

Breaking In:  
Female Intelligence and Agency  
in British Children's Fantasy Literature  
by  
Mikala A. Carpenter



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Thank you to my family,  
to my friends, and to my cohort,  
for all the love and support.





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## Abstract

In children's literature criticism, the feminist lens that is applied to the genre tends to maintain the view that both women and children are disempowered by their representations in fictional worlds. In the genre of children's fantasy, this assumption short-changes one specific group: young girl characters. Consider, specifically, the title character of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), the youngest sister in C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), and the aspiring know-it-all witch of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997). Criticism in children's literature portrays Alice as her fantasy world's humiliated, obedient plaything; Lucy as the deferential ideal of a spiritual devotee; and Hermione as the infinite resource from which male characters can take information and agency. Though much of criticism would argue that child female characters, especially these three, are inherently stripped of their agency, I posit that certain girls in British children's fantasy literature hold a less obvious or less visible asset that empowers them in accumulating their agency despite in-text and out-of-text mistreatment. This asset, previously overlooked by much of criticism, is the girls' intelligence.

By analyzing the primary female child characters of three popular and canonical works of British children's fantasy, this thesis aims to challenge the critical assumption that female child characters are disempowered in their fantasy worlds by virtue of being female and children by reconfiguring the focus of the criticism on these girls' creative and inventive intelligences. Instead of a feminine obedience, Alice shows an improvisatory intelligence that aids her in inventing new ways with which to traverse Wonderland as well as recognize the rules and social guidelines of both this fantasyland and Victorian England that will suit her best. And rather than merely being devoted, Lucy Pevensie accumulates the knowledge needed to not only enter and bring others into her world, but also to become a leader with experienced authority in her own right. Finally, Hermione's intelligence does more than serve others, but aids her first and foremost in proving she belongs at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry and, with her scholarly, driven intellect, gains her authority in her world that also transforms her into the brightest witch of her age.

By reconsidering the inventiveness and creativity as well as resilience of the intelligence of these three young girl characters, this thesis challenges the assumption that girls in children's literature are disempowered by their fantasy worlds and surrounding companions. Instead, this project works to focus on the ways in which these three girls — Alice, Lucy, and Hermione — use the creative and inventive resource of their own intelligences in order to create and gain their agency despite those figures of authority that say otherwise in these three girls' fantasy worlds as well as the feminist lens on children's literature criticism. By the conclusion, this thesis argues that Alice, Lucy, and Hermione, in their own, individual ways, can be re-imagined as models of both intelligence and agency that have been previously overlooked by the ways in which critics have constructed and understood the genre.



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**Short Titles**

*Alice's Adventures*: Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass*. New York: Modern Library, 2002. Print.

*LWW*: Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. New York: First Harper Trophy, 2000. Print.

*Philosopher's Stone*: Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. New York: Bloomsbury, 1997. Print.





## Introduction

“... And the dagger is to defend yourself at great need. For you also are not to be in the battle.”

“Why, sir?” said Lucy. “I think — I don’t know — but I think I could be brave enough.”

“That is not the point,” he said. “But battles are ugly when women fight....” (Lewis 109)

The moment in which Father Christmas gives gifts to three of the main characters in C.S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* — to the eldest boy a sword and shield, the eldest girl a bow and arrows and magic horn, and the youngest girl a vial of healing cordial and a dagger — and then insists that the girls, Lucy and Susan, not take part in battle remains a potent epitome of feminist and children’s literature criticisms’ treatment of female child characters in children’s fantasy literature. How so? First he outfits each child with useful, defensive weapons, then suggests it would be best if the girls refrain from using them or entering battle. In much the same way, critics of children’s fantasy have delineated a set of guidelines that lead them to also critique those female child characters available to them by devaluing, neglecting, or lamenting the girls’ lack of agency, effective traits, or subversive actions. Just as Father Christmas rejects Lucy’s quiet offer that she “could be brave enough” to help, feminist and children’s literature criticism blinds itself from noticing the less obvious but equally effective of assets of young girl characters — quiet subversion, to them, “is not the point.” This thesis looks to reconfigure the critical assumption that female child characters are inherently stripped of agency and to instead rediscover their less obvious asset of intelligence that they successfully use in such iconic texts as Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), C.S. Lewis’s *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), and J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (1997).

In general, criticism of children’s fantasy has tended to pigeonhole female child characters into a category of lesser social and literary value. Some critics notice the negative

aspects of child female characters, such as those “stereotyped and generally unappealing characteristics” that Ramona S. Frasher highlights, such as “helplessness, narcissism, passivity, and fearfulness” (860). These traits come together as the sum of a gender role that, as Frasher notes, is seen to proliferate children’s literature and has been measured as one of low social value in a masculine-oriented society (860). Criticism has, over time, allowed this role of the disempowered, passive, and submissive girl character to become a relative norm in interpreting the genre overall, as critics such as Beverly Lyon Clark and Lori M. Campbell — to be analyzed below — have examined. Criticism such as Frasher’s does admit, in a roundabout way, that female child characters have been shorthanded by much of criticism when it comes to being noticed and empowered in their own texts. Other criticism, such as Lori M. Campbell’s in *A Quest of Her Own*, has noted that critics rely too heavily on this assumption that female characters are constructed as stereotypically unappealing, invaluable, and disempowered. Critics interested in the effectiveness and visibility of empowered female characters in the fantasy genre have, Campbell suggests, “instead satisfied themselves with lamenting the few female protagonists populating such texts” (4). Not only is a multiplicity of other girl characters going unnoticed, but certain of their characteristics and attributes — no matter how stereotyped or feminine — are as well. The goal of this thesis is to raise the contention that criticism of children’s fantasy need neither devalue nor disenfranchise female child characters; rather, a shift toward recognizing the empowerment of fictional girls would be more conducive to its goals.

Exacerbating this devaluing and disempowerment of young female characters with potential for agency are the ways in which the feminist lens tends to be used to interpret and criticize children’s fantasy. Feminist critics search texts for signs of repression and disempowerment because they are informed by the assumption that to be female in literature

must be consistently analogous with a stripping of one's agency or power. A wholly "feminist" children's text, as Roberta S. Trites defines it, has a greater focus than just empowering a child main character "regardless of gender" (4), gender role, or gender value. Instead, "feminist" children's texts, in "[r]esponding to the traditional repression of feminine power," ought to "serve as a corrective, sometimes consciously and sometimes less obviously so, to the images of female docility that proliferated in children's novels prior to the contemporary women's movement" (5). Feminist criticism, then, tends to look for subversive characters and texts that react to and overthrow repressive systems. These traditional patterns and images of repression, power, femininity, and lack of value and agency are what John Stephens and Robyn Maccallum refer to as "the repetition of motifs and social formations across a multiplicity of texts" that "feminist critics of the genre are more apt to be concerned with" (203). Though Stephens and Maccallum are referring specifically to the fairy tale genre — often considered a subcategory of children's literature —, their statement holds true for some feminist critics' interests in children's fantasy. If a female character is not seen to openly and obviously "triumph over whatever system or stricture [is] repressing her" (Trites 7), she is critically devalued, neglected, or lamented. Overall, the assumption ruling feminist theory — that empowerment comes from being subversive, from directly reacting to suppression — leads to the stripping of agency from female characters in children's literature by the very critics aiming to empower them.

While the feminist lens tends to primarily treat girl characters in children's literature like this because they are female, these characters are also often disempowered in the eyes of criticism by dint of being children. Children in literature are similarly assumed to be less powerful and less valuable. In her iconic 1993 essay "Fairy Godmothers or Wicked Stepmothers?," Beverly Lyon Clark admonishes feminist theory's treatment of children and

children's literature, stating that "feminist theorizing has rarely recognized, let alone addressed, the position of the child" (172). Similarly, children's literature criticism itself seems obsessed with the power hierarchy that positions the child in relation to the adult, whether we consider the Romantic ideal of the innately innocent being or the Enlightenment's image of educational potential to be nurtured, molded, or filled. The motif and issue of power has, as Maria Nikolajeva claims, been "from start the engine for children's literature, as well as its tangible double address" ("The development of children's fantasy" 51). Power, position, and role remain traditional deciding factors in the critical judgment of the empowerment and agency of child characters. Despite this interest, the assumption remains in children's literature criticism just as in feminist criticism that the child, like the feminine or the female, continues to hold an inferior and submissive position no matter what the context. With this in mind, Nikolajeva asserts that, in "the position of a child and female," young female characters in fantasy children's literature are inherently "doubly oppressed" (53).

Why has this shared assumption that child female characters are inherently disempowered and stripped of any semblance of agency been maintained within two groupings of criticism interested in individual empowerment, the overthrow of repressive systems, and the subversion of authority? In a way that is reminiscent of how children's literature tends to ignore the child reader entering the literary world in favor of the adult writer that invented it, these critics also sometimes fail to recognize the agency and traits to invent such agency that girl characters can and do hold. While some concede that the child can be "empowered temporarily" (52) only in the space of a fantasy world, there is a critical insistence that the child's power and agency not only must be relinquished eventually but also are often *given* by their story's fantastical elements. What some critics in the feminist and children's literature critical fields

have tended to jointly miss in children's fantasy texts is the existence of certain girl characters' potentially effective and empowering attributes — anything from wily trickster habits, “unfeminine” strength of mind or body, wild curiosity, linguistic and imaginative creativity, untraditional gender roles or habits, or positions as sidekicks or secondary characters. If attention were given to girl characters' quieter, less obvious assets, the collected body of empowered and valuable female child characters could be expanded.

In response to this tendency to erase or neglect the power and agency girl characters do have, this thesis reconfigures current understandings of the interaction between young female characters and agency and empowerment in British children's fantasy. Instead, I argue that critical concern for subversive power has blinded the field of children's fantasy literature of its female child characters' greatest asset: their intelligence, through which they invent, create, and build their own agency. By analyzing the primary female child characters of three popular and canonical works — Carroll's *Alice's Adventures*, Lewis's *LWW*, and Rowling's *Philosopher's Stone*<sup>1</sup> — I challenge the critical assumption that female child characters lack agency and are intrinsically “doubly oppressed” even in their fantasy worlds where nonsense, magic, and other fantastic things make quite a lot possible. Rather than allowing Carroll's Alice, Lewis's Lucy Pevensie, and Rowling's Hermione Granger to be devalued, neglected, or lamented, even as some of the genre's most iconic female child characters, this thesis aims to reconsider the creative and inventive powers of intelligence and the multiplicity of ways Alice, Lucy, and Hermione portray comparative, contrastive, and uniquely individual modalities of intelligence in the face of overarching figures or ideals of social or cultural authority as they successfully

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<sup>1</sup> In the spirit of studying British children's fantasy, I have chosen to retain Rowling's text's original British title. Rowling's *Philosopher Stone* was published and continues to be referred to as *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in the United States.

traverse their fantasy worlds and simultaneously produce their own agency. While much of criticism considers openly subversive or feminist characteristics act as the keys to female empowerment and success, this thesis challenges us to reconsider these girls' intelligences as creative and inventive tools that generate the girls' agency and create the necessary "keys" to empowering themselves.

In order to highlight and track the creation and development of Alice, Lucy, and Hermione's individual examples of agency, each of my chapters will focus on one girl individually and the ways in which she gains agency via the creative and inventive powers of her intelligence as she journeys through and interacts with her fantasy world and its inhabitants. Each chapter will also consider the figures or traditions of authority that each girl must contend with in their texts and that each can be seen to reject or support — or both — throughout their adventures. In my first chapter, I trace how Alice responds and adapts to the nonsensical world of Wonderland by inventing her own set of evolving rules and alternately rejecting and supporting Victorian constructions of femininity. While some critics argue that Wonderland controls, humiliates, and subjects Alice to its own authority, this chapter resituates power and agency in Alice's character and her ability to create rules and a metaphorical rulebook that suit her, and no one else. My second chapter, on Lucy Pevensie, focuses on the young girl's potential to act and serve as a leader based on the unique knowledge and visionary power she holds in comparison with her siblings. In Narnia, Lucy enters and consumes the mythology of the world and connects innately to its inhabitants, resulting in the creation of a belief system that empowers not only herself but also others against the evil disempowering the land. Lastly, my third chapter analyzes how Hermione Granger throws herself full-force into cultivating an academic, scholarly, and logical authority for herself at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry in

order to both establish and maintain a place for herself within the magic world. While the wizarding world has certain ideals concerning how best to learn and to create, Hermione arrives and disturbs these authoritative ideologies on education, race, and gender; her uniquely logical intelligence sets her apart and invalidates her agency and magical powers. By tracing the ways in which Alice, Lucy, and Hermione use their individually creative intelligences within their fantasy worlds, I will uncover the agency the girls gain in the course of their fantastic journeys.

Overall, one shared notable attribute of these three texts is not only their categorization in the fantasy genre but also in the fantasy subgenre of the portal fantasy, characterized by the appearance of the rhetorical device of the portal. In *Rhetorics of Fantasy*, Farah Mendlesohn defines portal fantasy as one in which “a character leaves her familiar surroundings and passes through a portal into an unknown place” (1). The spaces of the rabbit hole in *Alice’s Adventures*, the wardrobe in *LWW*, and the Hogwarts Express in *Philosopher’s Stone*<sup>2</sup> each serve as the portals in their respective texts. Between the fantastical inside of the portal and its mundane outside, the primary world, there seems to be a seal-tight boundary against the ordinary and the fantastic intermingling: “... crucially, the fantastic is *on the other side* and does not leak” (1). Because of this, much of what Alice, Lucy, and Hermione experience in their portal fantasies is unknown, unfamiliar, or, as Mendlesohn adds, previously unavailable. The passage between the known world and the unknown world challenges the girls to pass a transitional stage or threshold similar to that proposed by Arnold van Gennep’s theory which identifies rites of passage that

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<sup>2</sup> While some disregard it as portal fantasy, Mendlesohn argues that the Harry Potter universe does function as such because its style is “reliant on elaborate description and continual new imaginations” (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* 2) as is common in the portal fantasy subgenre. Catherine Butler adds that the portal fantasy mode dominates the series’ early books because, in entering Hogwarts, “a place impenetrable to Muggles,” characters and readers alike are “effectively transported to another world, with its own customs and history” (233) as they pass a definitive threshold between worlds.

“enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally defined” (3). By applying this theory of rites of passage to these portal fantasy narratives, we emphasize the challenges that Alice, Lucy, and Hermione endure in the new, unknown worlds of Wonderland, Narnia, and Hogwarts and that catalyze the development of each girl’s intelligence and agency.

While the presence of the rhetorical device of the portal ties my three texts into a single subgenre, there are two other notable characteristics that bring these texts together and set others apart. First of all, Alice, Lucy, and Hermione’s specific modes of intelligence manifest themselves in two distinctly creative ways. In the cases of *Alice’s Adventures* and *LWW*, I will refer to both Alice and Lucy’s intelligences as crossing over into the realm of inventive and creative imagination. Hermione’s intelligence, on other hand, is markedly more logical than her predecessors’, though it is no less creative. Another characteristic of these three texts that is important to note and that will be raised in each chapter is the kind of gendered sphere in which each of these girls exists in their texts. Alice exists in a gender vacuum — a setting of little to no gender hierarchy. Not only is she not burdened by any companions, but she is also surrounded by Wonderland’s inhabitants, most of which are animals and few of which are referred to by anything but the genderless pronoun “it.” Lucy and Hermione, however, are essential members of gendered spheres within their texts. In *LWW*, Lucy traverses Narnia among her three siblings, a grouping of two boys, two girls. Similarly, Hermione becomes a member of a trio of friends in which she is the only female character. Surrounded by boys, Lucy and Hermione must not only contend with the unknown worlds of Narnia and Hogwarts, but they, unlike Alice, must also gain agency among their male companions and within their gendered social spheres.

For this project, I have chosen to focus solely on the first installments of Carroll, Lewis, and Rowling’s series. Why these three texts? Firstly, because Alice, Lucy, and Hermione are at



their youngest in each text. I felt that further inspection into these series would have been muddled when comparing Alice, who ages only a year — and six months, give or take — between *Alice's Adventures* and *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), with Lucy and Hermione, who are both roughly seventeen years old at the culmination of their respective series. Secondly, *Alice's Adventures*, *LWW*, and *Philosopher's Stone* are some of the most popularly canonical works in fantasy children's literature today. That is to say, these works are not canonical because critics say they should be, but because everyday readers — especially child readers — insist that they are influential. The popularity of these three books reaches the world over. Carroll's *Alice's Adventures* has not been out of print once since its original 1865 publication; Lewis's *LWW* has sold on its own more than 85 million copies worldwide (Everett); and Rowling's entire Harry Potter series had, as of 2013, more than 450 million copies in print worldwide (“Because It's His Birthday”). As these three children's books accumulated audiences that traverse geographic, linguistic, and demographic boundaries, Carroll, Lewis, and Rowling's works became models for child audiences. With this influence in mind, this thesis delves into what models of creative and inventive female intelligence young readers are reading today.

And, as a final note on my treatment of *Alice's Adventures*, *LWW*, and *Philosopher's Stone*, I would like to take this time to explain a theory I have used in considering Alice, Lucy, and Hermione as not solely the text's constructions, but as motivated and agented fictional individuals. In much of the criticism on children's literature, critics insist on considering the biography, intentions, and motivations of a text's author. Giving voice to the pseudonymous Lewis Carroll and his fascination with young girls and the inspiration for *Alice's Adventures* only illustrates his desire to control the biographical Alice Liddell and the fictional Alice rather than substantial insight into the character or text. Similarly, consideration of the evolution of C.S.

Lewis's misogynistic views throughout his lifetime lends too limited a lens to interpreting Lucy's character just as critical acknowledgment of J.K. Rowling's personal comments concerning the implicit intentions of her work place the series and its characters into the dominating stranglehold of their creator. Instead, I will part ways with the texts' authors and join with the feminist ideal, as Trites highlights, "to support women's choices" and "to foster societal respect for those choices" (2). In the spirit of reconfiguring and rediscovering these characters' agency, I will also consider and respect their choices as if they were choices of their own making. With this in mind, the only references to Carroll, Lewis, or Rowling that will appear in this thesis will be to paint their authorial intention as if it were yet another figure of overarching authority that Alice, Lucy, and Hermione contend with in their texts.

Ultimately, the underlying motivation that threads through this project and to which I will return in my conclusion is the goal of asserting and bringing to light the intelligence of young female characters as well as their creativity, innovation, imagination, and ingenuity. The influence of this reassertion on young readers is, I argue, of utmost importance. It takes more than physical strength and obvious proof of success to get these three young girls through their fantasy worlds and beyond the influence of authoritative figures and cultural ideals. Though this makes them less obvious and less openly feminist models for child readers, this does not erase the agency they gain for themselves and, by extent, for their readers. In analyzing and describing the ways in which these three female child characters cultivate and maintain agency via the uniquely creative and inventive asset of their intelligence, this thesis and I propose to initiate the first step in recognizing the value in the potential that Alice, Lucy, and Hermione hold as models for female intelligence and agency in children's fantasy literature.

## Chapter 1: Alice's Productive, Chaotic, and Inventive "Book of Rules"

"There seemed to be no use in waiting by the little door, so [Alice] went back to the table, half hoping she might find another key on it, or at any rate a book of rules for shutting people up like telescopes...." (Carroll 7)

Within moments of falling down the rabbit-hole, Alice begins inventing. She decides that she is in fact falling down "a very deep well" (5); she uses a key to create a "small passage ... into the loveliest garden you ever saw"; and she comes up with the idea that she could get into that garden if only she "could shut up like a telescope" (7). She longs for a "book of rules" that might teach her how to accomplish this, but, when a literal, static, and conventional book does not appear, Alice decides there's "no use in waiting" (7) for one. Rather, she adapts her thinking and her actions and improvises and invents new rules. In this chapter, I borrow Alice's own term of a "book of rules" as a metaphor to analyze the ways she uses her intelligence to assert her agency in the text. This metaphorical guidebook or rulebook serves as her key to successfully traversing Wonderland. Just as the young girl's *telos* — or ultimate goal — of reaching the beautiful garden is selfish and self-satisfying, so too is the accumulation of her intelligence and creation of her own agency: It sustains and nurtures Alice and Alice alone. Eventually, through this reconfiguration of Alice's intelligence and agency, we will see that this "dainty child," as Nina Auerbach suggests, "carries the threatening kingdom of Wonderland within her" (32). By examining Alice's improvisational inventive process in creating her metaphorical guidebook and by considering how she alternately supports and subverts established authority figures and cultural conventions, this chapter relocates Alice's intelligence as chaotic but productive and her agency as intact and empowering.

Criticism of *Alice's Adventures* has, on the other hand, focused on and subsequently undervalued Alice as unproductive, especially as the text's educational potential is concerned, and as disempowered by the interactions she has with the fantastical world of Wonderland. The

text's contemporary critics in 1865 paid Alice less attention than they did to the piece's educative merit as a whole and categorized *Alice's Adventures* as a wild nonsensical piece that, according to *The Sunderland Herald*, "has this one advantage, that it has no moral and that it does not teach anything. It is, in fact, pure sugar throughout" (qtd. Cripps 370). So while it was lauded for its benefits as an entertaining work for children, Victorian critics considered the text's sole value to be entertaining children, serving as their plaything, with its ornamental, seemingly face-value themes of nonsense and fantasy. Recent critics that have returned the focus to Alice tend to also construct the young girl as something that is ornamental, easily bent to others' will. Some, like Lucie Armitt, suggest Alice "is turned into a plaything herself" (157), just as the text's contemporary critics spun it into "pure sugar" of little sustenance or educative worth. The lack of sustenance — or, in this case, empowered or intellectual substance — that critics, like Maria Nikolajeva, tend to pinpoint in Alice concerns her thwarted agency within the land of Wonderland: "[*Alice's Adventures*] is one of the rare texts that, instead of empowering the fictional child through displacement in an alternative world, explicitly disempowers and even humiliates her" (*Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 33). The lack of critical acknowledgement of Alice's intelligence and agency in *Alice's Adventures* has portrayed her as an untamable, unproductive, and disempowered plaything.

However, this critical portrayal of Alice and *Alice's Adventures* focuses on the ways in which Alice's interactions with Wonderland's inhabitants, its language and logic systems, and her own body are consistently unstable and volatile. Superficially, this contact with the fantastic world could be interpreted as disempowering, weakening, or humiliating. Alice's agency, however, cannot be defined only by how outside sources treat and define her; attention should

also be given to how she reacts to and interacts with these moments, defines herself, and accumulates enough knowledge to, eventually, take control.

To begin uncovering Alice's creative intelligence, it is necessary to consider how Alice improvises and invents a book of rules as she interacts with Wonderland and discovers ever-changing methods to the madness of her fantastic world. A closer look at Alice's response to the first obstacle she faces in Wonderland will elaborate on the nature of her rulebook. When Alice is met for the first time by an obstacle — a locked door — in Wonderland, she invents several solutions on the spot. First is the seemingly illogical and imaginative desire to “shut up like a telescope!” (Carroll 7) so that she can fit through the too-small door into the beautiful garden. Though this first idea does not at first seem to be realistic or even possible, Alice thinks it is something she can learn to do, “if [she] only knew how to begin” (7). So the little girl responds to not knowing quite how to shut herself up like a telescope by searching for another way to circumvent the door itself — “another key,” a typical resource for locked doors — and her lack of knowledge — “a book of rules for shutting people up like telescopes” (7). At this point in her adventures, Alice seems to be looking for a physical, tangible rulebook for traversing this isolated incident. It is important to note that, similarly, the young girl is inventing these ideas and responses as she goes — the process is wholly improvisational. In her mind, Alice aligns the literal key with this book of rules so that, together, they form a metaphorical, never visible but always accessible cipher for her fantastic world in general. As Alice's adventures continue out of this entrance hall and into the greater, less sheltered spaces of Wonderland, she will accumulate new knowledge that, when added to this guidebook, will help her learn how to react to certain situations and interactions.

Coming from the primary world of Victorian England, Alice is used to having rules that not only keep her in line as a child but that also govern the ways she ought to react in certain situations, especially social ones. So when she first considers resorting to a “book of rules” to get into the garden, she seems to be looking for a uniform, domineering, step-by-step procedure to do so. Alice soon learns that not all things function by the rules of reality, logic, or social propriety in Wonderland: “... so many out-of-the-way things had happened lately that Alice had begun to think that very few things indeed were really impossible” (7). Despite this discovery that the lines between possible and impossible had begun to be blurred, Alice still struggles at first to reconcile this land of few boundaries with a desire for rules and guidelines. For example, when Alice discovers a bottle on the table to which she went for a key or book of rules, she tries to meet the straightforward, authoritative directions “DRINK ME” (7), whose written form is descriptively emphasized in the text, with equally textual logic. Alice turns to “several nice little stories about children” (7) as her guiding evidence. These stories are formulaic and didactic narratives that called for Victorian child readers to obey the authoritative figures in their lives, or else horrible consequences would befall them. In the case of this bottle, Alice recalls from these stories— she insists in fact that “she had never forgotten” (7) — that drinking from any bottle marked “poison” could be dangerous. So instead of listening to the authoritative missive written on the bottle, Alice turns to the “simple” (7) cause-and-effect rules most likely to govern realistic situations. When she drinks from this bottle, its contents make her shrink. Though it seemed like an illogical, even impossible solution before, Alice is now shutting up like a telescope just like she’d imagined she could. In this moment, the no-nonsense Victorian guidelines to which she would have liked to turn are proven as poor resources when the impossible becomes possible. Instead, Alice discovers and learns quickly that relying on what she already knows will not help

her in Wonderland. It is clear now: Alice must imagine her own solutions to the problems she encounters and invent her own rules as she goes.

As Alice continues to interact with her fantastic world, she learns to react to new experiences in order to build off the knowledge she has already accumulated during her adventures. Her process is adaptive, improvisational, and characterized by responsive, wondering, and guess-and-check procedures. The new knowledge that Alice is able to add to her metaphorical guidebook in this way accumulates until it equates, like the book of rules to the key before, to agency in her fantastic world. For instance, one of the first lessons Alice learns in Wonderland is how to control the size and growth of her own body in order to use it to her advantage. Although her initial changes in size seem arbitrary, as prompted by written demands to “DRINK ME” (7) or “EAT ME” (9), Alice does not listen to these directions immediately; instead, she problem solves. She uses what she has already learned about the illogical nature of Wonderland and prepares herself for all potential outcomes: “‘If I eat one of these cakes,’ she thought, ‘it’s sure to make *some* change in my size; and, as it can’t possibly make me larger, it must make me smaller, I suppose” (32). Here, Alice works out how she can change her own size with reasoning. Once Alice has determined that consuming certain foods and drink will allow her to change in size — imagine the young girl writing this down in a rulebook all her own that she’s just pulled out of her pinafore pocket — , she begins to use these changes in size to her advantage when interacting with inhabitants of Wonderland. When she comes upon both the Duchess’s house and the March Hare’s home, Alice decides, “it’ll never do to come upon them *this* size” (45). She nibbles at the pieces of mushroom referred to her by the Caterpillar so that she can make herself the most advantageous size for interacting with other characters. Although it is true that Alice chooses to accommodate the sizes of Wonderland inhabitants before her own preferred

size, we can see that the young girl, despite Nikolajeva's suggestion that Wonderland "[makes] her lose her mental capacity and control of her body" ("The development of children's fantasy" 51), is gaining new, adaptive control over her body and its size. Now that she has learned how to affect these changes in her height and problem-solved them enough to add them to her book of rules, Alice has gained full control of these faculties and her own agency in the face of Wonderland's nonsensical reality.

Among the many rules vital to Victorian society that Alice learns to circumvent and rewrite for her rulebook as it pertains to the specific space of Wonderland is that of obeying adult authority figures and asserting her own agency in response. In Alice's England, Victorian children "tended to be a source of pain and embarrassment to adults, and were therefore told they should be 'seen and not heard'" (Auerbach 44). Adults, in Alice's primary world, hold the authority, and children were silenced and cut off from defining their own agency by the dominance of adult figures like parents or educators. Though Wonderland reflects Victorian England and the society with which Alice is familiar, this reflection is subversive enough that it presents certain opportunities for rules to be rewritten and challenged. One such Wonderland subversion is that of the adult figures with whom Alice interacts: They are identified as adults and authority figures and portray themselves as Alice's superiors in words and deeds. Many of the characters resort to using insults or speaking to Alice as if she were significantly inferior. Take, for example, the Duchess's empty morals — "... and the moral of *that* is — 'Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves'" (Carroll 78) —, the Mad Hatter's hypocritical admonishments — "It wasn't very civil of you to sit down without being invited" (57) — or the Caterpillar's schoolmaster critiques — "That is not said right.... It is wrong from beginning to end" (42). With interactions like these in mind, Nikolajeva postulates that these



adult figures' verbal mistreatment and its increasing violence — culminating in wild threats of beheading — strip the young girl of power and humiliate her (*Power, Voice and Subjectivity* 33). However, in interacting with these adults, Alice finds of her own accord that these characters' authority is, in some cases, empty. Characters like the Duchess and the Queen of Hearts are authoritative by virtue of their names alone while others like the Caterpillar, the White Rabbit, or the March Hare are animals that speak.

Several of Alice's initial interactions with adult characters whose claims to authority she learns to circumvent despite her ingrained Victorian instincts are prime examples of entries in her guidebook to Wonderland. Though she tries to start these interactions with polite civility and reserved logic, Alice soon finds that her Victorian sensibilities won't cut it in Wonderland. Instead, by absorbing their social cues, Alice adapts to these situations and improvises effective responses to these characters, accumulating the knowledge she needs rather than just the knowledge these characters are willing to give. In the case of the Caterpillar, whose conversation Alice identifies as not at all "encouraging" and whose insistence on hearing Alice's recitations figures it as an uppity teacher, Alice turns the Caterpillar's value judgments back on it and uses its social cues to get it to "tell her something worth hearing" (Carroll 35-37). To get this valuable information, Alice obliges his many requests with politeness, "swallowing down her anger as well as she could" (37) in a rendition of the "seen and not heard" Victorian ideal. These resources prove ineffective. By the end of this short interaction with the Caterpillar, Alice learns to affect a tone that appeals to the Caterpillar, calling it "sir" and adding modest addendums of "if you wouldn't mind" or "I'm not particular" (42). Here, Alice adapts to the social situation in order to get the information she wants — how to get to her own size again — by perceiving the rules of the Caterpillar's game and using them to her own advantage.

Alice does not always resort to lulling authority figures into providing her with necessary information. In some instances, Alice is especially forward and caustic in interacting with certain Wonderland inhabitants. This kind of aggressive behavior is especially prevalent when she is reacting to insults or other unsavory interactions. For example, at the Mad Tea-Party, though the Mad Hatter and March Hare insist on insulting her intelligence and her manners, Alice does not demure as she did with the Caterpillar, but chooses to put these characters in their places: “‘You should learn not to make personal remarks,’ Alice said with some severity; ‘it’s very rude’” (58). Here, Alice is severe and aggressive in rejecting the Hatter’s and the Hare’s attempts to exert their authority over her. In her critical interpretation of the text, Edith Lazaros Honig even goes so far to define Alice’s improvisational adaptive strategy as a process in which she is “acquiring new weapons — not only defensive weapons, but at times aggressive ones as well” (77). These aggressive means aid her in gleaning information for her metaphorical guidebook. The diverse ways that Alice interacts with authoritative figures in Wonderland show her adapting to situations, improvising reactions, and accumulating the necessary knowledge to traverse the land.

As Alice invents her guidebook to Wonderland, she is, at times, simultaneously reinventing her own education and moving away from the institutional or canonical systems of authority of the Victorian era with which she was previously familiar. Just as she takes control of her interactions with other characters, Alice also begins to control her production of linguistic- and literary-focused knowledge. When she cries the iconic line “Curiouser and curiouser!” at the start of her adventures, the narrator’s condescending commentary identifies this as Alice having “quite forgot[ten] how to speak good English” (Carroll 12). From another standpoint, the little girl can be seen taking the established guidelines of what is considered “good English” and mixing them up, reinventing them, for her own use. Alice also destabilizes authoritative rules as

she discovers that appearance and the lessons she has learned in the past aren't quite as stable as she'd previously been led to believe. Among many of her discombobulated recitations of poems and stories she'd learned aboveground, Alice creates a parody of Isaac Watts' didactic "How Doth the Little Busy Bee" that replaces the dutiful, laborious, and productive bee with a vain, self-serving, and predatory crocodile. This dangerous creature does not keep its "idle hands" at "works of labor or of skill" (Watts ll. 9-12) but instead spends his days preening his "every golden scale" and gluttonously "welcomes little fishes in, / With gently smiling jaws!" (Carroll 14). The little crocodile that Alice invents changes his appearance to be more appealing — the crocodile "seems to grin" (14) —, an adaptation that aids him in capturing what he needs: sustenance. In much the same way, Alice adapts to situations and other characters from which she gleans the sustenance of knowledge. Alice's improvisational reconfiguration of authoritative guidelines as she invents her own education aid the girl in not only creating her own book of rules but also in discovering that not all authority is concretely superior to her agency.

Though she spontaneously invents the poem of the little crocodile mentioned above, Alice still seems to take its message to heart as she selectively and strategically manifests the crocodile's mode of selfhood in the ways she reacts to and interacts with creatures and events in Wonderland. The crocodile has "gently smiling jaws" and "golden scale[s]" (14) that are superficially ornamental, but which he knows how to use to his advantage. Similarly, in the proem to *Alice's Adventures*, Alice is called to "a childish story take, / ... with a gentle hand" (ll. 37-38), but, as seen in the incident at the White Rabbit's house in which she throws both the Rabbit and Little Bill into the cucumber frame with a single swipe of her hand<sup>3</sup>, Alice's hands as

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<sup>3</sup> In his analysis of John Tenniel's original illustrations for this scene, U.C. Knoepfelmacher suggests that Tenniel even went so far as to portray Alice's hand in this scene as a claw (172),

well as her actions are only gentle when she needs them to be, not when others request it.

Instead, Alice takes on a superficially ornamental appearance that placates the authority figures whose knowledge she needs to sustain herself. She sets herself up to seem, as contemporary critics of *Alice's Adventures* suggested of the text itself, like “pure sugar.” In figuring herself similarly to her little crocodile, Alice lets others believe that she is of little threat, substance, use, or significance in order to obtain the knowledge she needs.

This idea of Alice’s strategically superficial “seeming” leads to yet another authoritative structure that is prevalent in the Victorian world she knows from aboveground but is another set of rules and guidelines that she discovers she can reject or reinvent underground: established Victorian constructions of ideal femininity. Out from under the watchful eyes of Victorian society and in topsy-turvy Wonderland, Alice chooses to alternately support and subvert its idealizations of femininity and feminine roles rather than emulating its strict social guidelines. In Victorian times, young girls were expected to serve as the obedient, ornamental figure of the Angel of the House. This ideal pigeonholed young girls into being “religious; serious; moral; intellectual in a refined, socially acceptable way; and, above all, obedient to parents and older brothers” (Honig 65). Domestic and familial duties and obedience to the authorities of domestic spaces were of utmost importance for the construction of femininity in Victorian culture. At times, Alice’s character fulfills these social codes. She is often shown to speak “quietly” and “timidly” to Wonderland inhabitants, portraying obedient and modest feminine traits. Alice’s nature, however, is characterized by discrepancy, and she speaks to some characters like the Queen of Hearts “very loudly and decidedly” (Carroll 69), taking control of situations rather than behaving or speaking obediently. Though Victorian society and Carroll himself would prefer her

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drawing on Alice’s own self-association with the predatory kitten Dinah as well as her repeated portrayals of herself as the violent predator to Wonderland’s creatures’ victims.

to be obedient and “loving as a dog ... and gentle as a fawn” (“*Alice on the Stage*” 168), Alice recognizes that she can choose to portray these Victorian conventions of femininity, as they are advantageous to her in the face of authority.

As before, when we noted how Alice chooses to interact with different sets of Wonderland creatures in diverse ways that suit her needs best, so too does she alternately affect or reject proper feminine social behavior as per Victorian social maxims. With certain characters, Alice performs more ideally feminine virtues, especially at the start of her adventures. These virtues tend to involve her behaving obediently, politely, demurely, pleasantly, and timidly when interacting with adult-seeming characters. She immediately obeys, like a good obedient servant, the White Rabbit’s demand that she “run home this moment, and fetch [it] a pair of gloves and a fan” (27) rather than explain or argue its mistake, and at the Duchess’s home, she waits politely and “timidly” (47) at the front door to be let inside. Alice is also quite meek, mild, and modest in the presence of the Duchess. She wishes to ask a question, and then worries “whether it was good manners for her to speak first” (49). Here, Alice is especially focused on perfecting the art of conversation and performing it properly and successfully.

Good manners and adherence to ideal femininity, however, fall to the wayside in Alice’s interactions with other Wonderland inhabitants. The Alice who did not think she should appear at the Queen’s croquet game without a proper invitation is replaced by an Alice that does not wait for a proper invitation to the Mad Tea-Party. Polite, proper social interactions do not always concern her. Instead, she sometimes acts rudely and disobediently. At times, she is reprimanding and even caustic. Ignoring the Mad Hatter and March Hare’s cries that there is “No room!” for her at the table, Alice answers that “there’s *plenty*” (57) and creates the room she needs and rejects their authority. Here, Alice is breaking away little by little from obedience to Victorian

ideals. She reprimands the Hare for not being “very civil” (57), expecting the other characters to behave properly, but refuses to behave civilly in return unless it suits her. While she considered her contributions to conversation with the Duchess very carefully and timidly, Alice does not here, and instead “replie[s] very readily” (59) to the Hatter and the Hare’s illogical quips and insults. After caustically disrupting the tea party, Alice discovers the Queen’s garden and creates her own invitation to enter, without obediently waiting for an invitation from someone with greater authority or upholding Victorian conventions of proper, subservient femininity.

While Alice’s interactions with Wonderland inhabitants fluctuate as to how ideally feminine she behaves, she rarely supports the domestic responsibility and confinement that came with ideal Victorian femininity. Notably, Alice finds herself at times in spaces that are either coded as domestic — the rabbit-hole’s “sides ... were covered with cupboards and bookshelves” (4) like a kitchen or a pantry — or are literally domestic, such as the White Rabbit’s and the Duchess’s homes. These instances of domestic spheres are also contained inside, which contrasts interestingly with the abundant nature of the rest of Wonderland as well as with Alice’s nature-focused *telos* of the garden. Many Victorian girls, as Honig speculates, must have been “champing at the bit — eager to go off to school and independent adventure” (67) and to leave the limiting domestic spheres they knew behind. And while some fictional girls like Laura in Christina Rossetti’s Laura in “Goblin Market” (1862) or Princess Irene in George MacDonald’s *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) do have adventures, they generally return permanently to conventional and domestic settings — such as Laura and Lizzie’s nest-like home or Irene’s father’s castle out of which she previously snuck — following their adventures. In *Alice’s Adventures*, on the other hand, Alice not only repeatedly leaves these domestic spaces of her own accord, but she also disrupts their organization and stability as she does so. In the cupboard- and

shelf-filled rabbit-hole, Alice takes down a jar on the shelves marked “ORANGE MARMALADE” (Carroll 4) and, instead of returning it to its original place, she leaves it in another cupboard she passes. Alice physically disrupts the order and organization of the space by replacing the jar willy-nilly. Similarly, in the Duchess’s home, Alice decides to remove the Duchess’s baby because she thinks the Duchess and the Cook are “sure to kill it in a day or two” (52). Alice not only rejects these female figures’ abilities to raise a baby, but she also rearranges the stability of a home as the ideal setting to raise a child. In this way, Alice disrespects and interferes with the physical order and logical authority of domestic spaces and, by extent, rejects the Victorian ideal of domestically focused and obedient femininity.

As we can see here, Alice tends not to emulate or support the Victorian conventions of feminine obedience, polite behavior, or domesticity. Her intelligence-gaining actions in Wonderland and her interactions with its inhabitants reject the semblance of ornamental and domestic femininity and figure Alice not as a “plaything” (Armitt 157), but as a more chaotic, disobedient, and selfish creature of agency all her own. Instead of fulfilling the social ideals of femininity, Alice aligns more with the literary figure of developing masculinity that was especially present in the *Bildungsroman* genre form at the time. According to Auerbach, these *Bildungsroman* narratives “are usually novels of development, in which the boy evolves out of his inherent violence, ‘working out the brute’” (44-45). In *Alice’s Adventures*, Alice portrays a similar violent brutishness as well as a markedly predatory nature. She unsympathetically mentions her kitten Dinah, generally in reference to the cat’s “capital” (Carroll 17) aggressive abilities to chase, kill, and eat other creatures, among animals like mice and birds that the kitten could treat in the same way. She even figures herself at times as Dinah, adopting the cat’s predatory attitude, and, once, concedes that she is *like* a serpent in her taste for eggs. At one

point, Alice even resorts to physical violence for no discernible reason when she kicks Little Bill up and out of the White Rabbit's chimney. Later, a similar kind of bestial violence will be seen in the Queen of Hearts who acts, Alice notices, "like a wild beast" (68). While Alice associates herself with creatures with more predatory attitudes, the Wonderland animals she interacts with, in contrast, become "lugubrious victims" (Auerbach 36) to both her words and actions. In this way, Alice is not obedient and submissive, but instead becomes, like the boy characters at the start of *Bildungsroman* plots, violent and disobedient to established social guidelines.

Similarly, in Victorian literature, female characters, which often feature as mothers, sisters, nurses, etc., serve primarily as catalysts for their male counterparts' revelatory moments of maturation. Victorian authors even tended to associate girls with "a sustaining female imagination" (Knoepflmacher 9). This imagination was meant to nurture and aid in others' development, but, generally, the girls' own growth was static and unemotional. Alice, on the other hand, never lends her imagination or its nurturing potential with any other character in the story. Her motivation for traveling through Wonderland — the desire to reach the Queen's garden — is wholly her own and her inventive behavior is similarly self-serving and selfish. In one moment, Alice attempts to take on a nurturing role when she tries to save the Duchess's baby, worrying that it would "be murder to leave it behind" (Carroll 52). Her concern that the baby will be killed is extreme, and shows no maternal instinct to worry for its proper care or safety. Soon after, the baby transforms into a pig, and Alice's response parodies that of a reprimanding mother: "'If you're going to turn into a pig, my dear,' said Alice seriously, 'I'll have nothing more to do with you. Mind now!'" (52) Alice loses interest in the baby-turned-pig, and leaves it to fend for itself in the forest. The Victorian idea that a girl should only receive higher education in order to make her "a better wife and mother" in order to "educate and uplift



her (male) children” (Honig 68) would not have sat well with Alice’s self-serving, unsympathetic nature.

Alice is, instead, an independent girl and child in contrast to the nurturing, homebody ideal of femininity that Victorians pushed. Many children’s books from the time that followed in the wake of *Alice’s Adventures* featured girl characters — such as Maggie Browne’s *Wanted — A King* (1890); George Edward Farrow’s *The Wallypug of Why* (1895) and *The Little Panjandrum’s Dodo* (1899); George MacDonald’s *Cross Purposes* (1867)<sup>4</sup>, *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883) — that did not let said girl venture into the world on her own, but created more capable male counterparts to accompany and eventually overshadow her. Even in Christina Rossetti’s *Goblin Market* (1862), which preceded *Alice’s Adventures* and is sometimes lauded as a proto-feminist text, the rambunctious, curious sister Laura cannot survive without another character’s support and sustenance, while the tight-laced, moral sister Lizzie must sacrifice herself to provide sustenance and nurturance for a dying Laura. In *Alice’s Adventures*, on the other hand, Alice is never burdened by a companion, male, female, or otherwise, that she must sustain or to whom she must relinquish her agency. She exists in a vacuum of gendered interactions or hierarchies. While Victorian literature cast girls and other female characters as supporting cast members, Alice rejects dependence and instead survives Wonderland on the strength of her own independent agency.

After her many experiences in identifying established rules to alternately support and subvert as well as inventing many of her own in order to traverse her fantasy land, Alice has

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<sup>4</sup> In comparing these texts to *Alice’s Adventures*, Honig notes that MacDonald even named his heroine Alice though she is significantly different from Carroll’s Alice: “For Carroll, Alice needs no male to share the spotlight.... Successful in her independence, Alice falls into Wonderland alone, and she can puzzle her way out alone, as well” (75) while the other heroines mentioned here are eventually overshadowed and superseded by boys, kings, and other male figures.

accumulated enough knowledge and created enough of her own rules that she can begin to take control of interactions with Wonderland inhabitants as well as oust the current authority figures' tyrannical command. When she meets the King and the Queen of Hearts, Alice continues her process of choosing those rules that work to her advantage and inventing her own if none exist. She speaks to the royal court politely but decides she needn't show respect by bowing or prostrating because she had never "heard of such a rule" and she also judges that there'd be no value in such a rule "if people had all to lie down upon their faces so that they couldn't see" (Carroll 68) the procession. A prime example of Alice's thought process when rejecting established guidelines and improvising her own, this moment is also her first decisive act of disobedience toward Wonderland's monarchs. The girl's truculent insolence — which has been growing and developing since her arrival, and is, arguably, at its strongest in these interactions — draws the Queen's violently judgmental attention. When the Queen of Hearts threatens her with a beheading, however, Alice's response is decisive and effective:

The Queen turned crimson with fury, and after glaring at her for a moment like a wild beast, screamed "Off with her head! Off —"

"Nonsense!" said Alice very loudly and decidedly, and the Queen was silent. (68-69)

The Queen's violent and extreme emotions are reaching their peak in this moment; she is on the brink of turning bestial, to changing her body physically in a less controlled way than Alice before her, and the volume of her voice has reached a screaming height. Alice's response, which is loud but not uncontrolled<sup>5</sup> and logically decisive rather than emotionally governed, brings the

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<sup>5</sup> Alice is also often portrayed as matching the Queen's voice volume. When the Queen "shout[s]," Alice's responses is often to "shout[]" (Carroll 70) in return. The two characters' escalating volume could be read as a further competition to display and hold authority.

Queen's volume to silence, nullifying not only her threatening physical presence but also her threatening authority. In this way, the agency that Alice has accumulated through her improvisatory adaptation of inventing rules comes to a fore when she clashes with the ultimate authority of Wonderland and openly rejects its claims to power over her.

As *Alice's Adventures* comes to a close, Alice begins to notice that the nonsense and disorderly logic of Wonderland is getting out of control. Instead of letting Wonderland play with her mind and her individual agency, turning her into its compliant plaything, Alice reverses the objectification by judging and condemning the land and its inhabitants with her well-practiced ability to establish new rules. In the final court scene, Alice becomes outspoken, making her opinions known "in a loud, indignant voice" (94), even, at one point, interrupting the king because, she realizes, "she wasn't a bit afraid" (105) of doing so. While the rest of the court falls into disorderly shambles, with calls for verdicts before evidence, threats of violence against witnesses, as well as disappearing and unknowledgeable witnesses, Alice begins to grow to her real size again, breaking out of Wonderland's nonsense and away from its exasperating figures of authority. When the Dormouse warns her that she has "no right to grow *here*," Alice's response is a point-blank, bold challenge against the logic of Wonderland itself: "Don't talk nonsense" (97). She rejects the Dormouse's reprimand and replaces it with her own. Similarly, when the King attempts to invent a new rule in order to reject Alice from the court — "rule forty-two: *All persons more than a mile high to leave the court*" (103) —, Alice circumvents his authority. As an expert of effectively improvising rules, Alice sees through the rule that the King has just hastily scribbled down in front of her and judges it ineffective: "... that's not a regular rule: you invented it just now" (103). She refuses the monarch's order — "I sha'n't go, at any rate," she says — because she has learned how to filter the rules and figures of authority she has

encountered in order to reject or use their power as it suits her to the best advantage. In recognizing the nonsensical logic of Wonderland, Alice and her agency are at their strongest as her adventures and experiences of accumulating knowledge draw to a close.

Arguably, it is Alice's authority and manipulation that results in the events that close out *Alice's Adventures*. Though the judge and the jury of the Wonderland court prove ineffective and as much of "a nice muddle" (95) as she expected, Alice's judgment of the land and its inhabitants proves more effective. When Alice interrupts the court's proceedings with "Stuff and nonsense!" (107), she is passing judgment on the world and its inhabitants and defining it as something that has no authority over her. As Mendlesohn notes in her analysis of portal fantasy, these fantasy narratives tend to "lead us gradually to the point where the protagonist knows ... her world enough to change it and to enter into that world's destiny" (*Rhetorics of Fantasy* xix). In the same way, Alice has accumulated enough knowledge concerning rules and authority while traversing Wonderland that she can redefine its entire substance as mere "stuff." While criticism tends to suggest she is merely Wonderland's "plaything," Alice here turns the world of Wonderland into an object with negated authority over her. While the Queen's attempts to condemn her subjects to execution are, as the Griffin tells Alice, "all her fancy" (Carroll 81) — which draws a striking contrast between the Queen's unproductive "fancy" that hurts others and Alice's productive albeit self-nurturing imagination —, Alice's condemnation and destruction of the King and Queen, the court, and Wonderland does come to pass. She has gained the power to manipulate, create, or destroy and replaces the Queen's right to wildly judge, condemn, and destroy. Alice finalizes this with a cry of "Who cares for *you*? ... you're nothing but a pack of cards!" (107), reverting the Wonderland court to its true form. It is now the court, including its highest figures of authority that are literal playthings, now that they've been reverted into a pack

of playing cards. In the end, her accumulated intelligence and agency aid Alice in rejecting Wonderland's rules, authority figures, and its nonsense as well as redefining it as her plaything.

At the end of *Alice's Adventures*, when she awakes having interfered in Wonderland's existence and destiny and finds herself back on the bank of the river with her older sister, Alice finds herself immediately subjected to the authority of her older sister, who insists on framing her as a "little" (107) and "simple" (109) girl, obedient and willing to share her stories in order to nurture other children. The older sister's imagination, then, seems to wholly adhere to the constructions of femininity that Victorians held as ideal and preferable. When put in contact with Alice's own imagination, however, the older sister's mind is overrun with and overpowered by Alice's stronger, more potent ideas and dreams, "till she too began dreaming after a fashion" so that "the whole place around her became alive with the strange creatures of her little sister's dream" (107-8). Note the wild vibrancy, denoted by the words "alive" and "strange" here, that is associated with Alice's imagination as it invades the sister's more sensible mind and the "dull reality" (109) around her. Though Alice's older sister takes over the narrative for the final pages of *Alice's Adventures* and attempts to direct readers to imagine an older Alice with an ideally feminine "simple and loving heart" (109), bent on nurturing others, it is difficult to imagine Alice being willingly subjected to such a future. Instead, when the older sister imagines Alice making other little children's "eyes bright with many a strange tale" (109), we see Alice's domineering, creative imagination once again taking control and subjecting others to its disobedient authority. In this final glimpse of her in the text, Alice continues to subvert and reject those authoritative and ideal images of Victorian femininity and inconvenient guidelines, effectively retaining her agency subtly and quietly.

Ultimately, despite threats of humiliation, violence, and forced obedience from both inside and outside Wonderland, Alice successfully traverses this fantasy world by meeting and rearranging authority with the rules and guidelines she invents in her own metaphorical rulebook. Modern critics, like those inhabitants in Wonderland with whom Alice interacts, pigeonhole Alice into the role of “plaything,” without the agency or productive intelligence to subvert both authority figures and imposing social ideals that attempt to place her in an obedient, malleable, and powerless role. This interpretation of Alice as an ornamental, submissive object, which focuses on how others act on Alice rather than how she reacts and defines herself, aligns with contemporary critics’ categorization of *Alice’s Adventures* as an entertaining work of “pure sugar,” a child’s plaything devoid of educative or productive value. The ways in which Alice reacts to characters that attempt to exert authority over her change the terms of the game. Alice reverses the term of “plaything” back on those figures or social rules that try to subdue her. Wonderland and its inhabitants become Alice’s plaything: the knowledge of the world that she has accumulated and the rules that she has improvised and written in her metaphorical guidebook along the way make Wonderland her playground, a place whose rules she knows she can circumvent in order to get her way and whose rulers she knows she can control and subdue. In the end, Wonderland is Alice’s dream, and it is her curiously productive and adaptively improvisatory intelligence that aids her in gaining agency within it.

## Chapter 2: “Queen Lucy the Valiant” and the Imaginative Visionary

“Nothing there!” said Peter, and they all trooped out again — all except for Lucy. She stayed behind because she thought it would be worth while trying the door of the wardrobe, even though she felt almost sure that it would be locked. To her surprise it opened quite easily, and two moth-balls dropped out. (Lewis 6)

When the rest of her siblings see nothing, Lucy Pevensie almost always sees *something*. Critics of C.S. Lewis’s *Chronicles of Narnia* series, on the other hand, tend to notice as much about the youngest Pevensie as Peter, Susan, and Edmund do about the spare room’s wardrobe at first glance. Instead, when they consider the portrayal of female characters in the series, critics generally focus on the political and social gender hierarchy maintained within the land of Narnia by High Kings and great Lions, the “unfair treatment” of Lucy’s eldest sister at the end of the seven-part series — popularly referred to as “The Problem of Susan” after Neil Gaiman’s short story of the same title and topic —, or the White Witch’s genealogy which associates her with the Biblical figure Lilith. The young girl Lucy, the one child in the book who sees a relatively empty room and still thinks “it would be worth while trying the door of the wardrobe” (6), however, is generally noted as Lewis’s favorite. She is the child “most attuned to the will of Aslan” and, by extension, the most willing to submit to the lion’s divine authority (Rigney 153). Another critic argues that girls like Lucy in Narnia don’t hold agency, but passively “function as gateways for the boy protagonists, opening up the fantasy realm” (Rodriguez 192) for them and then following the boys’ traditionally patriarchal authority. The configuration offered in criticism, then, categorizes Lucy as a follower, a rule-abiding kind of child, and a young girl devoid of any semblance of individual agency. Like Lucy before us, then, we must look beyond the surface of the wardrobe to recast Lucy as not only an active female character in the plot of *LWW* but also as one whose intelligence aids in her accumulation of agency throughout her story.

In the process of reconfiguring Lucy as not a submissive female character and a follower but as an empowered and selfless leader in her own right, the young girl's intelligence as the creative and imaginative force behind the creation of her agency and her roles as a knowledgeable leader and a saint-like visionary must be emphasized and analyzed. As the discoverer of Narnia, Lucy is the character in the plot that knows the most about the magical land and it is down to her, as Sally Adair Rigsbee suggests, to teach this "secret knowledge to [her] less enlightened companions" (10). In this way, Lucy is not the follower of divine or patriarchal authority that some criticism suggests she is, but begins the adventure as its leader, eventually evolving into a spiritual leader with certain saintly qualities. During the course of the first Narnia story, while her brothers have their weapons and masculine authority and her sister her piercing rationality, Lucy discovers that "Narnia cannot be kept alive by swords alone" (Vincent and Koenig 209). Instead, Lucy discovers that her own belief in the world and its inhabitants can re-empower the land of Narnia itself. In the process of doing so and interacting with other figures of authority, Lucy also displays a tendency to not behave authoritatively or submissively as if the two traits were distinct and separate, but instead straddles the two as she sees fit. By reevaluating the ways in which Lucy accumulates knowledge, creating her own mode of intelligence and belief system that she will share, it is possible to see the youngest female character in *LWW* as not only a visionary leader, but a young girl with autonomous agency all her own.

Before Lucy Pevensie's agency can be re-explored, however, it is necessary to understand this female child's significance within the broader context of Lewis's personal theory on gender, a theory that was considered problematic within literary criticism and the evolving social context of his own time. When portraying gender, Lewis tended to espouse an exclusionary and hierarchical society that starkly separated the male and female genders. Lewis



seemed to even believe early in his life, as Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen suggests in her study of the evolution of Lewis's gender theory over time, that "human beings were so inescapably gendered ... that they were almost different species" (396). This inescapable gendering applied to social, intellectual, religious, and more interactions. A common complaint of he and his Oxford fellows was that women altogether were, on principle, "intellectually inferior ... [and] incompatible" (Frederick and McBride 7) with men. Lewis seemed to believe, then, that women were bound in a rigid set of subordinate gender roles that left them little autonomy in the real world — Lewis was known to deride the "New Women" that surfaced after the World Wars — and in his literature.

Though much of the criticism devoted to the author himself tends to focus on the problematically misogynistic aspects of his personal theory on gender, Lewis's own writing troubles his ideas of strict gender roles and traits and provides a distinct lens through which to consider the role of Lucy in contrast to the author's social ideology on gender roles and authority. Taking the gender divide a step further, Lewis defined a Platonic form-like hierarchical structure that establishes the male gender as the authoritative and the female as the submissive. Lewis argues that "masculine" and "feminine" are ideas separate entirely from the figures "man" and "woman," "male" and "female." Instead, Lewis's concept of masculinity and femininity makes them into symbolic archetypes, using "'masculine' as an umbrella term for strength, initiative, courtesy, frankness, and chivalry, and 'feminine' to mean tenderness, responsiveness, tact, and beauty" (Glyer 477). These delimited traits were strict, representing levels of authority: masculinity is authoritative while femininity is submissive. In joining the *Christian Scholar's Review* journal's debate on whether Lewis's gender bias did or did not evolve over time, Diana Pavlae Glyer qualifies Lewis's use of these traits in arguing that the

attributes were not meant to define a specific sex: “Lewis believed that every person should reflect *both* masculine traits and feminine traits. He says there ought to be ‘a man in every woman and a woman in every man’”<sup>6</sup> (Lewis *Collected Letters: Volume III* 159 qtd. 479). The gender-based hierarchy Lewis presents, then, is fluid so that one’s playing of the masculine-authoritative or feminine-submissive role was always shifting depending on social context.

This is the point at which Lucy Pevensie, young British child full of wonder for and devotion to the land of Narnia and to the Great Lion Aslan, begins to contrast sharply with the interaction between gender roles and authority that Lewis theorized. As the youngest child and as a girl, Lucy ought to be, according to Lewis’s own theory, an extremely submissive subject in the gender and power hierarchies present in *LWW*. In one of his apologetics, published in 1949, Lewis seemed set to write a traditionally submissive and gendered girl character: “I do not believe that God created an egalitarian world. I believe the authority of parent over child, husband over wife, learned over simple, to have been as much a part of the original plan as the authority of man over beast” (Lewis “Membership” 37 qtd. Van Leeuwen 400). These authoritative identities, however, are noticeably confused in the Narnia series: parents are absent and can exert no authority and the land’s greatest authority is a Lion — a beast in our own world. This presents a gap in Lewis’s own ideas through which we can consider how Lucy does not succumb to the author’s ideal feminine-submissive figure. While Lewis’s adult-gear literature tends to run rampant with women who are “adult female types” (Frederick and McBride 147) and vague symbols and binaries of spiritual morality, the character Lucy stands out for exemplifying the mobility between Lewis’s strict gender characteristics, straddling the divide

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<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, contrary to his own theories, Lewis himself uses the terms “man” and “woman” in this instance, even though he had previously argued that the gender traits of “masculinity” and “femininity” were wholly separate from the sexual identities “male” or “female.”

between the masculine-authoritative and feminine-submissive types throughout her journey through Narnia.

In *LWW*, other characters, especially her older siblings, assume Lucy Pevensie ought to be in a submissive role and do not recognize that she *could* be a leader, an assumption that she strives to break as she leads others into and through the land of Narnia. It seems Lewis himself experienced similar assumptions when creating the first text in the Narnia series. As evidenced by a scrap piece of notepaper of Lewis's, an initial concept for the story featured a young boy as the main character:

This book is about four children whose names were Ann, Martin, Rose and Peter. But mostly it was about Peter who was the youngest. They all had to go away from London suddenly because of the Air Raids, and because Father, who was in the army, had gone off to the war and Mother was doing some kind of war work. They were sent to stay with a relation of Mother's who was a very old Professor who lived by himself in the country. (qtd. Green and Hooper 303)

Apparently, the child character who was meant to function as the key into the land beyond the wardrobe almost *wasn't* a young girl. Compare this to the opening sentences of the final product we now know as *LWW*:

Once there were four children whose names were Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy. This story is about something that happened to them when they were sent away from London during the war because of the air-raids. They were sent to the house of an old Professor who lived in the heart of the country, ten miles from the nearest railway station and two miles from the nearest post office. (Lewis 3)

The general details of the two synopses — the war, refugee children, an old Professor’s country home — are similar. Very little about the story seems to have changed except for the role and gender of the youngest child. Emphasis in the rough draft synopsis highlights “mostly” the young boy Peter while the final product only mentions Lucy within the list of her siblings and the third-person plural pronouns “them” and “they.”<sup>7</sup> Though speculation as to *why* this change occurred focuses on the fact that Lewis dedicated the final product to Lucy’s namesake, his goddaughter Lucy Barfield, the switch from a boy protagonist to a girl protagonist speaks to Lewis’s personal gender theory, which painted — and confused symbolically in his writing — the feminine as subject to the hierarchical authority of the masculine.

It is not until the rest of Lucy’s siblings are fully within the wardrobe and Narnia that any of them begin to recognize the potential for a new, more active, and leaderly role for Lucy. In an effort to make up for refusing to believe her before, the eldest Peter insists, “I think Lu ought to be the leader ...; goodness knows she deserves it” (Lewis 57). Here, Peter portrays the activity of “leader” as if it were merely the principal role in the game follow-the-leader. With this, the eldest boy recognizes Lucy’s potential *in play* but is also establishing the groundwork for his own kingly authority by delegating roles. Peter does not seem able to acknowledge that his little sister could be — and, arguably, already *is* — the group’s leader. Lucy’s brother frames her as submissive to his authority, but Lucy, as we will see throughout this chapter, is already well on her way to thwarting the role assigned to her by both Lewis and her siblings and designing her own authoritative role as leader through the world of Narnia and, eventually, the spiritual realm.

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<sup>7</sup> While the original concept aimed to be “mostly ... about Peter,” the final product still filters the narrative through Lucy, also the youngest child. This focus on youngest children, the last-born, could serve as a secularization of the Christian doctrine that, “The last shall be first, and the first will be last” (*King James Bible Online*, Mat. 20:16). Though she is last, youngest, and least authoritative, Lucy is the first to enter Narnia and, ultimately, the most empowered. Thank you to my advisor Lisa Makman for this idea.

In order to gain the role of leader within her portal world and her social sphere among her siblings, Lucy, like Alice before her, must first invent herself as an authority of an important and significant resource. In Lucy's case, this resource is knowledge and an understanding of Narnia that only she can hold because she is the discoverer of the wardrobe's magic and the first of her siblings to enter the magical world beyond. Readers follow Lucy in to the magic woods and stand as witnesses to her discovery as she pushes against the boundaries between the real world and the fantasy world: "She took a step further in — then two or three steps — always expecting to feel woodwork against the tips of her fingers" (7). Lucy toes the transition between rainy, familiar England and snow-blanketed, unfamiliar Narnia and expects to hit a physical boundary, though she does not rule out the possibility to the contrary. Once within Narnia, however, Lucy discovers that there is another, more effective and productive way to feel: "Lucy felt a little frightened, but she felt very inquisitive and excited as well" (8). The diction here — characterized by the repetition of the verb "felt" — describes Lucy's first interactions with Narnia as ones of active feeling and emotion. As she discovers the fantastic world of Narnia, Lucy also discovers a unique ability of her own to make a deeply innate and emotionally receptive connection to the land and its inhabitants that will aid in her better understanding the world and her role in it.

Exemplifying this innate ability to "feel" her way and emotionally connect with Narnia is the way Lucy is especially attuned to and understands the inhabitants of Narnia, most of whom are either talking animals or mythological creatures. When interacting with the magic world and those creatures within it, Lucy's siblings tend to try and rationalize or substantiate the reasons they are doing so. For instance, when validating the decision to follow a robin through the woods, Peter responds to Edmund's statement that the children are "following a guide [they]

know nothing about” by referring to the proof to the contrary that he has found in texts and stories: “Still — a robin, you know. They’re good birds in all the stories I’ve ever read. I’m sure a robin wouldn’t be on the wrong side” (61-2). While Alice in *Alice’s Adventures* completely reinvents and proves malleable the literature that is meant to instruct her, Lucy rarely connects or interacts with physical texts, though the Faun’s stories of Narnia’s origins serve as her sustaining initiation into close familiarity with the world. Instead, Lucy relies not on printed or published proof but instead on how she innately and emotionally connects with the world of Narnia and its inhabitants. Because of this, she understands before her siblings when the land’s animals are feeling “as if [they] wanted to say something” (60) to the children and speaks to them without ever questioning if a response were possible or useful. In a similarly contrasting way, the Narnian Mr. Beaver portrays a reliance on physical appearance when he explains that those who have “been with the Witch” are always recognizable by “something about their eyes” (85). Though the Beavers also rely on proof, Lucy looks further, into an emotional realm that approaches others’ innate or spiritual essences. For instance, when she meets Mr. Tumnus, she acknowledges his “strange, but pleasant little face” (10) but trusts him for another reason altogether. The girl and the Faun’s first interaction is littered with highly emotional responses to each other: Mr. Tumnus gives “a start of surprise” (10), speaks for a moment “in a rather melancholy voice,” and is a kind, polite gentleman throughout; Lucy is highly inquisitive, asking questions, and finds herself “almost laughing” (12) while conversing with him. Lucy and Mr. Tumnus’s emotions closely align and culminate in the Faun suddenly breaking down in tears and Lucy beginning to “[feel] rather frightened” (17). Hearing his plight, Lucy lets go of her own emotions and calms Mr. Tumnus by challenging his choice of alliance with the White Witch and

convinces — even orders<sup>8</sup> — the Faun to let her return home. She sees more to him in, possibly, his spiritual and moral center, than a single moment of treachery. Because of her emotional connection to his innate being, Lucy knows, without having met another Faun, that Mr. Tumnus is the “nicest Faun [she’s] ever met” (18). This emotional affinity with the world of Narnia and its creatures allows Lucy to connect to and understand both as well as the world’s moral and emotional territories.

Because Lucy is open to both the imaginative possibility of Narnia’s existence and to communicating and connecting with its inhabitants, she accumulates significant knowledge conducive to traversing the world once she brings her siblings in too. After two teas with Mr. Tumnus, Lucy is well aware of the land’s recent history and political state. Peter, seeking the moral action when faced by Mr. Tumnus’s arrest, asks Lucy what she knows:

“Who is this Queen, Lu?” said Peter. “Do you know anything about her?”

“She isn’t a real queen at all,” answered Lucy; “she’s a horrible witch, the White Witch. Everyone — all the wood people — hate her. She has made an enchantment over the whole country so that it is always winter here and never Christmas.” (59)

Here, Lucy is contrasted with two sets of authority that intend, whether consciously or unconsciously, to subordinate her own. First is that of the White Witch whose authority and power as both a witch and the current Queen of Narnia are threatening and seemingly insurmountable. Lucy, however, recognizes and identifies the Witch’s authority as false and unjustly maintained; like Narnia’s inhabitants, she rejects the Witch’s claim to power over her and others. The second authority portrayed here is that of her eldest brother Peter, who, as a

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<sup>8</sup> Lucy also portrays an ability to *take* an authoritative leadership role when necessary, stepping up as a commanding authority over Mr. Tumnus when the Faun falls into an emotional mess.

traditional male character, must aspire to be the moral and patriarchal authority of the band of siblings. However, Peter's leadership must be ranked below Lucy's for now because, at this point, she is the most all-knowing of the four children. Lucy is aware of how "the wood people," Narnia's key inhabitants, feel in this time of political oppression. By citing her original source, Mr. Tumnus, Lucy also lends herself substantial credibility. When she says the White Witch is a "perfectly terrible person" who does "all kinds of horrible things" (42), her siblings, unfamiliar with Narnia, must listen to her because she is the one who has the most informative and useful knowledge about it. Eventually, Peter and Susan turn readily to Lucy with questions like, "What do you think, Lu?" (65) With this, Lucy's connection to both her imagination and to Narnia accumulates productive knowledge for her that not only aids herself and her siblings but also solidifies her authority and prompts others to follow her leadership.

Unlike Alice before her, Lucy does not exist in a gender vacuum and is set up in opposition to her male companions — her brothers Peter and Edmund — throughout *LWW*. At the start, Lucy's experience, knowledge, and claim to a leadership role contrasts with her brother Edmund's, who accidentally follows Lucy in to Narnia before the others. The ways in which Lucy and Edmund interact with Narnia and are influenced by their initial entrances into it serve to accentuate the useful and more sustaining authority that Lucy creates for herself. First, both children's initial contacts with the fantastical world will inform the way each treats and interacts with the world thereafter. Lucy meets first the Faun, Mr. Tumnus, while Edmund enters and is immediately intercepted by the White Witch, the narrative's antagonist. Mr. Tumnus is all manners, bowing and begging pardon. "Excuse me — I don't want to be inquisitive" (11), he says, the image of a well-mannered but quiet Englishman, complete with scarf and umbrella. The White Witch, on the other hand, is immediately imposing and intimidating; Edmund decides



quite quickly that he “did not like the way she looked at him” (33). The White Witch’s sledge, reindeer, dwarf driver, and person — she was “a great lady, taller than any woman that Edmund had ever seen” (31) — are also all markedly foreign and unfamiliar to Edmund. Likewise, the food and forms of sustenance offered to the two siblings by their Narnian companions are markedly distinct as well. At tea with Mr. Tumnus, the spread involves hearty, simple, typically British fare: “There was a nice brown egg, lightly boiled, . . . and then sardines on toast, and then buttered toast, and then toast with honey, and then a sugar-topped cake” (15). While the spread is abundant, it is still, as Rachel Towns identifies it, “good, sustaining British food” (Towns 18). In partaking of Mr. Tumnus’s simple, honest meal, Lucy is framed as morally good in contrast with Edmund’s consuming of the White Witch’s Turkish delight, a foreign delicacy that is coded as “threatening” (Alston 106 qtd. 20) and ambiguous for its unfamiliarity. While Edmund selfishly sates himself on sweets that are of little substance but will fuel an unhealthy, wicked desire for more, Lucy consumes healthy, familiar British food and a significant amount of fascinating Narnian facts and lore. In this way, Edmund finds himself inducted into Narnia by a character adept at untruths and manipulation, whose own selfish pursuits corrupt him and convince the impressionable young boy to betray and manipulate his own family. Lucy, in contrast, is convinced of the good possible in Narnia and uncovers its truths and her own reservoir of sustaining and authoritative knowledge. By contrasting the two youngest Pevensies’ first interactions with Narnia, it is possible to see how Edmund and Lucy have been initiated into the world by two very different power structures — one of dishonest, morally corrupt tyranny and another that demonstrates the power of kindness, sustenance, and moral goodness. In contrast to her morally ambiguous male companion, then, Lucy accumulates knowledge of Narnia and its

power dynamics that aids her in taking on the role of an authoritative leader that will aid her siblings, the land of Narnia, and its inhabitants in the face of the Witch's evil enchantments.

Lucy also builds and invents her own authority in the land of Narnia as she is constructed in the role of a visionary with certain qualities of a saint whose honesty, faith, and moral goodness make her an effective leader. Lucy's insistence on believing in Narnia's existence is unique among her siblings. She is the child that chooses to stay behind and take a closer look at the insignificant, mundane-looking wardrobe, going "further in" (Lewis 7) and beyond the wardrobe's real-world space to discover the fantasy world of Narnia. While Colin Manlove argues that Lucy one-dimensionally fulfills the "enlightened soul" character type in comparison to Susan's "body" and Peter's "reason" (35), there seems to be more empowerment to her "enlightenment" than just spiritual superiority. In analyzing Lucy's imaginative and innate interaction with the world of Narnia, Rigsbee identifies the youngest Pevensie as a heroine who is "gifted in imagination, and therefore, readily accept[s] a fantasy realm as a valid reality" (10). There is never a moment in which Lucy rejects the land of Narnia; she accepts the queerness of half-men, half-goats; talking animals; and a land that is always winter but never Christmas. While Edmund sees Narnia and denies its existence — "There's nothing there really" (Lewis 45) —, Lucy does not stop believing. Rigsbee further suggests that "believing in the reality of the fantasy realm represents a necessary openness to the deeper levels of the psyche" (10) in which the fantastic and archetypal reign. Lucy, then, sees beyond the everyday, beyond the physical. Because she remains open and receptive to the deeper realm of the spiritual, Lucy is able to both develop and claim the authority of a visionary during the children's journey.

With the role of visionary come certain obstacles and challenges that Lucy must surmount in order to complete the invention of her leadership role in her portal world. The

hardships that Lucy must undergo before others recognize her potential — including rejection, disbelief, resilience, and treachery — are notably similar to those of a saint. First, when Lucy tries to share her discovery and ideas with her siblings, Peter, Susan, and Edmund reject the possibility of Narnia on a logical and rational basis. Lucy demands the three “come and see” what she has discovered, but they take this request literally and only “see” what they see in front of them: “... they all saw — Lucy saw herself — a perfectly ordinary wardrobe” (Lewis 25). Here, Peter, Susan, and Edmund’s reliance on solidity and superficial reality infects even Lucy, and all she finds now is an ordinary wardrobe with no wintry woods or fauns waiting for her inside. Because she is the youngest child, Lucy’s knowledge of Narnia is met with “outright skepticism just because [she] was too young to have earned any credibility” (McClymer 112) among her siblings. This skepticism can be seen in the way that Peter and Susan devalue Lucy as just “a young kid” (Lewis 45) who is “making up a story for fun” (25) because her story seems to be too illogical for them to fathom until they are open to her belief.

Despite the skepticism, disbelief, and rejection that she faces at the start of her adventures, Lucy remains resilient in believing in Narnia and supporting her own experience and authority. Initially, the youngest Pevensie tries to sway her siblings into believing, insisting “really and truly” and “honestly” (26) that she wasn’t pulling a hoax or telling tales. She is distraught that the others will not listen to her, and, “[a]lthough she never doubts her own vision, her selfhood is damaged by the lack of faith of those she loves” (Rigsbee 11). Lucy’s self-confidence, then, is shaken momentarily by the fact that that others thought she was telling lies; she aligns with her own emotions and recognizes that this makes her feel “very unhappy” (Lewis 26). Despite the others’ whispers of doubt and disbelief, Lucy does not give up on Narnia. She escapes to the wardrobe during a game of hide-and-seek and enters for a second time to prove to

herself that “Narnia and the Faun had not been a dream” (27). By rejecting in turn her older siblings’ rejection, Lucy also rejects the semblances of authority they have tried to establish in the unfamiliar situation they find themselves in as war refugees in the English countryside. When Peter and Susan reprimand her for being silly and what they believe is too imaginative, Lucy disinclines to acquiesce to the order the two eldest siblings have attempted to establish in their otherwise disorganized lives:

“I don’t care what you think, and I don’t care what you say. You can tell the Professor or you can write to Mother or you can do anything you like. I know I’ve met a Faun in there and — I wish I’d stayed there and you are all beasts, beasts.”  
(46)

Here, Lucy rejects every figure of authority that Peter and Susan could potentially threaten her with as well as the rational logic the two are trying to impose on her. Peter and Susan’s logic relies on the teachings of the British education system of the World War II era with which Lewis seemed to disagree: “In Lewis’s opinion, the thing most likely to cause young readers to lose faith in the non-factual (but true) is an education system designed to kill imagination, curiosity, and the spirit” (Dorwick 59). Notably, the attributes Dorwick lists are Lucy’s strongest assets. Unlike her eldest siblings, Lucy resorts to relying on her own experience and openly imaginative knowledge — “I *know*,” she says — as the proof of Narnia’s existence. Significantly, the Professor, an adult icon of wisdom and intellectual authority, rejects Peter and Susan’s lines of logic and uses his own imaginative logic to support and align with Lucy’s. Even as those closest to her reject her belief and imagination, Lucy maintains a strong and resilient hold on her belief in and visionary authority on the land of Narnia.

By comparing Lucy's quasi-saintly attributes with those detailed in a saint's life, it is possible to discover how the young girl's role as a visionary simultaneously supports and circumvents the traditional constructions of gendered authoritativeness and submissiveness. In the medieval text *The Golden Legend*, also known as *Lives of the Saints*<sup>9</sup> and first compiled in 1275 and first translated to English in 1483, there is a legend of St. Lucy<sup>10</sup>, a blessed virgin and a martyr. In the legend, the female saint selflessly prays for her mother to be healed by God's will and, when this miracle comes to pass, she decides to live a holier, more Christian life. She is, however, brought to the attention of a local Roman judge who condemns her to be executed as a Christian. When the Romans try to carry out the death sentence, however, "the Holy Ghost made her so pesant and heavy that in no wise might they move her from the place" (*Golden Legend*; sic). In the same way, Lucy in *LWW* resiliently "abode still" (*Golden Legend*) even in the face of her siblings' rejection and disbelief. St. Lucy explains her own resilience as "the work of God, and if thou settest thereto yet ten thousand they should not move me" (*Golden Legend*). This "work of God" is a physical representation of the saint's undying belief and immovable commitment to her faith. The authority of the feminine is bolstered and strengthened over that of the masculine pagans by the support of a higher power. In contrast to St. Lucy, whose immoveable body and faith are attributed directly to God, Lucy's resolute belief does not come from an ultimate (spiritual) authority — the ultimate masculine, according to Lewis's theory on gender — but instead from her own belief in herself and what she knows to be true of Narnia. So

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<sup>9</sup> Thank you to University Prof. Catherine Sanok for suggesting the possible correlations and contrasts to be found in *The Golden Legend or Lives of the Saints*.

<sup>10</sup> While there is no reason to assume Lucy's character stems specifically from the legend of a saint of the same name, it does seem possible to apply the assumption to Lewis's own interest in the virgin saints' lives tradition as a renowned medievalist himself. This comparison of Lucy Pevensie and St. Lucy of Sicily does not aim to definitively connect these two figures, but only to compare and contrast the fictional girl character with the tradition of blessed virgin martyrs that appears in the medieval texts with which Lewis would have most likely been familiar.

while Lucy, in portraying attributes of resilience and resolute belief in her own discoveries and ideas, fulfills the role of a saintly figure, exemplified here by the virgin martyr St. Lucy from *The Golden Legend*, she can also be seen to create her own distinct authority as a visionary and empower herself despite others' incredulity and lack of faith in her.

The final saintly attribute that Lucy portrays is selflessness. When it comes to sharing her new knowledge and discovery with her siblings, Lucy is unselfish and wholly willing to do so: “‘Come on then,’ said Lucy, ‘let’s find the others. What a lot we shall have to tell them! And what wonderful adventures we shall have now that we’re all in it together’” (Lewis 43). For Lucy, her experiences in Narnia are not quite complete without her siblings sharing them and the opportunity to further enlighten those she loves is thrilling to her. Lucy is also altruistic in another way, namely in why she wishes to return to Narnia. While Alice’s *telos* of the beautiful garden was wholly selfish and self-serving, Lucy’s *telos* — to rescue Mr. Tumnus from the White Witch — is markedly more selfless and emphasizes her concern for others as well as her willingness to sacrifice her own priorities and safety for those of others. When faced by the Faun’s violent arrest, Lucy’s siblings become nervous that Narnia “‘doesn’t seem particularly safe;” Susan even suggests that they should return home because their adventures aren’t going to be “‘much fun” (59) with the threat of the White Witch hanging over them. But Lucy refuses to leave because she is concerned about and loyal to her new friend. She speaks up and says, “‘We can’t just go home, not after this. It is all on my account that the poor Faun has got into this trouble.... We simply must try and rescue him” (59). This objective is often the first topic of her interactions with other Narnians thereafter and is, in a way, a heroic journey all its own that Lucy actively defines and perseveres as the story continues. Lucy’s quasi-saintly character traits — though her martyrdom is never literally enacted but instead displaced onto Aslan — of

empowering belief, resilience in the face of skepticism, and selfless motives, then, serve to not only portray the young girl as a visionary but also as one with agency and authority.

In the face of the authority of older siblings, adults, talking animals, the White Witch, and the Witch's evil lackeys, Lucy and her belief in her own visionary authority never wavers except in the rare instance when she cedes her authority to the spiritual and political power of Aslan, the Great Lion and one true king of Narnia. Once she and her siblings and Mr. and Mrs. Beaver reach Aslan's camp three-quarters of the way through *LWW*, Lucy's role as leader is no longer wholly necessary because the Great Lion is present. Her spiritual openness and visionary connection to the land of Narnia — and, by extension, Aslan — does not, however. She innately understands Aslan in much the same way as she did the land and its creatures before: emotionally. When Lucy first meets Aslan, she looks past his physical aesthetic and into his emotions: "Up to that moment, Lucy had been thinking how royal and strong and peaceful his face looked; now it suddenly came into her head that he looked sad as well" (129). Lucy registers Aslan's minute emotions and finds herself spiritually aligned with the Great Lion. Later, she is emotionally aware of the closeness she shares with him, "[feeling] sure that she need say no more and that Aslan knew all they had been thinking" (149). Though the "they" referred to here includes Lucy's older sister, it is Lucy who recognizes and revels in how she *feels* and connects with him. Words between the two of them are not necessary, only feelings. Lucy joins with Aslan emotionally and spiritually in a way the other children do not; only the White Witch comes as close, and only then when she is killed by the Great Lion in battle. With this connection, Lucy becomes a subordinate counterpart to the Lion, doing as he tells her and fulfilling many of the same roles as he does. For instance, both Lucy and Aslan are able to liberate, save, and nurture the land of Narnia and its inhabitants: Aslan is able to free the

Narnians the White Witch turned to stone with his own breath while Lucy saves the lives of many warriors in the final battle with the healing cordial given to her by Father Christmas. The language of these scenes make it so Aslan has “liberated” (171) and “restored” those on whom he bestows his gift while Lucy is merely “attending to the wounded” (179), like a bedside nurse in wartime. By considering the interactions and transfer of power between Lucy and the Great Lion, it is possible to see the ways in which the young girl is analogous to Aslan but also subordinate and submissive to his authority overall.

While Lucy serves as Aslan’s spiritual analogue, her older brother Peter serves as a contrasting male counterpart to Lucy as he is framed as an ideal figure of patriarchal political authority and is similarly aligned to Aslan. These two male characters’ alliance is, notably, acknowledged more openly by the Lion than his with Lucy is. Aslan requests that the eldest brother accompany him and converse with him and readily shares his military and political campaign plans with Peter. Between these two male figures of authority, aggressive and protective action is relied on as significant resources. The Great Lion seems to adhere to and pass on to Peter the belief that the sword and battle are most efficient and most productive in restoring Narnia. Similarly, Aslan openly declares his intent to also pass on to Peter the future political state of Narnia: “I show it [Cair Paravel] to you because you are the first born and you will be High King over all the rest” (130). Significant here is that, just as Aslan is the authority above all the other creatures of Narnia, Peter will be the authority above his fellow rulers; Aslan has established the monarchy of Narnia as one in which Peter’s siblings are to be his political subordinates — the feminine to his masculine, to borrow the terms from Lewis’s personal theory on gender. The political alignment of these two paradigms of male/patriarchal authority is portrayed as a paramount ideal, but it is a power dynamic that Lucy circumvents. She does not



perform Lewis's feminine-submissive character type, but instead sidesteps Peter's power and raises herself to parallel his authority by seeking out knowledge of her own accord. For example, when Aslan is leaving for his sacrifice at the Stone Table, Lucy feels that "something dreadful is going to happen to him" (148). Instead of waiting to be informed of what has occurred, Lucy insists on leaving camp to follow Aslan and to discover the answer for herself. In doing so, Lucy portrays a belief that contradicts the authoritative male reliance on action, aggression, and visible power and instead proves, as previously mentioned, that "Narnia cannot be kept alive by swords alone" (Vincent and Koenig 209).

Ultimately, Lucy recognizes that, like Aslan, her belief and her newfound agency must be shared with the greater good in order to revitalize it; the authority she accumulates, then, is subordinated to the larger quest of saving and maintaining the peace in Narnia. The people she saves and nurtures do not forget her sacrifice, however, and name her and revere her as "Queen Lucy the Valiant" (Lewis 184). She contrasts with her sister Susan, whose title "the Gentle" is markedly coded as feminine and less powerful in comparison to her brothers' — "High King Peter the Magnificent" and "King Edmund the Just" (Lewis 184). Lucy's title, on the other hand, is on par with Peter's, the "great warrior" (183), and celebrates her bold, brave, and courageous ("Valiant," Def. 2) nature as well as her great worth (Def. 4) to her Narnian subjects. As she grows older as a Queen of Narnia, she remains herself, separate and individual: "But as for Lucy, she was always gay and golden-haired, all the princes in those parts desired her to be their Queen" (Lewis 184). Though marriage proposals, aimed to subdue her politically and domestically, are offered, Lucy remains distinct from others' power and influence over her. Though she submits to a lower political office than her brother, the High King, she balances this with her own authority and agency as a valiant queen and visionary nurturer of her people.

All in all, while many readers and critics judge her to be a subservient follower and the least subversive of the female characters that appear in *LWW*, resulting in criticism ignoring her role and agency in the text, Lucy's imaginative, spiritual, and emotionally-invested intelligence can be seen to aid her in becoming a valiant leader and empowering herself in the fantasy world of Narnia. It is Lucy's resilient faith in her own imagination and her belief in Narnia's existence and magic that not only invents her agency but creates a passage through which her siblings can enter the world and a resource with which its inhabitants can regain control of the world as well. While C.S. Lewis's own personal theory on gender as well as figures of masculine authority like Lucy's eldest brother Peter and the Great Lion Aslan are constructed in order to subdue her based on gender and power roles, Lucy manages to circumvent as well as bow to each as she sees fit, always maintaining control of her own intelligent and agented resource. An interesting aspect of Lucy, though she does not wholly submit to gender roles, is that she is altruistic and self-sacrificing, fulfilling certain qualities of a saintly visionary as she accumulates her power and agency in order to share it and empower others. Lucy's intelligence aids her in cultivating an emotional and spiritual attunement with Narnia and its inhabitants that gains her agency as well as loyalty and creates her into a beloved and valiant Queen of Narnia.

### Chapter 3: The Valuable Logic, “Books! And Cleverness!” of Hermione Granger

On Harry’s other side, Percy Weasley and Hermione were talking about lessons (“I *do* hope they start straight away, there’s so much to learn, I’m particularly interested in Transfiguration, you know, turning something into something else, of course, it’s supposed to be very difficult....”) (Rowling 93-94)

Harry Potter’s fellow first-year, Hermione Granger, is constructed immediately to her classmates and to readers as a dedicated learner who relies on the accumulated acquisition of knowledge via hard work, reading, and practice. Although she has made sure to overachieve and to read every book for every class over summer holidays, Hermione expresses especial interest in the subject of Transfiguration, the magic art of “turning something into something else” (94). The young girl concedes, while breaking into the narrative via the above parenthetical dialogue, that it will be a difficult subject, and introduces her listeners to her dedication to learning and accomplishing new, challenging things. Hermione’s inclination for Transfiguration also serves as a symbol for her own struggles in becoming a witch and an accepted and valued member of the wizarding world and school. By cultivating her academic focus and magic skills, Hermione undergoes a kind of self-transfiguration as she attempts to turn herself into something else: an empowered witch. By tracing the ways in which Hermione, whom Rowling once described as a “strong female character who [is] primarily about brain” (HarryPotterAdmirer), invents and cultivates an academic and uniquely logical authority of her own in *Philosopher’s Stone*, this chapter reconsiders this young girl’s scholarly and dedicated intelligence and its invention of her valuable agency — which goes beyond mere “braininess” — at Hogwarts. Moreover, rather than assuming that she is a disempowered girl in a male-heavy social sphere, this chapter reconstructs Hermione as not a traditionally supportive female character but as one that is independent and agented at the same time that she interacts with male companions.

Though much of the criticism of Rowling's Harry Potter series does acknowledge that Hermione is a notably intelligent female character, the feminist lens through which some critics have read the character disparages her as lacking agency on the grounds that she is not only one of the text's secondary characters but also because she also seems to cater so willingly to the needs of her gendered social sphere. Some feminist criticism of the whole series laments any and all female characters that appear in it, arguing, as Elizabeth E. Heilman does, that "the *Harry Potter* books feature females in secondary positions of power and authority" (222), effectively stripping the female characters of agency. In the same vein, Tison Pugh and David L. Wallace note that "women's agency in the books is muted" and "limited" (269). In the particular case of the character of Hermione, critics lament her role as the only girl among the three main characters, asserting that this position results in the subjugation of her intelligence and magical agency to the boys' needs. She becomes, according to critics, not an accomplice but a willingly disempowered resource: "Hermione is so wrapped up in Harry's goals that hers may be suppressed or unrealized" (Heilman and Donaldson 145). Hermione is seen, generally, to function on the male hero's sidelines as well as to fulfill the traditional gender role of the less valuable, supportive, emotional, and submissive female, all of which leads to the assumption that she and her agency are suppressed and undervalued in the text.

The criticism that results from these views of Hermione's character, however, seems misguided by the assumption that a female character must be obviously subversive of her social sphere in order to hold agency. As Ernelle Fife remarks, "Hermione is another warrior figure easily dismissed as merely a sidekick, even by some feminists, oddly enough, whose analyses of her strong character seem limited to counting the number of times she shrieks or squeals" (158-159). In dismissing Hermione as fulfilling a position of inferiority to her male companions,

criticism of Hermione in *Philosopher's Stone* also dismisses the valuable, authoritative, and empowering potential stemming from her intelligence. While some suggest her goals and agency are “suppressed or unrealized” by Harry’s heroics, Hermione, as the essential underestimated sidekick — a character type commonly “overlooked by virtue of their positions as the hero’s companions or secondary characters” (Campbell 10) — and outsider at school, can be seen to apply herself to her studies and the acquisition of magical knowledge not just so she can support her male companions but also to further her own academic authority and prove her unique relevance and value at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

Before we continue, however, it is important to recall that Hermione Granger is *not* the primary protagonist of Rowling’s worldwide bestselling children’s series. That role goes to the title character Harry, a boy whose every characteristic and flaw is exceptional to both the magic-folk and the readers that meet him. He is, at only a year old, “famous ... a legend — there will be books written about Harry — every child in [the magic] world will know his name!” (Rowling 15) Hermione, by contrast, is often framed by critics as a member of the supporting cast. She is, in fact, a key member of what Rowling refers to as “the big seven” (Warner Bros. Studios) and which includes the series’ most influential characters: Harry Potter, Ronald Weasley, Hermione Granger, Neville Longbottom, Luna Lovegood, Ginny Weasley, and Draco Malfoy. Among the three main characters, often referred to in popular criticism as the “Golden Trio,” Hermione is the only female with Harry and Ron and is often interpreted as the hero’s subordinate, useful only when needed, and — especially in the first book — his annoying sidekick. Although Ron could also be considered a sidekick, he features more as the loyal knight of the Round Table to Harry’s altruistic and honorable King Arthur. This leaves Hermione as the odd (wo)man out.

Though she enters the new world of magic with the same sense of unfamiliarity and intrusion as Harry, Hermione recognizes that gaining agency or any leverage at all at Hogwarts will require her to cultivate a certain kind of authority uniquely her own. The need to prove herself that Hermione intuits early on stems from the fact that both she and Harry, children from the non-magic world entering the magic world for the first time, are at a liminal, or transitional, stage. Hermione, Harry, and other first years like them who come from the world of Muggles, or “non-magic folk” (Rowling 43), are at a stage where they “fall between categories, in that they neither belong to their previous group nor have been incorporated into their new group” (Lacoss 74). As an outsider, Hermione aims to complete this transition, to enter and be incorporated into the magic world, and she senses that she must prove herself to insiders to do so. Harry, on the other hand, needs to prove his worth a bit less than Hermione in this transitional process because he grew up “dislocated from his rightful environment” and, in entering Hogwarts, is being “returned to [his] proper position in the social hierarchy” (Nikolajeva “Harry Potter and the Secrets of Children’s Literature” 229). Unlike other students who grew up in the Muggle world, Harry already has a “rightful environment” and “proper position” because he was born to two magical parents; he is all magic and resembles the displaced, stolen child of fairy lore. Harry excels in the wizarding world because he possesses abilities and powers that are, as Farah Mendlesohn suggests, “inherited” (“Crowning the King” 163) rather than the result of his own learning or strength. Some examples of these inherited attributes include Harry’s “inherited” magic blood — and money — from his deceased parents; the exceptional Quidditch skills credited to his father; and the ability to physically defend himself against evil ascribed to his mother’s undying love. Harry is rarely, if ever, challenged to prove that he can “act with anything that can be called his own or the result of hard work and application” (163). In contrast,

Hermione is challenged to create magic powers, authoritative agency, and acceptance that can be “called [her] own.”

At the same time, Hermione and other Muggle-borns must contend with an at times rampant prejudice that stems from their “pureblood” peers — those of “pure” wizard lineages, untouched by non-magic blood — who are less willing to accept students who were not born into magic families. This prejudice is first introduced to the series by Harry’s future nemesis, Draco Malfoy. Upon meeting the protagonist, the Malfoy boy first insists on verifying that Harry belongs to the pureblood “kind,” then adds, “I really don’t think they should let the other sort in, do you? They’re just not the same, they’ve never been brought up to know our ways” (Rowling 61). With the use of words like “kind” and the more derogatory “sort,” Malfoy sets up an ideologically strict separation between pureblood students and Muggle-born students<sup>11</sup>. Because Hermione and other Muggle-borns were not born into the wizarding world, the prejudice exists that their magic is not innate and therefore not valuable. The animosity that some “pureblood” students at Hogwarts direct at Muggle-born peers serves, as Lisa Hopkins suggests, to devalue acquired knowledge (25), revealing the belief that the craft of magic can only be innate, not learned or acquired over time. Those few witches and wizards that promote this almost-racial prejudice will surreptitiously use it against Hermione and construct her as an outsider with low intellectual or social authority or value.

In the space of Hogwarts, however, Hermione and other students entering from the Muggle-world have the opportunity to prove that this prejudice against both their blood and their

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<sup>11</sup> Significantly, readers know that Harry, though the son of a wizard and a Muggle-born witch, and therefore all magic, was also not “brought up to know” the ways of the magic world. With this knowledge, readers are already able to circumvent the “pureblood” ideology that Malfoy espouses, but Hermione’s success despite the prejudice she faces serves as undeniable proof to both readers and other students at Hogwarts.

ability to acquire knowledge is ill-founded and not valuable to magic society. At school, there is, “both literally and figuratively, a level playing field” (Hopkins 26) when it comes to learning magic and other skills, even for those who believe they have a privileged and innate advantage over others. That is to say, every first year “starts at the beginning at Hogwarts” (Rowling 61), whether or not they have been “brought up” by an all-magic family. Similarly, Rubeus Hagrid assures a worried Harry that there are “loads of people who come from Muggle families and they learn quick enough” (76). Not only does this line foreshadow Hermione’s extraordinary academic excellence, but it also contrasts sharply with Malfoy’s prejudice against acquired learning. Instead, Hogwarts emphasizes the practice and process of learning and acquiring knowledge, which Hermione also values.

In fact, Hermione embodies these nondiscriminatory and process-oriented values of the magical school more than other students in *Philosopher’s Stone* and, in this way, she most shows her authoritative agency and intelligence as she establishes and secures an advantage in the class- and race-like competition among her peers. In order to cultivate this academic and scholarly authority and prove to others that she belongs, Hermione invents and presents a dedicated and intelligent persona to her fellow students. One way that this persona comes across is the way in which she attempts to insert herself into the center of the new world, although, until she becomes friends with Harry, she lands somewhere at its periphery. For example, the reader’s and Harry and Ron’s first introduction to Hermione is in a scene on the Hogwarts Express, the train that transports the students to the magic school, when she bursts in on the boys’ budding friendship and their train compartment. Hermione commandeers the scene with “a bossy sort of voice, lots of bushy brown hair and rather large front teeth” (79). These descriptors show Hermione filling up others’ physical and mental space with her abundant hair and her demanding way of speaking



and ordering the boys about; even her “large front teeth” seem to hold a dominating presence. She forgets to introduce herself by name until she has finished exhibiting how much she has already learned over summer holidays. Once they arrive at school, Hermione is an especially talkative character, always just at the edge of the Harry-focused narration: “No one was talking much except Hermione Granger, who was whispering very fast about all the spells she’d learnt and wondering which one she’d need. Harry tried hard not to listen to her” (86). Her dialogue is often described as “fast” and, similarly, tends to be driven by run-on sentences, portraying an earnestness and urgency in the young girl. In this scene as well as others, Hermione tends to be an especially noticeable exception — always talking more than other characters, or knowing the answer to a question few other students know, or purposefully getting in the way of Harry and Ron’s first-term shenanigans — to her fellow first years and, in this way, establishes her intellectual authority to both the boys, other students, and readers.

Another way the text portrays Hermione’s invention of an authoritative and valuable persona for herself is in its emphasis on her dedication to and eagerness for learning and scholarship. For the majority of the first years’ first term at Hogwarts, Hermione features prominently in classroom scenes, often in order to emphasize her academic and magic successes in contrast to her classmates’ struggles. Her body language, noticed often by Harry, portrays her as eager: “... she was on the edge of her seat and looked desperate to start proving that she wasn’t a dunderhead” (102). Her goal is to prove that she is not only enthusiastic but also that she is as intelligent as her teachers and classmates. With this in mind, Hermione’s tactics for cultivating her intelligence are markedly based in books, homework, and diligent practice. She is constantly listing books she has read “for background reading” because she wanted to “[find] out everything [she] could” (79) before arriving at Hogwarts and starting classes. Hermione reads,

studies, and prepares to gain knowledge from the pages of a book rather than from improvisatory experience and mistakes, as Harry tends to do. At one point, Harry notices Hermione is “nervous” when learning “something [she] couldn’t learn by heart out of a book — not that she hadn’t tried” (108). Similarly, when she, Harry, and Ron are trying to solve the riddle of the philosopher’s stone throughout the school year, Hermione’s first reaction to a clue about Nicolas Flamel is to turn to books: “And that reminds me — Harry, Ron, we’ve got half an hour before lunch, we should be in the library” (145). Reference to the library has other characters calling her a “bit keen” (145), as if her reliance on books and dedication to learning from their pages were overzealous and, even, eccentric. It is, however, the book she took out of the library “for a bit of light reading” (161) — out of personal interest to acquire more informational material — that proves the most useful to the trio, even as Ron ridicules the fact that she refers to the “enormous old book” (160) as “light.” Interestingly, the value Hermione places on books and their proven reliability contrasts with the chaotic, unproductive, and malleable literature and language with which Alice interacts in *Alice’s Adventures*. While other students and other modes of intelligence question the value of books and acquired knowledge, Hermione cultivates this aspect of her scholarly persona in order to prove her own academic and authoritative value at Hogwarts.

In contrast to much of the world of magic, wizards, and witches in which staircases can move unbidden and a desk’s substance can be turned into that of a pig’s, however, Hermione’s intelligence stands out in how much more organized, concrete, straight-forward, and, above all, logical it is. Not only does she base much of her knowledge on written text and dedicated practice, but much of what she thinks and does is methodical and reasoned out rather than spontaneous and rash. As first years, the main characters of *Philosopher’s Stone* have a long way to go before they can tackle interesting and impressive magic and instead spend much of class

time, learning the basics of witchcraft and wizardry. At Hogwarts, knowledge must “always be acquired slowly, painfully, and over a period of time” (Hopkins 25). While other first years bemoan taking notes, reading texts, or writing essays, Hermione recognizes the importance of these resources and taking time to learn: “After making a lot of complicated notes, they were each given a match and started trying to turn it into a needle. By the end of the lesson, only Hermione Granger had made any difference to her match” (Rowling 100). From a set of “complicated notes,” steps, lectures, and readings, Hermione’s logic-based intelligence allows her to create magic and cuts out the slow and painful period of time that Hopkins referred to above. Hermione contrasts her own logical intelligence with magic’s generally less rational and less concrete tendencies when she notices that a particularly difficult challenge that she and Harry face when saving the philosopher’s stone from Lord Voldemort is notably “[not] magic — it’s logic” (207) to be analyzed and solved. In a similar way, it is possible to analyze the logic of Hermione’s intelligence and the ways in which it creates as well as strengthens her academic authority and agency in contrast to the traditions of magic.

Hermione’s intellectual practices are generally book-based as well as fixated on words and their power and meaning. Words and word meaning, unbeknownst to many students at Hogwarts, are subtly important to the art of magic. Many spells, for example, stem from Latin roots or other etymological configurations. As first years, Hermione and her fellow students start their instruction in magic with spoken-word spells that combine particular sets of speech and wand motions. First-year students struggle initially with this concept, as is exemplified in Professor Flitwick’s instructions to his class: “And saying the magic words properly is very important too — never forget Wizard Baruffio, who said ‘s’ instead of ‘f’ and found himself on the floor with a buffalo on his chest” (126). While this aside seems to be primarily of

entertainment value for readers — and Hogwarts students as well —, Hermione turns this amusing anecdote about the fantastical outcomes and irrational idiosyncrasies of magic into a logical and intellectually valuable resource. She understands the particulars of the spell Flitwick is teaching and explains to Ron, “You’re saying it wrong.... It’s Wing-*gar*-dium Levi-*o*-sa, make the ‘gar’ nice and long” (127). Hermione unravels the mysteries of the spoken spell before her magic peers do because of her attention to words, details, and magic’s intricate steps, which allows her to understand that the way the spell is pronounced is significant. Hermione is the first student in Charms class to successfully levitate a feather, demonstrating the value of her logical and detail- and word-oriented perspective.

Although Hermione recognizes the significance and power of words and their meanings, those around her seem to value these details as little as they value studying in the library. While the majority of other Hogwarts students and much of magic-folk in general tend not to question and comprehend the reasoning of how or why magic works — Mrs. Weasley, for example, explains how to use the barrier to Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ , as if it were any other door, unconcerned with its mechanics —, Hermione instead notices the meanings of details and accumulates the scholarly knowledge necessary to do so. She uses class lessons outside of the classroom and registers the importance of applying this information to other contexts. Like the logical Professor in *LWW* before her, Hermione uses step-by-step deductive reasoning to respond to questions, challenges, and dangers. Because she has carefully studied and accumulated the information necessary to understand certain aspects of magic, Hermione is able in one instance to understand and identify a threat to Harry’s life during a Quidditch match. Hermione, “instead of looking at Harry” like everyone else, “started looking frantically at the crowd” and recognizes the signs that Professor

Snape may be jinxing Harry's broom, and, with a commanding and aware order of, "Leave it to me" (140), she counteracts and eliminates the threat.

Because of her meticulous attention to detail and dedication to reading and understanding more than what is assigned in course work, Hermione applies deductive reasoning to magic and takes control of even a threatening situation. In another instance, when she and the boys have fallen into the first challenge the trio must pass to save the philosopher's stone, Hermione is the first to identify the danger and the plant threatening to kill them. She "order[s]" Harry and Ron to be still and not to struggle, insisting, "I know what this is — it's Devil's Snare!" (201-2) Merely by naming the plant, Hermione remembers how to defeat it. Though Ron's sarcastic rejoinder to this information — "Oh, I'm so glad we know what it's called, that's a great help" (202) — ignores the importance of *identifying* the danger, naming it, in order to defeat it, Hermione proves she can use this information and aspect of her intelligence to her advantage. Interestingly, the power of naming has quintessentially been, as exemplified by Adam in the Genesis story<sup>12</sup> of creation, a male prerogative. Here, however, Hermione takes over and uses this male construction of power more effectively than either of her male companions. Hermione, then, shows a capacity to look at both academic and life-threatening challenges in a logical way that contrasts with how others react to magic. By acknowledging the significance of words, meanings, and intricate, methodical details, Hermione creates and maintains a distinct kind of intelligence and agency as well as portrays a unique way of using and creating magic.

Though Hermione's intelligence is portrayed as more logical than imaginative and contrasts with Alice's and Lucy's modes of intelligence in this way, she proves it is no less valuable or productive than her predecessors', or than the inborn intelligence valued by those

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<sup>12</sup> Thank you to my advisor Prof. Gillian White for suggesting this idea.

wizards who consider themselves “purebloods.” Hermione relies on words, books, memory, and other rule-based resources to accumulate her knowledge and establish her intellectual value at Hogwarts at the same time that she soundly rebuffs those voices asserting authority over her cultural and social assimilation into her portal world. Although Hermione’s intelligence is notably characterized less by improvisational chaos than is Alice’s and as less imaginative and emotionally-attuned than is Lucy’s, hers still holds a characteristic of self-empowering individuality: its uniquely productive and creative strengths in contrast to the irrationality of traditional magic in the wizarding world. After Hermione, Harry, and Ron have successfully executed and survived their first of many dangerous escapades that will save the school, the school’s headmaster acknowledges the potency and value of Hermione’s particular actions and intelligence: “... to Miss Hermione Granger ... for the use of cool logic in the face of fire, I award Gryffindor house fifty points” (221). Not only does Dumbledore literally quantify the value of Hermione’s logic with house points — equal to Ron’s and only ten points fewer than Harry’s reward for the male hero’s quintessential “nerve and outstanding courage” (221) —, but the headmaster also recognizes the significance of it with his use of language. He identifies Hermione’s “cool logic” in contrast to the wild, overbearing “fire” of magic’s own irrationality, emphasizing how Hermione’s mind functions in a way that opposes forces of the wizarding world that might challenge other members of the magic community. That is to say, Hermione uses rationality to subdue, consider, and solve challenges that other wizards and witches, as visible in Harry and Ron’s differing responses to situations, might approach rashly and unmethodically. Similarly, by adhering to the education system — unlike Alice — and acknowledging the importance of books and words in accumulating rather than intuiting knowledge —unlike Lucy—, Hermione is able to create and maintain her place at Hogwarts.

By dedicating herself to learn magic and excelling at it even at an early age, Hermione proves to those wizards and students of “pureblood” ancestry that magic ability and the intelligence it entails are not endowed or inherited traits of blood or race. She herself notes, when trying to solve the puzzling potions challenge at the end of *Philosopher’s Stone*, that “[a] lot of the greatest wizards haven’t got an ounce of logic, they’d be stuck in here for ever” (207). Although this title of “greatest” does not specify if these individuals are outstanding in their field for intellectual, physical, or other feats of magic, Hermione still recognizes that the puzzle would have challenged and stumped some of the magic world’s most valued set of witches and wizards, leaving them intellectually and literally immobile, unable to solve it and unable to move forward on the quest for the philosopher’s stone. Hermione insists that all the clues they need to solve the puzzle are “here on this paper” (207), reiterating her trust in words and literature and ability to understand them in her own unique way. Though “pureblood” wizards would cite her Muggle-born status as a lack of innately magic blood and knowledge, Hermione’s origins allow her to bring to Hogwarts a freshly logical perspective that not only interacts but also methodically and intricately understands magic at a new level. With this, Hermione is evolving into “a formidable opponent even when she is not using magic” (Fife 160) because she recognizes the value in acquired intellect, books, words, logic, and other details that the pureblood magic-folks’ reliance on innate knowledge overlooks.

Much of the criticism on Hermione’s empowerment and agency in *Philosopher’s Stone* fixates on the role she fills in her friendship with Harry and Ron and argues that Hermione loses her agency and intelligence in this markedly gendered social sphere. Unlike Alice in *Alice’s Adventures*, Hermione Granger does not exist in a vacuum of (male) companions and, as mentioned previously, is often interpreted as relinquishing her intellect and magical talents for

others' use rather than her own. Hermione's power, some critics posit, is subverted and stripped from her for Harry's and Ron's uses. In particular, her character and agency is criticized for seeming to uphold traditional and limiting gender roles. Heilman suggests that, instead, Hermione aligns with the compliant and deferential feminine characteristics delineated by research on the portrayal of women in children's literature that "found females in children's storybooks to be comforting, consoling, and providing of emotional support, whereas the males were more likely to be represented obtaining a goal or overcoming an obstacle" (225). Harry and Ron, then, should perform the gendered roles of active, brave, and successful heroes while Hermione is "comforting, consoling" and willingly offers her male companions emotional support when they require it.

However, despite this configuration of Hermione's character that some critics use, the agency and academic authority that Hermione creates via her scholarly intelligence suggest that Hermione remains empowered even in her male-heavy social sphere. Arguably, Hermione does not perform those femininely gendered roles or attributes that some critics suggest strip her of her agency and intellectual resources. During the trio's first year, Hermione is neither comforting nor consoling and on only one occasion — in which she insists to him that he is a "great wizard" (Rowling 208) — provides Harry with any instance of relative emotional support. Instead, she tends to respond to Harry and Ron's boyish and rash behavior with scathing reprimands, exasperation, and a consistently "bad temper" (120); her forte is in intellectual support rather than emotional support. One of her more iconic lines, which some have interpreted as having the tone of a protective, even neurotic mother-hen figure, seems more scathing than motherly: "I hope you're pleased with yourselves. We could all have been killed — or worse, expelled" (120). This reprimand emphasizes how disinterested Hermione is in comforting or consoling the boys.



She stresses expulsion as a greater travesty than being killed, showing no concern for their well-being or personal priorities, and sarcastically ridicules their boyish behavior and lack of deductive instincts when she snaps, “You don’t use your eyes, do you?” (120) Hermione unapologetically refuses to coddle the boys or support their attempts to be perceived as traditional adventure seeking masculine heroes.

When Hermione does support the boys’ adventures, it is only when she claims a share of the authority and a significant role necessary to pull off the exploit. While Harry and Ron consistently perform behavior that is often described as “both brave and very stupid” (130) and arguably fits the role of boy heroes, Hermione proves she is less of the traditional feminine character throughout the trio’s misadventures. During one of Hermione, Harry, and Ron’s first escapades together, during which the boys initially refuse to listen to her sound, reasonable advice, Hermione and Ron’s attempts to remedy the group’s situation contrast significantly. Ron portrays the aggressive, disorganized, action-oriented characteristics of a masculine hero figure, threatening to curse Hermione and Neville for getting in the way, resorting to the expedited plan to move as “quickly as possible,” and taking an aggressive swipe at Peeves the Poltergeist, a “big mistake” (118) that exacerbates the situation. With their backs to a locked door, Hermione acts of her own accord. She takes charge and “snarl[s]” directions at the boys — a tone of voice that is neither consoling nor comforting —; “grab[s] Harry’s wand” from him without permission, using his source of magical power for herself; and unlocks the door with the spell “*Alohomora!*” (119) In contrast to Ron’s aggressive interaction with the ghost in the way of the group’s passage, Hermione only needs to lightly tap the lock in order to eliminate the obstacle of the locked door. Though Ron’s forceful and unsuccessful attempts at overcoming this obstacle align with the masculine hero role that Heilman outlines above, Hermione’s controlled and resourceful

actions are more effective, authoritative, and successful. Hermione, even when aiding the boys in their exploits, does not portray the characteristics of the traditionally supportive, encouraging, consoling female role but remains empowered in the gendered social sphere of the Golden Trio.

Instead of performing the role of passive resource and supportive sidekick into which female characters are traditionally pigeonholed, Hermione is distinct from the boys and fulfills a relatively more empowered and valuable part within the trio. By borrowing Ernelle Fife's description of the "wise warrior" figure, it is possible to consider Hermione's character in light of her similarities to the Greek Goddess Athena, known as the goddess of wisdom and reason and who often acts in myth and classical literature as "a mentor and guide to numerous heroes and ... seldom [as] a deity of aggression, but of defensive warfare, battling to protect the city and the home" (147). As we have already seen, Hermione rarely acts as aggressively as her male companions in *Philosopher's Stone*<sup>13</sup>, but what she lacks in physical aggression, she arguably makes up for in intellectual strength. Though a male hero's female sidekick would traditionally offer him emotional support, Hermione primarily provides Harry with intellectual support. She often challenges his rash decisions or thought processes, and prompts him to think with a different point of view. Even before he considers her his friend, Hermione guides Harry's logic and often "giv[es] Harry something else to think about" (Rowling 120). Without the catalogue of information and knowledge that Hermione has accumulated and stored in her own brain as well as her penchant for research and reading, the trio would not have been able to begin let alone survive the adventure to defeat Lord Voldemort. Hermione also mentors and guides the boys academically and personally, compelling them to study — but not giving them the answers or

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<sup>13</sup> In later books, Hermione's aggressive tendencies increase. For example, she punches Draco Malfoy in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* (1999); conceives of the educational and defensive Dumbledore's Army in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2003); and duels often against Lord Voldemort's followers in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007).

writing their essays — and reprimanding their irresponsible and impulsive behavior. In these ways, Hermione's intellectual support of her male companions is wholly more significant and prevalent than the few instances of emotional support she offers, and accentuates the alignment of her characterization and intelligence with a supporting but wise and empowered role.

Like Athena and the “wise warrior” figure, Hermione portrays an acute intuition for understanding the difference between defensive strategy and the aggressive force. Hermione seems to be aware of “when to fight, what to fight for, and how to fight” (Fife 147) once she is in the magical world. Although she does not have ties to civilization or the urban center as Athena does, she is highly dedicated to creating a space where she belongs at Hogwarts, which, though not markedly domestic, functions as a home for her and other students. In this space, Hermione uses her intellectual and magical talents to defend “what she perceives to be a higher good” (Whited and Grimes 201). This “higher good” centers on the safety and fair treatment of other students, as well as the security of the school at large. For example, when others subject Neville Longbottom to the Leg-Locker Curse, Hermione is the first to step forward and help him — “Everyone fell about laughing except Hermione, who leapt up and performed the counter-curse” (Rowling 160) — and insists he seek justice and acknowledgment from a professor. She shows great appreciation for Harry's knack for “friendship and bravery” (208) and is loyal herself. Several times, Hermione reminds Harry and Ron to think of how their actions will affect others, admonishingly asking, “Don't you *care* about Gryffindor, do you *only* care about your selves” (116). Just like the underappreciated character Neville, one of Hermione's great attributes is standing up for what she thinks is right even in the face of those whose good opinion she wishes to receive. Ron notes that she has “some nerve” (116) when she tries to keep the boys in line, a task and authority that no one else in the series really accomplishes. While the boys' nerve

revolves around acts of foolhardy bravery, Hermione's nerve is more effective, more productive, and more authoritative than theirs. With her resourcefully logical intelligence, Hermione can identify a greater good to defend and also knows how and when to defend it as well. This defensive instinct that Hermione portrays provides her, like Lucy, with the potential to be a child savior of other students as well as of the school and the magical world. While Harry "inherits" the destiny of savior, Hermione develops this characteristic on her own. Rather than fulfilling the subordinate and secondary role of the heroes' sidekick, Hermione is characterized by attributes of defending, authoritative intelligence of an independent "wise warrior" and can be seen to invent her own agency and value even in her male-heavy social sphere.

Even as she plays a crucial role in the trio's misadventures and heroic deeds, Hermione still maintains her own personal and academic priorities throughout *Philosopher's Stone*. That is to say, Hermione manages to create for herself an academically authoritative persona, establish her valuable position within the trio, unravel the mystery of Nicholas Flamel and the philosopher's stone, and help Harry complete the challenges to reach the stone — all while studying magic and passing end-of-year exams. Her primary goal to prove her value and place at Hogwarts remains a concern even as she balances friendship with Harry and Ron and her sense of obligation to defend the school. At one point, she reminds the boys of the importance of exams: "What am I revising for? Are you mad? You realize we need to pass these exams to get into second year?" (167) For Hermione, the marks she'll receive for these end-of-year exams could translate into either a permanent place at Hogwarts or a ticket back to Muggle Britain. After a school year of cultivating her logical and magical intelligence as well as her academic authority, she wants to keep a hold of these accomplishments and the value she has cultivated and proven. Hermione's desire to remain *within* the fantastical space that has aided her in

creating her intelligence and her agency contrasts sharply with Alice's rejection and ultimate breaking *out* of Wonderland. Hermione, on the other hand, refuses to relinquish this priority and continues to study and focus on exams — "I should have started studying a month ago" (167) — in order to ensure her place in and at Hogwarts. It is only after exams have finished that Hermione agrees to help Harry: "Flitwick told me in secret that I got a hundred and twelve percent on his exam. They're not throwing me out after that" (197). It is only once the fear of expulsion from school and rejection of her intelligence and value is eradicated and her place at Hogwarts is secured that Hermione takes part in her male companions' heroic habits.

In the end, though she participates in dangerous adventures, rule breaking, and interrupted studying, Hermione's many priorities and goals come to fruition because she insists on maintaining them even in her male-heavy social sphere. First, the young witch's end-of-year exam marks are exceptional. In fact, she "of course came top of the year" (222) and is left with no qualms as to whether she will be able to return to Hogwarts for second year. The narrator's addition of "of course" serves to emphasize how much of an academic authority Hermione has accumulated and proven to her fellow first years and the school at large. Second, just as Hermione's intelligence aids her in developing her agency and value in the magical world, so too does it serve to ultimately prove that she does not conform to the subordinate, supportive, or emotional role of the traditional female character. Instead, Hermione breaks into Harry and Ron's male-heavy social sphere — as she does, literally, the first time she meets the boys on the Hogwarts Express — and proves to them that there is more to her than gendered social roles would suggest. By the end of the year, Harry and Ron recognize Hermione as their ally, friend, and social equal (if not their intellectual superior). As the three children leave Hogwarts and re-enter the Muggle world, they "pass[] through the gateway together" (223), side by side as equals.

To the boys, Hermione is no longer the geeky know-it-all or annoying female sidekick of lower social value. Instead, she has proven she is more than the comforting, consoling female but rather an independently intelligent and agented force to be reckoned with.

While some critics of *Philosopher's Stone* argue that “themes related to power and gender seem[] to conform to a rigid set of patterns, which reflect capitalist and patriarchal gender regimes” (Heilman 222), a specific focus on the character of Hermione and her development as a female character whose intelligence, value, and distinctly logical perspective are recognized in the text demonstrates the ways in which she is, instead, an empowered female child character with individual, authoritative, and magical agency. In spite of her initial status as an unvalued outsider — a Muggle-born — and an overly competitive classmate as well as her inclusion in the male-heavy social sphere of the Golden Trio, Hermione uses her intelligence to both empower herself and prove she belongs at Hogwarts. Ultimately, though Hermione was concerned about the difficulties inherent in the hidden labor and art of “turning something into something else,” her magical prowess and knowledge prove that even something that is “supposed to be very difficult” (Rowling 94) can be learned and overcome. Beyond her studies, Hermione learns she can surmount social prejudice that marks her as an outsider and turns her entrance and acceptance in the magical world into a challenge. The young witch’s goal at the outset of *Philosopher's Stone* is to prove her value and her place at the school, and she does so, inventing for herself an authority with book-, word-, and logic-based knowledge as well as the role of a loyal and brave “wise warrior.” With the aid of her academic and logical intelligence, Hermione Granger not only proves her own value and magical abilities, but also creates and cultivates the agency to transform herself into the brightest witch of her age.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, while some criticism on children's fantasy literature complies with the critical assumption that female child characters are disempowered and subsequently devalues, neglects, or laments their roles, characteristics, and actions, it is entirely possible to reconstruct girls like Alice in *Alice's Adventures*, Lucy Pevensie in *LWW*, and Hermione Granger in *The Philosopher's Stone* as creating their own agency with the use of the creative and inventive intelligence that some criticism overlooks. Though their texts, authors, and critics demonstrate a tendency to portray these girls as ornamental playthings, as followers, or as subservient sidekicks, Alice, Lucy, and Hermione successfully traverse their new, unknown portal fantasy worlds despite facing off against authoritative figures and conventions. Instead of being humiliated, led, or used by other — generally male — characters, these three girls empower themselves in adapting, sharing, or cultivating their own individual modes and models of intelligence.

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated that these three female child characters portray not only creative and empowering intelligence, but I have also highlighted each girl's unique model of said intelligence. In the process of traversing their portal fantasy worlds, Alice, Lucy, and Hermione portray different but equally authoritative and empowering attributes that have aided each girl in breaking into Wonderland, Narnia, and Hogwarts at the same time that they effectively break away from those authoritative figures or social constructs that aim to strip them of their agency. In the relative gender vacuum of Wonderland, Alice exhibits an imagination that is both chaotic, self-serving, and, at times, destructive. Just as her selfish goals contrast with Lucy's selfless ones, Alice also subverts and overthrows the monarchical structure of power in Wonderland while Lucy comes into control of the order and power of the Narnian

monarchy. Similarly, Alice destroys both the world of Wonderland and her connection to it, but Hermione builds and maintains a permanent and productive place at Hogwarts. Though Hermione's logical tendencies contrast with Alice and Lucy's strengthening imaginations, her trust and interest in books, words, and education — the opposite of the malleable literary and lexical moments in *Alice's Adventures* — prove as effective. Lucy intuits much of her knowledge in *LWW* and Hermione acquires hers in *Philosopher's Stone*, but both girls are especially willing to share what they learn with companions. These variations that Alice, Lucy, and Hermione portray exemplify the force of each girl's creative and inventive intelligence as well as prove, contrary to the limiting assumption held by some critics of the genre, that there are diverse ways in which a female child character can be both intelligent and empowered. Whether by adapting to and inventing the rules of her surroundings, by trying the door that others assumed was insignificant or locked, or by using her acquired knowledge of magic, Alice, Lucy, and Hermione each successfully and distinctly break into their fantasy worlds and the opportunity to cultivate their specific mode of intelligence and create their empowering agency.

While this thesis has functioned to rediscover the productive and empowering, albeit less obvious, resource of female intelligence, I believe there is still more work to be done to fully recognize other girl characters in children's fantasy who have been relatively overlooked. Not only are there more under recognized assets like intelligence to consider, but there are also girl characters whose categorizations as "anti-feminist" or "not feminist enough" ought to be reconsidered. Why, for example, does criticism celebrate Sophie's use of magically creative language in Diana Wynne Jones's *Howl's Moving Castle* (1986) in the same breath that it berates Wendy's inventive but maternal storytelling talents in J.M. Barrie's *Peter and Wendy* (1911)? Why are girls like the title character in Garth Nix's *Sabriel* (1995) and Lyra Belacqua in Philip



Pullman's *Northern Lights* (1995; published as *The Golden Compass* in the United States) characterized as overbearing and precocious, respectively, because of their interactions with male companions? How can we support and protect the multiplicities of strengths of heroines like the physically dynamic knight-in-training Alanna of Trebond in Tamora Pierce's *Alanna: The First Adventure* (1983); the romantic but physically capable Clary Fray in Cassandra Clare's *City of Bones* (2007); or the feisty, intelligent, and loyal Annabeth Chase in Rick Riordan's *The Lightning Thief* (2006)? How do we diversify the genre with more figures like Linh Cinder in Marissa Meyer's *Cinder* (2012) — who also has significant physical disabilities — or Katniss Everdeen in Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* (2008), two intelligent and empowered women of color? Female child characters like these need to not only be brought to light but also considered for their multiplicities and complexities rather than dismissed due to the first “un-feminist” attributes that critics notice.

Similarly, attention to the effect that such a rediscovery of female child characters on their texts' intended audience — child readers — might have an equally enlightening outcome. When young readers, girls and boys alike, read books in which intelligent female models like Alice, Lucy, and Hermione appear, how do they respond to these characters? What might they learn from these girls' fantastical worlds and the ways in which they use their intelligence to invent agency in spite of what outside sources — within and without of the texts — suggest? What might a child, regardless of his or her gender, learn about what it means to be female when faced by these models of empowered intelligence that have been relatively unacknowledged by critics? For further literary study of this topic, I would recommend that future consideration of these children's fantasy texts via a reader response lens would aid in examining and recognizing the texts' and their characters' significant effects on young readers.

Ultimately, this thesis's reconfiguration of the female child characters as creatively and inventively intelligent and empowered has, as Alice, Lucy, and Hermione are portrayed as doing, recognized and responded to certain authoritative conventions of criticism that have attempted to strip them of agency. In doing so, this thesis highlights the relatively less emphasized and less openly subversive asset of their intelligence as a model for young readers. When children read these texts, might they also discover, as these girls do, that there is more to them than meets the eye? In her piece on the female hero in modern fantasy, Lori M. Campbell argues that:

... if as Susan J. Drucker and Gary Grumpert assert, "the hero exists in the eye of the beholder. Every hero must be a hero *to* someone" ... then a major trait of the female hero is the potential of her journey to inspire those with a similar need to prove themselves or rise about subjectivities of varying kinds. (Drucker and Grumpert 20 qtd. 7)

Campbell's description of the female hero does not exclude any demographic of reader — child or adult, female or male — but opens up her appeal to *anyone* "with a similar need to prove themselves." While much of children's literature and feminist criticism assumes that those characters that are both child and female are inherently "doubly oppressed," readers can discover Wonderland, Narnia, and Hogwarts with Alice, Lucy, and Hermione for the first time and follow in these girls' footsteps as their intelligence aids them in creating their empowering agency. The reconsideration of Alice, Lucy, and Hermione as influential models for female intelligence and creative agency in children's fantasy that I propose is not an attempt to critically redefine these female characters as heroes but a first step in recognizing the value in the potential that these girls may be the heroes that any child reader — or any reader, for that matter — could need.

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