中國文化大學外語學院英國語文學系
碩士論文

Master of Arts Thesis
Graduate Institue of English Language and Literature
College of Foreign Languages and Literature
Chinese Culture University

《小王子》、《小史都華》和《愛麗絲夢遊仙境》中的異化和自我發現

Alienation and Self-Discovery in *the Little Prince, Stuart Little* and *Alice in Wonderland*

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中華民國 103 年 6 月
June, 2014

Alienation and Self-Discovery in *the Little Prince, Stuart Little* and *Alice in Wonderland*

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A Thesis Submitted to

the Graduate Institute of English Language and Literature

Chinese Culture University

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in English

June 2014

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中 國 文 化 大 學

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經考試合格特此證明

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口 試 日 期 ： 中 華 民 國 103 年 6 月 16 日

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Abstract

These three children's novels are tales of adventure in which the young protagonists find themselves to be "aliens" in a strange world. Saint-Exupery's little prince is actually an alien, as he comes from another planet though the author makes him seem very human; E. B. White's Stuart is physically a mouse but mentally and emotionally seems in every way like a young boy; Lewis Carroll's Alice is a human girl who enters a strange and unfamiliar world. In all three cases the main characters, having been thrust into an alien world, are "alienated" where this term can also mean "self-alienated," not knowing who we ourselves are. Thus all three cases the protagonist's adventure is one of "self-discovery" where this is closely related to the exploration and "discovery" of the world they find themselves in.

The philosopher Hegel says the subject's perception of the object (or world) outside of him inevitably makes him/her aware of him/herself as a subject, that is, as an isolated self-consciousness which will nonetheless seek to unify itself with the objective world through "understanding." Thus the psychologist Lacan speaks of the moment when a human infant first realizes or understands that the object (person) that he/she sees in the mirror is him/herself, which however also meanings realizing that one's self is always split, always a duality: we can never see ourselves but only our image in the mirror. These are two of the approaches, along with Freud's theory of the id/ego/superego (unconscious/conscious mind/superego) that will be used to discuss the process of "self-discovery" undertaken by the little prince, Stuart and Alice in their journey through an unfamiliar world that becomes increasingly familiar. The intelligence and curiosity of these three protagonists, who are constantly asking questions, will inevitably play a key role, as will their innocence, courage, and capacity for kindness and love, that is, their humanity.

摘要

這三本兒童小說是年少主角發現自己在陌生世界為”外星人”的冒險故事。Saint-Exupery 的小王子確實是外星人，因為雖然作者讓他看起非常像人類，但他來自另一個星球。E. B. White 的 Stuart 實際上是一隻老鼠，但心理和情緒上各方面看起來都像個少年。Lewis Carroll 的 Alice 是一位人類女孩進入陌生和不熟悉的世界。所有三個情況下，主角都曾經闖入外星世界而被異化，也可以說是「自我異化」，而不知自己是誰。因此三個故事主角的冒險是一種與探險和「發現」他們所在世界的「自我發掘」。

哲學家 Hegel 說主體對外界物體(或世界)的認知無可避免讓他/她知道他/她本身是一個主體，也就是說，是一個不論如何試圖透過「瞭解」來與目標世界成為一體的獨立自我意識。因此心理學家 Lacan 說當一個人類嬰兒首次瞭解或知道在鏡中看到的物體(人)是他/她自己時，雖然也表示瞭解一個人本身永遠是分離和二元：我們只能看到我們在鏡中的影像而永遠不可能看到自己。這些是兩種看法，加上 Freud 的本我/自我/超我理論 (潛意識/意識/超我)會被用來討論小王子所採的「自我發掘」過程、Stuart 和 Alice 從不熟悉到越來越熟悉世界的旅程。這三個不斷提問主角的智慧和好奇心將扮演關鍵的角色，他們的天真、勇氣以及善與愛的能力，亦即人性也是。

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to God by giving me His blessings so that I can learn and finish my master study here. I would like also to say many thanks to Prof. Stevenson, my advisor, for all his attention, advice, feedback and time he has allocated for me in finishing this thesis.

My gratitude to Prof. Ting, who has guided me a lot and given me a thoughtful discourse on poetry, literary criticism and theory, so that I could build my way of thinking and perspective in doing the analysis, not only from literature point of view but in the broader context. Also, many thanks to Prof. Huang for all your inputs and knowledge that you have shared with me so that I could get more understanding on English literature and the broader context in cross-cultural understanding. No forgot, I am grateful to Prof. Chuang, Kun-liang's suggestions and critical comment.

I would like also to express my gratitude to Ms. Pi Theresa, thank you for helping me with academic requirements. Many thanks to Alvin, Nadia R, Celli, David, Patience, Eva, Esther, Berryl, Cindy, and all friends without you guys, I will be so desperated to know how to follow procedures that often I do not understand. With you guys, everything becomes easy. I would also like to say thanks to Rina Novita Mansjur, for your unlimited help and support to me in finishing my study.

My sincere gratitude also goes to my dear husband, Gunawan, and my only daughther, Ghanies. Both of you are the best things I have. Send you my big hug and love to your encouragement for letting me continue my study so that I could have the best experience of my life, also by giving unconditional moral and material support.

To those that I can not mention one by one, I would like to say thank you.

Taipei, 16 June 2014

Riskhana

Introduction

As Piaget among others has pointed out, children from the time they are born are learning to explore the world in which they find themselves and their own relationship to it. This means they are going through a process of cognitive development: in the beginning they are thinking in much more simple and concrete terms, but they continue to think in terms of increasingly abstract and complex concepts, and also to develop and refine the logical schemas which they use to order their perceptions and thoughts. Based upon his observations, Piaget concluded that children were not less intelligent than adults, they simply think differently.

Their ongoing exploration of the world around them also leads children to increasingly understand their own separation or alienation from this world, and thus even from themselves. The German philosopher Hegel, in *The Phenomenology of Mind* (1806), says that when we perceive an object with one of our five senses we also perceive our own separation, as a subject, from this object—that is, we become self-conscious. In Freud's psychology we are also alienated from ourselves: what he calls our id or "unconscious" harbors feelings of desire, fear, anger and guilt that we are usually not consciously aware of. One of the ways we become aware of these is via our dreams when we are sleeping, for such feelings are often manifested in our dreams.

The experiences of loneliness and alienation are also frequently found in novels and films. Children's novels present young children's experience of these feelings in very poignant and interesting ways, and this thesis will explore the role of the protagonist's sense of alienation, as well as his or her

quest for self-understanding—where this involves orienting oneself within the world in which one finds oneself—in three well-known children's novels: *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Stuart Little* by E.B. White, and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass* by Lewis Carrol. The thesis will try to show how in each case the protagonist overcomes his sense of alienation and thereby discovers himself and/or gains a clearer sense of his or her own self-identity.

In *The Little Prince* the protagonist is already an "alien" (extraterrestrial being) though to the author and to the reader the prince will seem very human; in fact, he may represent the author's memory of himself as a child. In *Stuart Little* the protagonist seems to be a variation on the little prince, for he has the tiny body of a mouse—an "alien" creature from the human point of view—and yet in every other way he seems to be a young person. Alice in the late-19th-century novel *Alice in Wonderland* is clearly a young human girl, but by following a rabbit down his rabbit hole she enters another world, a fantasy land or "wonderland" which can easily be compared with the "underworld" of Freud's unconscious.

Chapter One

Theories of Alienation: Piaget, Hegel, Freud, and Lacan

In children's novels it is especially clear that these processes of alienation and self-discovery are closely bound up with the imaginary world that the child creates for himself. But their tendency to create an imaginary world is closely related to young children's natural tendency to be solipsistic: to think that the whole world revolves around them, and to want to be alone so that they can enjoy their freedom and independence and more fully explore themselves, get to know themselves. On the other hand, children will of course begin to feel lonely and want to be with others, so there is a sort of dialectical interplay between these two tendencies. We clearly see both of these impulses and the interplay between them, though in different ways, with the protagonists of these three novels.

A. Key Concepts in Piaget

According to Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, children progress through a series of four key stages of cognitive development marked by shifts in how they understand the world. Piaget believed that children are like "little scientists" who actively try to explore and make sense of the world around them, and that their early cognitive development involves processes based upon actions and later progresses into changes in mental operations. Thus their intellectual development progresses through four distinct stages: the sensorimotor stage, from birth to age 2; the preoperational stage, from age 2 to about age 7; the concrete operational stage, from

age 7 to 11; and the formal operational stage, which begins in adolescence and extends into adulthood (Oakley 15-26).

a. The Sensorimotor Stage: This stage encompasses the child from age 0–2 years. This is a stage of rapid development. During this stage the child will change from a fairly helpless newborn baby to a walking, talking toddler. This stage is dominated by sensory and motor activity. The newborn baby is dependent upon built-in schemas and reflexes, and is unable to imitate or integrate information. An example of a reflex is the sucking reflex, which is necessary for feeding and growing. As the child develops, their sensory and motor activities develop and increase, so that by the end of this stage they are able to imitate and integrate information to some degree. A 2-year-old child is capable of using objects to represent other objects..

b. The Preoperational Stage: At this stage, kids learn through pretend play but still struggle with logic and taking the point of view of other people. This stage is characterised by an increase in language development, continuation of symbolic / internal representation and the development of imaginative play. The child begins to use symbols and language to represent things.

c. The Concrete Operational Stage: Kids at this point of development begin to think more logically, but their thinking can also be very rigid. They tend to struggle with abstract and hypothetical concepts. The term operations is used because this stage is characterised by the development of strategies and rules for interpreting and investigating the child's world. The term concrete refers to the child's ability to apply these strategies to things that are present. Thus the child can solve problems they can see or manipulate.

d. The Formal Operational Stage: The final stage of Piaget's theory involves an increase in logic, the ability to use deductive reasoning, and an understanding of abstract ideas. The dependency on concrete objects diminishes in this stage and children are able to solve hypothetical problems or imagined problems that they are unable to see. This stage is characterised by the use of hypothetical deductive reasoning and systematic problem solving.

It is important to note that Piaget did not view children's intellectual development at a quantitative process; that is, kids do not just add more information and knowledge to their existing knowledge, as they get older. Instead, Piaget suggested that there is a *qualitative* change in how children think as they gradually process through these four stages. A child at age 7 doesn't just have more information about the world than he did at age 2; there is a fundamental change in *how* he thinks about the world.

For Piaget a *schema* describes both the mental and physical actions involved in understanding and knowing. Schemas are categories of knowledge that help us to interpret and understand the world. In Piaget's view, a schema includes both a category of knowledge and the process of obtaining that knowledge. As experiences happen, this new information is used to modify, add to, or change previously existing schemas. For example, a child may have a schema about a type of animal, such as a dog. If the child's sole experience has been with small dogs, a child might believe that all dogs are small, furry, and have four legs. Suppose then that the child encounters a very large dog. The child will take in this new information, modifying the previously existing schema to include this new information.

The two essential schemas for Piaget are *Assimilation and Accommodation*:

Assimilation - The process of taking in new information into our previously existing schemas is known as assimilation. The process is somewhat subjective, because we tend to modify experience or information somewhat to fit in with our preexisting beliefs. In the example above, seeing a dog and labeling it "dog" is an example of assimilating the animal into the child's dog schema.

Accommodation - Another part of adaptation involves changing or altering our existing schemas in light of new information, a process known as accommodation. Accommodation involves altering existing schemas, or ideas, as a result of new information or new experiences. New schemas may also be developed during this process. Equilibration - Piaget believed that all children try to strike a balance between assimilation and accommodation, which is achieved through a mechanism Piaget called equilibration. As children progress through the stages of cognitive development, it is important to maintain a balance between applying previous knowledge (assimilation) and changing behavior to account for new knowledge (accommodation). Equilibration helps explain how children are able to move from one stage of thought into the next (Oakley 14-15). Not just Piaget, the period of cognitive development of which a child develops also introduced by Lacan's concept of language. Lacan's conceptualization of the way the individual, or what he terms the subject, is formed as a result of the learning of a language, and of the consequences of this, namely the production of the unconscious in the psychic life of human beings, is of central importance for sociology (Bocock, 1:10).

B. Key Concepts in Hegel, Freud, and Lacan

Hegel, in some respects the predecessor of Freud and Lacan, says in *The Phenomenology of Mind* that when we see an object and thus are conscious of it as something external to us, we also become self-conscious, that is, conscious of ourselves as something different from what is outside of us (that is, what we are conscious of). On a more abstract level he also speaks of an absolute Subject or absolute Self-Consciousness, so that now the world of our sense-perception—the physical world, reality—can be understood as the "object" of this more absolute self-consciousness. Physical reality then, or the physical world, is finally taken as a transcendent being or absolute in-itself, the object of the absolute ego or for-itself, and Hegel distinguishes both of these from the Christian conception of God.

However, for Hegel the idea of *self–alienation* does not include, involve or recognize the identity of the subject (mind, consciousness) and object (objects of consciousness or of the absolute subject). On an individual human level, for example, from the point of view of a young child, this non-identity is of course the essential of ***being*** (as a self) **alienated** (from the world outside). On the more abstract or "absolute" level, this means again that there is no (awareness or consciousness of) unity between the absolute subject and absolute object, and the absolute Object (Reality) becomes then for the absolute Subject also something outside of or beyond it, and thus in this sense also sees itself as a finite innate consciousness (Hegel 210).

Therefore that which appears (the Absolute in-itself, in Hegel's sense) alienates itself in the act of becoming apparent. By means of this alienation, consciousness attains to the ultimate extremity of its own being. But even so it does not leave itself or its own essence; and neither does the absolute, because of its alienation, fall into a vacuum of debility (Hegel 21). Consciousness does not take itself to be particular

excluding self, nor does the substance mean for it an existence shut out from it, with which it would have to establish its identity only through estranging itself and thus at the same time have to produce that substance. Yet this world is a spiritual reality, it is essentially the fusion of individuality with being. Its existence is the work of self-consciousness, but likewise an actuality immediately present and alien to it, which has a peculiar being of its own, and in which it does not know itself (Hegel 176).

Sigmund Freud, the Austrian psychologist and founder of psychoanalysis, is clearly in the German idealist philosophical tradition of Hegel. He speaks of our conscious or rational mind and also of our "unconscious" or unconscious mind, where the latter is closer to our physical (animal) body with its emotions, its powerful feelings of desire, fear, anger, hatred and guilt. Insofar as we are normally (consciously, rationally) not aware (conscious) of our unconscious, and indeed "repress" the above feelings down into it—as we could not function normally in everyday life if we were always "conscious" of them— we are in effect *alienated* from our own unconscious mind, or *self-alienated*, and yet our essential humanity or selfhood is in a sense embodied by it.

The Freudian notion of the unconscious introduces, then, a new conception of the "self" as disjointed, not in full control of its own desires or actions (Bocock xi). However, these powerful feelings of desire, anger, hatred, guilt and fear come out in our dreams at night and also when we are in highly emotional states during the daytime. Indeed, Freud would try to uncover and analyze the neurosis of his patients by letting them report to him a recent dream, preferably a recurring dream. He then proceeded to interpret some of the key dream-images as we might interpret the images or symbols in a poem, to find their underlying meaning. The fact that people dream at all was taken as a major example of the activity of the unconscious. The content of his

patients' dreams, noted by Dr. Freud when they described their dreams to him, gave him clues about how unconscious processes operated. Many of his axioms about the unconscious stem from the seminal work he did on dream interpretation (Boccok18). Thus we see that sexual fantasies may play an important role in people's dreams, as well as other pleasurable fantasies—fantasies of satisfying other kinds of desires or ambitions—or fearful fantasies of being chased, of falling or dying.

In fact, Freud made a three-way distinction between our id (unconscious), ego ("I") or conscious mind, and superego, where the latter is something like our moral conscience and regulates our behavior: the fact that we may feel guilty if we do something we know to be wrong is the work of our superego. In a sense then we are (our ego is) always caught in a struggle between the wish to gain pleasure by satisfying the desires of our id on the one hand, and on the other hand the moral restraints of our superego and "negative" feelings of guilt. So far as conscious impulses always have some relation to pleasure or unpleasure, pleasure and unpleasure too can be regarded as having a psycho-physical relation to conditions of stability. Every psycho-physical motion rising above the threshold of consciousness is attended by pleasure in proportion as, beyond a certain limit, it approximates complete stability, and is attended by unpleasure in proportions as, beyond a certain limit, it deviates from complete stability; while between the two limits, which may be described as qualitative thresholds of pleasure and unpleasure, there is a certain margin of aesthetic indifference (Akthar 8-14).

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud postulated another but related duality: that between *eros* (love, sexuality) and *thanatos* (death): the former is correlated with reproduction, self-preservation, the "life-instinct" - thus Eros subsumed Freud's earlier conceptions of the "sexual" and "self-preservatory" instincts (Akhtar 1: 2), the

latter is correlated with death as a "return to our pre-organic state" and thus also with repetition and with obsessive-compulsive behavior. *Eros* has to do with unity as in the coupling of a man and a woman and the growth of the embryo within a single egg; *Thanatos* or the death-drive has to do, obviously, with "separation." For Freud, aggression is also closely linked to the death-drive, since the ultimate goal of aggression is the death or destruction of others; moreover, he sees masochism as an inward-turning of aggressive impulses, that is, a form of aggression against oneself or self-destruction. In fact, Freud' earlier (1962) view was that destructive aggression was not an independent instinct but a reaction to thwarted self-preservatory instinct. However, in his much later work *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he claimed that "aggression is an original, self-subsisting disposition in man". He now suggested that "the instinct of destruction, moderated and tamed, and, as it were, inhibited in its aim, must, when it is directed towards objects, provide the ego with the satisfaction of its vital needs and with control over nature" (Akhtar 3). Freud also speaks of the ongoing struggle between our live-instincts and death-instincts in *The Ego and the Id* (Akhtar 4).

For Freud, then, each of these agencies - ego, id, and superego - is in some way split, divided against itself. The id owes no allegiance to consistency, and happily harbours contradictions within itself. The ego is only partly conscious, and is still largely unknown to itself; it stands at a distance from itself, offering itself as the object of its own love in narcissism, and as the object of the superego's criticism if it has done something unethical. Here again we may think of Hegel's self-consciousness as a sort of split between the knowing *subject* and the subject as *object* of itself (of what it knows). But Freud may go even further here, for according to his model our very sense of a self or ego, especially when the ego comes under the gaze of the

superego, may devolve into a hall of mirrors (Thawaites 43).

Freud's conception of *Eros* as being essentially our life-instinct is closely tied to the fact that he emphasizes *desire*, whose foundational role in our dreams and fantasies should already be obvious, and basically sees our unconscious or *libido* as being a field of sexual energy. Thus, as he claims in his early "Three Essays on Sexuality," little children are already "sexual" in a broad sense of the term, and even may be sexually "perverse" as we see in the games they play. In this essay Freud discusses the three sexual stages we pass through from infancy to adolescence—the oral stage (breast feeding), the anal stage (toilet training), and the genital stage (puberty)—and notes that some people may be "arrested" at earlier stages of development. This aspect of Freud's theory, and the fact that our id or unconscious is already formed when we are infants, suggests the obvious relevance of psychoanalytic theory to children's literature.

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan combines Freud's theory of the unconscious with Saussure's structuralist linguistics. Saussure had said that any word in our language is a combination of a signifier or sound-image (e.g. "cat") and a signified or concept (e.g. that of a "cat"). But Saussure had also stressed that the connection between the mere sound of a word (sound-image, signifier) and an abstract "meaning" (signified) is purely arbitrary, not logically necessary (66).This "separation" between signifier/ signified means we might have a signifier without any signified, an idea further developed in the late 1960s by the French deconstructionist Derrida, who suggests that abstract terms like "self" or "freedom" or "God" may be "transcendental signifiers" which can never actually *reach* their signifieds (Lewis 89). Lacan, then, says that our unconscious is structured like a language, but it is a

language of signifiers which lack their signifieds (Lewis 47). This is closely tied to the philosophical problem that while we can easily say such words, it is not clear that we can ever know what they actually mean, ever fully know their meaning. Again we come back to the Hegelian tradition and the problem of self-consciouisness: or own consciousness can never be an object of knowledge for us, we can never fully know "ourselves" in this sense.

Lacan is perhaps best known for his theory of childhood development which begins with the "mirror stage." When a six- to eighteen-month-old human infant first realizes that the image or the "thing" he or she sees in the mirror is himself/herself, this means that he/she only knows him/herself as an object outside of him/her, an object (image) in the mirror, and can never have a fully unified image, concept or knowledge of himself/herself (Lewis 196). For Lacan, the "imaginary" designates that basic and enduring dimension of experience that is oriented by images, perceived or fantasized, the psychologically formative power of which is established in the primordial identification of the mirror phase. Lacan's first and arguably most original and far-reaching innovation in psychoanalytic theory was to characterize the Freudian "ego" as a formation of the imaginary (Boothby 18).

For Lacan the mirror stage is really the beginning of the imaginary stage, a stage during which young children think mainly in terms of images rather than logical and abstract concepts. This is because this is a mostly pre-linguistic stage of consciousness (Zupancic 71-73). A little later we enter what Lacan calls the symbolic stage, at which point we begin to use language and to think in terms of language, and to think in increasingly logical and complex ways—a process that is also important in Piaget's theory of childhood development. However, we now get even further away from a concrete knowledge or image of ourselves, since we become in a sense the

language (with its signifier-signified dualities) in or with which we are thinking.

Therefore Lacan stressed the importance of the scopic drive, and of the eye as an organ, which Freud had already started to talk about. For Lacan, the *gaze of the other* is the way the baby becomes hooked into socialization at a preverbal level. We each build up a store of images—the imaginary stage—as a result of our *seeing* (the Imaginary stage) before we hear or speak a language and thus enter into our culture through language (the Symbolic stage) (Bocock 10).

Chapter Two

Alienation and Self-Understanding in *The Little Prince*

As we have seen in the Introduction, we may discuss both physical and spiritual alienation. In *The Little Prince*, we have the physical and spiritual (or emotional) alienation of the prince as his displacement or self-distancing from his home planet to the earth, and we also have the contrast between the nature of children and adults, where this too can be interpreted in the light of alienation or self-distancing. The prince's physical alienation is viewed by the author in part from the perspective of physics and the theory of "*relativity*." (Brake 11). His spiritual or emotional displacement from his own planet to the earth can be analyzed in terms of his general sense of loneliness and confusion on the earth, where he has to try to explore and understand his new world "like a little scientist" (Piaget), and more specifically in terms of his missing of his beloved rose.

A. The Prince's Physical, Emotional and Spiritual Alienation

The little prince is an alien in the literal sense of being an extraterrestrial, a creature or person from another planet. Thus, he has been physically displaced by traveling to the earth, though in his case this was a voluntary act: he wanted to escape for a while from his beloved rose, back on his own tiny planet, for he was too confused by her and by his feelings for her.

> The little prince believed that he would never want to return. But, on this last morning all these familiar tasks seemed very precious to him. When he watered the flower for the last time, and prepared to place her

under the shelter of her glass globe, he realized that he was very close to tears (Saint-Exupéry 42).

"Goodbye," he said to the flower. But she made no answer. "Goodbye," he said again. The flower coughed. But it was not because she had a cold. "I have been silly," she said to him, at last. "I ask your forgiveness. Try to be happy..." He was surprised by this absence of reproaches. He stood there all bewildered, the glass globe held arrested in mid-air. He did not understand this quiet sweetness (Saint-Exupéry 43).

Now go!" For she did not want him to see her crying. She was such a proud flower . . . (Saint-Exupéry 45).

In the context of a purely physical or bodily displacement of the prince from his home planet to the earth, we also get the theme of scientific or physical *relativity* . The general theory of relativity deals with the more general case of accelerating frames of reference. Einstein postulated the principle of equivalence, which states that observations made in an accelerated reference frame (Dubeck, 100). The light bends because it travels in a space-time geometry that is bent. The presence of mass causes this bending of space time, or it can be caused by an acceleration (Brake 23). The mass of the Earth is too small to appreciably bend the surrounding space-time, which is practically flat, so any such bending of light in our immediate environment is difficult to detect. However, close to bodies of much larger mass, such

as the Sun, the bending of light is large enough to detect (Dubeck 101).

Thus while he is very big on his (from our perspective) very small planet, he is quite small on the earth. In the purely physical (as in physics or astrophysics) context, Saint-Exupery is indirectly—and through the use of humor, as we see in his absurd picture of a giant prince standing on his tiny planet—teaching young readers about the nature of planets and their inhabitants, and the fact that we are inevitably much smaller than the planets we live on. Human infants will of course immediately realize this once they are standing anywhere outside and begin to really see that they are on a flat surface which extends indefinitely far in all directions. This also brings into play issues of "orientation" such as coming to learn at an early age not just about the four directions but about space and time and our own situation within these broader "dimensions" in the world we find ourselves within. This suggests the problems Alice faces in "orienting" herself in her new under-earth world (or dream-world) in *Alice in Wonderland*, as well as the plan of the protagonist of *Stuart Little* (a "human mouse") to keep traveling north, a direction he picked randomly, in search of the bird Margalo.

We get a geophysics and astrophysics lesson on a slightly more sophisticated level early in *The Little Prince* when the prince explains to the author that he can see "many sunsets" in what we would call "a single day" by continuing to move his chair in a straight line around the surface of his tiny spherical world (Saint-Exupéry 30). This idea depends of course on the fact that we see sunrises and also sunsets only once every 24 hours, since this is how long it takes the earth to rotate once; though we are not told how long it takes for the prince's tiny planet to rotate. We could see that because it is so small, he can keep moving his chair around its circumference in a straight line faster than the planet rotates, and thus he can see many sunsets in one "day."

Here, Piaget's theory that mentions children as "little scientists" who from a very early age, learn about their new worlds by exploring it. They keep expanding their understanding of this world by developing (within their brains) a series of logical schemas for "picturing" this world, each one more elaborate and accurate than the preceding one (Young 11). Of course, the child is becoming aware not just of the physical world around him but of the human, familial, social world as well. Hegel speaks of the subject's alienation from itself when it moves into the object of its knowledge, but at this point it also becomes self-conscious; when the human subject becomes conscious of another *person* there is again a process of self-reflection, and from this there arises, in Hegel's view, social consciousness.

Thus the prince, who would otherwise be all alone on a planet that is not much bigger than himself, is very fond of Rose as well as his sheep and volcanoes, although he hates the evil and "alien" Baobab trees—which he had to destroy just like today's global warming which consume the whole planet. Therefore, his sadness upon departing from this planet, as well as rose's sadness upon his immanent departure, is closely tied to his sense that he (and she) will be alone again, separated or alienated from one another. From a Freudian perspective we may say that he suffers from conflicts involving love and aggression and from his ambivalence towards those he loves and needs, and who gratify and frustrate him, who can never satisfy all his desires and sometimes dramatically withhold the gratification of his basic psychological needs. For Freud such aggression arises from the conflict between the pleasure principle and the reality principle, for such aggression, mingling with our deepest needs for closeness and love, may be related to our biological disposition toward aggression, as inborn as that toward love and eroticism (Akhtar 177). For Freud privation, the frustration of a real satisfaction, is the first condition for the

generation of a neurosis, although it is far from being the only one (Freud 3104). Then, in journeying via several other tiny planets or worlds to the much larger earth, he must experience a more extreme form of physical as well as mental, emotional or spiritual sense displacement or alienation: he has willfully alienated himself from his own *home*, even if it was one where he had been largely alone until he met his Rose.

His move to the planet earth, a totally unfamiliar world to him - this means that the prince must now orient himself within the new physical world as well as within the new "social" world of plants, animals and human beings. Indeed, in the latter half of the novel, he is continually learning about the physical nature or landscape of the earth and about the plants, animals and humans that live there. Whereas he already "understood" the world of his native planet, now that he is on earth, we may see him as more clearly representing or symbolizing a human child growing up in a world that is initially unknown, mysterious, "alien" to him. It is a world where, as Piaget says, the prince is like a little scientist who must constantly explore his surroundings in order to develop, through constantly experiencing and testing, his logical schemas of understanding.

> The little prince crossed the desert and met with only one flower. It was a flower with three petals, a flower of no account at all. "Good morning," said the little prince. "Good morning," said the flower. "Where are the men?" the little prince asked, politely. The flower had once seen a caravan passing. "Men?" she echoed. "I think there are six or seven of them in existence. I saw them, several years ago. But one never knows where to find them. The wind blows them away. They have no roots, and that makes their life very difficult." "Goodbye," said the little prince. "Goodbye," said the flower (Saint-Exupéry 84-85).

Here, we might also think of Piaget's first two schemata. At the stage of assimilation, the young child tries to absorb new concepts into existing cognitive structures, in order to respond to the problems that come from the environment. Meanwhile, at the stage of accommodation, new schemata are formed or existing cognitive structures are modified so that new concepts can be absorbed into them.

As if to reinforce the intense loneliness (alienation) of the situation in which the prince now finds himself—on a different planet and one that is even devoid of humans (or creatures something like himself)—the prince now encounters his own echo:

> After that, the little prince climbed a high mountain. The only mountains he had ever known were the three volcanoes, which came up to his knees. And he used the extinct volcano as a footstool. "From a mountain as high as this one," he said to himself, "I shall be able to see the whole planet at one glance, and all the people . . . But he saw nothing, save peaks of rock that were sharpened like needles. "Good morning," he said courteously. "Good morning—Good morning—Good morning," answered the echo. "Who are you?" said the little prince. "Who are you—Who are you—Who are you?" answered the echo. "Be my friends. I am all alone," he said. "I am all alone—all alone—all alone," answered the echo. "What a queer planet!" he thought. "It is altogether dry, and altogether pointed, and altogether harsh and forbidding. And the people have no imagination. They repeat whatever one says to them... On my planet I had a flower; she always was the first to speak..." (Saint-Exupéry 86-87).

With the “echo”, we gain the Hegelian notion of self-consciousness: the self loses itself or becomes alienated from itself in the object of its own knowledge, but this then becomes the alienation of intense self-consciousness as much as we become conscious of ourselves seeing, hearing or knowing (ourselves as) the object. In fact the author-prince relationship—where the author is also the “I”-narrator—as we get it right at the beginning of the novel is something like a self-echo relationship, where the two seem to be twins, reflections or echos of each other. Here, the author has just mentioned that his airplane has just crashed in the desert. Of course, we might also think of Lacan’s mirror stage here: when a human infant first realizes that the image he sees in the mirror is himself, he forms his first “objective” conception of himself and yet this self-conception is already split (into subject/object), not a whole (Zupancic 153). Thus in the mirror stage the infant—or perhaps here the prince, though he is already physically alienated from his own planet, is on an alien planet—faces radical self-alienation.

> And the little prince broke into a lovely peal of laughter, which irritated me very much. I like my misfortunes to be taken seriously. Then he added: “So you, too, come from the sky! Which is your planet?” At that moment I caught a gleam of light in the impenetrable mystery of his presence; and I demanded, abruptly: “Do you come from another planet?” But he did not reply. He tossed his head gently, without taking his eyes from my plane: “It is true that on that you can’t have come from very far away...” (Saint-Exupéry13-15).

This passage of course underscores the point that both of them are space-travelers from their own (different) planets, as well as the point that in fact the I-narrator of

the novel is also its author, who has only imagined the little prince as, no doubt, in some sense a projection of himself.

B. Seeking Understanding through Making Connections/Forming Relationships

As for the rose he has left behind on his home planet, at first he is very sad to realize that there are many flowers on earth which seem to be exactly the same as her:

> But it happened that after walking for a long time through sand, and rocks, and snow, the little prince at last came upon a road. And all roads lead to the abodes of men. "Good morning," he said. He was standing before a garden, all a-bloom with roses. "Good morning," said the roses. The little prince gazed at them. They all looked like his flower. "Who are you?" he demanded, thunderstruck. "We are roses," the roses said. And he was overcome with sadness. His flower had told him that she was the only one of her kind in all the universe. And here were five thousand of them, all alike, in one single garden! "She would be very much annoyed," he said to himself, "if she should see that... she would cough most dreadfully, and she would pretend that she was dying, to avoid being laughed at. And I should be obliged to pretend that I was nursing her back to life-- for if I did not do that, to humble myself also, she would really allow herself to die..." Then he went on with his reflections: "I thought that I was rich, with a flower that was unique in all the world; and all I had was a common rose. A common rose, and three volcanoes that come up to my knees-- and one of them perhaps extinct forever...

> that doesn't make me a very great prince..." And he lay down in the grass and cried (Saint-Exupéry 88-90).

However, the prince does then come to know, through his conversation with the fox, that his own Rose is after all unique in all the world, for he comes to know that every creature and thing is in fact unique, special (Saint-Exupéry 92). Of course, unlike normal human children who gradually become more or less familiar with their human (e.g. familial) and physical world, not only is the prince always dreaming of returning to his original, far-away home planet and to the Rose (girl, woman) that he left behind there, but he actually does return to it and to her in the end (at least according to one interpretation of the ending). This may be contrasted with the more conventional plot of *Alice in Wonderland,* where the heroine returns from the mysterious world she has been traveling in to her original home and family, and with the end of *Stuart Little* where the young adventurer is still traveling away from home at the end, traveling toward the north in search of a bird he loves. However, the prince's departure from earth leaves his good friend the author-narrator sad and lonely, spiritually "alienated" from his young friend.

It is indeed in his famous encounter with the fox that the prince comes to understand better the nature of all "emotional" attachments or relationships, whether they are between human (or alien) and human (alien), or person and animal (fox, snake), or person and flower (rose).

> "I am a fox," said the fox. "Come and play with me," proposed the little prince. "I am so unhappy." "I cannot play with you," the fox said. "I am not tamed." . . . "What does that mean−− 'tame'?" . . . "It is an act too often neglected," said the fox. It means to establish ties." "'To establish ties'?"

> "Just that," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in the entire world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world . . ." (Saint-Exupéry 92).

This notion of "taming" as a way of looking at human love relationships is very interesting, since the term is normally applied to the process through which men "tame" wild animals (such as horses) so that, in the most common cases, we may have pet dogs, pet cats, pet birds. With his rose, The Little Prince comes to realize that it is the invisible essence bestowed on the rose by his devotion that makes her unique. Her truth, too, is hidden: Only when the Little Prince leaves his planet does the Rose admit that she loves him. The Little Prince reflects that he should have judged her on her acts, not her words, and guessed the affection beyond her wiles (Robinson 331). We might also think here of the social psychologist Erikson's point that "alienation is a creative process in which . . . real children will [psychologically] interact in real life by socializing . . . A child has quite a number of opportunities to identify himself, more or less experimentally, with . . . real or fictitious people of either sex. Certain crises force him to make radical selections." (Erikson 215).

At one side, it places human to human relationships within a much wider "ecological" context that includes our relationships with plants (roses for example) and animals (foxes, snakes) as well as with other humans. Here, we are led to wonder, not only whether our pet dogs (or any dogs we meet) might like or love us as much as, or in the same way as, we like them, but also whether we could love

trees or even the flowers that we plant ourselves, and furthermore whether and how they might also love us. This is indeed a very profound "ecological" question, and one that Sait-Exupery asks is told in various ways throughout novel. Closely tied to this question is the question whether young children may in fact be much closer to their natural environments than are adults, much more at one with "Nature." This is often thought to be the case and is a very traditional idea, one that is affirmed by Romantic poets like Wordsworth, in his "Intimations of Immortality Ode," and Transcendentalist thinkers like Emerson in "Nature" (8-13). Ironically, it may be that young children eventually will understand the new world within them which they find themselves through a gradual process of exploration such as that described by Piaget, through the very refinement of their logical thinking patterns and the need to increasingly enter into the human (social) world, they also become gradually alienated from the purely natural one, gradually losing their natural sense of harmony or Oneness with it.

On the other hand, the wisdom of the fox makes us rethink the nature of human love relationships, the process through which they develop. Do we really in some sense "tame" the one we are falling in love with in the way in which the fox goes on to describe here: at first staying far away from our love-object (the wild horse or deer) and then gradually coming closer and closer to it? This may really be true, but we may more likely see it another way: we do not at first intentionally stay further away from our love object and then come closer, but rather we are naturally more shy at first, less certain that the Other really cares about or (potentially) loves us, and then as we become more confident we move closer to him/her, and/or let him/her move closer to use. What this really means is that we are already naturally

playing the role of the fox here, the animal that is to be tamed, the “object” rather than the “subject.”

The other most important animal in the novel, except for his sheep, which the prince is so worried about when he first meets the author, is probably the snake. We get the snake right at the end, where the prince invites it to bite him, for its bite will kill the prince or rather apparently transform him—since his body disappears—and perhaps (we are clearly hoping) somehow send him back, or enable him to fly back, to his home planet. Thus we have the above-mentioned ambiguity of the ending, and one interpretation sees this as a variation on Christ’s death and resurrection in the Bible. In Chapter 26:

> Beside the well there was the ruin of an old stonewall. When I came back from my work, the next evening, I saw from some distance away my little price sitting on top of a wall, with his feet dangling. And I heard
>
> 
>
> him say: "Then you don't remember. This is not the exact spot." Another voice must have answered him, for he replied to it: "Yes, yes! It is the right day, but this is not the place." I continued my walk toward the wall. At no time did I see or hear anyone . . . "You have good poison? You are sure that it will

not make me suffer too long?" I stopped in my tracks, my heart torn asunder; but still I did not understand. "Now go away," said the little prince. "I want to get down from the wall."

I dropped my eyes, then, to the foot of the wall-- and I leaped into the air. There before me, facing the little prince, was one of those yellow snakes that take just thirty seconds to bring your life to an end . . . But, at the noise I made, the snake let him-self flow easily across the sand like the dying spray of a fountain, and, in no apparent hurry, disappeared, with a light metallic sound, among the stones. I reached the wall just in time to catch my little man in my arms; his face was white as snow . . . He looked at me very gravely, and put his arms around my neck. I felt his heart beating like the heart of a dying bird, shot with someone's rifle.

I too, am going back home today . . . "It is much farther . . . it is much more difficult . . . Tonight—you know . . . do not come," said the little prince. "I shall not leave you," I said. "I shall look as if I were suffering. I shall look a little as if I were dying. It is like that. Do not come to see that." . . . That night I did not see him set out on his way. He got away from me without making a sound. When I succeeded in catching up with him he was walking along with a quick and resolute step. He said to me merely: "Ah! You are there . . . It was wrong of you to come. You will suffer. I shall look as if I were dead; and that will not be true..." I said nothing. "You understand . . . it is too far. I cannot carry this body with me. It is too heavy . . . All the stars will pour out fresh water for me to drink . . . " And he too said nothing more, because he was crying . . . "Here it is. Let me go on by myself." And he sat down,

> because he was afraid. Then he said, again: "You know-- my flower... I am responsible for her. And she is so weak! She is so naive! She has four thorns, of no use at all, to protect herself against all the world . . . " I too sat down, because I was not able to stand up any longer. "There now-- that is all..." He still hesitated a little; then he got up. He took one step. I could not move. There was nothing but a flash of yellow close to his ankle. He remained motionless for an instant. He did not cry out. He fell as gently as a tree falls. There was not even any sound, because of the sand (Saint-Exupéry 114-124).
>
> And now six years have already gone by... I have never yet told this story. But I know that he did go back to his planet, because I did not find his body at daybreak. It was not such a heavy body... and at night I love to listen to the stars. It is like five hundred million little bells . . . (Saint-Exupéry 125).

The author-narrator's, that is, Saint-Exupéry's failure to find the Little Prince's body may imply a Christlike resurrection. If so, the message is in keeping with the rest of the story. Of all the so-called serious things of the grown-up world, death is the most serious. Death, as the Little Prince teaches, however, is no more real than the serious things that preoccupy the red-faced businessman who incessantly counts the stars he believes he owns. Like the seeming hat that is really an elephant in a snake, and like the vain wiles of the Rose that conceal her love, death is simply another deceptive appearance (Robinson 332).

The snake is of course a traditional symbol of male sexuality and (perhaps partly for this reason) of the devil, and is also often associated with violent death. Freud in his practice of dream-interpretation is also aware of these associations, and

Nietzsche in *Zarathustra* 3 uses the ancient circular image of a snake eating its own tail as symbol for his conception of the eternal return: there is no heaven or transcendent world after death but only, in effect, an infinite recurrence of our own life (1088-1063). In addition to lying behind Deleuze's conception (e.g. in *The Logic of Sense*) of Aion (meaning "forever" in ancient Greek) as the flat surface of time, and thus too as the eternal return, this notion of death as a circular recurrence or repetition also fits Freuds' conception of Thanatos (the death-drive, in distinction from Eros) as a "return to our pre-organic stage"—a sort of inorganic, mechanical repetition that Freud also associates with obsessive-compulsive behavior in e.g. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle.*[1]

C. The Child-Adult Difference Interpreted in Terms of Alienation

Especially at the opening and in the earlier chapters of the novel we get many contrasts between the "nature" of children and adults, where in every case the author gives children's nature a higher value. One way of interpreting the "value" of children's awareness of their world would be to say that in fact they are already more fully self-integrated with themselves and with the world outside, or simply that they themselves are still fully integrated with the world outside them, which also means with themselves, whereas adults have become alienated from it. This brings us back to Hegel's discussion of the subject's alienation from itself as it moves into a rational knowledge or consciousness of the object, which to a degree lies behind Freud's notion of the rational, conscious mind that "represses" that part of itself he calls the unconscious.

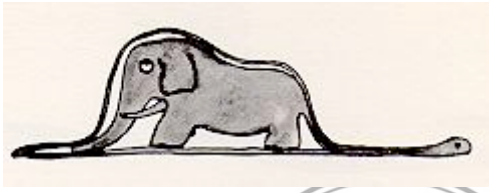
[1] In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze also correlates Aion with Thanatos, while correlating Eros with Kronos or "linear time" ("chronological time") with its "depths" (Deleuze 160-166).

Thus, we have right from the beginning the child's (young author's) instinctive or emotional love of art and powers of imagination versus the adult's obsession with rational abstractions and "external" (or "social") standards of power or value. This is most clearly shown by Saint-Exupery via the notion that children can see the "inside" of things, while adults can only see the outside. It is the point made by the novel's famous opening:

> Once when I was six years old I saw a magnificent picture in a book, called *True Stories from Nature*, about the primeval forest. It was a picture of a boa constrictor in the act of swallowing an animal. Here is a copy of the drawing.

> In the book it said: "Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing it. After that they are not able to move, and they sleep through the six months that they need for digestion." I pondered deeply, then, over the adventures of the jungle. And after some work with a colored pencil I succeeded in making my first drawing. My Drawing Number One. It looked like this:

I showed my masterpiece to the grown-ups, and asked them whether the drawing frightened them. But they answered: "Frighten? Why should any one be frightened by a hat?" My drawing was not a picture of a hat. It was a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. But since the grown-ups were not able to understand it, I made another drawing: I drew the inside of the boa constrictor, so that the grown-ups could see it clearly. They always need to have things explained. My Drawing Number Two looked like this:



The grown-ups' response, this time, was to advise me to lay aside my drawings of boa constrictors, whether from the inside or the outside, and devote myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. That is why, at the age of six, I gave up what might have been a magnificent career as a painter. I had been disheartened by the failure of my Drawing Number One and my Drawing Number Two. Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them. (Saint-Exupery 3-5)

We get the same point a little later when the prince appears out of nowhere in the desert and meets the author, and immediately wants him to “draw him a sheep” (“*Dessin-moi un mouton*”). When the prince is never satisfied with the author’s attempts at drawing a suitable sheep, the author simply draws a box with breathing holes in it, assuming that the prince will be able to imagine any sheep he wants inside of it. This was a correct assumption: the prince is delighted and says, “This is exactly

the way I wanted it." (Saint-Exupery 7-12). Later still we meet the various men living on the asteroids that the prince visits on his way to the earth, and in addition to the extreme selfishness, indeed egomania of all of them except the last, the Lamplighter, there is a tendency for them to be more interested in the external appearance of things—as in formality, proper manners—and (at least with the Businessman) in numbers rather than the actual things they represent. The businessman counts the stars only so that he may be able to estimate the total monetary value of all these "possessions" of his, whereas the prince, like the author-narrator, likes to actually look at the stars and appreciate their wondrous beauty, something spiritual rather than material. The Little Prince passes on something of the Fox's teaching when he tells Saint-Exupéry that what makes a house, the desert, or the stars beautiful is invisible. Saint-Exupéry recalls his childhood home, which was more precious by the legend of a treasure hidden within it. The desert is beautiful because somewhere it hides a well. For the Little Prince, when he is away from his planet, all the visible stars flower because of one invisible rose. Thanks to the Little Prince's gift of wisdom, for Saint-Exupéry all the stars will forever ring with laughter because of the laughter of the Little Prince, who has long departed (Robinson 332).

So far, this suggests a contrast between children's inner world of imagination and emotion and adults' external, practical, money-oriented world of material things that others will admire for their real-world value in terms of money and power. We might say that the latter point of view suggests a kind of perversion on the part of adults of their original childlike nature. More specifically, we could say children share the prince's and narrator's view of the larger world of nature (especially the sky and stars) of which we are an integral part, whereas adults with their rational point of view have forgotten this larger world of which they are part and are only focusing on one

rather limited part of it, the more rational and practical part. If Hegel's subject becomes alienated from itself by moving into consciousness of the object and thus of itself as object, that is, but objectifying itself, this also means a sort of hyper-rationality, one which Hegel himself might also be accused of.

We come back again to the problem of adults' self-alienation with the fox's claim that he wants the prince to "tame" him and the idea that (romantic) love between people may be a form of "taming" that also could apply to the larger, more encompassing world of animals and even plants (roses). The fox says that hunters hunt him (for food, for money), just as he hunts chickens (for food), but that what he really wants is for the prince to tame him, even if this would take some time as it would involve gaining his trust. The point is that we do see wild animals in general as being somehow alien to us, and then as we gradually come to know one better (our pet dog or cat or even a wild horse) by taming or domesticating it, just as the prince has come to be tamed by, and also has tamed, his rose back on his home planet, whose wild volcanoes have also been "tamed" by him. But in fact young children may seem curiously more innocently "open" to wild animals, at least once they have started to tame them, to be familiar with them, compared to adults, which suggests again that adults are more alienated from themselves (their deep nature, their unconscious) and thus too—as this comes to the same thing—from the vast and incomprehensible (as well as unpractical and "useless" and "valueless" in monetary terms) natural world that surround them.

In fact, there may also be a way to look at the adult-child "difference" in relation to the later Freud's theory (in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*) of *Eros* (the love-drive) versus *Thanatos* (the death-drive). Freud relates our love-drive (erotic-drive) to sexuality and to an organic unity, expansion (growth) and multiplicity, that

of the egg and then the embryo inside the mother's uterus; he relates the death-drive to death as a "return to the pre-organic state" and thus to a larger process of repetition which we also find in human obsessive-compulsive behavior, itself a kind of hyper-rational and thus in a sense non-human, "mechanical" behavior.[2] We see the latter in the very "adult" behavior of the businessman who obsessively counts the stars, the drunkard who drinks because he is ashamed of his drinking, and even the lamplighter who continually lights his single lamp on a tiny planet and puts it out again, though we may tend to think he is more compassionate and human-like than the others.

[2] In this regard also see Note 1 above and the related discussion.

Chapter Three

Alienation and Self-Understanding in *Stuart Little*

E. B. White's character *Stuart Little*, in his 1945 novel, is a kind of double-entity. He is a human character that looks like a mouse and/or a mouse that looks like a human, but we won't feel that he is "alienated from himself" in any sort of negative way. Rather, he is delightful and amusing and full of life, and we like him from the very beginning. This arguably postmodern novel is based on a fantasy and also a paradox with regard to the identity of Stuart—is he a human being and/or a mouse? —and it mixes science with absurdity (Markey 34).

> When Mrs. Frederick C. Little's second son arrived, everybody noticed that he was not much bigger than a mouse. The truth of the matter was, the baby looked very much like a mouse in every way. He was only about two inches high; and he had a mouse's sharp nose, a mouse's tail, a mouse's whiskers, and the pleasant, shy manner of a mouse (White 1-2).

In Saint Exupery's *The Little Prince*, where we seem to have the author/ narrator's fantasy and/or memory of himself as a child, we could say that author-prince are two sides of the same person (the author): the self and its other or the self and its own mirror reflection, now displaced in time (Adams 5). However, in the case of *Stuart Little,* the author does not really play a role, for we begin with the double-entity of a *character* who is a mouse-human. Or could we also interpret this as a mouse which sees itself (its image, its mirror reflection) as a human being, and/or *vice versa*?

For Freud, the unconscious or pre-rational mind of newborn babies and infants

does not yet have a clear way of distinguishing between fantasy and reality. The psychologist Derrida Lacan speaks of an earlier "imaginary stage" of human development which is then followed by the language-based (conscious-mind-based) "symbolic stage," when conscious thinking comes to dominate." The key moment which founds the imaginary stage is the moment when an infant realizes that the image he/she sees in a mirror is in fact him/herself, and yet this means that/he she is already split, a duality, a self-other (self-image) *difference* (Lewis 30-45). Any discussion of the young Stuart's experience of the world as an experience of "self-alienation" would perhaps need to begin from this point.

> Before he was many days old he was not only looking like a mouse but acting like one, too—wearing a gray hat and carrying a small cane. Mr. and Mrs. Little named him Stuart, and Mr. Little made him a tiny bed out of four clothespins and a cigarette box. Unlike most babies, Stuart could walk as soon as was born. When he was a week old he could climb lamps by shinnying up the cord (White 1-2).

Thus the author of this primarily upbeat, indeed comic novel immediately views Stuart in a positive light, focusing on his unusually rapid development. We might have thought Stuart would be like a human soul trapped in the body of mouse, that he would need to face many difficulties in his life, that his two-inch-tall body would make it hard for him to do things that a normal human could easily do, but in fact he is a mouse-boy who can already do many things independently. Indeed, he is a kind of heroic character who helps others whenever he can. Like a hero, he can do things that seem beyond his own ability, and can solve problems that seem too tough for anyone else to solve, in part by taking advantage of his tiny size (Clowley 249). Thus Stuart Little is a mouse-man who learns quickly from his experience. He heroically

fixes a broken key inside a piano, an environment that is actually very dangerous for him; he races his toy boat (for him a big boat) on a pond in a competition, and struggles with dangerous "waves" to win the race; he saves the bird Margalo when Snowbell the cat (who would eat him if he could) wants to eat her (White 54-56).

> And while Mr. Little knelt in the tub, Stuart slid easily down the drain and was lost to view. In a minute or so, there came three quick jerks on the string, and Mr. Little carefully hauled it up. There, at the end, was Stuart, with the ring safely around his neck (White 5).

In addition to retrieving his mother's ring, which had fallen down the bathtub drain near the beginning of the novel, Stuart also goes inside their grand piano to fix a key. Here he faces real physical danger in the form of the falling hammers, which to him look like giants (White 8-9), inside the piano, which we now see is actually a very powerful and potentially violent machine. Here, through Garth Williams' excellent pictures, which show how strange the inside of a piano looks to a mouse who is much smaller than it is, we get an Harriet, perhaps fearful sense of defamiliarization or estrangement, a sense of this piano as an unfamiliar, alien thing or being. That is, we see it through a mouse's eyes, and so now we are looking at neither the mouse nor at ourselves but at objects in the everyday world around us as alien, unfamiliar beings, things from which we feel *alienated*.

> The Littles had a grand piano in their living room, which was all right except that one of the keys was a sticky key and didn't work properly. Mrs. Little said she thought it must be the damp weather, but . . . the key had been sticking for about four years, during which time there had been many bright clear days. But anyway, the key stuck, and was a great inconvenience to anyone trying to play the piano. It bothered

> George particularly when he was playing the "Scarf Dance," which was rather lively. It was George who had the idea of stationing Stuart inside the piano to push the key up the second it was played. This was no easy job for Stuart, as he had to crouch down between the felt hammers so that he wouldn't get hit on the head. But Stuart liked it just the same: it was exciting inside the piano, dodging about, and the noise was quite terrific. Sometimes after a long session he would emerge quite dead, as though he had just stepped out of an airplane after a long journey; and it would be some little time before he really felt normal again (White 7-9).

This need to readjust to everyday reality "on the ground" after a long airplane flight perhaps echoes our reaction, as well as that of his parents' and perhaps Stuart himself, when reading the opening passage describing his birth (White 1-3). We might speak of defamiliarization here as well as alienation, where the former refers to the ability to sometimes see an everyday object like a tree, one which we normally "take for granted," as something very strange and unfamiliar, something "from another planet" that we have never seen before.

In his 1836 essay "Nature" Emerson says that poets and artists may have the ability to see nature in this way, that is, see it "as children do"; to see his point we must try to remember or imagine how we felt when for the first time in our lives, as infants, we "saw" a tree or cloud or lightning in the sky (Windolph 1). Russian formalists like Mukarovsky in the 1920's says that art is always a form of *ostranenie* ("estrangement"): thus we take the actual mountain for granted, but see it in a different, somehow estranging way, as art, when looking at a photo or painting of the same mountain (Martín-Asensio 191-192). In the same vein, at the opening of *Sophie's World*, a book that introduces philosophical thinking, we are told that a little

baby or infant who saw his parents in the kitchen for the first time would not be at all surprised if they were floating around in the air (Garder 17-18). This point could also be approached via Piaget's theory of schemas: babies or very young infants are just beginning to form their initial cognitive schema, picture or "form" (Ducret 156) for understanding the world in which they now find themselves, a schema which will continue to be revised and expanded on in the following several years.

In addition to the above-mentioned psychological domains of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, Lacan also speaks of the Real:

> The primordial Real in which a (pre-Oedipal) human subject is born is differentiated from the *real* which a subject integrated into the symbolic order experiences. In the former, the real is the continuous, "whole" reality without categories and the differential function of language. Following the mirror stage, however, and the eventual entrance of the imaginary and the symbolic, the real may only be experienced as traumatic gaps in the symbolic order. An example of this are traumatic events such as natural disasters, which effectively break down the signification of everyday life and cause a rupture of something alien and unrecognizable, without the usual grammar of the symbolic that conditions how to make meaning of something and how to proceed (Ragland-Sullivan 22-23). For Lacan, the order of the real is not only opposed to the imaginary but is also located beyond the symbolic. Unlike the symbolic, which is constituted in terms of oppositions such as "presence" and "absence", there is no absence in the real. If the symbolic is a set of differentiated signifiers, the real is in itself undifferentiated: "it is without fissure." (Libbrecht 84-83). The real is that which resists symbolization absolutely." The real is impossible because it is impossible to imagine, impossible to integrate into the symbolic order. This

character of impossibility and resistance to symbolization lends the real its traumatic quality (Fink 43).

Thus the Lacanian Real is another way to see the impingement upon us of the traumatic *presence* of the external world—for instance, the piano for Stuart, when he is inside of it. To be aware of the strangeness of this piano when we defamiliarize it, to see it as something incomprehensible as Stuart is forced to do, is also perhaps to see it as "the Real" in Lacan's sense. The piano is something fearful, ominous, evil to this tiny "human mouse" who finds himself trapped inside of it as if by a mousetrap.

A. Fear, Love, and Courage: the Cat and the Bird

This same interpretation can even more easily be used to describe Stuart's first meeting with the cat, who is shown in the book's fine pictures as being a giant white creature, much larger than the mouse.

> Good morning," said Stuart. "Hello," replied Snowbell, sharply. "You're up early, aren't you? . . . Your teeth aren't really big enough to brush anyway. Want to see a good set? Look at mine!" Snowbell opened his mouth and showed to rows of gleaming white teeth, sharp as needles. "Very nice," said Stuart. "But mine are all right too, even though they're small." (White 17-18).

Stuart then jumps onto the ring of window shade cord in order to show the cat how strong he is by swinging thorugh the air like a trapeze artist. However, he jumps too hard and gets rolled up inside the window shade. He calls "Help! Let me out!" to Snowbell, but:

> Snowbell did a very curious thing. He glanced around to see if anybody was looking, then he leapt softly to the window sill, picked up

> Stuart's hat and cane in his mouth, carried them to the pantry and laid them down at the entrance to the mouse hole. When Mrs. Little came down and found them there, she gave a shrill scream which brought everybody on the fun. "It's happened," she cried. "What has?" asked her husband. "Stuart's down the mouse hole." (White 17-20).

Here we have the huge open mouth of the cat, which could easily kill the mouse with a single bite and then eat him, played against the mouse hole (perhaps roughly the same size as the cat's mouth) which we see in Garth Williams' illustration as a dark opening at the bottom of a wall, just above where the floor meets it. Not only is the human freedom of flying up to the window (and potentially going out through it into the human world) contrasted here with the sense of an animal's imprisonment down beneath the floor in its "mouse hole"—though this is also where mice can escape to, can be free, safe from humans and cats—but we also have the apertures of the window (closed or open) and the mouse hole (always open) contrasted with the gaping, fearful, potentially deadly mouth of the cat (closed or open), with all its visible teeth. The cat's claim that "Stuart's down the mouse hole" reminds us that this human mouse is after all really a mouse, and has now gone back to being a mouse. Yet this is a deception on the part of the cat who wants Stuart to be a mouse (and not a human boy) so that he can eat him: Stuart is really trapped just inside that all-too-human window which promises real freedom.

There could also be a Freudian interpretation of these holes or apertures in terms of Freud's oral and anal stages of childhood development. Freud thought that children went through several phases where their sexuality focused on particular parts of the body. The first stage is the autoerotic (self-pleasure) stage. Children generally get their gratification from sucking at first, though any part of their bodies could

produce sexual pleasure. This is the oral stage. During the next stage, which frequently occurs at about the same time as toilet training, children derive sexual pleasure from the anus and retaining feces. Finally, after the anal stage, children's main source of pleasure switches to the genitals, where it remains for the rest of their lives. During latency, children have "amnesia" about their previous sexual development. Instead of exploring their bodies, these school-age children sublimate, or redirect, their sexual energy into other activities, such as school and play (Freud 94). However, the cat's gaping mouth would seem to imply that the oral stage, which for Freud is based on the infant sucking milk from the mother's breasts, has now become the violent mouth of the cat (and perhaps mother) which/who would consume the (its own) child. The low position on the wall of the mouse hole, which leads down to some subterranean hideaway beneath the floor (beneath the house), might more likely suggest a toilet, garbage, waste, and thus the (later) anal stage of development, which in *Three Essays on Sexuality* Freud connects with the stage of toilet training.

Later on, when Stuart is seven years old, he gets accidentally locked by his mother inside a cold dark refrigerator; she cannot hear his tiny voice calling out but luckily, before too long, she opens it again by chance to get something and so he can escape (White, 47-49). Here again we have the mother-son theme and a scene of imprisonment within a dark, womb-like "prison" that is also filled with food, suggesting orality again as well as genital sexuality, perhaps the pre-Oedipal stage as well as the Oedipal complex. Once Freud started looking into his own memories, they returned en masse. Freud suddenly remembered his Catholic nurse, his rivalry with his nephews and siblings, and a glimpse of his mother's genitals during a train journey when he was four. Freud's memories of the nurse who toilet trained him were especially important (Muchenhuopt 83).

Soon after this, “Mrs. *Little* was shaking her dust cloth outside the window when she noticed a small bird lying on the windowsill, apparently dead. She brought it in and put it near the radiator, and in a short while it fluttered its wings and opened its eyes. It was a pretty little hen-bird, brown, with a streak of yellow on her breast” (White 50). We get a possible suggestion of the genital stage in Stuart’s own development when the brave and heroic boy-mouse protects the young female bird, Margalo the wren, from the gigantic male cat, and later begins the journey toward the north in search of this new object of his affections. In fact, their first encounter takes place in what seems to be another “oral” scene, for when he first meets Margalo, she has a sore throat, and Stuart, though he has bronchitis himself, takes her temperature.

> Presently she hopped upstairs and into Stuart’s room where he was lying in bed. “Hello,” said Stuart. “Who are you? Where did you come from?” “My name is Margalo,” said the bird softly, in a musical voice . . . . “I love to whistle.” Stuart sat bolt upright in bed. “Say that again,” he said. “I can’t replied, Margalo. I have a sore throat.” “So have I,” said Stuart. “I’ve got Bronchitis. You better not get too near me, you might catch it.” “I’ll stay right here by the door,” said Margalo. “You can use some of my gargle . . . And here are some nose drops, and I have plenty of Kleenex. “Thank you very much, you are very kind . . .” “Did they take your temperature?” . . . “No,” said Margalo, “but I don’t think it will be necessary.” “Well, we better make sure . . . because I would hate to have anything happen to you. Here . . .” And he tossed her the thermometer. Margalo put it under her tongue, and she and Stuart sat very still . . . Then she took it out and looked at it, turning it slowly and

> carefully. "Normal," she announced. Stuart felt his heart leap for gladness. It seemed to him that he had never seen any creature so beautiful as this tiny bird, and he already loved her" (White 51-52).

Thus, we could say that the female bird inspects the phallic thermometer carefully after holding it under her tongue, yet this only reaffirms her sense of her own normality, and Stuart knows he really loves her when he sees that she is a normal, a true woman. Indeed, such Freudian interpretations only go to underscore the point that this is a normal (human or animal) boy and girl who are falling in love. That is, this is the happy, healthy world in which we are fully integrated with ourselves (our bodies and minds) and with our world, and not a world of alienation, danger, confusion, otherness.

Stuart of course immediately falls in the love with the beautiful female bird: "Stuart felt his heart leap for gladness. It seemed to him that he had never seen any creature so beautiful as this tiny bird, and he already loved her" (White 52). But now the cat enters again, desiring to devour the bird if not also the mouse, and so again Stuart faces the alien world of the truly other. Snowbell is getting jealous and wants to expel Margalo from the Little family, because Margalo now begins to take a higher position than Snowbell in the family. For one thing the Little family is very grateful to Margalo, because she saved Stuart when he was accidentally thrown into the sea inside the garbage (White, 67-71). If we see the above scene of mouse-and-bird as symbolizing a "healthy unconscious," we will soon be again confronted with the nightmarish sense of a wider reality, perhaps of the Real, which goes beyond our comprehension. Freud assumes that anxiety is a form of conflict caused by self-alienation, and to deal with his sense of alienation within/from the house—largely due to the fact that his body is tiny, a non-human body, while the house is huge, a human

house—Stuart tries to overcome his anxiety. With regard to the "Real", Verhaeghe suggests we speak about the (our) *organism* instead of the (our) *body* (Pluth, 28). Stuart, trying to keep himself awake, fears the cat will attack Margalo as she sleeps and so he comes closer to her.

> Stuart could see Margalo, asleep in the fern, her head tucked under her wing . . . Then he hid behind a candlestick and waited, listening and watching . . . The clock struck ten, loudly, and before the sound of the last stroke had died away Stuart saw two gleaming yellow eyes peering out from behind the sofa . . . He reached for his bow and arrow. The eyes came nearer. Stuart was frightened, but he was a brave mouse . . . He placed the arrow against the cord of the bow and waited. Snowbell crept softly toward the bookshelf and climbed noiselessly up into the chair within easy reach of . . . where Margalo was asleep. Then he crouched, ready to spring. His tail waved back and forth. His eyes gleamed bright. Stuart decided the time had come. He stepped out from behind the candlestick, knelt down, and took careful aim at Snowbell's left ear—which was nearest to him . . . And he shot the arrow straight into the cat's ear. Snowbell squealed with pain and jumped down and ran off toward the kitchen. "A direct hit!" said Stuart . . . And he threw a kiss toward Margalo's sleeping form." (White 54-56).

The mouse-man thus appears as a heroic warrior with a bow, a warrior from ancient times perhaps, so that E.B. White may be seen as whimsically, perhaps ironically giving a mythic, an epic feel to his narrative at this point. Stuart is also like the romantic male lead in older movies, throwing a kiss toward his ladylove after saving her life, at least for the time being. As for Snowbell, we might think that in a

certain sense Stuart has "tamed" him, to use the fox's term in *The Little Prince* (Saint-Exupéry 92-99), for Snowbell now begins to respect Stuart more and to realize he and Stuart are both part of the same (mainly human) family. When another cat from "outside the family" says to Snowbell, "you mean to say you live in the same house with a bird and a mouse and don't do anything about it?" Snowbell says:

> "That's the situation . . . But what can I do about it? Please remember that Stuart is a member of the family, and the bird is a permanent guest, like myself." "Well," said Snowbell's friend, ". . . you've got more self-control than I have." "Doubtless," said Snowbell. "However, . . . I've been terribly nervous lately, and I think it's because I'm holding myself in." . . . "Look here," [a gray pigeon [heard the Angora cat say to Snowbell, "I admit that a cat has a duty toward her own people, and that under the circumstances it would be wrong for you to eat Margalo. But *I'm* not a member of your family and there is nothing to stop *me* from eating her, is there?" "Nothing that I can think of offhand," said Snowbell (White 68-69).

This is a fairly sophisticated view of our own human world with its various rules of polite social behaviour, rules which determine when and when we need to respect or be nice to others, and where and when we might be allowed (according to *some* moral standards) to kill or eat them. This presents a view of our world in which certain groups—our own nuclear or extended family, all the people in a school, a city or a country—are necessarily more intimate or tightly bound than others when it comes to the question of the possibility of robbing or killing others. Thus again we may think of the fox's speech on how it takes a long time to "tame" another one — another person or another kind of animal (human-dog, human-fox) (Saint-Exupéry

92-99) — who at first may seem quite unfamiliar and "alien" to you, but who (once you have tamed him/her) you would never wish to hurt.

B. Going North: Alienation and (Self-) Orientation

Margalo, aware of the danger she is in, leaves the Stuart's home after leaving a letter for Stuart. Stuart feels very lonely and lost, so he decides to also leave the house where he has lived since his birth and try to find her:

> "Goodbye, beautiful home," he whispered. "I wonder if I will ever see you again." Stuart stood uncertainly for a moment in the street in front of the house. The world was a big place in which to go looking for a lost bird. North, south, east, or west—which way should he go?

Stuart decided that he needed advice on such an important matter, so he started uptown to find his friend Dr. Carey.

> "Well, what's on your mind, Stuart?" asked Dr. Carey . . . "I ran away from home this morning," explained Stuart. "I am going out into the world to seek my fortune and to look for a lost bird. Which direction do you think I should start out in?" "What color is the bird?" (Dr. Carey) asked. "Brown," said Stuart. "Better go north," said Dr. Carey . . . "If you can't locate the bird in Central Park, take a New York New Haven and Hartford Railway train and look in Connecticut . . ." (White 75-77).

In *The Little Prince,* we remember, the four directions play a key role—in particular the fact that, at least on the earth, the sun rises in the East and sets in the West. However, the prince's tiny planet has many sunsets in each "day" because the planet is so small, and thus the prince says to the author near the beginning that "It is true that always going in the same direction one cannot travel very far. I had thus

learned a second fact of great importance: this was that the planet the little prince came from was scarcely any larger than a house!" (Saint-exupéry 18) However, the earth (as the prince quickly discovers) is much larger than his own tiny planet, especially from the prince's point of view, just as the earth's surface may seem very vast indeed to a mouse, a snail or an ant.[3] Therefore E. B. White (via Dr. Carey) will emphasize the idea that Stuart must *move continuously in a single direction* (perhaps like a resolute, intrepid hero), which happens to be north.[4]

When he finds out Stuart is planning to travel on foot, Dr. Carey says:

> "Well, I think you 'd better have a car." . . . He then led Stuart into another room. From a shelf he took a tiny automobile, about six inches long—the most perfect miniature automobile Stuart had ever seen. . . "I made this myself," Dr. Carey said. "By the by," yelled the man, "you haven't told me your name." "Name is Stuart Little," called Stuart at the top of his lungs. "I'm the second son of Frederick C. Little, of this city."
>
> "Bon voyage, Stuart," hollered his friend, "take care of yourself and bring the Wasp home safe." (White 72).

At first Stuart becomes a substitute teacher (in a classroom full of human children) for 'Ms. Gunderson '(White, 86-89), and later he meets a pretty human girl who is introduced to him by a shopkeeper. Her name is "Harriet" and she "is about two inches high," that is, just as tiny as he is. Here the author gives us a kind of

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[3] We are reminded again of Stuart's tiny size at the beginning of Chapter 12, when he buys new clothes for himself before leaving on his trip: "He went to a doll's shop, where they had things which were the right size for him, and outfitted himself completely, with new luggage, shirts, and accessories. He charged everything and was well pleased with his purchases" (White 83).

[4] Many Native American creation myths begin with the creator-god's "setting of the four directions" immediately after (or even while) creating the earth/world, and North is often emphasized. Of course the needles of compasses point toward the magnetic north, although ancient peoples did not have compasses. There is of course always a keen awareness in these ancient stories of the primal role of the east as the place where the sun rises, and of the west as the place where it sets, and of the north-south line as interseccting the east-west one.

mediation between being-human and being-non-human, perhaps an image of self-alienation in just this sense. Stuart decides to take Harriet for a ride in a canoe down a river, and show her how well he can swim, but this plan (this dream) is shattered when a heavy rain destroys his tiny canoe. Harriet leaves and he is very sad.

Now the intrepid young hero, like a teenager or young man, continues on his journey in search of Margalo with a heroic firmness of will, a fierce determination. Here, in the last part of the novel, the fact that Stuart decides to only keep moving toward the *North*—he had to pick one direction and stick with it—in search of his beloved bird also reminds us of the theme of *orientation* in *The Little Prince*. In that novel, the problem is that the prince has left his own world and flown away to another one, one which happens to be our own human world but for him is an "alien" one. He had to explore his new world, just as Stuart or any human child has to do, and in this context we briefly turned to Piaget's theory that young children keep revising and expanding their logical schemas for understanding the world around them.

> Alone again in his car and still driving north, he stops at a crossroads where he sees a telephone repairman sitting in a ditch and leaning against a signpost.
>
> "Good morning," said Stuart in a friendly voice . . . "It's going to be a fine day . . ." "Yes, agreed the repairman, "a fine day." . . . "By the way, do you ever see any birds at the tops of your poles?" "Yes, I see birds in great numbers," replied the repairman. "Well, if you ever run across a bird named Margalo," said Stuart, "I'd appreciate it if you would drop me a line. Here's my card." "Describe the bird," said the repairman, taking out pad and pencil. "Brown," said Stuart. "Brown with a streak of yellow on her bosom.' . . . The repairman wrote it all down briefly . . .

> "Which direction are you headed?" he asked. "North," said Stuart. "North is nice," said the repairman . . . "I hope you find the bird." Stuart rose from the ditch, climbed into his car, and started up the road that led to the north . . . The way seemed long. But the sky was bright, and he somehow felt he was headed in the right direction." (White 127-131).

Here the comic absurdity is combined with a certain bittersweet sense of life's joys and sorrows, and the central theme remains in the positive attitude, always in a hopeful spirit of this intrepid human mouse. Yet, we also still have the encompassing framework of an ultimately unknown and unknowable physical space and directionality, and thus the fundamental problem of self-orientation when one (a young child) is basically lost (Young-Bruehl 251).

White's theme is, after all, that of a human and/or mouse who/which is simultaneously alienated from himself and his world and totally at home with himself and his world. While in various ways it is a more "optimistic" novel than *The Little Prince*, and arguably also than *Alice in Wonderland*, we still have the same driving need to achieve self-orientation and self-understanding within a world from which one also remains essentially alienated.

Chapter Four

Alienation and Self-Understanding in

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and *Through the Looking-Glass*

The protagonist of Lewis Carrol's late-19th-century novel *Alice in Wonderland* is a young girl whom the author actually knew and liked.[5] Again we have a physical-directional spatial framework and the problem of the protagonist' self-orientation and self-recognition ("Who am I?") *within* it, but now the "other world" is an "underworld." While the prince moves from one planet (one world) to another, and Stuart seems to dwell, in terms of his own identity, in two worlds (mouse-world, human-world) at the same time, Alice enters Wonderland in a dream, though within the dream she enters it by following a rabbit down a rabbit hole to an *underground* land. Unlike that of the prince and mouse-boy, her own body size keeps changing, especially when she first enters Wonderland but also later on at certain points. Though Alice is supposed to be only 7 years old at the beginning, these bodily changes, which confuse her sense of her own self-identity, may also easily suggest the psychological confusion of a young girl going through puberty (Taliaferro 183).

Thus once again we get right from the start a sense of the protagonist's alienation from his/her world and also from him/herself. Insofar as within her dream[6] Alice goes down beneath her normal "home world," we may also think—as with the

[5] Carroll's real name was Charles Dodgson, a professor of mathematics and logic at Cambridge University and a friend of young Alice's family.

[6] According to Freud's Interpretation of Dreams, the mind creates the dream as a release of psychological tension of the unconscious. In other words, people who sleep using dreams to work or to express emotions or issues, that issue is not convenient if examined in the light of reality. The dream became a vehicle to express and cope with crises. Freud believed dreams to be a manifestation of the wish-fulfillment. Although the idea of wish-fulfillment define happiness, Freud also showed that the fulfillment of wishes and dreams actually refers to unpleasant dreams are not as exciting as anxiety dream. He further observed that the children are the most vulnerable to anxiety dreams (Freud 134-135).

human mouse who is living on or above the floor of the house, whereas the actual mouse hole leads to somewhere down below it where the "real" mice live—of Freud's id, libido, unconscious or subconscious mind, home to our deepest, darkest desires, fears, impulses, dreams and fantasies. And again, as in the other two novels, Alice is always exploring this new world in order to orient herself, gain self-awareness and self-understanding.

Freud's conscious, waking mind is of course also our rational mind, and in Alice we get a greater emphasis on the contrast between reason and madness, or rationality and nonsense[7], which extends into the domain of language. This is also closely tied to the theme of mirror reflection. If the prince is really the author-narrator's own self-image or self-fantasy, his childhood memory of himself, and if the mouse looking in a mirror would perhaps see a human (or vice versa), the novel Lewis Carroll wrote as a follow-up to *Alice in Wonderland* was *Through the Looking Glass*. In the later novel Alice enters the other world by actually walking through a mirror, and in this other world she finds among other things a book of nonsense poetry, including the poem "Jabberwocky" which she can only read by looking at the reflection of the words in a mirror.

At the end of *Alice in Wonderland*, when she is with the Queen of Hearts and her court (a deck of cards), Alice—at this point much larger than all the card-characters—suddenly realizes, "Why, you're all just a pack of cards!" At this moment this whole world disintegrates or evaporates, as Alice is now waking up from a dream

[7] Brady Bush said that Carroll's works participate within the "beginning of those far-reaching challenges to our cultural notions of mimesis and representation which culminate in what we have come to call . . . postmodernism" ("Nonsense and Metacommunication"). A critical subject within Alice would occur in the context of the complex negotiations between the "madness" of nonsense and the epistemic and ontic doubt grounded in simulacrum . . . one whose principle discourse as the hysteric is anticipated within nineteenth-century Victorian literature and culture, but whose destination and thus whose understanding and explication, may be located within postmodern theory, continental philosophy. It is this notion of nonsense as unconsciously psychic and phantasmatic (Bush 13).

and is back at home. However, this way of describing the "dream" also has the effect of making us question the solidity of what we take to be our everyday "reality," just as, for example, a physicist or metaphysician might question it. In other words, if Wonderland turned out to be "nothing but a pack of cards," nuclear physicists might say our actual world is "nothing but swirling atoms, with electrons orbiting around atomic nuclei and still smaller particles within those nuclei."[8]

A. Metamorphosis and the Problem of Self-Identity

We get the traditional mythic theme—whether in dream or in reality—of the passage to another world, along with that of the metamorphosis[9] of the self (in reality or in dream), at the beginning of the first chapter:

> ALICE was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank and of having nothing to do . . . So she was considering, in her own mind (as well as she could, for the hot day made her feel very sleepy and stupid), whether the pleasure of making a daisy-chain would be worth the trouble . . . When suddenly a White Rabbit with pink eyes ran close by her.
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> 
>
> There was nothing so very remarkable in that . . . but, when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-

[8] As a professor of logic and mathematics, Dodgson was of course interested in physics.

[9] In "The Metamorphosis," by Kafka, "Gregor Samsa never identifies himself with an insect. It is important to realize, therefore, that Gregor's metamorphosis actually takes place in his 'uneasy dreams,' which is something altogether different than saying it is the result of the lingering impact of these dreams. An interpretation often advanced categorizes Gregor's metamorphosis as an attempt at escaping his deep-seated conflict between his true self and the untenable situation at the company." (Czermak 13)

pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, . . . and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge. In another moment down went Alice after it, never once considering how in the world she was to get out again . . . so suddenly that Alice had not a moment to think about stopping herself before she found herself falling down what seemed to be a very deep well . . . First, she tried to look down and make out what she was coming to, but it was too dark to see anything: then she looked at the sides of the well, and noticed that they were filled with cupboards and book-shelves: here and there she saw maps and pictures hung upon pegs. She took down ajar from one of the shelves as she passed: it was labeled "ORANGE MARMALADE" but to her great disappointment it was empty: she did not like to drop the jar, for fear of killing somebody underneath, so managed to put it into one of the cupboards as she fell past it.

Down, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end? “I wonder if I shall fall fight through the earth! How funny it'll seem to come out among the people that walk with their heads downwards." (Carroll 1-3).

Here again we have the scientific theme: Alice is demonstrating the science and geography she has learned in school—if Saint-Exupery was a pilot, Carroll was a mathematics professor—which, as in the picture of the little prince standing on his tiny planet and, less directly, the conception of the boy-mouse’s journey constantly toward the North, foregrounds geophysical relativity. And now she will meet the problem of the relativity of her own self-identity, in particular as defined by the size and shape of her body.

Down, down, down . . . when suddenly, thump! thump! down she came upon a heap of sticks and dry leaves, and the fall was over. Alice was not a bit

hurt, and she jumped up on to her feet in a moment: she looked up, but it was all dark overhead: before her was another long passage, and the White Rabbit was still in sight, hurrying down it. There was not a moment to be lost: away went Alice like the wind, and was just in time to hear it say, as it turned a corner, "Oh… how late it's getting!" (Carroll 3-4).

We note here the idea of the relativity of time as well as space coming into play: we are not sure whether the White Rabbit's time is the same as normal "human-world" time up above, or in any case what "how late" will mean in this context.

She was close behind it when she turned the corner, but the Rabbit was no longer to be seen: she found herself in a long, low hall, which was lit up by a row of lamps hanging from the roof.

There were doors all round the hall, but they were all locked; and when Alice had been all the way down one side and up the other, trying every door, she walked sadly down the middle, wondering how she was ever to get out again.

Suddenly she came upon a little three-legged table, all made of solid glass: there was nothing on it but a tiny golden key, and Alice's first idea was that this might belong to one of the doors of the hall; but, alas! Either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open any of them. However, on the second time round, she came upon a low curtain she had not noticed before, and behind it was a little

> door about fifteen inches high: she tried the little golden key in the lock, and to her great delight it fitted!
>
> Alice opened the door and found that it led into a small passage, not much larger than a rat-hole: she knelt down and looked along the passage into the loveliest garden you ever saw. How she longed to get out of that dark hall, and wander about among those beds of bright flowers and those cool fountains, but she could not even get her head through the doorway; "and even if my head would go through," thought poor Alice, "it would be of very little use without my shoulders. Oh, how I wish I could shut up like a telescope! (Carroll 4-5).

This image of opening and closing like a telescope, with its two or more sections that fit inside each other, again brings physical science (astronomy) and relativity back into play by comparing the human body (Brake 31), as it grows taller (or, in fantasy, grows shorter), to this mechanical instrument; at the same time it suggests our otherness from our self, our self-alienation as purely physical things or purely biological organisms—that is, the “weirdness” of our own bodies to us.

So now Alice has become to become small again to go through the door, and she must try to find a way to become smaller again. But clearly Carroll is linking changes in the physical size of the body to one’s inner, emotional or psychological moods and changes. The easiest way to interpret this problem of being either too big or too small is probably in terms of “growing up.” Child psychologists tend to say that adolescents in particular feel they are “caught between” childhood and adulthood: they are too old (and too big, too well-developed especially after puberty) to be seen as children yet they are still immature from the perspective of adults. Thus teenagers famously need to define their problematic “in-between” identity by identifying with other teenagers:

having teenage friends, doing things in groups, using their own teenage slang and wearing the latest teenage clothing styles.

Every effort to maintain her sense of her own identity[10] —in terms of her mind as well as her body—just makes her realize she has lost this sense. Falling down the rabbit hole and then in the different rooms on the bottom, Alice is clearly confused and disoriented. She indulges in constant conversation with herself in order, perhaps, not just to keep herself company but to remind herself that she is really *there*. The novel's theme of self-identity is perhaps most explicit in Alice's conversation with the caterpillar, a creature which in itself represents *metamorphosis*[11] or *transformation*, since it will go into a cocoon and then become a butterfly that flies away. The wise old caterpillar, hanging upside down (relativity again) and smoking his large pipe, famously asks Alice "Who are you?" In the old Disney cartoon movie he blows the letters "HUUU….RRRRR…..UUUU?" out at her in smoke rings, which is one of the many different ways that the author plays with language and logic in the novel[12].

[10] The question "Who am I?" may not have a definite answer; we begin to ask it as young children and are likely still asking it in our old age. Wonderland is the place where Alice is trying to find out who she is, uncover her true identity. Knowing who she is can help her to survive in this strange environment. According to William R. Beardslee, knowledge of oneself determines how one operates in the world (269).

[11] Metamorphosis has a strong grip on our psyche, from Ovid's vivid descriptions of arms spreading to branches, throats turning to stone, to Kafka's Gregor waking to find himself a beetle. One of the first ways children understand nature and how it functions (a cocoon in a jam jar is a staple of elementary school classrooms), metamorphosis has metaphorical potential that is strong and easy to grasp. It is a process integral to the way we perceive ourselves and our ability to change our lives (Todd 11). While many natural phenomena capture a grim vision of life and potential—the rosebud doomed to fading metamorphosis offers the reverse trajectory. A humble worm becomes an iridescent moth. A plague of caterpillars turns into a blessing of butterflies. It is a biological adaptation that embodies hope, from religious use of the butterfly as a symbol of rebirth to girls (Todd 13). The story's symbolism, in which physical transformation may metaphorically represent psychological or spiritual transformation (Todd 10)

[12] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sdWYzMgpGPA, Alice in Wonderland – Eng, Levani Turdziladze, 33:06-33:51. Published on May 9, 2013.

The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other for some time in silence: at last the Caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice.

"Who are YOU?" said the Caterpillar.

This was not an encouraging opening for a conversation. Alice replied, rather shyly, "I--I hardly know, sir, just at present-- at least I know who I WAS when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then." (Carroll 35).

The part played by temporality (time, change) is crucial here, as it tends to break down the more "spatial" concept one has of oneself as a fixed "thing." This may especially be true for young people, of course, as one's own sense of one's identity or selfhood is closely linked to the physical and emotional changes one is going through, and perhaps especially in the case of young children and adolescents.

What do you mean by that?' said the Caterpillar sternly. `Explain yourself!'

`I can't explain MYSELF, I'm afraid, sir' said Alice, `because I'm not myself, you see.'

`I don't see,' said the Caterpillar. `I'm afraid I can't put it more clearly,' Alice replied very politely, `for I can't understand it myself to begin with; and being so many different sizes in a day is very confusing.'

`It isn't,' said the Caterpillar.

`Well, perhaps you haven't found it so yet,' said Alice; `but when you have to turn into a chrysalis--you will some day, you know--and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you'll feel it a little queer, won't you?'

`Not a bit,' said the Caterpillar.

`Well, perhaps your feelings may be different,' said Alice; `all I know is, it would feel very queer to ME.'

`You!' said the Caterpillar contemptuously. `Who are YOU?'

Which brought them back again to the beginning of the conversation. Alice felt a little irritated at the Caterpillar's making such VERY short remarks, and she drew herself up and said, very gravely, `I think, you ought to tell me who YOU are, first.'

`Why?' said the Caterpillar.

Here was another puzzling question; and as Alice could not think of any good reason, and as the Caterpillar seemed to be in a VERY unpleasant state of mind, she turned away.

`Come back!' the Caterpillar called after her. `I've something important to say!' . . . "So you think you're changed, do you? . . . Are you content now?" `Well, I should like to be a LITTLE larger, sir, if you wouldn't mind,' said Alice: `three inches is such a wretched height to be.'

`It is a very good height indeed!' said the Caterpillar angrily, rearing itself upright as it spoke (it was exactly three inches high) . . . (Carroll 35-38).

The caterpillar's constant questions —"Who? Why? What?"— in response to everything Alice says suggests a very skeptical attitude, or perhaps a very

philosophical attitude, toward oneself and the world, the attitude of one who knows or assumes that in fact nothing at all is certain, and the caterpillar might even seem to be a kind of holy man, priest guru or perhaps psychiatrist. As for Alice, at the end of the novel she thinks this whole world of Wonderland is "nothing but a pack of cards," something transient and illusory—but this is when she awakens to find herself back at home with her family in the English countryside.

The fact that she is "now" speaking to a very strange, non-human creature who at least in the Disney film version, is hanging upside down and smoking a large curved pipe or hookah, could hardly help her know or remember who she was or had been before arriving in this strange world. After all, we constantly reinforce our own sense our everyday identity as human beings by seeing and talking to the other people around us, not by talking to giant, pipe-smoking smoking caterpillars and disappearing cats. We may imagine such fantastic worlds, or dream of them at night—perhaps as a way of escaping from the social pressures of our everyday world—but we always quickly "wake up" from our daydreams and, in the morning, we wake up from our dreams.

If we do think of this whole novel as being Alice's actual dream—for she fell asleep at the beginning and wakes up (back at home) at the end—then we might also turn to Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams.* As we know, Freud would have his patients recount their recent or frequently recurring dreams to him so that he could try to uncover his patients' neuroses, in particular their repressed fears, anxieties and desires, by interpreting various scenes, objects or characters in the dreams. In his book, Freud theorizes that our original "dream thoughts" are transformed or "distorted" to become the "manifest dream" (the dream as we actually experience it)

through the "dream-work" of condensation and displacement: condensation is the compression of many dream-thoughts into the compact "space" of the dream, and displacement is the transformation of the "contents" of dream-thoughts into those of the dream. The original dream-thoughts could be any of our seemingly ordinary experiences or memories, especially relatively recent ones, but it is from the way these get transformed or distorted into the complex scenarios of dreams that Freud tried to detect the repressed fears, desires, guilts, anxieties, neurotic obsessions of his patients.[13]

However, in the case of Alice's fantasies or "experiences" as we get them in the novel, it may be easier to just freely associate and see what we (our unconscious) would naturally link them to. Insects like caterpillars we likely will think are horrible and frightening monsters, and thus relate them to the "irrational," though this may only be because they are so different from us; white rabbits and smiling Cheshire cats seem much less threatening, but only because they are mammals just like we are, and also because we see them around (especially cats) quite often. Of course, the author is giving each of these characters specific "human" personalities, and the caterpillar is actually very wise and intellectual, like a sort of philosopher.

But then can we say that these are all Alice's fantasies, elements of her manifest dream? And if so, can we like Freud try to figure out what they represent in terms of

[13] Alice's dream can clearly be classified as an anxiety dream since she is only seven and a half years old. Repressed ideas/feelings reappear in a dream, often through distortion. This distortion may be a deliberate attempt by the dreamer: if her repressed feelings are too much to handle, they appear in a dream. Thus dreaming is a way to "say something bad without actually saying it" (Freud 141). Real events and pressures which make children uncomfortable are "condensed" and "displaced" through their dreams, and the fact that children tend to really enjoy watching cartoon movies with their fantasy creatures, even monstrous ones may suggest that they are aware of how dreams work. Perhaps they even want to seek their true identities by entering such fantasy worlds. According to Karen Coats, "Alice's expedition signifies a "process of self-alienation that comes from knowing oneself through an external image" (86).

her neuroses, anxieties, confusions, and “problems”? The immediate problem here is that they were actually created not by Alice but by her author, Lewis Carroll (or Charles Dodgson). On a more simple and conventional level of analysis, we will naturally think the Queen of Hearts represents stupid, selfish people who have too much power and like to use it; the caterpillar represents a sort of wise man; the mad hatter represents a very witty, playful person, a kind of intellectual clown—perhaps the author himself. But this would be to operate on a different and more conventional level than the sort of operation of dream-interpretation Freud speaks of in his book, which is more like interpreting the possible symbolic meanings of images in a poem.

B. Language, Logic, Nonsense, and Absurdity

Another famous scene or chapter in *Alice in Wonderland* is “The Mad Tea Party,” featuring the Mad Hatter (played by Johnny Depp in the most recent film version of the novel), where we get the theme of madness combined with something we often find throughout Carroll’s novel, a very witty English conversation marked by frequent puns or plays on words where sometimes communication begins to break down:

> There was a table set out under a tree in front of the house, and the March Hare and the Hatter were having tea at it: a Dormouse was sitting between them, fast asleep, and the other two were using it as a cushion, resting their elbows on it, and talking over its head. 'Very uncomfortable for the Dormouse,' thought Alice; 'only, as it's asleep, I suppose it doesn't mind.'
>
> The table was a large one, but the three were all crowded together at one corner of it: 'No room! No room!' they cried out when they saw Alice

coming. 'There's PLENTY of room!' said Alice indignantly, and she sat down in a large arm-chair at one end of the table.

'Have some wine,' the March Hare said in an encouraging tone.

Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. 'I don't see any wine,' she remarked.

'There isn't any,' said the March Hare.' . . . The Hatter opened his eyes very wide . . . but all he SAID was, 'Why is a raven like a writing-desk?'

'Come, we shall have some fun now!' thought Alice. 'I'm glad they've begun asking riddles. —I believe I can guess that,' she added aloud.

'Do you mean that you think you can find out the answer to it?' said the March Hare.

'Exactly so,' said Alice.

'Then you should say what you mean,' the March Hare went on. 'I do,' Alice hastily replied; 'at least—at least I mean what I say—that's the same thing, you know.'

'Not the same thing a bit!' said the Hatter. 'You might just as well say that "I see what I eat" is the same thing as "I eat what I see"!'

'You might just as well say,' added the March Hare, 'that "I like what I get" is the same thing as "I get what I like"!' 'You might just as well say,' added the Dormouse, who seemed to be talking in his sleep, 'that "I breathe when I sleep" is the same thing as "I sleep when I breathe"!' . . . (Carroll 55-56).

In fact it seems that a more empirical linguistic issue has entered in here, namely, the problem of communication, which to some degree native speakers of a given language within a given culture, even a given family may sometimes face. Perhaps this is after all a problem that the author is concerned with, even if his novel is dealing with a more or less normal human character who finds herself within an imaginary and more or less non-human, or trans-human, world.

We also had this issue in *The Little Prince*, right at the beginning when the author-narrator kept telling his readers that it was rather hard to really communicate with the prince, since the latter "never lets go of a question once he has asked it" and so sometimes stopped listening to what that author (the adult) said to him or asked him, as he was obsessed with getting an answer to the question he had asked. This may also be a very interesting point on which to compare these two novels—and it is not so clear that Stuart Little will present this same issue—but one that will not be pursued further here as it lies outside the main framework of the interpretation at hand.

The interpretation being pursued here has rather to do with the potential absurdity or nonsensicality of any given human language, even when everyone using it is a native speaker. That is, by misusing certain words, whether by accident (which would more likely be the case with non-native speakers), or due to carelessness or, as here, due to the (perhaps very childish and thus understandable to young readers) desire to constantly joke and play, it quickly becomes impossible to seriously discuss the given topic or even to go on "making sense of it." Yet perhaps we would need to distinguish the idea of a conversation, which irretrievably descends into nonsense or incomprehensibility because this is the will of all those present from this conversation, where at least one person present (Alice) *really wants to have* a sensible conversation.

The Hatter was the first to break the silence. 'What day of the month is it?' he said, turning to Alice: he had taken his watch out of his pocket, and was looking at it uneasily, shaking it every now and then, and holding it to his ear.

Alice considered a little, and then said 'The fourth.'

'Two days wrong!' sighed the Hatter. 'I told you butter wouldn't suit the works!' he added looking angrily at the March Hare.

'It was the BEST butter,' the March Hare meekly replied.

'Yes, but some crumbs must have got in as well,' the Hatter grumbled: 'you shouldn't have put it in with the bread-knife.'

The March Hare took the watch and looked at it gloomily: then he dipped it into his cup of tea, and looked at it again: but he could think of nothing better to say than his first remark, 'It was the BEST butter, you know.'

Alice had been looking over his shoulder with some curiosity. 'What a funny watch!' she remarked. 'It tells the day of the month, and doesn't tell what o'clock it is!' '

Why should it?' muttered the Hatter. 'Does YOUR watch tell you what year it is?'

'Of course not,' Alice replied very readily: 'but that's because it stays the same year for such a long time together.'

'Which is just the case with MINE,' said the Hatter.

Alice felt dreadfully puzzled. The Hatter's remark seemed to have no sort of meaning in it, and yet it was certainly English. 'I don't quite understand you,' she said, as politely as she could (Carroll 57-58).

Of course, the point at issue in the above dialogue is not simply language in itself but logic as well, insofar as we can distinguish them. This takes us back to Lacan's Real as meaning, in one of its senses, that *rupture within the symbolic order* itself which would lead to a sort of traumatic inability to comprehend, where incomprehensibility perhaps has to do in the first place with a breakdown in logic itself. And once we are speaking of logic or rationality, the issue of madness is never far away.

In other words, this possibility of a *rupture within the symbolic orders* takes us back again to the whole issue of self-identity, self-understanding and self-alienation. For if Lacan's mirror stage, where the infant sees himself in the mirror as something other than himself, begins the imaginary (pre-linguistic) stage of development, the following symbolic order is also founded on a kind of split or difference, the split within language itself, the signifier-signified difference or the difference between what is said and what is meant or intended. The incomprehensible otherness of the Lacanian Real also bears some relationship to this.

We have a variation on this in the famous "Jabberwocky" pome of Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* (1872), which uses nonsense words yet somehow we (at least English native speakers) can more or less get the main idea. It is as if we are both inside the text and alienated from it; we understand by partly not-understanding:

`Twas brillig, and the slithy toves / Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves, / And the mome raths outgrabe.
`Beware the Jabberwock, my son! The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jujub bird, and shun / The frumious Bandersnatch!'
He took his vorpal sword in hand: / Long time the manxome foe he sought –
So rested he by the Tumtum gree, / And stood awhile in thought.
And as in uffish thought he stood, / The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,

Came whiffling through the tulgey wook, / And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through / The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!

He left it dead, and with its head / He went galumphing back.`

And has thou slain the Jabberwock? / Come to my arms, my beamish boy!

O frabjous day! Calloh! Callay! / He chortled in his joy.

`Twas brillig, and the slithy toves / Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;

All mimsy were the borogoves, /And the mome raths outgrabe (Carroll 126-127).

The name saying sense can only be *nonsense.* Nonsense is of a piece with the word have no sense, that is with the conventional word it itself the principle of an alternative the two terms of which it forms (frumious = fuming –and furious or furious-and-fuming). Each virtual part of such a word denotes the sense of the other or expresses the other part, which in denotes it (Deleuze 67). Nonsense is that which has no sense and that which, as such as it enacts the denotation of sense, is opposed to the absence of sense (Deleuze 71).

In *Through the Looking-Glass* Alice enters the reflected version of her own house through a mirror and she finds a book of looking-glass poetry, which includes the poem "Jabberwocky". She realizes that she can only read the reversed printing by holding it up to a mirror. She finds the poem scary but intriguing: "Somehow it seems to fill my head with ideas – only I don't exactly know what they are!" Although the poem contains many nonsensical words, its structure is perfectly consistent with classic English poetry. Carroll uses that it is formed from “wocer” or “wocor,” which means offspring or fruit, and “jabber,” which expresses a voluble, animated, or chattering discussion. It connotes a series of the animal or vegetable provenance of edible and denotable objects and a series of verbal proliferation of expressible sense. It is of course the case that these two series may be connoted otherwise, and that the portmanteau word does not find in

them the foundation of its necessity. The definition of the portmanteau word, as contracting several words and encompassing several senses, is therefore a nominal definition only (Deleuze 45).

Several of the words in the poem are nonsense words from Carroll's own imagination. In the book, the character of Humpty Dumpty gives definitions for the nonsense words in the first stanza. Humpty Dumpty offers as portmanteau words the words “slithy” (=lithe-slimy-active) “mimsy” (=flimsy-miserable), etc. Here our discomfort increases. We see clearly in each case that there are several contracted words and senses; but these elements are easily organized into a single series in order to compose a global sense (Deleuze 45). Even though it is said that Carroll wrote the poem as a parody designed to show how not to write a poem, it is considered by many to be one of the greatest nonsense poems written in the English language. A few words that Carroll invented in this poem, like "chortled" and "galumphing", are still being used in the English language. The word ‘jabberwocky’ itself is sometimes used to refer to nonsense language in general.

In fact, even non-native speakers of English will likely understand the main theme or plot of the poem: the brave young hero goes out with his sword and kills the monster, perhaps like a medieval knight killing a dragon. However, relatively well-educated native speakers of English (and sometimes non-native speakers) will say they can also understand at least some of the nonsense words, or at least get some emotional impression of their meaning, though different native speakers may disagree so apparently in most cases these meanings would be hard to “pin down”. However, Humpty Dumpty’s “explanation” or “translation” of the poem for Alice, which we also get in *Through the Looking Glass*, seems for the most part totally absurd. A clear exception is “gyre” which any native speaker will associate with “gyroscope.”

Finally from the previous conclusions we can picture how, Alice a young girl, trapped in a strange and unusual world completely foreign to her, managed to survive and solve the new problems and creatures she faced. In a challenging world the capacity to adapt can also define intelligence, and rational thinking combined to her ingenuity, helped Alice realise that she could also find her courage and solve all the problems facing her.

Conclusion

We might say of all babies and infants, not only human ones, that they find themselves in a new and unfamiliar world. It is one which, as Piaget points out, they have to gradually explore and interact with, using both their minds and their bodies, and the latter keep developing through this process of interaction. However, in these three novels we are dealing with a special case, for these are not "normal" human children living in a normal human world. The little prince comes from another planet though he also seems human, Stuart Little is a mouse thought he also seems human, and Alice while fully human is living in a strange, trans-or non-human wonderland.

Of course, this situation might simply serve to emphasize the degree to which normal human infants and children are already in an "alien" world, which they must gradually come to understand and deal with. That this is also a major point of these novels is perhaps further emphasized that two of the protagonists, the prince and Stuart, are already "hybrid" creatures, both human and non-human, just as Alice is living in an "underworld" that seems both human and trans-human.

The theories of Piaget and Freud have been used to interpret the situation in which these three find themselves as well as the actions they take to deal with it, with some discussion also of Hegel and Lacan, both of whom can be related to Freud. Piaget speaks of the child's need to form and then revise the logical schemas he uses in order to comprehend the world, and here there is always an interplay between the intellectual schemas, the child's perceptual acumen and the reality being perceived. That is, as one's powers of perception and of understanding keep developing, one sees more clearly the complexity of the world being perceived, and a greater awareness of its complexity drives the ongoing formation of ever more complex intellectual and perceptual schemas.

The primary theoretical focus, however, has been on Freud. In fact, the German philosopher Hegel already speaks of the *Unbewusstsein* or "unconscious mind." For Hegel, when we perceive and thus are conscious of external objects we are at the same time already conscious of ourselves as perceiving and knowing subjects. That is, we are already self-conscious and thus in a certain way *divided*: now are both subjects which are conscious of external objects and (external) objects of our own consciousness. We see this same split most clearly in the "mirror stage" discussed by the Freudian psychologist Lacan: once an infant realizes the object in the mirror is him/herself, he/she begins to have a clearer conception of his/her "self" yet it is already a conception based on the primordial *split* (into self and other) of this self.

Freud speaks of the ego (conscious mind) and id (unconscious), as well as the superego (moral conscience). According to his theory we repress various instinctive feelings—desire, fear, anger, guilt—down into our unconscious so that we can normally function in society by means of our rational (conscious) mind. However, these repressed feelings have a powerful influence on us, making us neurotic (or in more extreme cases psychotic) in various ways, so the Freudian praxis of psychoanalysis seeks to make people (patients) aware of these underlying (unconscious) repressed feelings so that they may learn to deal with, contain, control them. One way Freud and his school of psychoanalysts do this is by interpreting the dreams of patients, as in his or her dreams a person's repressed anxieties, desires and obsessions are manifested though in a disguised form.

In the interpretation of the Little Prince presented in chapter one, considerable emphasis was placed on Piaget. This is because the prince has come to a totally new and different world (the earth) and he must keep *exploring* and seeking to understand it through the use of schemas that he himself will keep developing. Yet as this is

actually a very romantic novel, and the prince is always missing his beloved rose who had stayed back on his home planet, he has to learn to deal with his feelings of loneliness and of missing his beloved rose. To do this one can make use of the idea of cognitive and emotional schemas that keep getting expanded, but also the notion of the unconscious whose repressed desires and fears the conscious subject must come to deal with. In this very poetic novel there are also many key symbols, including the sunset (romance, loneliness), the rose (love, desire, sadness) and the snake (death, journeying to another world), and these can be analyzed in part through the use of Freud's dream theory, according to which the symbols found in our dreams reveal, again, our deepest wishes and feelings that have been repressed or concealed from us.

Stuart Little is a heroic human mouse, just as the Prince is a heroic human alien, and like the Prince he must body continues to come to terms with his own condition or situation in the world. In the discussion of Stuart it was convenient to turn again to Piaget's notion of cognitive schemas, which children use to make sense of the world they find themselves in, and also to bring into play Freud's theory of children's sexual development: in his view we pass through three "sexual" stages, namely the oral (breast-feeding), anal (toilet training) and genital (puberty) stages. But with this novel it was also logical to refer to Lacan's theory of the Real: this is because Stuart tends to find himself in dangerous, somewhat horrifying, "uncanny" situations such as inside a piano (where he has to fix a broken key) or in front of a hungry cat whose mouth is wide open. Lacan uses the idea of the Real to describe areas of human experience that go beyond all rational understanding, and thus in can be related to the notion of defamiliarization, which also seems to fit the situation of Stuart in various situations. Originally estrangement or defamiliarization or perhaps *self-alienation* was a term used to describe our sudden awareness, in certain moments, of the weirdness or

otherness of the everyday world we find ourselves in, though normally we think it is not strange at all.

In *Alice in Wonderland*, of course, one can hardly avoid discussing again the ways in which Alice finds herself in an alien world which she has to keep exploring in order to "make sense" of it. One can also hardly avoid turning to Freud since, in the first place, the "underworld" of Wonderland, in which Alice has become self-alienated, may suggest that of our own unconscious. Moreover, she falls asleep at the beginning and wakes up (back at home) in the end, so the whole novel can also be taken as her dream or as a series of dreams, where there may be various interpretations of the "meanings" of such dream-characters as the mad hatter, white rabbit, caterpillar and Cheshire cat. Now more use was made of Freud's actual theory of dream interpretation, according to which, again, certain repressed desires and other emotions are expressed in our dreams at night though in disguised form, since our original dream-thoughts have undergone, as Freud says, the transformative processes of condensation and displacement. However, the most obvious point about this novel is the one it shares with the other two: in addition to all three having dream-like qualities, these novels also begin with the "displacement" of the protagonist into another world, just as all humans are in some sense "displaced" when they are born.

With Alice in particular the author foregrounds from the beginning the theme of her own psychological development; she may have been only seven or eight years old but the author also seems to present her at times as an adolescent who goes through the bodily changes associated with that stage. Thus early on we have her body continuing to change in size after she falls down the rabbit hole, which parallels her later psychological changes and confusions as she tries to deal with the question asked her by the Caterpillar: "Who are you?" by replying that in the morning she thought

she knew, but now she no longer knows. Lacan's notion of the Real is again made use of here, and on two levels: clearly this is a strange, incomprehensible, uncanny world but in linguistic and logical terms as well as visual ones. Witty conversations such as that at the mad tea party play with the double meanings of words to the degree that communication actually begins to break down—at least from Alice's "rational" and "human" point of view—and this may correlate with Lacan's discussion of the Real in terms of the excessiveness of the symbolic stage, whereby the gap between language (spoken words, what is said) and meaning (what is meant or intended) becomes to wide, so that finally there can he "no sense" (only nonsense).

Strangely enough, Freud's incongruity theory of humor, which is influenced by Kant's Second Critique, says that our laughter is a release of the excess energy we now have since for once (when for example a joke is told, one involving word-play perhaps) we "are not forced to be rational." Humor indeed plays a key role in all three novels, as no doubt in children's literature generally, since reminding children that (given the strangeness and challenges of the world they find themselves in) they need not take things too seriously—that is, reminding them to play—can surely not be too bad a thing for them.

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