of sharing the world with many people. This additional characteristic of a heterocosm helps

illuminate the boundary between a paracosm and a heterocosm in a more easily understandable way. In *The House of Make Believe*, for example, Dorothy and Jerome Singer claim that “humanity has already benefited from the paracosmic visions of J.R.R. Tolkien” (116) but his vast invented world is more precisely described as a heterocosm. It is true that the stories are characterized by what Louis Menand describes as a “‘complete world’ effect, the illusion of spatial and temporal extension beyond the boundaries of the story proper” but the worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien and J.K. Rowling are heterocosms, rather than paracosms because they were created by adults and intended for publication. Thus, the *Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* stories weren’t “imaginary worlds” as much as they were fictional worlds.

Since many of the imaginary worlds we recognize are published works, and since many of the paracosms we recognize were created by famous authors, there seems to be a great deal of overlap between author and paracosmist. However it is important to remember that having a paracosm does not imply writing fiction—and likewise not all fantasy writing can be deemed a paracosm. As authors have paracosms apart from their fiction, many children who do not go on to become writers will produce documents about their paracosm including maps, pictures,

genealogies, and usually stories. An author must write to give legitimacy and substance to a fictional world, but the paracosmist need only imagine a paracosm for it to “exist.”

The posthumous examination of the paracosms of famous authors is generally restricted to the physical records they have left in writing. For this reason the author persona and the paracosmist persona of my subjects (Emily and Charlotte Brontë and Lewis Carroll) are quite intertwined. Charlotte Brontë rigorously recorded the events of her paracosm, and this record exists today to give us detailed insight into her secret world. Emily Brontë, however, is an example of a person whose paracosm was predominantly contained in her head and not in her writing. If only we could ask Emily Brontë about the parts of Gondal she did NOT record, to which her poetry alludes with vague references, we could have a much fuller sense of her private world and not have to reconstruct it by guesswork.

In contrasting paracosms and heterocosms, there is also the case of Lewis Carroll’s paracosm—the various family magazines he produced—and *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, which manage to originate as paracosms and become heterocosms. This presents an interesting case to examine alongside those authors, like the Brontës, who kept their paracosms

and their fiction separate, excepting the influence paracosmic writing inevitably has on one's later work. The transition of the *Alice* books from one definition to the other illustrates the subtlety of the criteria differences between the paracosm and the heterocosm. Although the *Alice* books manage to be both, they illuminate rather than obscure the differences between the two.

### **A Crucial Juncture:**

As the work on paracosms has just emerged in the last two decades or so, the current body of work on noteworthy authors with paracosms has viewed these private worlds through more conventional disciplines. The first of the traditional approaches to the paracosms of authors is from a purely literary angle: for example, examination of Angria and Gondal as the literary predecessors of the Brontë's published books. There has been a great deal of attention paid to the translation of characters and events from Angria and Gondal into the published fiction of *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*<sup>1</sup>, and also to strains of dialogue or poetry that Lewis Carroll wrote earlier and then incorporated into the *Alice* books. The second is an analysis of their worlds as sources

---

<sup>1</sup> For more on the way the paracosms' characters and plots become those of published fiction, see Fannie Ratchford, "The Brontës' Web of Childhood," 189-247; Robert Keefe, "Charlotte Brontë's World of Death," 69-76; Inga-Stina Ewbank, "Wuthering Heights and Gondal" in *Wuthering Heights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 480-486.

of biographical information, revealing the relationships between the four Brontë children and Lewis Carroll and his siblings, and providing insight into their daily lives and influences. The third is the study of the paracosm from a purely psychological point of view—the quest for knowledge about the uses of a paracosm, the reasons for creating them, the circumstances that encourage fantasy, the personality types of the paracosmists, and so on (Silvey and MacKeith). But there is an important overlap of all three approaches that lies at the very center of this three-ring Venn diagram—a crucial juncture—which has been avoided by the scholarly attention up to this point. Therefore we have been unable to understand the reasons for the parallels between the paracosmic fiction and the mature work of these authors. Instead of viewing the worlds of *Angria*, *Gondal* and Carroll's family magazines simply as precursors to the published fiction of their respective writers, they deserve to be analyzed first in their own right. Before comparing them to their successors like *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, we must recognize and analyze the special relationship that the Brontës and Carroll had with them, and how it differs from the interaction between other authors and their juvenilia. I advocate taking a paracosmic approach—that is, bearing in mind the paracosm's differences from other types of

early work as we examine the paracosms of Carroll and the Brontës, and focusing the area where the biographical, literary, and psychological disciplines converge to make the paracosm. This has the potential to help determine why the similarities between their paracosm and their later fiction were created, instead of simply making us aware that these similarities exist.

The paracosmic approach includes looking at four main features: the longevity of the paracosm, the desire for secrecy resulting from the paracosmist's intense attachment to their private world, the unity a paracosm provides for an author's apprenticeship work, and the control a paracosmist has over their imagined world. These are the characteristics that separate a paracosm from regular juvenilia, and therefore an analysis of these points will help us illuminate the differences between authors' relationship to their juvenilia and authors' relationship to their paracosms. Both the Brontës and Lewis Carroll demonstrate the intense, lasting attachment that paracosms' creators have to their world quite effectively through their several futile efforts to free themselves of the imaginary worlds they lived and wrote in for most of their childhood. These efforts are closely entwined with the private nature of paracosms and the secrecy that often accompanies them, which is not commonly found in other types of experimental

and developmental fiction. The Brontës and Lewis Carroll also exhibited the interaction a paracosmist has with manipulating the rules of his or her paracosm, and in each of the three cases the paracosm provides a sense of unity that finds a parallel in the unity of their published works. These factors make *Angria*, *Gondal* and Carroll's family magazines unlike other juvenilia. The specific nature of a paracosm allows and sometimes necessitates the author to have different sorts of interactions with and reactions to their fiction than is generally encountered in a writer's juvenilia, and understanding the Brontës' worlds and Carroll's magazines as paracosms specifically helps us understand these special and important relationships.

### **The Brontës:**

In the case of the Brontës, though *Angria* and *Gondal* were most prominently countries, they originally grew out of a toy-based world, that eventually grew to incorporate literary and historical elements, especially components gathered from the writings of Byron and information they read in periodicals. In Charlotte's own words,

"Papa bought Branwell some wooden soldiers at Leeds. When Papa came home it was night and we were in bed, so next morning Branwell came to our door with a box of soldiers. Emily and I jumped out of bed, and I snatched up one and exclaimed, "This is the Duke of Wellington! This shall be the duke!" When I

had said this, Emily likewise took up one and said it should be hers; when Anne came down she said one should be hers. (...) Branwell chose his and called him 'Bounaparte' (*sic*)" (Beer 182).

These wooden soldiers were to become the cornerstone of the tale of the discovery of Angria. Twelve British adventurers set sail in 1793 (twenty-three years before Charlotte was born) and are hopelessly blown off course. They land on the African continent, and must fight off twenty natives to acquire land for their tents. This land becomes the Glass Town (later translated into the Latin "Verdopolis") named for the glassy nature of the sea around its borders. Verdopolis would later grow into the country of Angria. Presiding over the events of Angria were giants and genii, the four greatest of these being named Brannii, Tallii, Emmii, and Annii (hybrids of their own names and the word "genii"). These genii would direct the actions of the Angrians and the Ashantee natives, assisting or hindering them as they saw fit. Charlotte's Duke of Wellington had an especially important role to play, as he would become ruler of Verdopolis after his historical conflict with Branwell's Bounaparte (foretold by the four Chief Genii), and his sons Charles and Arthur emerged as the narrator and protagonist, respectively, of most of Charlotte's Angrian tales.

What emerges from these early writings is the sense of control the children gained from manipulating their characters, their shared

excitement, and their practical division of labor according to their interests (Charlotte was stronger in characterization and plotting, for example, while Branwell was better on geography and social structure). Living in reduced circumstances, trained in solitude by a remote and bookish father, they became their own small community of creators of fantasy while also developing their literary skills in these first attempts at writing" (The House of Make Believe, 114)

**Longevity:**

In 1830, Charlotte went away to school at Roe Head, and the children decided to destroy Angria (Ratchford 43). Tired of the war, politics, and general immorality of Angria, Emily and Anne decide to declare creative autonomy from Branwell (who, despite its recent destruction, continued to write about the Glass Town throughout the eighteen months that Charlotte attended school) and create their own country of Gondal. Branwell, thus isolated, revisited the kingdom of Angria, using his power as Chief Genius Brannii to resurrect the country. Charlotte also returned eagerly to their paracosm whenever she was home on holidays, and completely re-immersed herself in it when she came home from Roe Head permanently in 1832. From this point on, the children wrote in

collaborative pairs; Branwell and Charlotte continued to build Angria, while Emily and Anne wrote in Gondal.

A good portion of Charlotte's writings in Angria was dedicated to the exploits of a man called Zamorna, actually Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Zamorna and Emperor of Angria. Charlotte chronicles his ascent to power and rivalries with other political figures, but most prominently, his love life. Three wives, the occasional mistress and a love-struck admirer or two occupy a great deal of Charlotte's creative efforts. She finds clever ways to blend Zamorna's political and private spheres, for example, when he breaks the heart of his second wife, Mary, to ruin her father, and Zamorna's archenemy, the Duke of Northangerland. Zamorna, who began life as a loyal and upright man, falls from grace as he grows in age and power. Charlotte narrates her account of the life of Zamorna through his brother, Charles (an interesting masculinization of her own name). Most of Emily's Gondal writing revolved around the life of Augusta Geraldine Almeda, Queen of Angria. Like Charlotte's Zamorna, Emily's protagonist has a long list of lovers and admirers, and does not often hesitate to lead them on and destroy them at her leisure. Ratchford suggests, "It was as if Emily was saying to Charlotte, 'You think the man is the dominant factor in romantic love; I'll show you it is the woman'" (Ratchford

22)—a theme that she would later explore in a more nuanced form in *Jane Eyre*. The spectacularly beautiful and haughtily proud Blanch Ingram seems straight out of one of Charlotte Brontë's early tales, yet it is the cipher Jane—perhaps something or a surrogate for the author herself—who is the heroine of the mature work. Likewise, many critics have pointed out how the figures of Rochester and Heathcliff arose out of the sisters' childhood fascination with Lord Byron<sup>2</sup>, but in the adult novels he becomes naturalized and less of a figure of pure fantasy.

The first characteristic of a paracosm relevant to the work of the Brontës is that the paracosm must be sustained over a significant period of time, usually a year or more. This common longevity of paracosms was taken much farther in the case of the Brontë children, especially by Charlotte and Emily. Most paracosms are abandoned between the ages of eighteen and twenty (Silvey and Mackeith), but the worlds of Angria and Gondal were among the comparatively few paracosms that last into adulthood. The persistence of the secret worlds of the Brontës gave them a unique background for their eventual published novels. Writing in their paracosms was essentially their apprenticeship work where they

---

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Winifred Gérin, "Byron's Influence on the Brontës" in *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin* 17 (1966), 1-19; Ann Lapraik Livermore, "Byron and Emily Brontë" in *Quarterly Review* 300 (July 1962), 337-44; Helen Brown, "The Influence of Byron on Emily Brontë" in *Modern Language Review* 34 (July 1939), 374-81; and Harold Bloom's "Introduction" to his Brontë Chelsea House Anthology.

could practice the nuances of plot and character development. But unlike other juvenilia, Angria and Gondal were the continuations of two story lines over twenty years or more, during which time the characters grew and developed into three-dimensional representations of life. This has significant effect on the creation of their mature novels, since the main characters from their novels were, in reality, barely disguised appearances of the main characters from their paracosms. They did not have to create characters for their published work or generate back-stories to give their protagonists a realistic feel because they had been writing the background since childhood. The characters in *Wuthering Heights* and *Jane Eyre* seem so life-like to readers presumably because the Brontë sisters had already fully defined the personalities of their characters years before they began work on their published fiction, by way of writing in their paracosms.

After Charlotte's first failed attempt to exit Angria forever by while a student at Roe Head by virtue of destruction, she continued to create in her paracosm until she was in her twenties. This was not, however, without further attempts to end her fascination with the Glass Town before she finally freed herself enough to write only publishable fiction like *Jane Eyre*. Charlotte and Emily had developed an intense attachment to their paracosms by the time

they both returned to Roe Head in 1835, Charlotte as a teacher, and Emily as a student. Here, “to the puzzlement of all around them( ...) they were homesick, suffering from such nostalgia of soul as few persons ever knew, homesick not for Haworth and the moors, nor even for the Parsonage and its family, but for their dream worlds, Angria and Gondal” (Ratchford 105). With no time to devote to the paracosm that had overtaken all of her creative energies for the last ten years, Emily was possessed with a homesickness so strong that she became physically ill – it is even suggested by Katherine Frank in *A Chainless Soul: The Life of Emily Brontë* that she was suffering from anorexia, although the evidence to support this theory is doubtful at best. Emily’s severe decline in health prompted Charlotte to have her sent home after only three months at Roe Head. Charlotte would later write of this time in her introduction to Emily’s poems that had been collected and published with the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights*: “Every morning when she woke, the vision of home and the moors rushed on her, and darkened and saddened the day before her. Nobody knew what ailed her but me – I knew only too well. In this struggle, her health was quickly broken: her white face, attenuated form, and failing strength threatened rapid decline. I felt in my heart she would die, if she did not go home, and with this conviction

obtained her recall" (Norton *Wuthering Heights* 319). What was "ailing" Emily was the separation from her paracosm, a separation that none could understand the way Charlotte did— without having examined the psychological aspects of the paracosm, it would have been difficult for outsiders to see how truly invested Emily must have been in the world she imagined.

Well into adulthood, Emily Brontë blurred the line between reality and fantasy, paracosm and fictive apprenticeship. Barker notes that Emily was still slipping seamlessly between Gondal and the parsonage less than a year before she began *Wuthering Heights* (864). In her diary papers for that year, Emily writes:

Anne and I went our first long journey by ourselves together, leaving home on the 30th of June, sleeping there and walking home on Wednesday morning....And during our excursion we were, Ronald Macalgin, Henry Angora, Juliet Augusteena, Rosabella Esmaldan, Ella and Julian Egremont, Catherine Navarre, and Cordelia Fitzaphnold, escaping from the palaces of instruction to join the Royalists who are hard driven at present by the victorious Republicans. The Gondals still flourish bright as ever. I am at present working writing a work on the First Wars....We intend sticking by the rascals as long as they delight us, which I am glad to say they do at present. (*Wuthering Heights* 298)

Various scholars and biographers have described the confluences between Gondal and *Wuthering Heights*<sup>3</sup>, pointing out,

---

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Fannie Elizabeth Ratchford, "The Brontës' Web of Dreams," *Yale Review* (Autumn 1931) 139-57, *The Brontës' Web of Childhood* (1964), "Biography" *Wuthering Heights* (New York: Harper and Row 1965) v-viii, *et cetera*; David R. Isenberg, "A Gondal Fragment" *Brontë Society Transactions* 14 (1962) 24-26; Mary Visick, *The Genesis of Wuthering Heights* (1967) and "The Last of Gondal" *BST* 18 (1982) 75-85; Victor A. Neufeldt, "Emily Brontë and the Responsible Imagination" *Victorian Newsletter* 43 (Spring 1973) 15-21 and "The Shared Vision of Anne and Emily Brontë: The Context for *Wuthering Heights*" *DAI* 31 (Aug. 1970)764A-765A; Gerald L. Gould, "Emily Brontë's Relation to Gondal as Subject of *Wuthering Heights*" *DAI* (Sept. 1974), 1655A-1656A; Inga-Stina Ewbank, "*Wuthering*

for example, the resemblance between “The Two Children” and the second Cathy’s growing attachment to Hareton (Norton *Wuthering Heights*, 283-284); “The Prisoner” and Heathcliff’s mental state at the close of the novel (Visick, 16); and “But dreams like this I cannot bear” and Lockwood’s nightmare in chapter three (Ratchford, 240). In addition, both the Gondal saga and *Wuthering Heights* revolve around similar treatments of the themes of betrayal, passion, and dreams. For Emily Brontë as for Charlotte, the paracosm formed the training ground for the mature work.

Gondal remained with Emily until her death at thirty. Anne, however, tired of Gondal. On Emily and Anne’s journey to York, Emily fully immersed herself in Gondal, as shown in her July 1845 journal note quoted above. Anne participated in this reenactment, although somewhat more reluctantly. Anne mentions in her own diary paper of the same date that “We have not yet finished our Gondal chronicles that we began three years and a half ago when will they be done? (...) The Gondals in general are not in first rate playing condition – will they improve?” (Barker 133). Anne’s relatively smaller contributions to the Gondalian poetry and her abandonment of the paracosm to

---

*Heights and Gondal*” in *Wuthering Heights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 480-486; Richard Benvenuto, *Emily Brontë* (1982).

create Agnes Grey in 1847 indicate that Emily's attachment was singular in nature for much of the latter part of her life.

While Emily's separation anxiety over loss of contact with Gondal while at school was causing a physical attack, Charlotte was suffering an attack of conscience as she began to see her obsession with Angria as a barrier to her relationship with God.<sup>4</sup> So intense was Charlotte's attachment to Angria that it seemed as if her beloved Zamorna had walked off the page and begun to interfere with her daily life. She records in her journal,

"Never shall I, Charlotte Brontë, forget what a voice of wild and wailing music now came thrillingly to my mind's –almost to my body's—ear; nor how distinctly I, sitting in the schoolroom at Roe Head, saw the Duke of Zamorna leaning against that obelisk with the mute marble Victory above him, the fern waving at his feet, his black horse turned loose grazing among the heather, the moonlight so mild and so exquisitely tranquil, sleeping upon that vast and vacant road, and the African sky quivering and shaking with stars expanded above all. I was quite gone. I had really utterly forgot where I was and all the gloom and cheerlessness of my situation. I felt myself breathing quick and short as I beheld the Duke lifting up his sable crest, which undulated as the plume of a hearse waves to the wind and knew that that music which seems as mournfully triumphant as the scriptural verse

"Oh Grave where is thy sting;  
Oh Death where is thy victory"

was exciting him and quickening his ever rapid pulse.

---

<sup>4</sup> This is perhaps why Charlotte's mature fiction is much more concerned with strict morality and devotion to a stronger relationship with God than her paracosm is.

“Miss Brontë, what are you thinking about?” said a voice that dissipated all the charm and Miss Lister thrust her little, rough black head into my face!” (423-4 Norton)

This was not the only time she would curse the interruption of her daydreaming by her regular duties at Roe Head. Charlotte also relates in her journal the account of a time that she was seized with the inspiration to write. “The spirit of all Verdopolis (...) came crowding into my mind. If I had had time to indulge it, I felt that the vague sensation of that moment would have settled down into some narrative better at least than anything I ever produced before. But just then a dolt came up with a lesson. I thought I should have vomited” (Norton 413). The ever-presence of Angria and her need for time to devote to elaborating her inspiration properly is strong enough to turn her against the people in her real life that cannot relate to her paracosm. The Brontë siblings’ devotion to their paracosms bound them closer than regular siblings. They were linked by the sharing of their paracosms and the isolation that it brought them as it alienated them from others who could not understand their commitment to their private worlds.

**Secrecy:**

This alienation came from the desire of the Brontë children to keep their enduring play-worlds a secret from outsiders—the second important difference between the writing of a paracosmist and

regular juvenilia. Some of this desire is rooted in the stigma that comes with being unable to leave behind the world of make-believe that traditionally should have been put aside in late childhood. But keeping their early writings a secret served an important purpose in their creative process. It gave the Brontës a sense of freedom with their writing— their writing in Angria and Gondal need not meet any standards but their own. At the time, the actions of the paracosmic protagonists would have been considered somewhat scandalous for good Christian women to be writing about. But the public opinion could not hamper their creativity if their work was kept private. For Charlotte especially, who seemed to pride herself on her sense of propriety in *Jane Eyre*, public ridicule, or even the condescension of close friends would have been unbearable. Emily, not quite as concerned with respectability in *Wuthering Heights* did, in fact, receive the criticism Charlotte would have dreaded. Critics in 1847, although generally recognizing Emily's natural ability as a writer, denounced *Wuthering Heights* for being too dark and dealing too much with cruelty and inhumanity. Fear of discouragement of fantasy play, especially of the kind the Brontës engaged in while writing in Angria and Gondal, and anxiety about disapproval of the immorality of the paracosmic

protagonists motivated the Brontës to keep their paracosms secret, thus giving them the creative freedom they desired.

Charlotte never revealed the secrets of Angria to even her closest friends. At one point, in response to a schoolmate marveling at her small, cramped handwriting, "she confessed she acquired it by writing in a magazine written and read only by herself and her brother and sisters. She even told this girl a tale out of the periodical, and promised to show her one of the issues, but retracted the promise and could never be persuaded to bring forth the little volume" (Ratchford 52). That was generally the last time Charlotte talked about her paracosm with anyone outside the society of her siblings, though Angria remained with Charlotte until 1839. She was 23 years old when she wrote poignantly about quitting the familiar landscape of Verdopolis for "a distant country where every face was unknown and the character of all the population an enigma which it would take much study to comprehend and much talent to expound" (427), that is, putting aside her paracosm to write new fiction in the "real" world. But her struggle to get to this point occupied much of her time while at Roe Head, as she feared that her devotion to the characters and plot lines (often dealing with unremorseful, unpunished immorality) and her inability to put aside these imaginings was slipping into the

realm of idolatry, and jeopardizing the salvation of her soul.

Charlotte carried on an extensive correspondence with her close friend Ellen Nussey, in which we are shown the extent of Charlotte's distress over her sinful preoccupation:

"If I were like you, I should have my face Zionward (...) but I am not like you. If you knew my thoughts; the dreams that absorb me; and the fiery imagination that at times eats me up and makes me feel society as it is, wretchedly insipid you would pity and I daresay despise me. But Ellen I know the treasures of the Bible I love and adore them. I can see the Well of Life in all its clearness and brightness; but when I stoop down to drink of the pure waters they fly from my lips." (Barker 37)

But even as Charlotte tries to communicate her religious distress to Ellen, she simultaneously attempts to keep the cause a secret:

"I have some qualities that make me very miserable, some feelings that you can have no participation in – that few, very few, people in the world can at all understand. I don't pride myself on these peculiarities, I strive to conceal and suppress them as much as I can, but they burst out sometimes and then those who see the explosion despise me and I hate myself for days afterwards." (Barker 40)

She is fighting a battle on two fronts. On the one hand, she feels the necessity of reaching out for support from a close friend, but on the other, she is overcome with the impossibility of sharing her paracosm. This may be for fear of criticism by the aristocratic and sophisticated Ellen—Charlotte would not have been devastated to be called silly, or much worse, thought mad. It is said that Charlotte

wrote more candidly to Mary Taylor, another school friend, but Mary, in accordance with what she believed to be Charlotte's wishes, burned all correspondence upon Charlotte's death in 1855.

Almost all of Charlotte's other original manuscripts survived, along with a huge bulk of her letters to family, friends, and publishers. The fact that her Angrian writing was in prose and meticulously dated—either with “real” dates or dates in Angrian time—makes Charlotte's vision of Angria much easier to piece together than Emily's. Charlotte makes a concerted effort to situate each new piece of writing within the context of the larger story, giving us a clear window into her paracosm and also a distinct separation between her Angrian tales and her experimentation with unrelated fiction and early novels. But if Charlotte's window is clear, Emily's is at best foggy, and at worst, opaque, because of Emily's intent to keep them secret. First, there is presumably a large body of work belonging to Emily that is missing from our current accounts of her fiction. Whether this material was lost, destroyed by Emily herself (this is not implausible, given her intensive editing of her poetry—she may have felt previous versions of her work was of poor quality and therefore unnecessary to save), or simply never written is a matter of conjecture. Secondly, Emily's

Gondal work was composed entirely in verse, usually written from the point of view of one or another of her characters in Gondal. Emily's Gondal poems were mostly emotional references to events in the story and do not always include an account of the events themselves. Thirdly, these poems were not kept together in any recognizable order; written on scraps of paper and crammed in available space in book margins. They are seldom dated and only sporadically do they include names or initials that Brontë historians can use to interpret their place in the Gondal story. It is indeed miraculous that analysts like Ratchford could produce any account of Emily's internal world, much less the coherent and linear (although still speculative) version she arranged in *Gondal's Queen: A Novel in Verse by Emily Brontë*.

Though Charlotte makes her accounts linear and accessible to the public and Emily does quite the opposite (an interesting parallel to the narrative structures of their mature work), they are both responding to the same cause: the specific nature of a paracosmist and author's relationship to his or her paracosm. The conceptualization of Angria and Gondal as worlds happening outside of their writing causes opposing, but closely related reactions in the Brontë sisters—both Charlotte's obsessive need to situate, and Emily's complete disregard for chronological order. The

only difference is that Charlotte felt compelled to write down how each story fit into the larger picture, but Emily, having this larger history plainly crystallized in her head, needed only to transcribe the poetry for its expressive value. While Charlotte preferred to think of her writing about Angria in terms of an explicit history, Emily's Gondal poems are her own, personal, emotional record of her paracosm, not ever meant for other eyes to see – not even the eyes of her sisters.

The desire to keep her paracosm secret was especially pronounced in Emily, possibly because poetry about her real life intermingles with Gondalian poetry until they are sometimes indistinguishable. In "O God of heaven! the dream of horror," Emily writes of Gondal's Queen Augusta's release from prison in a profoundly ambiguous way—she includes a description of despair in a dungeon that is highly suggestive of her time as a "prisoner" of Roe Head. The return of the speaker to freedom is reminiscent of not only a return home for Augusta, but of Emily's return to her paracosm.

"It's over now – and I am free,  
And the ocean wind is caressing me,  
The wild wind from that wavy main  
I never thought to see again.

Bless Thee, Bright Sea—and glorious dome,  
And my own world, my spirit's home;" (Hatfield 41)

The "Bright Sea" is presumably the ocean Augusta would be sailing from the prison to her home in Gaaldine, south of Gondal. This functions as a landmark for Emily too; she has been freed from her despair at Roe Head and is allowed to return to the seas of her paracosm, her "own world, (her) spirit's home." This ambiguity occurs often in Emily's poetry, and perhaps gives a new dimension to her intense secrecy regarding her paracosmic writing, revealing how she mingled her paracosm with her everyday life.

When Charlotte discovered and read some of Emily's poems in 1845, Emily took it as a monumental betrayal, and it caused a serious family rift. "It took hours to reconcile her to the discovery I had made, and days to persuade her that such poems merited publication," (Frank 14) Charlotte notes. After much controversy between Emily and Charlotte, these poems were then published in the Brontës' first work, *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*. If Charlotte had so much difficulty winning permission to publish Emily's work while Emily was present to serve as editor and censor, we can only imagine what Emily's dismay would have been like after Charlotte's posthumous publication of the Gondal poems, when she collected some of Emily's "best" poetry to be published with the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights*. Charlotte desired both to "interpret Emily to the world" (Gérin 263) and to respond to

critics' doubts about the authorship of *Wuthering Heights*. In her quest to do this, she drastically altered many of the Gondal poems, removing references to the mountains and palaces of Gondal and replacing them with pictures of the moors and homes of Haworth.

Originally, "A little while, a little while" contained the following stanzas:

A little while, a little while  
 The noisy crowd are barred away;  
 And I can sing and I can smile –  
 A little while I've a holyday!

Where wilt thou go my harassed heart?  
 Full many a land invites thee now;  
 And places near, and far apart  
 Have rest for thee, my weary brow –

In the 1850s *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte erases the line that alludes to Emily's dislike for people unconnected to her paracosm "the noisy crowd are barred away," substituting "the weary task is put away." She also deletes "full many a land invites thee now" – a reference to Gondal – and changes it to "What thought, what scene invites thee now?" The poem goes on to talk about the comforts of home, and the desire to return there. Emily's original poem then introduces a counterpart to home, another place the heart seeks: Gondal.

Shall I go there? Or shall I seek  
 Another clime, another sky –  
 Where tongues familiar music speak

In accents dear to memory?

Yes, as I mused, the naked room,  
The flickering firelight died away  
And from the midst of cheerless gloom  
I passed to bright, unclouded day—

A little and a lone green lane  
That opened on a common wide  
A distant, dreamy, dim blue chain  
Of mountains circling every side—

But Charlotte is determined to keep the references in this poem strictly pointing to their home. Therefore she omits completely the first of these stanzas, which is filled with allusions to the existence of Gondal. Somewhere other than home, “another clime, another sky,” calls to Emily: a place where “familiar” tongues “speak in accents dear to memory.” This could well be indicating the baby-lisp Emily and Anne had created as the dialect of the Gondals that Charlotte ridicules in *Early Writings* (l: 230—i.e. “a little oldish maun and waman”). With the elimination of these lines, Charlotte tweaks the rest of the poem to match a nostalgic vision of Haworth by converting “Yes” to “Yet,” and “flickering” to “alien” in the second stanza; reinforcing that the speaker of the poem is abroad, and longing for home, and eradicating the possibility that the speaker could be home, and thinking about somewhere else. Most tellingly, Charlotte replaces the “mountains” of Gondal in the third stanza with the “moorland” of Haworth.

It is slightly puzzling that though Charlotte was so eager to conceal her own paracosm that she would reveal poems that Emily had clearly written for Gondal. But Charlotte had always maintained a cognitive distance between her *writing* and her *paracosm*. Her interaction with Angria was extremely private, but the writing she did outside of the Angrian tales was not at all kept secret. This is perhaps because this writing was, for Charlotte, not ultimately about Angria, despite the similarities between the two. Emily had a harder time keeping the them separate, not only in her poetry, but also in her diary papers, where she notes the current state of the Gondals right alongside her reports of what is happening in her daily life.

Emily wrote only one novel, and did not intend for any of her poetry to be read by anyone other than perhaps Anne. But Charlotte had always been interested in writing outside of Angria in hopes of eventual publication. Her first novel *The Professor*, though actually a re-write of an early part of the Glass Town saga, was written following her "Farewell to Angria," and it seemed that this small distinction was enough to remove the storyline from her paracosm, and thus make it suitable for distribution to the public.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Charlotte, quite unlike Emily, seemed to have some heterocosmic tendencies to her work, as evidenced by her constant desire to push her sisters to publish their fiction, and her repeated efforts at publishing her own novels. Though she would

Publishers, however, thought otherwise, and rejected *The Professor* until after Charlotte's death. For Emily, fine changes of this sort would not have been enough to make her completely comfortable with the revelation of her poems to the world; a copy of her Gondal poems with direct references edited out of the writing would presumably still be, in her mind, a Gondal poem. And though Charlotte may have thought she was acting for her late sister's benefit, and showing enough discretion to honor her wishes, it is doubtful that Emily would have felt the same.

**Control:**

Though not as unique to the relationship of a paracosm to the published fiction of an author, the consistency of rules within a paracosm does also have influence on later works. Paracosms display a certain integrity, in which the paracosmist finds a degree of satisfaction (Silvey and MacKeith 175). This sets the stage for the paracosmist-author to develop a commitment to the way the rules have already been laid out, a commitment to what has already happened, a need to justify occurrences *to oneself* more so than to the reader, because of the idea that the paracosm somewhat "exists" beyond oneself. This is not a necessary condition of regular fiction (although it certainly happens often), written with the intent

---

never have disclosed her paracosm to a publisher, her later fiction is often only a thinly-veiled rendering of events that happened in Angria.

of publication, because the internal consistency found in fiction of this sort can be solely directed towards pleasing an audience, making the storyline somewhat more malleable. In *Angria and Gondal*, the effects of an action are predicated on the rules each world follows, and once established, these rules are maintained. This relationship to the control of the paracosm gave the Brontë sisters extensive practice with the suspension of disbelief, an important tool for use in the creation of their mature fiction.

The Victorian fantasy writer George MacDonald, a friend of Lewis Carroll, wrote in his essay on "The Fantastic Imagination," "A man's inventions may be stupid or clever, but if he do not hold by the laws of them, or if he makes one law jar with another, he contradicts himself as an inventor, he is no artist" (6). The control and consistency the Brontës learned as creators of paracosms would serve them well in their mature fiction—enabling Emily, for example, to create the sense of mystery at the beginning of *Wuthering Heights* in which the reader, like Lockwood, enters into a fully realized world whose main tragedy has already happened years before, leaving only traces behind in the margins of books and scraps of paper in Catherine's old room—much like Emily's own *Gondal* fragments Charlotte found hidden in the parsonage.

One of the chief rules in Angria that required suspension of disbelief to set up its recurrence was resurrection. Resurrection was used from the very beginning of Glass Town, but the most significant resurrection was that of Mary Percy, while Charlotte was away at school. After Branwell had resurrected the whole of Verdopolis from their attempted destruction, he wrote Charlotte from home to tell her that he had killed off her beloved character Mary, second wife of Zamorna. Charlotte mourned her death as she would that of a family member, and when she returned to Haworth, she also returned to Angria and brought Mary with her. This was not just an arbitrary authorial choice, a sign of Charlotte completely ignoring Branwell's input, or a concession that the story does not have to make sense or be dealt with in coherent order; it is a property, a measure of control that is afforded by the paracosmic structure of their worlds. That is, in writing in a paracosm, instead of the real-world setting she later adopts, Charlotte could justify the resurrection of Mary (most importantly, she could justify it to herself) by virtue of the rules the children had already created for Angria. Waking from the dead is an acceptable part of Angrian life. Therefore when Charlotte decided she could not part with Mary Percy, she simply resurrects her. This theme later finds its way into *Jane Eyre* with providential coincidences toward the close of the

book and the figurative resurrection of Rochester by Jane—she revives him by returning to him and becoming his wife after his crippling accident.

Emily, however, would not resurrect a character once he or she died, though she occasionally inserted something into his or her history at a later date (although the order in which the story was written is unclear, because of the tentative nature of the reconstruction of the Gondal Epic by Ratchford and Hatfield). The guidelines of Gondal are very different. Emily's world carries a strong repercussions for immoral actions—usually punishment or remorse, or a combination of the two. Augusta acts on impulse, doing whatever she pleases—banishing people who offend her, leading men into infidelity and casting aside lovers as she grows tired of them, even leaving her own baby to die as she flees Gondal after the overthrow of her husband's empire—and generally succeeds in her endeavors, but when she acts thus maliciously, she always feels remorse (quite unlike the pitiless Zamorna, who sends a vast majority of his acquaintances to wrack and ruin without the slightest indication of guilt). In Gondal, there is also an emphasis on punishment that is absent in Charlotte's world. Where in Angria, Zamorna can literally get away with murder, Gondal citizens and queens alike are often being lectured, thrown in dungeons (where

they proceed to write profound poetry on the walls), and even executed. Such is the fate that befalls Augusta for her lifelong cruelty toward the end of the Gondal epic. This also has an impact on Emily's conceptualization of *Wuthering Heights*: Catherine is not resurrected, but she haunts Heathcliff much the way the Gondalian realm haunted Emily Brontë's mature imagination.

**Unity:**

This issue of control is, in the case of the Brontës, dependent upon the issue of unity—another part of what can sometimes make a paracosm different from a collection of short stories, or even a novel. A paracosm gives the budding author a test platform for a potentially infinite cast of characters while also providing a way to maintain unity between them. It links separate and otherwise unconnected pieces of writing together in a way that can be cohesive without being restrictive. The structure of a paracosm can allow creators this overarching unity between for their characters and their worlds.

Strangely, this connectedness of the paracosm finds its opposite in Charlotte and Emily's published fiction. The worlds of their paracosms were vast and interrelated, but the setting of their fiction is either disjointed, as in *Jane Eyre*, or completely isolated as in *Wuthering Heights*. There are several settings in *Jane Eyre*; the

house of the Reeds, Lowood School, and Thornfield Hall. These places are completely separate from one another in the story, much as their counterparts in Charlotte's life would have seemed. The inhabitants of each of these places never seem to have any contact with those of the others; they are segregated into pieces of Jane's life that form a whole only by virtue of Jane having passed through them. Association between places and global significance of locations exists only in Angria, made possible by the full-world aspect of the paracosm. In Angria, each location was connected to every other location by the action that took place there once the main character left. These occurrences would have an effect on the main character later, and the "meanwhile" motif served to advance the story on many occasions especially in times of war, and encounters between Zamorna and his various lovers. But this was not so in the "real world" of Charlotte's life. The things that happened at Haworth usually did not enter into her life at all while at Roe Head, nor did the relationships at Roe Head much affect her life while working as a governess, save her correspondence with Mary Taylor and Ellen Nussey. Even as Charlotte tried to connect her experience at Brussels with her life at Haworth via letters—some say love letters—to her teacher M. Héger, she was thwarted by his refusal to participate in this correspondence. The places and

characters in Charlotte's paracosm were unified, but those in her life were not, therefore neither were those in *Jane Eyre*, because Charlotte was attempting to mirror the way things happened in "real life."

In *Wuthering Heights*, we are introduced to an extremely isolated area made up of Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange, in which the events of the entire story manage to take place. Because of her overpowering attachment to her paracosm, Emily forced her real world, her network of experiences and acquaintances, to be very limited. She had to return from Roe Head, and although she finally procured a successful governess position at Law Hill, only eight miles from Haworth (Frank 119), she always desired to be at home. She would not expand. Emily's concept of the world was that it was small and insular, as her real life had been. Emily experienced the larger world only sporadically through trips she took to York and Brussels, vicariously through the newspapers they read at Haworth, and imaginatively through her own world of Gondal.

The unity of a paracosm, its never-ending quality and its cohesiveness, does more than just set a standard for the Brontë sisters to which they could compare their everyday lives: it helped them imagine the background stories that they did not necessarily

write into their fiction. Their paracosm serves as the full world that lies behind the novel—a full world that they did not have to create specifically for the novel because pieces of the plot lines and almost all of the character development had been happening since their childhood. Heathcliff, Catherine, Jane, and Mr. Rochester had been growing up before their eyes for years as characters in their paracosms. When the time came to create their mature, publishable work, the Brontë sisters did not need to ask themselves how their characters would react in various situations because they already knew. In this way, the unity of paracosm contributes to the unknowable nature of both *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*, the indecipherability of the “whole” reality. What Lockwood is searching for in *Wuthering Heights*, and what the reader (often directly addressed by Jane) is trying to uncover in *Jane Eyre* is the unexplained “rest” of the story.

As J. Hillis Miller points out in “Repetition and the Uncanny,” *Wuthering Heights* does not end in a fully resolved fashion, but is involuted and cyclical in a way that keeps the story alive through repeated elements and many layers of retelling and narration (Miller 377-8). We enter the world of *Wuthering Heights* halfway through the action of the novel, and must decode the beginning, use it to reinterpret the middle, and await an ending that never

really comes, but as it approaches it seems to take us back to the beginning. This is part of what occurs in paracosm: children can replay a familiar scene with entirely different details, reworking and refining it in a spiral format—expanding elements as they repeat them. *Wuthering Heights* is essentially the same story told twice, once for the original Catherine and Heathcliff, and again for their children bearing the same names and enacting the same drama. *Wuthering Heights* falls back on the narrative structure of a paracosm to tell its story, because the paracosm was such a prevalent influence in Emily's life.

This circular property can also be traced back to the whole-world aspect and unity of the paracosm: after Emily puts down the pen, after the reader closes the book, there is a sense that the world on the page keeps living, continues to exist autonomously outside the direct consciousness of the author or reader. There is not, however, the same attribute in Charlotte's *Jane Eyre*, whose narration is linear, although by using the fictional autobiography trope, the reader is being told the story after it has happened. The difference in the way the narrative structures are working in the books may be due to the fact that Emily was still creating and writing poems in Gondal alongside her development of *Wuthering*

*Heights*, while Charlotte had effectively separated herself from Angria by the time she began work on *Jane Eyre*.

The Brontë paracosms, their form and functions, are reflected and refracted throughout their published work not only because of their importance as a literary training ground, but also because of their impact on the sisters' personal lives, and even psychological development. The domain of the paracosm is the world where the traditional approaches to studying the Brontës meet, and the places from which we have the best viewpoint of the places Angria and Gondal truly occupied in the lives of Emily and Charlotte Brontë.

**Lewis Carroll:**

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson—pen name Lewis Carroll—began his paracosm at the age of 13. The paracosm took the form of private family magazines in which the Dodgson children published short stories, poetry, drawings, and occasionally advertisements. The Dodgson paracosm can be classified as a “systems and documents” paracosm because it revolved entirely around the creation of the magazine. This activity reflects full-world, adult conventions in miniature—the defining aspect of a paracosm.

As the third-born of eleven children in the Dodgson family, Charles had a close relationship with his siblings. At twelve, he left

his parson father's rectory at Croft to attend school at Richmond. Dodgson's experiences at school would not be pleasant ones. It is tempting to wonder if the development of his paracosm, unlike those of the Brontës, arose out of a need to escape these painful experiences and was really one of Barry Cohen's "post-traumatic paracosms." He writes home to his two older sisters to tell them of the hazing he received upon his enrollment in school:

"The boys have played two tricks upon me which were these—they first proposed to play at "King of the cobblers" and asked me if I would be king, to which I agreed, then they made me sit down and sat (on the ground) in a circle round me, and told me to say "Go to work" which I said and they immediately began kicking me and knocking on all sides. The next game they proposed was "Peter, the red lion," and they made a mark on a tombstone (for we were playing in the church-yard) and one of the boys walked with his eyes shut, holding out his finger, trying to touch the mark, then a little boy came forward to lead the rest and led a good many very near the mark; at last it was my turn, they told me to shut my eyes as well, and the next minute I had my finger in the mouth of one of the boys, who had stood (I believe) *before* the tombstone with his mouth open. For 2 nights I slept alone, and for the rest of the time with Ned Swire. The boys play me no tricks now" (Cohen 5).

This hazing at Richmond would be perpetrated tenfold at the next school Dodgson attended, Rugby. "When Charles left Croft for Richmond, he left childhood and domesticity behind, but he could and did come to terms with change. Going from Richmond to Rugby was another matter altogether," (Cohen 18). Cohen's biography places a heavy emphasis on the practice of fagging that occurred at Rugby—a system in which the older students controlled the younger ones, forcing them to do any undesirable

chores or errands, and enforcing their control with corporal punishment and bullying (19). Dodgson would reflect on his time at Rugby many years later, when he visits another boarding school in 1857:

“I was particularly struck by the healthy happy look of the boys and their gentlemanly appearance. The dormitory is the most unique feature of the whole: (...) every boy had a snug little bedroom secured to himself, where he is free from interruption and annoyance. This to little boys must be a very great addition to their happiness, as being a kind of counterbalance to any bullying they may suffer during the day. From my own experience of school life at Rugby I can say that if I could have been thus secure from annoyance at night, the hardships of the daily life would have been comparative trifles to bear” (Diaries 1:107)

In her article, “Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll): A Brief Biography” on *The Victorian Web*, Karoline Leach states eloquently what many other Carrollian scholars allude to: “The nature of this nocturnal ‘annoyance’ will probably never now be fully understood, but it may be that he is delicately referring to some form of sexual abuse.” If this was the case, it represents a severely distressing event for Dodgson. The creation of post-traumatic paracosms may partially represent an escape into his idyllic pre-Rugby childhood, even as the magazines served as an apprenticeship for his adult work. Though Dodgson excelled academically, and succeeded in making friends, he later comments, “I cannot say that I look back upon my life at a Public School with any sensations of pleasure, or

that any earthly considerations would induce me to go through my three years again" (qtd. in Kelly 6).

Perhaps as a result of his "fagging" at Rugby, Carroll remained "fixated emotionally in childhood" (Wallace 5). He would go on to spend the rest of his life "trying to recreate the warm, familiar pattern of his home circle" (Clark 13).

This desire became more and more pronounced as he grew older—particularly manifesting itself in his close ties with young girls (perhaps representative of his sisters) and distaste for young boys (perhaps representative of his oppressors). "If we accept this version of Carroll's life," writes Catherine Robson (i.e., that he was abused by boys), "then it is no great stretch to hypothesize that this child-chasing son was on an impossible quest to catch the child he himself had once been....Carroll's writings simultaneously display a longing for a return to childhood, and a violent rejection of all children who happen to be male" (139). Perhaps this is the reason Dodgson's invented worlds often depict boys as unruly imbeciles (which finds its parallel in his published *Sylvie and Bruno*) or baby pigs (as in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*).

As early as age thirteen, the yearning to retreat to his safe, family-centered pre-school life was already factoring into his literary and paracosmic pursuits. Out of the desire to maintain close ties to

his siblings, Dodgson wrote the first family magazine in 1845, while he was attending school at Richmond. It was called "*Useful and Instructive Poetry*," and written for the benefit of his brother Wilfred (age seven) and sister Louisa (age five).

The poetry and stories collected in *Useful and Instructive Poetry* are some of the earliest of Dodgson's surviving works. They are largely comedic and nonsensical; unrefined forms of the clever humor that would make him famous in later life. A common theme in this particular magazine is the didactic nature of the relationship of authority figures to children—something we might expect from a bright child of thirteen who had made the transition from a comfortable home atmosphere to a regimented and controlled boarding school. In the poem "My Fairy," this is especially evident. The fairy in the story takes the role of a disapproving authority figure:

"I have a fairy by my side  
     Which says I must not sleep,  
 When once in pain I loudly cried  
     It said "You must not weep".

If, full of mirth, I smile and grin,  
     It says "You must not laugh";  
 When once I wished to drink some gin  
     It said "You must not quaff".

When once a meal I wished to taste  
     It said "You must not bite";  
 When to the wars I went in haste  
     It said "You must not fight".

"What may I do?" at length I dried,

Tired of the painful task.  
The fairy quietly replied,  
And said, "You must not ask".

*Moral:* "You mustn't." (Dodgson 700)

The fairy occupies the place of many different kinds of authority figures— most probably the teachers and older bullies Dodgson had learned to take orders from at school. As a child in a powerless position relative to teachers and more physically dominant students, rules often go unexplained, leaving just a string of "mustn'ts" for a child to obey, or face the consequences of disobedience.

This same kind of arbitrary logic presents itself in another poem from *Useful and Instructive Poetry*, called "Rules and Regulations." It begins with twenty lines all ending in "-tion" which prepare the reader to hear "A short direction / do avoid dejection":

Learn well your grammar,  
And never stammer,  
Write well and neatly,  
And sing most sweetly,  
Be enterprising,  
Love early rising,  
Go walk six miles,  
Have ready quick smiles,  
With lightsome laughter,  
Soft flowing after.  
Drink tea, not coffee;  
Never eat toffy.  
Eat bread with butter.  
Once more, don't stutter. (Dodgson 704)

The second stanza is much the same: a list of do's and don'ts ending with "Be rude to strangers. *Moral: Behave.*" Richard Kelly provides us with an excellent analysis of the logic of this poem in his revised biography of Lewis Carroll, which it would be helpful to quote at some length:

"Rules and Regulations" sets forth an incongruous list of social commandments that the moral, "Behave," simply cannot synthesize, except as a joke. Many of the rules are dictated solely by the requirements of rhyme, not reason: "never eat toffy" is an auditory corollary of "Drink tea, not coffee." In a sense, rules are arbitrary whether formulated by a disciplinarian or by the necessity of rhyme" (Kelly 41).

This theme has echoes in other poems from this first family magazine, such as "Punctuality" and "Charity," which aren't exactly sarcastic, but reveal Dodgson's "early concern with proper behavior" according to Susina's article (12) "*Respicendo prudens*": *Lewis Carroll's Juvenilia*. Instead of it truly being Dodgson's concern, however, it is more likely that these more seriously toned poems are reflections of *society's* preoccupation with absolute propriety, and possibly meant to display a contradiction between the daytime decorum and the nocturnal harassment of the Rugby boys.

The way this subject recurs throughout *Useful and Instructive Poetry* is important to its function as a paracosm in Charles Dodgson's life. He is not only creating a miniature magazine, but he is making use of that platform in a sophisticated way. Here the

paracosm is serving a function that many published newspapers and magazines do—to criticize the establishment by satire—but it is also helping Dodgson process the helplessness he felt during his apparently traumatic experiences. Dodgson expands the real-world qualities of his paracosm by using the poetry in his magazine to express dissatisfaction and even distress at the established order to which he was subjected.

The theme of arbitrary authority figures did not end in Dodgson's paracosms. It is mirrored back throughout *Alice in Wonderland* in various forms. Often the purveyors of such illogical rules are the Red and White Queens. When the White Queen offers to hire Alice as her lady's maid, and pay her in jam every other day, Alice says:

"I don't want you to hire *me*—and I don't care for jam."  
 "It's very good jam," said the Queen.  
 "Well, I don't want any *to-day*, at any rate."  
 "You couldn't have it if you *did* want it," the Queen said.  
 "The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday—but never jam *to-day*."  
 "It *must* come sometimes to "jam to-day," Alice objected.  
 "No, it ca'n't," said the Queen. "It's jam every *other* day: to-day isn't any *other* day, you know."  
 "I don't understand you," said Alice. "It's dreadfully confusing!" (150)

Alice, a child, is confused by the promises of an adult who says one thing but intends to do another. The promise of a reward of jam is given then taken back in a pseudo-logical way that denies the existence of a promise to begin with, based on nuances of wording.

The authority figure relies on manipulating semantics to avoid following through on a pledge. Furthermore, the rule itself, “jam tomorrow and jam yesterday—but never jam to-day,” is entirely based on the whim of the adult, and any logical reasoning behind it goes unrevealed. Nevertheless, it is a rule that Alice would have to submit to if she were taking the post of the White Queen’s lady’s maid, because of her ultimate powerlessness in Wonderland. For children, sometimes functioning in an adult world presents the same struggles that Alice experiences while travelling through Wonderland. The rules of adults, when unexplained, can seem unnecessary and capricious to the child, but the child has no power to demand intelligible explanations or to refuse to obey these rules.

**Longevity:**

Dodgson would look back on *Useful and Instructive Poetry* with a slight discontent, saying, “It lasted half a year, and was then clumsily bound up in a sort of volume: the binding, however, was in every respect worthy of the contents” (qtd in Clark 50). But Dodgson would have plenty of opportunities to revise his mistakes from this first paracosmic effort in the long line of family magazines that was to come. Perhaps regretting the “monochromatic” (Cohen 23) nature of a magazine with only one columnist, in the next installment of Dodgson’s paracosm, he expands realism of the

magazines farther. When Dodgson began *The Rectory Magazine* (around 1847, according to Clark (52)), it was designed to be a compilation of the work of all the members of the family. Sensing that *Useful and Instructive Poetry* lacked the variety of submissions from different authors as in real periodicals, Dodgson opened his creation up to the contributions of his siblings. Looking back on this development of *The Rectory Magazine*, Dodgson writes: "At first the contributions poured in in once continuous stream, while the issuing of each number was attended by the most violent excitement throughout the entire house: most of the family contributed one or more articles to it" (qtd. in Susina 11). It must have pleased Dodgson to see eight members of the Dodgson family submitting articles, poetry, letters, and stories to augment his paracosmic endeavors. During this time, he must have felt as if the bond between himself and his siblings was healthy and strong. His paracosm was fulfilling its desired function as communication and connection between the Dodgson children while Charles was still at school in Rugby.

However, Dodgson's standards as editor were high. Though the dedication of the *Rectory Magazine* directs itself "To the Inhabitants of the the Rectory, Croft and especially the younger members of that house" (qtd. in Cohen 22), Dodgson makes it clear

in his editorial, "Reasonings on Rubbish" of the same issue that the youthful audience would be no excuse for a lapse in quality. After thanking his siblings for their volume of contributions he admonishes them for the same, saying, "these are, with small exception, decidedly of a juvenile cast, and we would observe that this Magazine is far from being *exclusively* intended for Juvenile Readers. We have therefore been compelled, with considerable pain, to reject many of them" (qtd in Susina 11). He welcomes the additions of his family in theory, but has trouble incorporating their "juvenile" work into the paracosm he views as a realistic adult creation that must meet certain standards in order to preserve credibility.

Three twelve-page issues were published before the other Dodgson children started to tire of their involvement in *The Rectory Magazine*. Whether this is because they grew weary of Dodgson's exacting expectations, and possibly drawn to "other magazines which have appeared, but not under (Charles') own editorship" (qtd in Susina 11) –referring to attempts at family magazines propagated by other Dodgson siblings, such as *The Rosebud*, *The Star*, and *The Will-O'-The-Wisp*—or because they were distracted by other forms of entertainment, as children often are, we cannot say for certain. But we do know that Dodgson expresses his frustration in

his editorial for the fourth edition of *The Rectory Magazine*, called “Rust,” after which he puns on the title’s reference to “oxide” with a cartoon of an “ox-eyed” man (Clark 53). He laments:

“There is no fate which we dread more for our magazine than that it should become rusty. We would have its wheels run smoothly on, the axletrees well oiled by a copious and constant stream of contributions” however, “we opened our Editor’s box this morning, expecting of course to find it overflowing with contributions and found it—our pen shudders and our ink blushes as we write—empty!” (qtd in Cohen 24)

The fifth edition is entirely Dodgson’s work, and the sixth contains only one entry not written by Dodgson—a mock advertisement for a maid submitted by the Dodgson children’s Aunt Lucy Lutwidge.

But even as submissions declined and disappeared altogether, Dodgson was unshaken in his dedication to his paracosm. By this point, his paracosm was an important part of his life. It was quickly becoming his apprenticeship work, as it had for the Brontë sisters. As the number of submissions fell, he supplemented the gaps with his own work. He persevered in his publication of *The Rectory Magazine* for a total of nine issues, the last five being entirely composed of pieces by Dodgson. The 128 page collection was bound in approximately 1848 according to Dodgson’s own account, and again “carefully revised, and improved” (qtd. in Clark 52) in 1850.

The next rectory magazine was *The Comet*. Dodgson would also write *The Comet* singlehandedly, with a tinge of condemnation for those who had deserted the effort. He says,

When I first began to edit,  
In the Rect'ry Magazine

Each one wrote therein who read it,  
Each one read who wrote therein.  
When the Comet next I started,  
They grew lazy as a drone:  
Gradually all departed,  
Leaving me to write alone. (qtd in Susina 10)

But as Dodgson progresses from *The Comet* to his next creation, *The Rectory Umbrella*, he develops a sense of pride in his solo authorship. The above poem, from his "Poet's Farewell" at the end of the *Rectory Magazine's* publication, goes on to say:

But in thee—let future ages  
Mark the fact which I record,  
No one helped me in thy pages,  
Even with a single word!

Here we see Dodgson's voice developing a powerful autonomy, and deriving a satisfaction from once again being the sole creator of his paracosm.

Dodgson began his next solo magazine, *The Rectory Umbrella*, around 1849 (Susina 10). Maybe one of the most illuminating aspects of this magazine is the illustration with which he begins the first issue. It shows a "poet" (Cohen 26) and seven

feminine “angels” (Cohen 26) labeled “good humor, taste, liveliness, knowledge, mirth, content, and cheerfulness” seeking refuge under a large umbrella from the attack of six masculine-looking demons. As the demons throw rocks inscribed with the words “woe, crossness, alloverishness, ennui, spite, and gloom,” the poet and the angels are safe underneath their umbrella—each panel of which bears a word as well: “tales, poetry, fun, riddles, and jokes.” This provides considerable evidence for a post-traumatic paracosm reading of Dodgson’s magazines. The seven angels (his seven sisters) and the master poet (Dodgson himself) are completely shielded under *The Rectory Umbrella*—they are safe behind a wall of writing from the “woe” the outside world (represented here as having a masculine face) tries to inflict on them. The next panel of the illustration shows the last demons of woe and crossness retreating, as the poet stands “victorious” (Cohen 26) with his angels by his side. Dodgson may have felt that his paracosmic endeavors have been a successful shield in fending off the agony of his abuse at Rugby, and that his paracosmic writing has helped him withstand the “attacks” of his traumatic memories and emerge largely unscathed.

In addition to supporting and shielding Dodgson from pain, these paracosmic magazines show the progress and development

of Dodgson's authorial voice. Spanning eight years of Dodgson's life, they were a framework in which he felt secure enough to concentrate on cultivating his literary prowess. Susina notes that Dodgson was aware of the crucial role his paracosms played in helping him refine his abilities. He points out that while "looking back prudently"—the Dodgson family motto—"Carroll acknowledges the amateur quality of much of the material found in his family magazines, but he also realized their importance to him as a training ground" (13). This was an important function of the paracosm for Dodgson as it was for other paracosmists-turned-authors. The paracosms were Dodgson's first medium for creativity, and served as a space where he could gain writing competence and, perhaps more importantly, confidence.

Like Emily Brontë, Dodgson persevered in the creation of his paracosm long after his siblings lost interest. He always reverted to the magazine structure of his paracosm as his main forum for expression in his early years. His reluctance to discontinue the magazines and the way he reinvents magazine after magazine with each one springing up in the wake of its predecessor reveals the profound and enduring attachment Dodgson felt to the documents he was producing.

**Unity:**

The unity aspect of the family magazine paracosm is also highly reminiscent of the unity of the Brontë's *Angria* and *Gondal*. The magazines present the same kind of disjointed-unity paradox that the Brontë worlds do, linking separate pieces of writing together by virtue of each piece taking place in the same Paracosm. Although the stories in each issue may be unconnected, and each magazine is unconnected to the others, there is unity as far as the paracosm is concerned, because as a "systems" or "documents" paracosm it becomes unified by the consistency of production of documents. They are all of the same type; they all emulate the same convention: magazines.

A part of Dodgson's magazines that add to the feel of unity is the serials he wrote for them. In *The Rectory Magazine*, Dodgson included two serials. The first was a seven-part serial called "Crunle Castle" (Susina 10), a tale about the misadventures of an unruly boy and his doting mother as they terrorize their neighbor, Miss Primmins. The second was "a nine-part melodrama" called *Sidney Hamilton*,

"in which Sidney, estranged from his father, meets with robbery and violence, while his father, falsely accused of attempted theft, is in turn robbed by Sidney's best friend. The story is brought abruptly to a farcical conclusion in which Mr. Hamilton's only complaint is of toast wasted at the breakfast table" (Clark 54)

Another serial of note appears in *The Rectory Umbrella*. His eight-chapter piece, "The Walking-Stick of Destiny," concerns a Baron who kills the messenger of a rival Baron, and is punished by a magician wielding the walking stick of destiny, which ultimately turns the murderous Baron into a pile of mashed potatoes. The two-part "Lays of Sorrow," also appearing in *The Rectory Umbrella*, are among the favorites of Carrollian scholars, particularly "Lays of Sorrow No. 2." This is parody of Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Horatius" from *The Lays of Ancient Rome* (Susina 11) which tells of the pursuits of the ancient Roman hero, Horatius Cocles, and his defense of the bridge to Rome against the Etruscans ("Horatius Cocles") and is rewarded thus:

They gave him of the corn-land,  
That was of public right,  
As much as two strong oxen  
Could plough from morn till night;  
And they made a molten image,  
And set it up on high,  
And there it stands unto this day  
To witness if I lie. (Macaulay)

In Carroll's version, the hero is Ulfrid Longbow—a distortion of his brother's name, Wilfred Longley (Hinde 15)—who helps "the knight"—Dodgson's other brother, Skeffington (Hinde 15)—learn to ride a willful donkey. And just like Horatius, Ulfrid Longbow is rewarded:

They gave him bread and butter,

That was of public right,  
 As much as four strong rabbits,  
 Could munch from morn till night.  
 For he'd done a deed of daring,  
 And faced that savage steed,  
 And therefore cups of coffee sweet,  
 And everything that was a treat,  
 Were but his right and meed. (qtd in Hinde 15)

Carroll's penchant for parody was already well developed by this point, and he made excellent use of it in his prose and illustrations as well as his poetry. *The Rectory Umbrella* also includes Carroll's "Zoological Papers" in which he elaborates "with pseudo-scientific seriousness" (Clark 60) his entries on entries on "Fishes" (actually toy metal fish) (Clark 60), "The Lory" (a "species of parrot") (Cohen 25), and pixies:

"The best description we can collect of them is this, that they are a species of fairies about two feet high, of small and graceful figure; they are covered with a dark reddish sort of fur; the general expression of their faces is sweetness and good humor; the former quality is probably the reason why foxes are so fond of eating them" (qtd in Kelly 5).

Carroll also ran a column of drawings in *The Rectory Umbrella* in which he parodies famous paintings he had seen in *The Vernon Gallery of British Art*, a periodical likely read by the Dodgson family (Clark 61). The most popular drawing of this series is Carroll's satire of the Sir J. Reynolds' "The Age of Innocence." The original depicts a girl sitting under a tree, but in *The Rectory Umbrella*, she is replaced by a hippopotamus. It is captioned thus by Carroll: "The Age of Innocence' by Sir J. Reynolds, representing a young

Hippopotamus seated under a shady tree, presents to the contemplative mind a charming union of youth and innocence” (qtd in Kelly 4).

These repeating columns, serials, and parodies all contribute to the overarching sense of unity that makes a paracosm distinct from other forms of juvenilia. The parodies especially serve as a forerunner of the satire Carroll uses in the *Alice* books. The *Alice* books also resemble a construction under the disjointed-unity paradox—the events occur in very disconnected episodes, but strung together by the fact that they all occur in Wonderland. Kelly says, “The strategy of Wonderland is to defeat different systems of logic, to keep details from joining to establish some meaningful order. The language, characters, and scenes in Wonderland are all essentially discrete. Attempts to fuse them lead to misunderstanding” (80). And yet, they come together to form the whole of Alice’s adventures. This structure originates in Carroll’s magazines—in each, he presents his readership with a series of nonsensical encounters that form the whole of the issue.

**Secrecy:**

Dodgson’s magazines were designed for private use only. Given the apparent post-traumatic nature of his paracosm, this is not surprising. They may have been a very personal method of

healing from a painful experience, and naturally they were not the type of writing he would be willing to share with a large audience while still engaged with them for recovery purposes. Collingwood notes that “their circulation was confined to the inmates of the Croft Rectory” (31). The magazines were exclusively read by family, and not by schoolmates—a significant fact, seeing that Dodgson was at school during a large portion of the time he was editing the magazines—he notes that *The Rectory Magazine* was his “‘unceasing occupation for a period of full six months’, though he adds that it was not *full* six months, since he was at school for five of them” (Clark 55). The paracosmic creation at school must have been actively kept secret from his friends, and especially from his antagonizes, showing that Dodgson’s magazine work was most likely intensely private by necessity from its inception.

If engaged with the magazines as a way of protecting himself from the ordeals of his past, Dodgson would have had no intention of publishing the work he wrote in them. In fact, there is evidence from his book of poems, *Phantasmagoria*, that he actually shied away from the idea. In his poem “Poeta Fit, Non Nascitur” (“Poets Are Made, Not Born”), written three years before the completion of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Wallace 13), a young man asks advice from his grandfather about how to become a poet. The

grandfather gives nearly fifteen stanzas of advice on poetry writing, and sums up in the following manner:

“Now try your hand, ere Fancy  
 Have lost its present glow—”  
 “And then”, his grandson added,  
 “We’ll publish it, you know:  
 Green cloth—gold-lettered at the back—  
 In duodecimo!”

Then proudly smiled that old man  
 To see the eager lad  
 Rush madly for his pen and ink  
 And for his blotting-pad—  
 But, when he thought of *publishing*,  
 His face grew stern and sad. (Dodgson 793)(Italics  
 Dodgson’s)

This perplexing conclusion to an otherwise vigorous endorsement of composing poetry can only be understood if we recognize that Dodgson’s views about publishing his early work came from the desire a paracosmist experiences to keep the paracosm safe from outside opinions, particularly rejection.

Throughout his life, Dodgson would have trouble handling rejection. Clark tells us that he suffered from a “sense of personal unworthiness so strong that it can only be described as obsessive” (116). In July of 1855, Dodgson shows us this fear of rejection, after having once experienced it:

“Heard from Frank Smedley, who wants me to become a contributor to *The Comic Times* (...) I wrote, saying I should be happy to send them things at odd times, but I could not be a regular contributor, and enclosing some verses on Moore’s Gazelle which I sent to *Punch* last term, where they did *not* appear: these

were more as a specimen of failure than as a contribution" (Diaries 1:56)

But this "specimen of failure" was accepted and published in *The Comic Times*. However, in August of the same year, he sends illustrations to *The Comic Times* which are rejected. He proclaims "The pictures were pronounced 'not up to the mark': I shall send no more" (Diaries 1:62). His reaction to refusal is complete discouragement, at least in the case of his art. However, his reaction to acceptance seems hardly better—he dismisses the merit of the previous works he has had published: "I do not think I have written anything worthy of real publication (in which I do not include *The Whitby Gazette* or *The Oxonian Advertiser*)" says Dodgson (qtd in Clark 87). Dodgson's negative view of his merits as a writer also contributes to his desire for his paracosmic magazines to remain exclusively within the family circle.

However, in Dodgson's last family magazine, *Mischmasch*, he shows a steep transition from paracosmist to author. We cannot call *Mischmasch* a part of Dodgson's paracosms, exactly, for at its beginning, Dodgson sets out the intent to solicit a larger audience. In the "Preface" to *Mischmasch*, Dodgson notes: "The best of its contents will be offered at intervals to a contemporary magazine of a less exclusively domestic nature: We allude to the 'Comic Times'; thus affording to the contributors to this magazine an opportunity of

presenting their productions to the admiring gaze of the English Nation" (*Diaries* 1:68). In fact, many contributions to *Mischmasch* are clippings from Dodgson's published works in *The Comic Times* and *The Whitby Gazette*, and not hand-written entries at all.

The material found in *Mischmasch* is dated from 1855-1862. During this time Dodgson gradually ceased to rely fully on his paracosm for escape and had found other methods of distracting and cheering himself—specifically through his extensive photography of his girl children-friends. This seemingly odd friendship choice probably stemmed from the abuse he may have suffered at Rugby. In later life, he surrounded himself with the antithesis of the male aggressors he feared, and was buffered from the unpleasantness of his history by the innocence and gentleness of the girls he befriended. Through these friendships, he had recreated the days of his uncorrupted youth at Croft, surrounded by his equally uncorrupted and loving sisters. Thus symbolically recapturing a part of his childhood that he had been desperately seeking, he was able to release his tight hold on the secrecy he established for his paracosmic works. He had grown secure and stable enough that he was ready to share his talent with the world.

This is an important period in Dodgson's paracosmic development. He is beginning to feel more comfortable with, and even to yearn for, public recognition. Susina offers helpful insight:

"*Mischmasch* is not so much juvenilia as a transitional work composed by a talented Oxford undergraduate in his twenties. Carroll there reworks and recycles bits and pieces of his previous writing to produce his first publication beyond the confines of his family. He was no longer satisfied with writing for local family magazines and suggests as much in his evaluation of *Mischmasch*" (10).

In *Mischmasch*, Dodgson practices the transition from paracosm to heterocosm that he will perform again later with the *Alice* books. The process of "reworking and recycling" old writing will become increasingly common for Dodgson, and increasingly important for his development of *Alice*. We find many pieces of his early paracosmic poetry reappearing in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in revised forms, embedded in the main story. For example, "The Mouse's Tail" found in *Alice in Wonderland* is the last of many revisions of a poem which appeared first in *Useful and Instructive Poetry* as "A Tale of a Tail"—not retaining much subject matter but duplicating the typography that arranges the words of the poem to create a picture of a long, curving tail on the page. Also appearing in one of Dodgson's magazines is the text of the paper that the White Rabbit reads during the trial of the Knave for stealing the tarts. In its original form, it contained two additional stanzas at the beginning, and was entitled "She's All My Fancy

Painted Him”—a parody of the poem “Alice Gray” by William Mee, published in 1815 (Oxford Alice 264). This inclusion of versions of Dodgson’s paracosmic writing in *Alice* would not have been possible unless he felt far enough removed from his childhood trauma and sufficiently protected by the things in his life he had found to replace the paracosm. He practices this release of privacy in *Mischmasch*. This final magazine had a major influence on Dodgson’s perception of his paracosm. He begins to develop a sense of acceptability of sharing his writing, as his dependence on it for emotional support has severely decreased. *Mischmasch* paves the way for *Alice* to make the leap from paracosm to heterocosm in Dodgson’s later life.

Although he was finally able to allow his writing to be read by others outside his family, he still kept a measure of anonymity and personal privacy via his use of pseudonyms. Although able to allow his work to stand on its own, Dodgson was reluctant to allow it to be traced back to himself in his personal life. For Dodgson, this writing still carried an association with his paracosm, and by extension, the trauma that generated it. This association would produce a lifelong reluctance to own it as being the work of “Charles Dodgson,” possibly because of a subconscious fear that someone may

recognize it for what it was—an escape from reality that he had relied heavily on for many years.

His infatuation with pseudonyms began early in his life, as a contrivance in *The Rectory Magazine*. Dodgson assigned all contributors a set of “assumed initials, but a key (was) given at the front of the volume” (Clark 52). As submission numbers declined, Dodgson “disguised the shortage of writers by an ever increasing number of assumed initials, and he is represented as Ed. (naturally), VX, BB, FLW, JV, FX, and QG” (Clark 52). This extensive number of false initials was only the beginning of his preoccupation with *noms de plume*.

His use of initials, particularly “B.B.” lasted into his adult life (Clark 53), and were used in his earliest published works, “The Lady of the Ladle” and “Wilhelm von Schmitz,” both in *The Whitby Gazette* (Kelly 7). He continued to publish under these false initials in *The Comic Times* and its successor, *The Train*, until its editor, Edmund Yates, encouraged him to pick a pen name and abandon “B.B.” as his signature (Gatténgo 229). His diary entry for February 11, 1856 enlightens us to the origins of his pseudonym:

“Wrote to Mr. Yates sending him a choice of names: 1. *Edgar Cuthwellis* (made by transportation out of ‘Charles Lutwidge’). 2. *Edgar U. C. Westhill* (ditto). 3. *Louis Carroll*, (derived from Lutwidge = Ludovic = Louis, and Charles (Carolus). 4. *Lewis Carroll* (ditto). (Dodgson adds a note on March 1, ‘*Lewis Carroll* was chosen’.)” (Diaries 1:77)

From then onward Dodgson would publish only his mathematical treatises under his real name, in accordance with his teaching post at Oxford University, but his literary work, and most other writing that would appear in the public domain was signed "Carroll" (Gattégno 230).

As time went on, and particularly after the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Dodgson became gradually more adamant about keeping his identity separate from his pseudonym. Two episodes pointing to the progression of his desire to be completely unrecognized as Lewis Carroll are recorded by Stuart Collingwood (Gattégno 231):

On (one) occasion, when he was dining out at Oxford, and some one (*sic*), who did not know that it was a forbidden subject, turned the conversation on 'Alice in Wonderland', he rose suddenly and fled from the house. (Collingwood 272-73).

On one occasion the secretary of a 'Young Ladies' Academy' in the United States asked him to present some of his works to the School Library. The envelope was addressed to 'Lewis Carroll, Christ Church', and incongruity which always annoyed him intensely. He replied to the Secretary, 'As Mr. Dodgson's books are all on Mathematical subjects, he fears that they would not be very acceptable in a school library'. (Collingwood 273-74)

Then, in 1890, after having received more letters that identified him with Lewis Carroll, Dodgson wrote to the editor of the *St. James Gazette* "begging him to decline in future to print 'any statement as to my connection with the 'nom de plume' of 'Lewis Carroll' ...it being my earnest wish to remain, *personally*, in the obscurity of a private individual. In fact it is for that very purpose that I continue to

use that ‘nom de plume’” (qtd in *Diaries* 2: 481). Dodgson continued to deny association with “Lewis Carroll” in a pamphlet published later that year (Gattégno 231).

An even more telling event happened in 1896, when Dodgson encountered an old child-friend, Agnes Weld in public. Dodgson had sustained one of his characteristic girl-friendships with Agnes since he photographed her as Little Red Riding Hood in 1857 (Hinde 29). But Dodgson tells us of the unfortunate mistake that ended their amicable association in his diary entry for May 4, when she introduced him as “Lewis Carroll”:

I met Miss Agnes Weld, with some foreign lady, to whom she introduced me—a thing I have again and again begged her not to do, and have already explained to her how much I dislike being thus made a ‘lion’. Requests being evidently useless, I have at last taken the thing into my own hands, and have written to tell her that in future when I meet her with strangers I shall not recognize her. (qtd in Clark 101)

This abrupt change in affection after nearly forty years of friendship reveals the intensity of Dodgson’s revulsion to being associated with his pen name. His desire to maintain privacy in his personal life and distance from his published paracosmic works had reached a fever-pitch<sup>6</sup>. He had not been able to shake the association with Lewis

---

<sup>6</sup> For more examples of Dodgson denying credit for the work of “Lewis Carroll, see Cohen and Wakeling’s *Lewis Carroll & His Illustrators* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003) 17, 158, and Cohen’s *The Letters of Lewis Carroll* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979) 337, 395-7, 445-6, 463?, 554, 795-6, 811-2, 845, 925, 1039, 1051.

Carroll, despite his efforts. His last resort is recorded in his diary for November 8, 1897:

A letter came, addressed to L. Carroll, Christ Church, Oxford'. So many such now come, that I have decided to *refuse* them, and gave it, unopened, to Telling, to return to the Post Office. All such will now go back to the writers, through the Dead Letter Office, with endorsement 'not known' (Diaries 2: 542).

Given that Dodgson's paracosm plausibly emerged out of trauma in his youth, this longing for disassociation from his pseudonym is unsurprising. He had grown accustomed to a miniscule and understanding readership during the creation of his paracosms, and the transition to a global audience must have been jarring. Criticism and praise alike probably had direct bearing on his emotional state, as the paracosmic works had been relied on to create or improve that emotional state in times of hardship. It was necessary for Dodgson to maintain some cognitive distance from his published works because it allowed him to keep its real weight in his emotional life a secret. Perhaps if his readers did not know the writing was his, they would not guess at its true function in his life. Only with this distance was he able to circulate the work he knew merited publication.

**Control:**

During Dodgson's editorship of his paracosmic magazines, he had total control over their content and execution. Dodgson's

control, however, was of a markedly different type than the control exhibited by the Brontës. In exercising control over a “countries” paracosm, the Brontës manipulated the rules governing their worlds—for example their decisions regarding resurrection, magic, and the presence of supernatural beings. But as Dodgson’s paracosm was of a “documents” type, he dealt with the control of very different parameters—the physical parameters of the form and content of his magazines.

We have already seen Dodgson’s method of exercising control over the content of the family magazines. He rejected the offerings he sought from his siblings based on considerations of quality. While this seems somewhat harsh, it softens a bit when viewed in the light of a post-traumatic paracosm. Part of the restorative power of a paracosm lies essentially in the way it helps a paracosmist regain the feeling of agency—of control—that they lost through their trauma. In this sense, the strict standards Dodgson sets for the work that enters his paracosmic magazines could be seen as part of the way he used his paracosm to overcome his trauma. He experiments with the control over the submissions, even to the extent of admonishing his beloved family about the inadequacy of their writing samples, in an effort to assert his dominancy over the paracosm he created.

The control of content ceases to be an issue for Dodgson as his magazines become increasingly an autonomous project. In its stead rises a preoccupation with the form of the magazines; length, shape, color, illustrations, and visual components are of definite importance to Dodgson. For instance, *The Comet* “for the sake of variety, opened at the end instead of the side” (Clark 55).

When Dodgson reviews all the family magazines that he did not edit himself, he remarks mainly about their physical features. Susina provides a comprehensive look at Dodgson’s commentary on the form of the “other” rectory magazines:

“In his review of his family publications, particularly of the lost items, Carroll spends as much time discussing a volume's design as its content. He praises the covers of *The Rosebud*: “each number was tastefully ornamented with a painted rosebud,” and he notes that every issue of *The Will-O'-The-Wisp* was cut into a triangular shape (90). It is no surprise, then, given the time Carroll spent in his youth writing, illustrating, designing and constantly revising his family magazines, that he should take care not only in supervising the illustrations of his books, but also in the placement of the illustrations on the page in order to create the appropriate relationship between text and illustration (Hancher 121).” (Susina 11)

Dodgson was fond of the total authority he had over his paracosmic publications. He was also a highly enthusiastic illustrator of these works. Haute tells us, “From the age of thirteen, Charles was a keen illustrator. He kept a book of humorous ideas and cartoons, and many of his sketches were later coloured in by his brothers and sisters” (14). His “Lays of Sorrow No. 2” is accompanied with lively sketches of Ulfrid Longbow attempting to

subdue the obstinate donkey, and a crowd pouring out of their houses to look on. Also in *The Rectory Umbrella* is a lively illustration of Dodgson's story "Ye Fatalle Cheyse," depicting a fox hunt that ends with the unlikely danger of a monster nearly eating the king participating in the hunt (Haute 20). These illustrations and many others decorate the pages of Dodgson's paracosm helping bring their stories to life with the nuances of Dodgson's imagination. He directs the reader's interpretation of the stories and poetry in his magazine with the assistance of his art—a measure of control that gave him another dimension of communication with his audience.

This control, once established, was difficult to relinquish. Although Dodgson made a valiant attempt to illustrate *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by himself, he eventually realized that he must take on a professional illustrator. He chose John Tenniel, leading illustrator for *Punch* magazine (Clark 133). But detail-oriented as he was, Dodgson could not simply provide Tenniel with the manuscript of *Alice* and let him decide what to draw. Dodgson carefully planned out the entire layout of the book leaving specific spaces for thirty-seven illustrations for which he had already done preliminary sketches (Clark 130). They carried on a copious correspondence during Tenniel's progress of illustration for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and although their letters seem

amicable, their relationship was moderately antagonistic. A large portion of Dodgson's letters are dedicated to Dodgson trying to convince Tenniel to actually begin work on these illustrations after waiting six months for progress of any kind (Cohen & Wakeling 4). Even after they were begun, Tenniel's pace was excruciatingly slow—a largely frustrating condition for Dodgson. Printings were delayed several times to wait for the completed illustrations, and when they were finally printed, Tenniel felt the pictures to be of poor quality, and thus "protested so strongly against the disgraceful printing that ... (Dodgson) *cancelled the edition*" (qtd in Cohen & Wakeling 6). This represented a loss of "£600, a monumental sum for an Oxford don earning less than that amount in a year" (6). Cohen and Wakeling tell us that "Tenniel's biographer, Rodney Engen, believes that the artist was not justified in damning the edition and suggest that Tenniel might have been acting out of pique—'repressed anger,' he calls it—at Dodgson's earlier requests for changes in Tenniel's work" (6-7). Tenniel was unable to deal with Dodgson's intimate involvement in the creation of the *Alice* illustrations, causing him to lash out against Dodgson's attempt to continue exercising the control he had over his paracosm.

Dodgson's relationship with his other illustrators, however, grows even more critical as time goes on. For example, though

Dodgson maintains a genial relationship with his illustrator for *The Hunting of the Snark*, Henry Holiday, he runs his partnership with Arthur Frost into the ground after a particularly disparaging letter about Frost's illustrations for *A Tangled Tale*. The letter begins with Dodgson saying

"I fear I cannot use *any* of them in their present state. In neatness, and finish, and clearness of drawings, these seem to me to fall as far short of the average of what you drew on paper for the former book, as those in their turn fell short of what you drew on wood. To make my meaning clear, I had better begin by asking you to put before you either *Alice* or *The Looking Glass* and to examine the details of any one of the pictures with a magnifying-glass: and then to do the same thing with one of the best that you drew for me on wood. You will then understand what I mean (whether you agree with it or not) when I say that yours is a little, but not very far, behind Tenniel in delicate finish. He seems to me to use much fewer lines than you, but to produce a neater result" (Cohen & Wakeling 93)

Dodgson's letter continues to unfavorably compare Frost's work to Tenniels, and goes on to criticize each of the ten pictures in detail. Dodgson's criticisms are absolutely trifling: the knights in one picture are too far off the ground, the heroine's arm looks too rigid, the captain's fingers and foot are misshapen, the peacock's tail feathers are not parallel, and the dragon's left and right arms aren't equal length (95). And when he comes to the eighth drawing, he "must simply reject this *in toto*. It is not only ugly and ungraceful, but it offends against good taste. No gentleman would place himself so as to present such a view of himself to any spectator: and, that being so, it is not suitable for a picture" (95). Unsurprisingly, upon

reception of this letter, Frost flatly refuses to redraw the pictures, and ends his employment and friendship with Dodgson forever.

A much longer, but equally hostile association occurs with Henry Furniss, who was commissioned to draw for *Sylvie and Bruno*. Although it can be attributed as much to Furniss' untruthfulness and quick temper as to Dodgson's persnickety demands, the result was the same: the interaction between the two men was seldom harmonious. Cohen and Wakeling tell us that their consociation was characterized by "stages of cordiality, misunderstanding, disagreement, recriminations, threats, counter-threats, and near disaster. It was for Dodgson the most difficult collaboration of his career" (101).

Dodgson was equally involved with the work of his publishers, Macmillan & Company. During the thirty-five year association between Dodgson and Macmillan, Dodgson wrote an astounding 479 letters to the publishing company (Cohen and Gandolfo 1, 29). The partnership between Dodgson and his publisher was similar to his relationship with his illustrators. In their introduction to *Lewis Carroll and the house of Macmillan*, Cohen and Gandolfo note that "in spite of some tempests that came close to splitting author and publisher asunder, heir ties endured to the very end of Dodgson's life" (1).

Among the myriad complaints voiced by Dodgson, we find that he has many issues with the form of the *Alice* books—consistent with the aspects he vigilantly controlled while he was acting as editor for his paracosmic magazines. After a new printing of the *Alice* books, Dodgson writes:

Dear Sir,

I saw one of the new *Alices* at a shop today. Unless my eyes quite deceived me, the margins are narrower than in the old ones, giving to the book a *decidedly* poorer general appearance. If I am right in this, *pray* have it remedied as far as possible in the other copies not yet cut. If they are printed on small paper, I fear it is past remedy at this time (47).

Macmillan replies that since the first edition was printed on larger paper, and this edition on paper of the standard size, he would tell the binder to try to “cut as little off the edges as possible” (47).

Macmillan compromises with Dodgson on this issue, but nevertheless, Dodgson reveals his intense observation of minute details, and his unreservedness about resolving these issues at almost any cost.

To this effect, Dodgson wrote a letter to Macmillan and Company concerning the printing of the French translation of *Alice*. After many meticulous revisions and suggestions, the publishers gently remind Dodgson that the type for the French translation had been set for nearly a year, and that they would like the use of this type for other things (Cohen and Gandolfo 67). Dodgson took no heed of this admonition, thinking that payment should be sufficient

recompense for the inconvenience of allowing the type to sit unused for so long. Dodgson says: “The French *Alice* must wait—and even when printed, I don’t want the type broken up at all. If it is usual to make an annual charge for keeping type standing, I will of course pay it” (66).

Dodgson’s obsession with absolute perfection and attention to detail in the printing of *Through the Looking Glass* has much more bearing on capital to Dodgson himself. He is willing to incur great personal financial cost in order to ensure absolute perfection. He writes:

I have now made up my mind that, whatever be the *commercial* consequences, we must have no more artistic “fiascos”—and I am stimulated to write *at once* about it by your alarming words of this morning, “We are going on with another 6000 *as fast as possible*.” My decision is, we must have *no more hurry*: and *no more sheets must be pressed under blank paper*. It is my *particular desire* that all the sheets shall in future be “stacked” and let to dry naturally. The result of this may possibly be that the 6000 will not be ready for sale until the end of January or even later. Very well (...) You will think me a lunatic for thus wishing to send away money from the doors; and will tell me perhaps that I shall thus lose thousands of would-be purchasers who will not wait so long (...) I wish I could put into words how entirely such arguments go for nothing with me. As to how many copies we sell I care absolutely nothing: the only thing I *do* care for is, that all the copies that *are* sold shall be artistically first-rate” (97).

This letter gives us important insight into Dodgson’s mindset. He is totally unmotivated by financial concerns, and perfectly willing to sacrifice payment to retain control over the form of his published books. The control he had been so fond of while editing his magazines seems to slip away from Dodgson as he hands over his

work to the publishers. His attention to the publishing process, especially after it has passed out of his hands is an attempt to regain the total control he had valued when working with his paracosm.

**Alice as a Paracosm:**

The concept of *Alice in Wonderland* was born on July 4, 1862, when Dodgson and his friend Duckworth were taking three very special children-friends, Lorina, Alice and Edith Liddell, on a boat ride (Clark 123). This was their customary form of outing—a boat ride and a picnic—during which Dodgson would tell the Liddell sisters fairy tales made up on the spot. These stories went completely unrecorded, except for the tale that would change Dodgson’s life. *Alice* was also made up extemporaneously, but it differed from the forgotten stories in one aspect. Alice Liddell, the namesake of the fictional character, and perhaps Dodgson’s favorite girl-friend, liked this story so much that she begged him to write it down for her.

At the time he tells the Liddell sisters the first story of *Alice*, the world of “Wonderland” (although it would not be named such until its publishing) was much like a paracosm. This could even be said to extend beyond the specific anecdote of Wonderland to include the all the fairy stories

Dodgson told on his picnics with the Liddells. The story-telling went on from 1856 till about 1865 (Gattégno 8) which is certainly a case for its longevity as a paracosm. The children asked for stories in installments, as Anne Clark tells us:

Four days later the two men took Alice, Lorina and Edith to Godstow, where they had tea. On the way Dodgson tried to interest them in a game called 'The Ural Mountains,' but they were determined to hear a further instalment of *Alice's Adventures*, which Dodgson described as his 'interminable fairy-tale' (124).

Alice Liddell recalls something similar:

He seemed to have an endless store of these fantastical tales, which he made up as he told them (...) they were not always entirely new. Sometimes they were new versions of old stories: sometimes they started on the old basis but grew into new tales owing to the frequent interruptions which opened up fresh and undreamed of possibilities (qtd in Cohen 86).

Here Dodgson's fairy stories are reminiscent of the "spiral" nature of paracosms as demonstrated by Emily Brontë in *Wuthering Heights*—repeating and expanding elements as a child would during fantasy play. Thus, the paracosmic narrative tends not to be linear, but cyclical. Dodgson's natural instinct is to use this format when inventing stories for the Liddells, reinforcing the paracosmic elements of the world they shared.

This repeated and developed feature of Dodgson's stories also contributes to their classification as a paracosm by pointing to their unity. The same themes are elaborated over and over, threading unity through each episode, much the way Dodgson's

serials united the rectory magazines. And once again, when we specifically consult the stories about Alice, we see the fulfillment of the disjointed-unity paradox as discussed earlier—the unity comes from the integration of each episode into the journey of Alice, although each event is essentially an isolated unit.

“Wonderland,” or perhaps the more general universe of Dodgson’s stories, was a world shared between Dodgson and the three Liddell girls. This world was kept quite apart from the interactions the four companions had in the presence of other adults; on one boat ride, two of Dodgson’s sisters accompanied them. Clark tells us, “The presence of the two Dodgson sisters, who seemed stout and elderly to the children, was somewhat inhibiting, and Alice reported that there were no songs or stories on this occasion” (123). This tells us that the paracosm Dodgson shared with the Liddell children was too private to share even with his beloved sisters, contributors to his original paracosmic magazines. Dodgson’s need for privacy in relation to the *Alice* stories is also exposed by his detachment from his pseudonym, as we have already seen.

Dodgson’s control over the *Alice* stories involves not only his desire for control over the form of their eventual publication as previously discussed at length, but also over the temporality of the

telling of the stories of *Alice's Adventures* in person. The time and manner in which Dodgson related the first Alice stories was a key aspect of his control over the paracosm. But for once in Dodgson's life, the reign of his paracosm was not entirely up to him—the Liddell sisters, as participants in the paracosmic world, had a measure of control as well. Dodgson recalls “the three eager faces, hungry for news of fairy-land, and who would not be said ‘nay’ to: from whose lips ‘Tell us a story, please,’ had all the stern immutability of Fate!” (qtd in Cohen 90) Alice Liddell also comments on the manner in which Dodgson and the children playfully manipulated their control over the proceeding of the story:

Sometimes to tease us—and perhaps being really tired—Mr. Dodgson would stop suddenly and say, ‘And that’s all till next time.’ ‘Ah, but it is next time,’ would be the exclamation from all three; and after some persuasion the story would start afresh. Another say, perhaps the story would begin in the boat, and Mr. Dodgson, in the middle of telling a thrilling adventure, would pretend to go fast asleep, to our great dismay (Cohen 91).

Here the children use the skillful handling of semantics that Dodgson was so fond of in the *Alice* books—“Ah, but it is next time”—to influence Dodgson to continue telling the story. In a way, they have learned to manage themselves in Wonderland; to use the paracosm's own convoluted logic to control it, rather than be controlled by it. This is something the fictional Alice never learns to do, showing that the Liddell sisters are participants of their

paracosm as much as Dodgson is, and not, like the fictional Alice, limited by their confusion.

Thus, the *Alice* stories at their inception fit all the criteria for a paracosm—the longevity, unity, secrecy, and the control they afford their creators combine to give Wonderland the full-world aspect readers have come to treasure about the published books. These features of the paracosm follow *Alice* into its published form, as it makes the precarious conversion from paracosm, “private world,” to heterocosm, “shared world.”

#### **Alice as a Heterocosm:**

As we have seen, *Mischmasch*, Dodgson’s transitional paracosmic magazine, was instrumental in preparing him to show his work to the public. He had been testing his skill as a published author for some years before the *Alice* story came into being. Dodgson was already rehearsing the steps necessary to release his private and meaningful work into the hands of others who may or may not understand its significance. However, the idea of publishing was not a factor in the creation of *Alice*, nor did it even occur to Dodgson until after he had written out the manuscript, called *Alice’s Adventures Underground*, at the request of Alice Liddell. Dodgson “sat up nearly the whole night, committing to a (manuscript) book his recollections of the drolleries with which he

had enlivened the afternoon. He added illustrations of his own and presented the volume," (qtd in Cohen 91). Dodgson tells us, in the preface to *Alice's Adventures Underground*, the original title of the story, "there was no idea of publication in my mind when I wrote this little book: *that* was wholly an afterthought, pressed on me by the 'perhaps too partial friends' who always have to bear the blame when a writer rushes into print" (Cohen 126). Among the "too partial friends" to whom Dodgson refers here was George Macdonald: fellow author, and father of several of Dodgson's early children-friends. Encouraged by MacDonald and his family, and others who read the original manuscript, Dodgson submitted it for publication by Macmillan & Company.

This marks the turning point of the *Alice* story from paracosm to heterocosm. Once *Alice* became part of the corpus of works published by "Lewis Carroll" its popularity carried it into the stream of popular culture in a profound way. It was no longer a world shared just by Dodgson and the Liddell sisters—it was now a world which anyone could enter. The general appeal of the *Alice* stories lasts into modern times, sparking the adaptation of the story by Walt Disney Pictures into an animated film (among others), and even the 1997 *Alternative Alices: Visions and Revisions of Lewis Carroll's Alice Books*, a compilation of new stories that take place in Dodgson's

Wonderland. These are just a few of the many ways others have “lived” in the world Dodgson created, and taken possession of that world as their own. Dodgson’s world is shared by many—many more than Dodgson himself probably imagined—moving it directly into the definition of a heterocosm.

Another heterocosmic aspect of the *Alice* books is the conscious effort he put into transforming them from the paracosmic stories he shared with the Liddells into the wildly successful published versions. As Cohen tells us, Dodgson “described the early version as merely ‘the germ that was to grow into the published volume’; in fact, he decided that before publishing, he would have to flesh out the original with more chapters, incidents, and characters” (126). The expanded version of the manuscript includes such significant revisions as the addition of the Mad Tea-Party, and the extension of the two-page trial scene to its current twenty-six page account (127). The creative work done deliberately to add to the story to make it ready for publication is an important distinction between the paracosm and the heterocosm—when the work of creation is done in a more intentional and methodical way, and especially when the work is done with the intent for publication, the world of the author has become a heterocosm.

A less significant but somewhat helpful additional feature of the heterocosm is that it is created at a later age than a paracosm—generally after the creator has passed the age of childhood. This would surely be the case for Dodgson’s creation of *Alice*, as he was thirty at the time he began telling these stories to the Liddells. But with Dodgson, the transition between adult and child was entirely fluid—perhaps a luxury afforded by his friendships with young girls, or perhaps a reason for it. Dymphna Ellis, another child-friend of Dodgson, gives us her opinion of Dodgson’s everlasting childhood:

Lewis Carroll, introduced to my father, I know not how, came to our country home to photograph the children. (...) I was the eldest of a little group of five, and I feel sure I was a ‘favourite.’ He made every child to feel that. (...) He came several times. We cried when he went away. ...His letters were delicious... We were absolutely fearless with him. We felt he was one of us, and on our side against the grown-ups” (Cohen 1989 194).

This fluidity between adulthood and childhood is an aspect of Dodgson’s personality that also facilitated the transition of *Alice* between paracosm and heterocosm. The Wonderland world Dodgson shared with the Liddell children was truly paracosmic, because Dodgson was, in essence, still acting and thinking as a child, with the help of his young friends. But as Dodgson undertook to write out and publish *Alice*, he used his more mature, adult knowledge to refine the nuances that older readers love about the

*Alice* stories. For instance, the nonsensical interactions between Alice and the Red and White Queens and Humpty Dumpty gain some of their charm from the adept manipulation of word meanings that require the more subtle knowledge of language Dodgson acquired through his many years of study. And the description of Alice's journey through Wonderland as moves on a chessboard<sup>7</sup> show an incredible depth of knowledge that one would be hard-pressed to find set out so carefully in a paracosm, where only the gist of the chess game would be necessary to make sense in the paracosmist's mind.

While the distinctions between heterocosms and paracosms may seem indistinct at first glance, the ways Dodgson adapted the *Alice* books to move from paracosm to heterocosm are actually quite helpful in drawing this boundary. Where the paracosm is intensely personal, the heterocosm is shared among many, often to the point that the original creator's vision becomes obsolete (as in *Alternative Alices*). Where the paracosm is kept secret the heterocosm is published and becomes a part of a larger public consciousness. The paracosm is often effortless to create—it gives the sense that it the world on the page keeps lives and continues to

---

<sup>7</sup> For more on the logic of the chess game, see "Chess and Theology in the Alice Books" by A.L. Taylor, 373-380 in *Alice in Wonderland*. Ed. Donald J. Gray. Norton Critical Edition, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992.

exist autonomously outside the direct consciousness of the author or reader. In effect, the paracosmist is often just a relater of events happening outside of his or her control. But a heterocosm involves deliberate and focused elaboration; a heterocosmist plans and revises their world to suit a specific purpose. And lastly, as a paracosm springs out of the fantasy play of children, heterocosms are a more mature form of imagining, created by an older and more experienced adult, and therefore often contain more sophisticated material. All of these distinctions are embodied by the way the *Alice* books in their published form differ from the oral-tradition *Alice* fairy-tales that Dodgson shared with the Liddells.

**Conclusion:**

Examining the Brontë and Dodgson paracosms as the intersection between their biographical information, literary background, and psychological makeup allows us to investigate the paracosms' influence on all three areas. We can, for example, more fully understand why Charles Dodgson and Emily Brontë were so particular about their publishing: it is because they were used to the privacy and control of their paracosms, and had difficulty letting this intensely personal material into the public sphere without heavy degrees of censorship. We also have a more comprehensive insight into how these paracosms arose and the origins of the

authors' impulse to narrate and write: in the case of the Brontës, it was an outgrowth of the daily play of four highly imaginative siblings, but for Dodgson, it very well may have been a shield against a childhood trauma. And we have a more complete picture of how the paracosms shaped the lives of these authors: they were an exercise in creativity, their literary apprenticeship works, a trial of their confidence and ability, and even a beloved companion in times of need. Their paracosms meant a great deal to the Brontës and to Charles Dodgson, and for this reason, our treatment of the paracosm as a complex entity that is *not* simply juvenilia has helped us understand and interpret the true place of the paracosm in the life and published writings of these authors.

One wonders what Dodgson would have thought of the Brontë realms of Angria or Gondal or how the Brontës would have fared under the editorship of Dodgson. It is likely that the interdependent Brontës would not have flourished under an outside influence and that Dodgson would have been reluctant to relinquish creative control to others, unless he could play punting uncle to the somber Yorkshire girls. But they were kindred spirits nonetheless, dedicated to the private worlds of the imagination and the creation of dream realms and fantasies eventually extolled the world over.

Perhaps a hint of what Dodgson would have made of the Brontë paracosm, however, can be found in a comment he recorded in his diary. "Finished that extraordinary book *Wuthering Heights*," he wrote. "(I)† is of all the novels I ever read the one I should least like to be a character in myself. All the 'dramatis personae' are so unusual and unpleasant. The only failure in the book is the writing it in the person of a gentleman. Heathcliff and Catherine are original and most powerful drawn idealities; one cannot believe that such human beings ever existed: they have far more of the fiend in them. The vision at the beginning is I think the finest piece of writing in the book." (*The Diaries of Lewis Carroll*, ed. Roger Lancelyn Green 1:86) As the creator of one of the most famous dream realms himself, Dodgson certainly knew what he was talking about. Perhaps despite their vast thematic and stylistic differences, the phantasmagoria of Wonderland, the haunted moors outside Thurstcross Grange, and the hidden chambers of Thornfield are not so distant after all.

## Bibliography:

Alexander, Christine. The Early Writings of Charlotte Bronte. Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books. 1983.

Barker, Juliet. The Brontës: A Life in Letters. New York: The Overlook Press. 1998.

Bronte, Charlotte. Jane Eyre. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. 1847. Norton Critical Edition: 1987.

Bronte, Emily. Wuthering Heights. Ed. Richard J. Dunn. 1847. Norton Critical Edition: 2003.

Bronte, Emily. Wuthering Heights. Ed. Ian Jack. 1847. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.

Bullock, K. Imaginative Wor(l)ds: Paracosms and Writing Development.

<[http://209.85.165.104/search?q=cache:2unwzrW7CGwJ:www.bsu.edu/classes/bullock2/academics/PARASTUD.htm+Imaginative+Wor\(l\)ds&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us](http://209.85.165.104/search?q=cache:2unwzrW7CGwJ:www.bsu.edu/classes/bullock2/academics/PARASTUD.htm+Imaginative+Wor(l)ds&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=us)> Accessed November 4 2007.

Carroll, Lewis. Oxford's World Classics: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. 1998. Google Book Search. Ed. Robert Lancelyn Green. 1998. 3 May 2009.

<<http://books.google.com/books?id=Ekrge3RowTgC&printsec=frontcover#PPA264,M1>>

Carroll, Lewis. Alice in Wonderland. Ed. Donald J. Gray. Norton Critical Edition: Second edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. 1992.

Cohen, David. The Development of Play. New York: New York University Press. 1987.

Cohen, David, and Stephen A. MacKeith. The Development of Imagination: The Private Worlds of Childhood. New York: Routledge. 1992.

Cohen, Morton N. Lewis Carroll. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1995.

Cohen, Morton N., ed. Lewis Carroll: Interviews and Recollections. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press. 1989.

Cohen, Morton N. and Anita Gandolfo, eds. Lewis Carroll and the House of Macmillan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1987.

Cohen, Morton N. and Edward Wakeling, eds. Lewis Carroll & His Illustrators. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 2003.

Cohen, Morton N. Ed. The Letters of Lewis Carroll. New York: Oxford University Press. 1979.

Clark, Anne. Lewis Carroll: A Biography. New York: Schocken Books. 1979.

Collingwood, Stuart Dodgson. Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll, illustrated. London: T. Fisher Unwin. 1898.

Conover, Robin St. John. "Creating Angria: Charlotte and Branwell Brontë's Collaboration." Bronte Society Transactions. 24.1 (1999) 16-32.

Cuthwellis, Edgar, ed. Lewis Carroll's Bedside Book: Entertainments for the Wakeful Hours. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1979.

Dodgson, Charles Lutwidge. "The Complete Works of Lewis Carroll." London: The Nonesuch Press. 1939.

Frank, Katherine. A Chainless Soul: A Life of Emily Brontë. Boston: Houton Mifflin. 1990.

Gattégno, Jean. Lewis Carroll: Fragments of a Looking-Glass. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company. 1976.

Gérin, Winifred. Emily Brontë. Oxford: Clarendon Press 1971.

Green, Roger Lancelyn Green, ed. The Diaries of Lewis Carroll. London: Cassell & Company Ltd. 1953.

Hatfield, C.W. The Complete Poems of Emily Jane Brontë. New York: Columbia University Press. 1967.

Hinde, Thomas. Lewis Carroll: Looking-Glass Letters. New York: Rizzoli. 1992.

"Horatius Cocles." Encyclopædia Britannica. 2009. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 30 Apr. 2009.  
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/271671/Horatus-Cocles>>.

Keefe, Robert. Charlotte Brontë's World of Death. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press. 1979.

Kelly, Richard. Lewis Carroll: Revised Edition. Boston: Twayne Publishers. 1990.

Leach, Karoline. "Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (Lewis Carroll): A Brief Biography." The Victorian Web. 4 May 2009.  
<<http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/carroll/bio1.html>>

MacDonald, George. "The Fantastic Imagination." The Complete Fairy Tales. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.

Macaulay, Thomas Babington. "Horatius." 30 Apr. 2009  
<<http://www.englishverse.com/poems/horatius>>

Menand, Louis. "Goblin Market." New York Review of Books. (January 17, 2002): <<http://bjohnson.manilasites.com/2002/01/16>>

Miller, J. Hillis. "Wuthering Heights: Repetition and the "Uncanny"." Brontë, Emily. Wuthering Heights. Ed. William M. Sale, Jr. and Richard J. Dunn. Norton Critical Edition. New York: Norton, 2003.

Paden, William Doremus. An Investigation of Gondal. New York: Bookman Associates. 1958.

Ratchford, Fannie E. The Brontës' Web of Childhood. New York: Columbia University Press. 1941.

Ratchford, Fannie E. Gondal's Queen: A Novel in Verse. Austin: University of Texas Press. 1955.

Reed, Frances, ed. The Juvenilia of Jane Austen and Charlotte Brontë. Penguin Books. 1986.

Schorer, Mark. The World We Imagine. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 1968.

Silvey, Robert, and Stephen MacKeith. "The Paracosm: A Special Form of Fantasy." Organizing Early Experience: Imagination and Cognition in Childhood. Ed. Delmont C. Morrison. Amityville, NY: Baywood. 1988. 173-197.

Singer, Jerome L. The Child's World of Make-Believe. New York: Academic Press. 1973.

Singer, Jerome L. and Dorothy G. The House of Make-Believe. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1990.

Singer, Jerome L. The Inner World of Daydreaming. New York: Harper & Row Publishers: 1975.

Susina, Jan. "'Respiciendo prudens': Lewis Carroll's Juvenilia." Children's Literature Association Quarterly. Volume 17, Number 4, Winter 1992. Project MUSE. Bird Library, Syracuse, New York. 4 May 2009.

<[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/childrens\\_literature\\_association\\_quarterly/v017/17.4.susina.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/childrens_literature_association_quarterly/v017/17.4.susina.html)>

Taylor, Marjorie. Imaginary Companions and the Children Who Create Them. New York: Oxford University Press. 1999.

The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1971.

## Summary:

Many famous authors have had paracosms—imaginary worlds created in childhood that are marked by very detailed conventions, like languages or dialects, history, culture, geography, publications, politics, military, and sometimes even deities. Three such authors are Charlotte Brontë, Emily Brontë and Lewis Carroll. These authors had an intense and lasting attachment to their paracosms, and this relationship influenced their later work.

Since the study of paracosms has just arisen in the last two decades or so, a majority of the work done on the paracosms of famous authors has been concentrated in three traditional spheres: literary, biographical, and psychological. When we recognize the early work of these authors as “paracosms” specifically, we bring together the three disciplines to create a more complete picture of the relationship between the author, the paracosm, and the published work.

Paracosms are a different kind of early work than the “juvenilia” of other authors. There are four main differences that set paracosms apart from early work of a more common nature: their longevity, the paracosmist’s desire to keep the paracosm private, the control an author has over his or her paracosm, and the unity the paracosm affords by drawing many disparate pieces of work

together into a whole. Because of these factors, an author who has a paracosm has a very different relationship with their published and unpublished works than an author whose early works are *not* paracosms.

In this paper, the juvenile work of Charlotte and Emily Brontë and Lewis Carroll are examined with the “paracosmic approach”—recognizing the paracosm as the intersection of the three traditional approaches (biographical, literary and psychological) to these early writings. I examine their paracosms via each of the four aspects mentioned above, and allow the specific nature of the paracosm to shed light on the author’s life and works from these angles, the way only a paracosm can.

The paracosms of Emily Brontë and Charlotte Brontë—the countries of Angria and Gondal—lasted more than twenty years, having a serious impact on the relationships of the siblings to each other and to the outside world. The sisters, particularly Emily, invested a great deal of energy to keep their paracosms a secret from non-family members. These ties brought the siblings closer together, but drew them farther away from association with others. The consistency of the rules the Brontë sisters set up for their paracosms gave them a special kind of control over their worlds—the inclusion or exclusion of supernatural elements was introduced

at the beginning of the development of these worlds and was never altered. The unity of the locations in their paracosmic worlds helped shape the way they constructed location-interaction in their published fiction. Strangely, the connectedness of their paracosms finds its opposite in Charlotte and Emily's published fiction. The worlds of their paracosms were vast and interrelated, but the setting of their fiction is either disjointed, as in *Jane Eyre*, or completely isolated as in *Wuthering Heights*.

The Brontë paracosms, their form and functions, are reflected and refracted throughout their published work not only because of their importance as a literary training ground, but also because of their impact on the sisters' personal lives, and even psychological development. The domain of the paracosm is the world where the traditional approaches to studying the Brontës meet, and the places from which we have the best viewpoint of the places Angria and Gondal truly occupied in the lives of Emily and Charlotte Brontë.

The paracosm of Lewis Carroll was most likely a post-traumatic paracosm resulting from his probable sexual abuse while he attended school at Rugby. These escapist paracosms took the form of private family magazines, of which Carroll was the editor,

affording him total control over the details of form and content of these magazines—control which he may have been using to reaffirm agency in his life after feeling a loss of control after his abuse. The periodicals continued for several years, and though at first they were compilations of work from the entire family, Carroll's siblings soon lost interest. His perseverance in the creation of these magazines long after his siblings' desertion, and his reluctance to publish work first written for his magazines under his real name (Charles Dodgson) illustrate two of the paracosmic features of the attachment he formed with these magazines—the sustained interest and desire for secrecy that makes paracosms unique. Furthermore, the fact that the paracosm takes the form of a magazine let Carroll combine many separate pieces of writing into a coherent whole, and the control he exercised over the final publishing of *Alice in Wonderland* was so intricate and demanding as to be reminiscent of the total control he had when editing his family magazines. As in the writing of the Brontës, each of the skills and conventions Carroll learned via his paracosm found expression in his published version of *Alice in Wonderland*.

Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* began as paracosms—he told these stories privately to his child-friends, the Liddell sisters, in installments over time at their

request. After a time, he bound a version of these stories for Alice Liddell, and was convinced to publish them. This marked the transition from paracosm to heterocosm—a fictional world shared by many people—because of three factors that differentiate a heterocosm from a paracosm: the shared nature of the heterocosm, the effortful creation of aspects of the heterocosm, and the age of the heterocosmist at the age of creation. This transition, however, was a complex one for Carroll, and his extensive correspondence with his illustrators and publishers speaks to the difficulty he had relinquishing the privacy and control of his paracosm to others.

Examining the Brontë and Dodgson paracosms as the intersection between their biographical information, literary background, and psychological makeup allows us to investigate the paracosms' influence on all three areas. We can, for example, more fully understand why Charles Dodgson and Emily Brontë were so particular about their publishing: it is because they were used to the privacy and control of their paracosms, and had difficulty letting this intensely personal material into the public sphere without heavy degrees of censorship. We also have a more comprehensive insight into how these paracosms arose and the origins of the authors' impulse to narrate and write: in the case of the Brontës, it

was an outgrowth of the daily play of four highly imaginative siblings, but for Dodgson, it very well may have been a shield against a childhood trauma. And we have a more complete picture of how the paracosms shaped the lives of these authors: they were an exercise in creativity, their literary apprenticeship works, a trial of their confidence and ability, and even a beloved companion in times of need. Their paracosms meant a great deal to the Brontës and to Charles Dodgson, and for this reason, our treatment of the paracosm as a complex entity that is *not* simply juvenilia has helped us understand and interpret the true place of the paracosm in the life and published writings of these authors.