

Growing up in Wonderland: An Analysis of Lacanian Subject Formation Within the Secondary  
Worlds of Children's Fantasy

An Honors Project Submitted by

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## Chapter 1: The Nature of Fantasy

*"A society which thinks...that it has outlived the need for magic, is either mistaken in that opinion, or else it is a dying society, perishing for lack of interest in its own maintenance." –R.G. Collingworth (qtd. In Irwin 3)*

"I know such a lot of stories," Wendy says to the boy in the nursery, the boy who is everything she knows she wants (Barrie 25). He, who is just her size and who has lived just the life of freedom she has longed to experience, had been at the window to hear her stories. With the promise of more stories, "it was she who first tempted him" (25) to draw her into Neverland, the world of her own unconscious. Through her stories, she enters into a world fraught with danger, crawling with pirates, filled with fairy dust, mermaids, and helpless little boys, where she can be free to explore her own imagination, where fear is always conquered by joy, and all her deepest thoughts dance to pan-piped tunes. Wendy's stories bring her face to face with her own desires, and through her stories she finds a path into her own dreams where she learns to see the world and her own self in a brand new light.

While theorists have proposed many ideas concerning the value and purpose of fantasy literature, readers and critics alike acknowledge that, by creating a world unlike our own, fantasy offers the reader an opportunity to experience life in a way that cannot be found beyond the page. Just as Wendy's stories lead Peter to her window and bring her the opportunity to explore the realm of her desire and see the world in a new light, the fantasy text creates a system in which the author and reader alike can escape the confines of human existence and look back on the world free from the rules and assumptions that govern reality. Brian Attebery, a literary theorist specializing in the theory of fantasy, states that "fantasy starts with a Symbolic narrative" (30) in which literary structures signify both conscious and unconscious realities of the human existence. There, within a world free from the physical and moral structures that govern the

human world, the reader can explore this human reality, posit philosophy, or criticize society by recreating the systems of human life themselves. This world of fantasy becomes a space in which the reader safely explores the unconscious experience of life, psychological functionings, and tensions that govern social structure.

Lewis Carroll's *The Adventures of Alice in Wonderland*, *Alice's Adventures Through the Looking Glass*, and J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* all offer the freedom of an experience within the world of fantasy. These texts each tell the story of a child coming of age in an alternate reality, in a Wonderland of one kind or another. The children are not from a far, distant universe or a time long, long ago, but from our own reality. However, each child matures, not in a quiet suburb, but in a stumbled-upon alternate reality. True to the heritage of fantasy, these secondary realities do not completely follow the rules of the worlds left behind, but each still leads the child character into maturity. The fantastic becomes an exploration of our own reality and the descent into a contrary sense of order becomes a call to consider the nature of order in this world. In a sense, fantasy allows the reader to look at the world from an external perspective. The construction of a new order gives the reader a previously impossible perspective on the nature of human reality. The reader becomes the observer of an Other, and through comparison, gains a deeper understanding of his own reality.

Many literary theorists have written concerning the means through which fantasy benefits the reader. Viktor Shklovsky, a leading critic in the Russian Formalist movement, developed the concept of *ostranenie* in his writing concerning the nature of art. *Ostranenie* refers to the sense of defamiliarization the observer experiences through art. This sense of defamiliarization leaves the reader feeling estranged from both the world of the art, the fictional world, and the original world. This estrangement forces the reader to see familiar aspects of life

as strange and removed from personal perspective, causing a reevaluation of structures usually taken for granted (Attebery 16). Within these fantasy texts, inverting social and linguistic structures creates estrangement. Thus, the fantasy text leads the reader to question the order of the real world through the creation of disorder. The mirror image of the world leads the reader to see its true nature. Through the contrast of representation, the reader perceives reality.

T. E. Apter points out in his book *Fantasy Literature: An Approach to Reality* that the representation within fantasy is not to be confused with allegory, or with a direct representation of the real world, but must be understood on both a metaphoric and literal level in order to fully grasp the message of any given story. While an allegory simply presents truths of a real world through images that must be interpreted, fantasy also creates its own world that must be understood in and of itself. This world can serve purposes beyond a simple criticism or presentation of real-world ideas.

Rosemary Jackson suggests in her text *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* that the purpose of fantasy literature is to rediscover a past morality or superior social structure in order to criticize society and evoke a desire for social change. According to her definition, authors create fantasy to creating desire. However, Jackson's theory does not account entirely for the purpose of fantasy. C.N. Manlove criticizes her definition of fantasy saying, "Jackson's definition is particularly illuminating in relation to 'dark' or gothic fantasy, but it wholly excludes the fantasies of such writers as George MacDonald, C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien" (10), none of whom expresses a particularly stirring critique of social structure. Just as is implied within Apter's rejection of fantasy as allegory, fantasy must do something other than simply present social criticism through the veil of fiction.

Brian Attebery presents the counterpoint to this concept of fantasy as desire literature in his book *Strategies of Fantasy* by offering an alternative purpose first proposed by C.S. Lewis. While fantasists do frequently question social structure through their work, Lewis points out that some fantasy is in fact written with little to no political or social agenda, and even texts that do evoke a need for social change must contain something else to truly succeed. He argues that fantasy must not only inspire desire but must also enrich previously established desire. That is to say, rather than only encouraging the development of a desire for change, fantasy must also give new dimension to deep-seeded human desires for wonder (Attebery 21-23).

Lewis used the German term *sehnsucht* to refer to this concept of desire. The word can most closely be defined in English as a longing or an intense missing. However, no English term encapsulates the concept entirely. It falls somewhere between “ardent yearning” and “addiction,” which implies a negative aspect, as though the feeling could become destructive at any moment. In the afterward to *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, Lewis explains his use of the term as denoting “that unnameable something, desire for which pierces us like a rapier at the smell of bonfire, the sound of wild ducks flying overhead, the title of the *Well at the World’s End*, the opening lines of “Kubla Khan,” the morning cobwebs in late summer, or the noise of falling waves” (Lewis 204). For Lewis, the term denotes an undeniable, unceasing longing in the human heart for something nameless. It is a nostalgia, a longing to return to some unidentifiable or irrevocable state-of-being. The reader is attracted to the experience of fantasy by this unnamed, often unacknowledged longing (204).

Tolkien discusses this role of fantasy in his essay "On Fairy Stories." He sees fantasy as a sort of recovery from boredom and a loss of faith in the beauty of the world, and as a place for catharsis and dreaming rather than social revolution. He introduces the term "eucatastrophe,"

meaning a final turn toward resolution or deliverance within the story that evokes a sense of beauty, hope, and wonder within the mind of the reader. Like Shklovsky's *ostranenie*, defamiliarization within fantasy literature creates a renewed sense of wonder in the real world. Tolkien says, "We should look at green again, and be startled anew (but not blinded) by blue and yellow and red. We should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold, like the ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horses--and wolves" (Tolkien 21). If when looking at a flower that would have otherwise been ignored, the reader notices its beauty because of a happy memory connected to a fairy story, the fantasy has done its work. The fantasy should connect to the imagination of the reader to create a new lens through which to see the world. David Whitely reiterates this point saying fantasy offers "an alternative to the often bleak discordances of realism and a sense that within images of a distant past we can become alive to both the horror and the wonder of the world in ways it is now hard to recover" (182). This sense of wonder evoked by the fantasy becomes an awareness of meaning and value in the world that would have been overlooked without a venture into imagination. Tolkien goes on to say that it is the momentary sense of joy drawn from the moment of eucatastrophe that distinguishes fantasy texts from other fiction. Fiction that mimics the true nature of reality offers a place for recognition; fantasy a place for the creation of wonder. The reader seeks fantasy in a search for escape from the mundane in an attempt to connect with some new cathartic perspective (Tolkien 17-22).

Many argue that the psychological role of fantasy exists in this escapist value. In his book *The Fantastic in Literature*, E.S. Rabkin describes fantasy as an escape from "the prison of the mind" (73). This mental escape serves the reader as "psychological consolation" (73) that reorders the reader's perspective of what he refers to as the armchair world. He calls fantasy an

"exploration of the underside of our conscious world" (57) and claims that by presenting that which is unexpected, that which violates laws of real-world logic but falls within the laws of a fantastic reality, fantasy breaks ground rules within the reader's conception of the world and creates a renewed sense of order by undermining its own chaos. A world of fantasy that reflects but alters reality offers a sense of rejuvenation, much like Tolkien's concept of a renewed sense of wonder and Lewis' *sehnsucht*.

Though these theories describe the reader's experience with fantasy, none actually explain what the reader experiences in the fantastic world. Wonder is renewed. Eucatastrophe is experienced. The order of reality is challenged and either subverted or reinforced, but all of these are only symptoms, end results of a process. What is it psychologically that draws the reader back again and again to fantasy? What unconscious process makes us read fantasy to our children, our children's children, and still return constantly to it ourselves?

In order to examine these questions, one great explorer of the human experience turned to dreams, the original and universal human expression of fantasy. In his essay "Creative Writers and Daydreaming," Sigmund Freud explores the connection between dreams, daytime fantasies, and literary constructions and attempts to isolate the psychological processes that cause these forms of fantasy exploration, hoping to discover the root of the human need for fantasy. In the words of Brian Attebery, "Whatever function we believe dreams to serve--wish fulfillment, Symbolic confrontation with repressed memories, the unleashing of racial memories, or guidance toward psychological growth--fantastic literature is frequently designed to serve the same ends" (7). Freud claims that fantasies in all forms are motivated by the pleasure principle. Unconscious desires are fulfilled within dreams. He argues that fantasy contains both latent and manifest content (*The Dream Work* 501). The latent content is comprised of the unconscious wish for

pleasure or power. The ego censors this latent content and presents desires in the form of a story or at least a series of images, much like the writer creates a literary metaphor. Just as physical drives and desires must be contained and altered into socially acceptable forms in order to make the individual palatable to society, these unconscious desires must be transformed and made more palatable to the mind. In the introduction to Freud's theories from his anthology *The Critical Tradition: Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, David Richter describes Freud's concepts of fantasy: "The raw fantasies that make up latent content are transformed by substitutions and analogies, so as to disinfect them, so to speak, of the unacceptable content that the dreamer has to censor from awareness" (498). Just like a poem, some images in the dream will correspond directly to occurrences in the life of the dreamer, while others will have to be unpacked for deeper, hidden meaning.

Like dreams, literature also contains latent and manifest content. Freud claims that all fiction expresses the wishes to dominate others and to possess loved objects that originate for the unconscious during the Oedipal stage of development. While it seems to the conscious mind that maturity conquers, or at least controls, these desires, they in fact are merely repressed. These repressions rise again within latent fantasy content (Freud *Creative Writers* 511). Freud argued that " 'better' fiction contains the same Oedipal fantasies but . . . they are expressed in a form that is more carefully and elaborately defended. Because the form is less raw, the fantasy content is more acceptable to refined readers" (Richter 498).

Theorist Bruno Bettelheim draws from Freud's concepts of the nature of fantasy in his analysis of the role of fantasy within the development of the child. This psychological value of fantasy increases greatly when applied to the development of children. The sense of escape in fantasy that offers rejuvenation to the adult reader plays an imperative role in the psychological

development of children. According to Bettelheim, children need fantasy in order to successfully move from childhood to adulthood. He writes that “this growth process begins with the resistance against the parents, and fear of growing up, and ends when youth has truly found itself, achieved psychological independence and moral maturity, and no longer views the other sex as threatening or demonic, but is able to relate positively to it” (Bettelheim 12). Like Freud, he believes that in order to make these steps toward maturity, the child must relinquish childhood dependencies, overcome narcissistic disappointments and Oedipal dilemmas, gain a sense of self-worth and confidence, and a concept of morality that governs society. Before these can be achieved, the child must face both the conscious and the unconscious self and must learn to form a sort of unconscious resolution between dissident forces within the psyche.

According to Bettelheim, the child forms this inner resolution through daydreams. Within daydreams, the child can explore possible courses of action that fulfill psychological desires without suffering consequences in the real world. They can consider and explore situations that could never occur in reality, that could be too physically threatening, or that would be too damaging to the developing psyche. However, the limited real-world experience of the child does not always offer the child a field of images and situations rich enough to allow for the creation of daydream circumstances that successfully form psychological resolution. He posits that the child cannot rely on dreams and daydreams to explore his unconscious desires. Also, though some fears or desires can be worked out in play and daydreams, some are too terrible, violent, or confusing for the child to entertain. The child wants to understand and solve problems, but without the tools necessary to deal with these preconscious desires and fears of maturation, the unconscious overwhelms the child and the child is unable to overcome fears, desires, or negative emotions. Thus overwhelmed, the child cannot resolve internal conflicts and

reach maturity. Fantasy gives the child a form by which to order thoughts (74). Fantastic events in the story do not get lost among fears and confusion, but remain a constant narrative. Within the structure of the story, the reader can explore psychological problems in a symbolic form, creating a means by which the child can externalize internal conflicts. In this way, fantasy serves as a necessary element in unconscious development (10).

Bettelheim explains that, in teaching the child to deal subconsciously with the world, the fairytale also serves as a canvas from which to illustrate appropriate social roles to the child. The fairytale reflects the worldview of its parent society, so many other cultural constructs filter through the form of the stories and become engrained in the mind of the child. Attitudes and actions of female characters teach the child what role a woman should fill in society. Class structures within the story create a concept of social ranking and teach the child how to behave within an appropriate social class. Perhaps the story simply creates an image of the correct way to live as an adult, just like all the other adults, for the child. The story presents prevalent social values to the child as truth.

Another post-Freudian, Jacques Lacan, builds off Freud's theories of the unconscious to develop a theory concerning the root of the psychological tensions that the subject must face in the structures of fantasy. Rather than define the functionings of the unconscious and the development of the psyche in terms of sexual drives derived from the Oedipal stage, as Freud suggest, Lacan posits that the sense of lack originating from our experience of linguistic structure creates unconscious drives. While this lack can certainly be expressed through sexual desire, it is more accurately defined as a lack of unity. In Lacan's theory, the infant begins life experiencing his own self and the world as random and fragmented. The infant recognizes no structures and therefore understands no boundaries between his own self and other things in the world. His

fingers, his crib, his mother are all equally connected to his existence because he has no concept of himself. The infant continues to comprehend life as random until around the age of 6 to 8 months, when he enters what Lacan calls the mirror stage. At this point, the infant sees himself in a mirror, or at least sees aspects of himself mirrored in others, and develops a concept of himself as an individual being. The infant sees what appears to be a whole, completed individual in the mirror and develops a concept of himself as a whole being (Hunt *Understanding Children's Literature* 107).

The concept of wholeness developed in the mirror stage ushers the child into the Imaginary Order. Imaginary here does not mean an order of fantasy, but rather an order of images through which the preverbal infant perceives the world. In this Imaginary world, the infant experiences his new found sense of wholeness while still perceiving himself as unified with his mother, the author of all his needs and desires. This union with the mother gives the infant a sense of control and completeness, an experience referred to as the *Desire of the Mother* by Lacan.

The infant exists in this sense of perfect completeness until he develops the concept of language. Language acquisition ushers the infant into Lacan's Symbolic Order. In the Symbolic Order, the child develops the concept of the signifier "I" and with it the concept of fully individual being. The use of "I" supposes the existence of "you" and thus the infant is thrust into the realization that he is separate from others, and specifically that he is separate from his mother. This sense of lack creates the division between the conscious and the unconscious mind. The psychological loss of the mother corresponds to a more literal loss of the mother as the infant discovers that the father keeps him from fully possessing his mother. Just as language introduced the concept of unrequited needs and external rules, so the father introduces the

concept of the law. Lacan subsequently refers to the transition between Imaginary and Symbolic as the replacement of the Desire of the Mother with the Name-of-the-Father, the replacement of a sense of complete unity with a fractured existence under Symbolic structures. Rules of society are structured like the linguistic structures originally experienced by the infant. Just like the unconscious, all social activity is structured like a language and formed within language. Julia Kristeva articulates the concept as follows:

the major constraint affecting any social practice lies in the fact that it signifies; i.e., that it is articulated like a language. Every social practice, as well as being the object of external (economic, political, etc.) determinants, is also determined by a set of signifying rules, by virtue of fact that there is present an order of language; that is, this language has a double articulation (signifier/signified); that this duality stands in an arbitrary relation to the referent; and that all social functioning is marked by the split between referent and Symbolic and by the shift from signified to signifier coextensive with it. (Kristeva 25)

Like a language, a system of signifiers that appear stable to the speaking subject form the underlying structure of society. Thus, entrance into the Symbolic programs the infant to follow the rules of society. Linguistic signification and adherence to the structures of society become synonymous as Symbolic structures.

The loss of a sense of perfect union with the mother will haunt the infant for the rest of his life. The child's entire life, every desire, every sense of need, will be driven by an unconscious desire to rediscover that perfect sense of union. Lacanian theory refers to this perfect sense of union as *jouissance*. Like Lewis' *sehnsucht*, the term implies a joy to the point of pain and is experienced in the human unconscious as a longing for some unnamed,

irrecoverable state of being. Throughout life, the infant will strive to reach this state of *jouissance* by attaching the repressed sense of loss and desire to objects, making them "little others" or *objets petit a*. This sense of lack drives the unconscious. The human being exists in a constant state of lack and therefore in a state of desire for wholeness. The subject (fluid "I" position from which the Symbolic is approached) will never be whole, but always will be fractured and searching for unity (Homer 17-33).

Fantasy offers the subconscious the chance to explore the repressed sense of lack. According to Peter Hunt, "The literary text, then, is an image of the unconscious structured like a language" (Hunt *Understanding Children's Literature* 108). He goes on to explain this idea with a quote from theorist Elizabeth Wright saying that the attractive nature of literature "lies in a revelation, of things veiled coming to be unveiled, of characters who face shock at this unveiling" (108). He continues saying, "When this phenomenon is given utterance in the reader-interpreter's language, meaning is inevitably deferred" (108).

Herein lies the key to understanding the psychological process that renews wonder, challenges society, and teaches the child to live in the adult world all at once. Apter and the other theorists explain in these terms exactly what fantasy can do for the reader. Fantasy does in fact explore the underbelly of the conscious world, both in an individual and societal sense, and it does so by giving voice to the repressed sense of lack inherent in the formation of the subject. Hunt goes on to say that when seen through the lens of Lacanian theory, the text creates for the reader the realization that

the selves we see ourselves as being are as fictional [made up of language] as the stories of written fiction--limited images like those we see in mirrors when we first became conscious of our separateness--so fiction can be read in terms of the

way it echoes our basic human activity of inventing ourselves and becoming conscious of the limitation of our invention. (Nodelman qtd. in Hunt *Understanding Children's Literature* 108)

Carroll's Alice texts and Barrie's *Peter Pan* all offer an image of the exploration of *Lacanian* subject formation, creating signifying systems in which both Symbolic and Imaginary forces interact. The children within the texts journey into a world signifying the unconscious mind. J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* offers one of the most clear and striking images of the unconscious mind. Barrie describes the mind as follows:

I don't know whether you have ever seen a map of a person's mind. Doctors sometimes draw maps of other parts of you, and your own map can become intensely interesting, but catch them trying to draw a map of a child's mind, which is not only confused, but keeps going round all the time. There are zigzag lines on it, just like your temperature on a card, and these are probably roads in the island, for the Neverland is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of colour here and there, and coral reefs and rakish-looking craft in the offing, and savages and lonely lairs, and gnomes who are mostly tailors, and caves through which a river runs, and princes with six elder brothers, and a hut fast going to decay, and one very small old lady with a hooked nose. It would be an easy map if that were all, but there is also first day at school, religion, fathers, the round pond, needle-work, murders, hangings, verbs that take the dative, chocolate pudding day, getting into braces, say ninety-nine, three-pence for pulling out your tooth yourself, and so on, and either these are part of the island or they are another map

showing through, and it is all rather confusing, especially as nothing will stand still. (6)

Thus, Barrie depicts Neverland as a map of the human mind with both the Symbolic and Imaginary structures vying for a dominant position. The mind goes round and round, bouncing between these forces in a state of highly structured chaos, just as Lacan suggests in his theory of unconscious development. Through this representation, readers are able to come face to face with their own unconscious experience. In this way, fantasy explores the underbelly of the conscious world by expressing the psychological function of subject formation. Though each text functions in a similar way and expresses similar psychological experiences, *Wonderland*, *Looking Glass Land*, and *Neverland* each emphasize a different aspect of subject formation.

*Wonderland*, the most nonsensical of the texts, creates a sense of linguistic ambiguity and by doing so questions the nature of personal linguistic signification. The nonsense of *Wonderland* illuminates the fluid and arbitrary nature of Symbolic structure. However, by inverting these structures, it inevitably reinforces the importance of Symbolic signification by proving there is in fact an order to subvert.

*Looking Glass Land* presents a similar inversion of the Symbolic order. However, rather than focus on the deconstruction of the personal signifier, *Looking Glass Land* offers a mirrored image of society, and by doing so explores the arbitrary nature of social signification. It is “sadder and more nostalgic than the earlier book, because it is an attempt to remember what it meant” (Morton 305). Whereas *Wonderland* eventually supports the acceptance of the Symbolic and therefore implies the necessity of entering into a permanent discourse with the Other of society, *Looking Glass Land* gazes back longingly on a time before linguistic signification, questioning the very nature and necessity of subject formation within the Symbolic.

Peter Pan explores the role of *jouissance* and desire in the formation of the subject. Wendy must journey into her Neverland, the physical manifestation of her unconscious. There, she comes face to face with the physical construct of her desire in the form of Peter Pan. Over the course of her journey, she encounters characters signifying the Imaginary and Symbolic influences at work in her subconscious. By facing these characters, she learns to exist with the Imaginary and Symbolic forces simultaneously, and by doing so learns an appropriate and fulfilling way to connect to her own *jouissance* within the social constructs of society.

These fantasy texts offer imagistic explorations of the roles played by the Imaginary and Symbolic realms in subject formation within the unconscious mind. The socializing function of fantasy becomes evident through the journeys in secondary worlds depicted in these texts. Though all three texts lead the protagonist back to a real-world setting after their journey has been completed, they also create a partly unconscious regret over the inevitability of growing up and the wondrous world of childhood left like a dream in the past. Chaos and wonder become one entity, and the disorder of childhood, immaturity within the text, becomes a magical and attractive thing. By presenting this wondrous nature of chaos, the texts present a potentially negative aspect of maturation. Certain elements of wonder must be sacrificed in order to mature and exit the Wonderland. However, the Lacanian subject only exists as a speaking subject in the Symbolic because subjectivity must be constituted in a relationship to the Other. Thus, the stories urge the young reader to traverse the worlds of childhood to find maturity on the other side, but also offer a still, small, and subversive siren call to stay in Neverland, where boys and girls never have to leave the world of wonder.

## Chapter 2: The *Lacanian* Subject in Wonderland

*"They are, as it were, train bearers in the pageant of life, and hold a glass up to humanity, frailer than itself. We see ourselves at second hand in them: they show us all that we are, all that we wish to be, and all that we dread to be." (Hazlitt 64)*

Wonderland inverts the order of Alice's ordinary experience. Down the rabbit hole, Alice discovers a place where the order of the world above ground no longer seems to apply. At the beginning of the story, Alice sits on a riverbank with her sister. As she peers into her sister's book and discovers it contains no pictures or conversation, she wonders to herself, "what is the use of a book...without pictures or conversation?" (Carroll *Wonderland* 5). She, as a young child, has not yet fully entered the structures of the Symbolic order. Though she is a speaking subject, the structures and orders of society still exist without meaning in her mind. Like a book with no pictures, the structures of language and of society seem to act without rhyme or reason. In Wonderland, Alice discovers a world that expresses the ambiguity and fluid nature of Symbolic structure she senses in her world above the ground. She faces a new set of rules governing the relationship between word and meaning. Through nonsense, she discovers the paradox of language itself and therefore of her own role in the signifying system of the Symbolic. The seemingly nonsensical circumstances of Alice's adventure reveal a desire to escape the Symbolic structures of society, but underneath that exists the desire to thrive in the meaning created within the Symbolic.

As Alice falls down the rabbit hole, she begins to experiment with and explore the language of the adult, surface world she has been living in: "for, you see, Alice had learnt several things of this sort in her lessons in the school-room, and though this was not a very good opportunity for showing off her knowledge, as there was no one to listen to her, still it was good practice to say it over" (6). She does not know the meanings of the words she tries to use and

therefore cannot use them correctly. Thus, even before her trip to Wonderland, Alice lives in a world governed by that which she perceives to be nonsense. Donald Rackin observes her “assumptions are typically no more than her elders’ operating premises which she maintains with a doctrinaire passion that is almost a caricature of immature credulity” (314). She is working within a signifying system she does not understand before she ever approaches the rabbit hole. Wonderland simply magnifies the scope of that nonsense, bringing to light Alice’s true relationship with Symbolic structure.

The farther Alice falls into the rabbit hole, the more nonsensical her use of language becomes. Throughout her fall, Alice attempts to define and examine herself through language. She lists off facts and figures in an attempt to establish her vast knowledge of the world. With each fact, however, she further demonstrates her inability to connect to the realm of language and structure. She begins with a geographical fact, “I must be getting somewhere near the center of the earth. Let me see: that would be about four thousand miles down” (Carroll *Wonderland* 5), which is more or less an accurate scientific measurement of the radius of the earth (actual distance being somewhere between 3,949 and 3,963 miles according to The Encyclopedia Britannica). Fact one is accurate. The relationship between signifier and signified, fact and underlying truth begins to decrease from here. Next she attempts to use the words longitude and latitude (5), but while these are real words, and in fact real though perhaps arbitrary units of measurement, they are not effective measurements of vertical descent. Alice then uses the wrong word entirely for the situation at hand. She wonders aloud if she will fall into the Antipathies (5). However, *antipathy* is a feeling of repugnance, not a country into which a small girl could fall. She wants to refer to the *Antipodes Islands*, but produces entirely the wrong words.

Alice recognizes the inaccuracy of her language, but she cannot seem to grasp the right words to express her needs. Her next attempt at fact identification falls into utter and complete nonsense. Wondering if her cat could catch and kill a bat she begins chanting "Do cats eat bats? Do bats eat cats" over and over, because "as she couldn't answer either question, it didn't much matter which way she put it" (7). Her facts have now fallen entirely into nonsense. She is no longer connecting word with meaning.

According to Ferdinand de Saussure, "language is a system of signs . . . . the sign is the union of a form which signifies" (Culler 9). These signs are made up of signifiers (sounds images) and signifieds (concepts behind sounds). Signifiers (or for Alice's purposes, words) are linked to the signified concepts they represent and draw their meaning from their link to these "real" ideas.

Jacques Lacan built his theory of the unconscious as structured like a language on Saussure's concept of the nature of language itself. However, he disagreed with Saussure's theory concerning the relationship between the signifier and the signified. He believed that though both aspects of language are necessary, the connection between the two is inherently arbitrary and only contextually formed. Language, as the human being uses it, is built on a series of signifiers referring to signifiers which themselves have been defined by signifiers. The signified concept is never actually captured in language, only hinted at, like a shadow proves the presence of a man, but never manages to show his face. Because the relationship between the two sides of language is arbitrary and linguistic meaning is governed by a system of interconnected signifiers rather than signifiers based upon signifieds, linguistic signification is fluid and subject to change.

With Alice's descent into nonsense, Carroll creates an immediate sense of linguistic instability in Wonderland that mirrors Lacan's theory of language. Alice's misuse of language emphasizes the arbitrary nature of the signifier/signified relationship, and therefore language, and therefore the nature of the Symbolic itself. Also, the transformation of her use of language throughout the fall demonstrates for the reader that (pardoning a reference to another nonsense-based fantasy) Alice isn't in Kansas any more. Wonderland is demonstrated to be a realm of nonsense in which it is impossible to ignore the fluid nature of the signifier/signified relationship.

During her fall, Alice comes across a jar on a shelf. On the jar is a label that reads "MARMALADE" (6). However, when Alice opens the jar, she discovers that it is empty. The label on the jar means nothing at all. Though Alice trusts the writing on the jar to communicate truth, it in fact signifies nothing but an empty jar. It is a label without meaning, a word that does not communicate a truth, an empty signifier. Though the jar is empty, though its label has misled Alice, she cannot drop the jar for fear of killing someone. She must cling to the empty signifier in her hand to avoid destruction. This experience foreshadows the nature of Alice's adventure through Wonderland. By deconstructing the relationship between signified and signifier, separating the word from its meaning, the social practice from its purpose, Wonderland explores the tensions felt by the unconscious that arise from the disparities formed between the whole "me" image of the mirror stage and the lacking "I" of Symbolic signification.

According to Lacanian theory, the unconscious mind is "governed by the rules of the signifier as it is language that translates sensory images into structure. We can only know the unconscious through speech and language; therefore, similar kinds of relationships exist between unconscious elements, signifiers and other forms of language" (Homer 68-69). The unconscious

is formed through language and must be understood through language. Therefore the breakdown of structure, particularly of linguistic structure, directly affects the unconscious. As a signifier, the "I" position from which each subject must approach the world has no meaning as a signifier outside the comprehension of this system of signs. The "I" is a signifier like any other. Thus, when the subject acknowledges a break-down between linguistic signifier and meaning, a breakdown of the individual "I" position is also acknowledged. However, much like speaking society assumes signifiers intrinsically connect to concrete signified concepts, the unconscious attempts to construct the "I" around the ideal-I, the "me" position formed in the mirror stage.

This ideal-I is a whole, complete image of the self, formed from observing a reflection. The reflection looks physically whole so the unconscious assumes that it too is whole and complete. However, when the child grasps language, he realizes that he is not whole, but rather must use linguistic signification to relate to the Other, who also in turn is not whole. In this way, the child realizes lack and this realization creates the unconscious mind. The child, as a speaking subject, has developed an "I" and has therefore developed a linguistic position, an identity defined by the lack intrinsic in all linguistic communication (Chiesa 15-16). The subject, therefore, is not a state of definitive self-identity, but rather an expression of the tension between the desire to be whole and the inescapable awareness of lack. "I," or the cognitive subject position, does not define the individual, as we tend to believe, but offers an empty sign from which to relate to humanity. Neither "I" nor the ideal-I is sufficient to offer the unconscious a constant state of subjectivity, so they exist in oppositional tandem. Upon this volatile subject foundation, we then structure a whole of system of "I's" that we call society. The "I" becomes both a formative member and a governed citizen of a Symbolic system held together by a web of arbitrary connection. Alice can no longer assume that the signifiers she comes in contact with

possess the concrete meaning she assumed in her original reality. When the signifier/signified relationship becomes fluid, Alice's concept of self and the consistency of her own "I" position becomes fluid as well.

Like Alice's digressive language use during the fall, the Caucus race is a resonant example of the inversion of order and the signifier/signified relationship present in Wonderland. The scene itself is laced with linguistic ambiguity. The race is originally inspired by the Mouse's inability to dry his listeners with a boring story. During his story, the nature of language and specifically of empty syntactic structures comes under fire. The Mouse begins:

Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and Northumbria, declared for him: and even Stigand, the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable--

"Found what?" said the Duck.

"Found it," the Mouse replied rather crossly: "of course you know what 'it' means."

"I know what 'it' means well enough, when I find a thing," said the Duck: "it's generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?"

(Carroll *Wonderland* 16)

The Duck's question illuminates a very real aspect of the arbitrary nature of language. Syntactic structure allows for the formation of what is known as expletive or existential noun phrases. These phrases have no semantic value. Rather, they serve as placeholders within a sentence, serving only to fill a gap in syntax and not to refer to any meaning. The Mouse's "it" does not reference any actual term. It has no signified and only fills an empty syntactic category. Thus, "it" becomes the ultimate criticism of linguistic solidarity. Donald Rackin says the Duck, "implicitly puts above-ground linguistic assumptions to the test by asking language to do what is

finally impossible--to be consistently ambiguous” (316). The answer to the Duck’s question cannot be given; “it” cannot be defined, because it is without signified. “It” is truly an empty sign.

When the linguistic sign begins to break down and be misunderstood, the Dodo calls for a Caucus Race. Carroll writes, “There was no ‘One, two, three, and away,’ but they began running when they liked, and left off when they liked, so that it was not easy to know when the race was over” (6). Thus linguistic ambiguity creates a race without rules, without a beginning or a definable end point, at the end of which are awarded prizes with values based solely on social consensus: “in despair she put her hand in her pocket, and pulled out a box of comfits, (luckily the salt water had not got into it), and handed them round as prizes” (Carroll *Wonderland* 17). When linguistic structure breaks down and shows its true ambiguous colors, the subject runs the ambiguous race of linguistic structure and accepts that, as a societal structure, even its ambiguity has value. Alice herself is given a thimble as prize for running the race. Though the thimble was already hers, it gains value only when seen as precious in the eyes of society. And though Alice “thought the whole thing very absurd, but they all looked so grave that she did not dare to laugh; and, as she could not think of anything to say, she simply bowed, and took the thimble, looking as solemn as she could” (17).

Alice cannot treat the ambiguous structure of language, made valuable only by social context, as a laughing matter. Her anxiety throughout her adventure concerning the inversion of structure in Wonderland and concerning her own subsequent loss of linguistic control stems from the truth her experience illuminates. Jacqueline Flescher says, “language can be emphasized, either by closing the gap between word and meaning and tightening the relationship or ... by widening the rift and weakening the relationship. In either case the balance between word and

meaning is upset and the function of language becomes more apparent” (134). Alice’s experience in Wonderland, the inversion of order she observes underground, emphasizes the true arbitrary nature of language and therefore the true arbitrary nature of her own existence as a member of speaking society. Her position as a speaking subject, signified by an “I” signifier, is fluid and ever-changing according to her context (Homer 74).

If language is ambiguous and social structures are arbitrary, the solidarity of her own position in the Symbolic becomes dubious. Flescher says, “The problem of personal identity is closely connected with the idea of estrangement from language” (134). Once in Wonderland, Alice herself falls prey to the inversion of structure and the subsequent ambiguity of language. As she too loses her ability to say what she means, she begins to question her own identity. “I’m sure those are not the right words” (Carroll *Wonderland* 12), she bemoans after unsuccessfully attempting to recite a poem. “I must be Mabel after all” (12). Flescher explains, “Alice’s immediate conclusion on ‘not finding the right words’ is that she can no longer be herself” (134). As the signifier loses consistency, the fluidity of her own “I” position becomes more apparent. Thus, her own identity exists as intrinsically linked to the nature of language and the stability of structure.

As Alice travels through Wonderland, she continues to encounter the deconstruction of sign and meaning exhibited during her fall, both linguistically and within the structure of Wonderland society. The Mad Hatter’s tea party inverts order on both of these levels. The members of the tea party exercise no concept of manners that would remotely resemble those practiced on the surface. The Victorian tea party is inseparable from the Symbolic constructs of manners and would be meaningless without them. However, once over the borders of Wonderland, the relationship between meaning and practice unravels. When she first approaches

the party, the Hatter and the Hare shout “No room!” (Carroll *Wonderland* 40). When she sits down anyway, the Hare offers her some wine: “Alice looked all round the table, but there was nothing on it but tea. ‘I don't see any wine,’ she remarked. ‘There isn't any,’ said the March Hare. ‘Then it wasn't very civil of you to offer it,’ said Alice angrily” (40). Just like that of the Hare, the Hatter’s first remark to Alice is what she considers to be decidedly rude: “‘Your hair wants cutting,’ said the Hatter. He had been looking at Alice for some time with great curiosity, and this was his first speech. ‘You should learn not to make personal remarks,’ Alice said with some severity; ‘it's very rude’” (40).

The members of the tea party also deconstruct linguistic stability. The Door Mouse’s story revolves around linguistic ambiguity. Alice asks,

“Where did they draw the treacle from?”

“You can draw water out of a water-well,” said the Hatter; “so I should think you could draw treacle out of a treacle-well--eh, stupid?”

“But they were in the well,” Alice said to the Dormouse, not choosing to notice this last remark.

“Of course they were,” said the Dormouse; “--well in.”

....

“They were learning to draw,” the Dormouse went on, yawning and rubbing its eyes, for it was getting very sleepy; “and they drew all manner of things-- everything that begins with an M--.” (45)

Both “draw” and the concept of being in the well are subject to ambiguity. Thus, the Mad Hatter’s tea party demonstrates the fluidity of Symbolic structure both by exhibiting none of the anticipated aspects of a tea party and by evoking linguistic ambiguity. It has inverted the general

relationship between the tea party structure and the social etiquette practices that define said structure in the surface world. By doing so, the party itself is a signifier without a signified, serving the same function as nonsense language. At the party Alice is thus confronted with the concept of ambiguity with the Symbolic, within social structure. Those structures that she once assumed to be unwavering, even if she did not understand them, have now shown their true arbitrary colors. As demonstrated during her fall down the rabbit hole, Alice does not understand the structures of the adult surface world. However, she still attempts to define herself through such comprehension. When Wonderland shows them actually to be arbitrary, not just misunderstood, her entire identity within the Symbolic and her ability to be defined as a “self” therein must be questioned. Just as Alice questions the purpose of the Mad Hatter’s riddle with no answer, she must question the value of a Symbolic order governed by an arbitrary signifier/signified structure.

Alice eventually rejects the nonsense of the tea party, unable to accept its inversion of structure. As James Kincaid words it, “Alice’s prudence and desire for order are blasted again and again, but here, as elsewhere, she is uneducatable, and she disrupts the comic joy with her linear perspective and finality” (97). Alice is unable to release her desire for stable signified/signifier order and therefore cannot accept the inversion of order in Wonderland. When the Mad Hatter denies Alice’s statement “I don’t think--” from the context it required to create her intended meaning, it is more than she can take: “This piece of rudeness was more than Alice could bear: she got up in great disgust, and walked off . . . ‘At any rate I’ll never go there again!’ said Alice as she picked her way through the wood. ‘It’s the stupidest tea-party I ever was at in all my life!’” (Carroll *Wonderland* 45).

Throughout her journey in Wonderland, Alice refuses to acknowledge the nonsense of the world around her. Though bombarded with images of fractured structure and the fluid nature of linguistic signification, “she soberly, tenaciously, childishly refuses to accept chaos completely for what it is” (Rackin 314). Instead of embracing the fractured nature of signification and accepting the nonsense of Wonderland, she continues to interpret Wonderland in terms of her primary reality. Rackin observes that when Alice contemplates her size changes, she does so assuming that events should follow a linear, logical progression just as they did above ground: “Fortunately, ‘so many out of the way things had happened lately’ that she has ‘begun to think very few things indeed [are] really impossible’” (314). Here Alice’s mind is operating along logical lines established before her arrival in the confusing underground.

However, “Alice’s dogged quest for Wonderland’s meaning in terms of her above-ground world of secure conventions and self-assured regulations is doomed to failure” (Rackin 313). By rejecting the chaos and continuing to interpret the world of nonsense through her own terms, Alice also refuses to contemplate the fluid nature of her identity. “If I am not the same,” she wonders, “Who in the world am I?” (Carroll *Wonderland* 11).

Just as she experiences anxiety at the inability to master the fluid linguistic sign and assumes that she could not be herself without full control and stability, Alice also experiences anxiety related to her frequent size changes in the world down the rabbit hole. Her first size changes occur in chapter one almost immediately after her arrival in Wonderland. These changes revolve around getting through a door into a garden. In her original state, she is much too large to fit through the door. However, when she shrinks, she is much too small to reach the key to unlock. When she grows again, she can reach the key, but again, cannot fit through the door. Her sizes are not really defined in relation to each other, but rather in relation to the door. When she

does finally return to something closer to her natural size, she is in the White Rabbit's house and is in fact much too large for her setting. Her own personal identity and idea of correctness does not define her size, but rather her surroundings. She never really changes, no matter what size she becomes. However, her relationship to society is different with every change. Her size dictates the way in which she will interact with the world, and the world around her defines the appropriateness of her size. Had Alice been outside the White Rabbit's house when she grew large, she may not have even considered herself to be large. Her position in society at the time made growing to that height inappropriate. As Alice learns to understand society's role in the signification of truth, she learns to control her size and use it to assist in her social interactions:

She came suddenly upon an open place, with a little house in it about four feet high. "Whoever lives there," thought Alice, "it'll never do to come upon them this size: why, I should frighten them out of their wits!" So she began nibbling at the righthand bit again, and did not venture to go near the house till she had brought herself down to nine inches high. (*Carroll Wonderland 32*)

The infant in the mirror stage creates the concept of the whole "me" by relating to the image of itself in the mirror. This image looks whole; therefore, the infant believes himself to be whole. Like the infant, Alice relates her own subjectivity to the image of her body. Thus, Alice's size changes reflect this fluid subject position. Her body becomes fluid to reflect the nature of the speaking subject. Though she tries to understand her changing size by referring to her original size within the primary reality, that image of herself no longer applies within Wonderland. Just as the infant was never really whole and therefore cannot look back to a true time of wholeness in the mirror, Alice cannot continue to understand her size in terms of the primary reality. Self-reference does not define size; nor can size be defined by Alice's surface state. Context must

define size, and context is by no means stable. The "I" position changes with every new setting and Alice's size must change with it.

In the chapter "Advice from the Caterpillar," Alice has a crisis of identity much like that of Lacan's infant. Alice acknowledges the connection between her size and her subject identity during her conversation with the caterpillar. She claims not to know exactly who she is because she has experienced so many changes throughout the day. These changes have been changes in size. Her identity used to revolve around that which she knew herself to be in relation to society. However, with the size changes, her relationship to the world becomes unpredictable. Her subject position becomes physically fluid. When the Caterpillar asks her, "who are you?" she responds by saying, "I--I hardly know, Sir, just at present--at least I know who I was this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then . . . . being so many different sizes in one day is very confusing" (*Carroll Wonderland* 27). She can no longer answer the question "who are you?" by referring to her "self" from the primary reality. Similarly, when the pigeon accuses her of being a snake, she can offer no satisfactory explanation for her identity:

"I--I'm a little girl," said Alice rather doubtfully as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through that day.

"A likely story indeed!" said the Pigeon in a tone of the deepest contempt. "I've seen a good many little girls in my time, but never one with such a neck as that! No, no! You're a serpent; and there's no use denying it. I suppose you'll be telling me next that you never tasted an egg!"

"I have tasted eggs, certainly," said Alice, who was a very truthful child; "but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know."

“I don't believe it,” said the Pigeon; “but if they do, why then they're a kind of serpent, that's all I can say.” (Carroll 31-32)

Confronted by the instability of the signifier, unable to construct meaning in Wonderland by referencing the whole self she believed herself to be on the surface, Alice experiences a crisis of identity. Lost in a land of nonsense and chaos, she must find another way to understand the function of the signifier and in doing so acknowledge its arbitrary nature. Alice must learn to see her own subjectivity as a discourse with the Other, and therefore as dictated by the constructs of the Symbolic.

Alice is both too big and too little, but on which side of the binary she exists is not actually imperative to her identity. Alice does not change with her size. However, her contextual position does. The important factor in the scene is her size in relation to her surroundings. As in Derrida's concept of linguistic meaning through context, "the group identity accounts for a substantial part of the individual's self-identity" (Zizek 72). Context creates meaning, not by the binary relationship between opposites.

Whereas Saussure describes the relationship between the signifier and signified as two sides of a piece of paper, inseparable and necessary to one another (McNamara par. 6), Derrida argues that both signified and signifier are arbitrary and defined only by context. Meaning is built, not on some concrete concept, but on a string of interconnected signifiers. For Derrida, the sign is in a constant state of flux. Derrida then, with a magic pair of scissors, cuts along the margin of thought and sound in a way which Saussure thought impossible. Meaning is asserted to be no longer possible in the moment, which Derrida regards to be as a result of the absence of the "transcendental signified": since this original

signified or 'true' meaning is not present the chain of signification continues endlessly.

(McNamara par. 9)

This concept of linguistic meaning as being in a state of flux defined by an ever-changing external context is important within Lacan's theory.

Like Derrida, Lacan holds to the notion of language being comprised of signifieds and signifiers. However, also much like Derrida he assumes that these elements of language are not as intrinsically linked as Saussure had suggested. He posits that subjects experience lack by developing the concepts of “you” and “I.” This lack is unsatisfied because, like Derrida, Lacan believes that the signifier could never fully satisfy human desire, can never fully represent or produce fulfillment for the speaker, but rather can only point to true meaning. *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* describes Lacan’s relationship with Saussure’s linguistic theories saying that he “diverges from Saussure’s equation of the signifier and the signified to explore the unstable relationship between the two” (Makaryk 167). Thus, the subject is the unstable and fluid "I" signifier from which the individual relates to the world. This "I" is a linguistic construct and therefore, like all linguistic signs, draws its meaning from an arbitrary set of signifiers accepted and acknowledged as meaningful by society, but these signifiers only ever hint at meaning.

Like his academic predecessors Jacques Derrida and Ferdinand de Saussure, Slavoj Žižek claims that “meaning cannot be accounted for in purely syntactic inherent terms: the only way ultimately to gain access to the meaning of a statement is to situate it in its life-world context . . . to take into account its semantic dimensions, the objects and processes to which it refers” (91). The linguistic signifier itself cannot denote ultimate meaning. The signifier is simply an arbitrary set of phonological constituents put together to symbolize something other.

The signifier as its own entity is meaningless. It relies on real-life context to give it meaning. Speech is "the medium of the intersubjective recognition of desire" (Zizek 29). Thus, the signifier only expresses that which the speaking subject is not and relies on the reality surrounding the speaking subject to create meaning. Subjectivity must be constituted by a relationship to the Other. The subject must "be located in between the idealizing effects of the signifying function and the Real of the drive" (Chiesa 141). That is to say, the subject cannot ever be fully contained within a signifier, but rather occurs where Imaginary drives and the Symbolic signs meet.

Alice must acknowledge the fluid nature of her subjectivity. She must account for something other than the clear-cut binaries like big and little in reference to her ideal image of herself. She discovers that "I am I and she is she" (Carroll *Wonderland* 11) does not always form a foundation strong enough on which to base identity of the self. Rather, selfhood must be seen as "a concrete, overdetermining, complex totality" (Zizek 78), not a series of "truths" defined by blatant opposition. Meaning is not necessarily formed within opposition, but rather from presence in context. The binaries are present, but arbitrary. Their Symbolic context creates meaning. The interaction between opposing forces creates truth. It is not the binary that creates meaning--each opposite state is privileged at different moments. The binary oppositions are no longer two sides of a coin, but rather two states of being which exist simultaneously.

Author Carolyn Burke explains Derrida's theory of deconstruction:

The structures in question are usually binary opposites such as "same/other," "subject/Other," "identity/difference," "male/female." The aim is not to neutralize the oppositional structure, but rather to demonstrate the inequality of the terms locked into the opposition. In such a structure, according to Derrida,

“one of the two terms controls the other . . . holds the superior position, To deconstruct the opposition is first . . . to overthrow [renverser] the hierarchy.”

However, the task is not yet complete: “in the next phase of deconstruction, this reversal must be displaced,” and the “winning” term used without giving it the privileged status that the opposing once possessed. (Burke 294)

Thus, there is no true “winning” term. Neither side of the binary is truly privileged, so meaning within linguistic signification is founded not on a winning/losing binary, but on equal footing that draws value from the structures imparted by the Symbolic. In the Caucus Race of linguistic structure, “everybody has won, and all must have prizes” (Carroll *Wonderland* 17).

The subject, as the signifier position from which the unconscious addresses the Other, must account for something other than the clear-cut binary oppositions implied in the Saussurian structure of language. Relating two sides of a binary to a whole concept does not create meaning. Rather, the subject comes to being within the gap between the signifier and the signified, between the whole self of the mirror and the lacking “I” position, by negotiating the arbitrary nature of the deconstructed sign and assuming that it draws its value from Symbolic context. Burke describes the influence of deconstruction on the analyst by saying, “the critic must be prepared to accept ‘the irruptive emergence of a new concept, a concept which no longer allows itself to be understood in terms of the previous regime’” (Burke 294). Just as the critic must accept the immergence of an entirely new concept when the binary is deconstructed, Alice must be willing to accept a concept of her own subjectivity beyond the binaries of Saussurian linguistics. She must accept a definition of her own position in the Symbolic that accounts for the fluidity of her identity and by doing so must accept existence in a fluid Symbolic order.

Alice finally reaches the garden when she learns to navigate between the binaries of her own fluid size. She has accepted the fluidity of her own person. However, she has yet to acknowledge the inverted order of Wonderland society itself and still sees it as nothing but nonsense. When she reaches the garden, it does not fulfill her expectations. Like the rest of Wonderland, it inverts Symbolic order. Peopled by playing cards, it emphasizes the importance of structure, but not the structures Alice wants to find. Like the tea party and the Caucus race, the characters within the garden function as signifiers without signifieds, defined only by their Symbolic contexts. The Queen of Hearts spouts phrases of power and destruction, continuously shouting, “Off with his head!” but her commands are empty: “It’s all her fancy that: they never execute nobody, you know!” (Carroll *Wonderland* 57).

At this point in her adventure, Alice begins to realize the nature of signification and by doing so is beginning to participate in the Symbolic structure of Wonderland society. When the Queen threatens to behead the card soldiers painting the roses, Alice takes control of the situation. She puts the soldiers “in a large flowerpot” (Carroll *Wonderland* 49) and thus takes her first step towards entering the game of the Symbolic within Wonderland.

The culmination of her experience with nonsense in the garden occurs during the croquet game with the Queen and the Duchess. The croquet game, played with flamingos for mallets, hedgehogs for balls, and wandering soldiers for wickets, once again inverts supposed surface world structure (Carroll *Wonderland* 50). Kincaid suggests that Alice is upset and confused by the game because “it is too literally alive, without rules, order, or sequence. She is upset, in other words, by the absence of rigidity and hates the fluidity of this comic game” (94). The signifier of the game, like the other aspects of Wonderland, implies the fluidity of language and of the subject position within the Symbolic, which still creates tension for Alice. However, unlike the

tea party, Alice does not abandon this bit of nonsense. Instead, she reestablishes her contact with the Duchess and thus discovers what Kincaid suggests is a foil for her own rigid and linear train of logic. Alice herself identifies the Duchess as a foil for herself when she identifies her as a role model: “‘When I’m a Duchess,’ she said to herself . . . ‘I won’t have any pepper in my kitchen’” (Carroll *Wonderland* 54). Kincaid posits that the Duchess’s “absurd rage for categorizing and labeling . . . burlesques Alice’s own need to reduce things to the most mechanical level” (94). Only after she has witnessed the ridiculousness of reducing everything to a linear point of logic through the character of the Duchess can she begin to contemplate existence in a fluid Symbolic order.

The courtroom displays the true turning point within Alice’s experience of the fractured subject. When the king questions Alice and she declares she knows nothing of the situation at hand, a debate ensues concerning the appropriateness of the words *important* versus *unimportant*. In the end, “Some of the jury wrote it down ‘important’ and some ‘unimportant’” (Carroll *Wonderland* 73). However, Alice recognizes that “it doesn’t matter a bit” (73) which way they put it because the structure of the court rests in the arbitrary signifier/signified relationship identified in Wonderland. However, in realizing that the court reflects the arbitrary nature of the sign, Alice discovers the true nature of the Symbolic order. The sign and the court rely upon each other to create meaning. Each is essentially arbitrary, but in context they develop meaning. The arbitrary sign is meaningful in the context of Symbolic structure. Alice comes to realize that the discourse within the Symbolic, the discourse of the Other, dictates meaning within the sign-to-sign relationship. She learns that her understanding of the court system above the ground cannot help her understand the Wonderland Court. Rather, she must participate in the discourse of the Other. She must function within the Symbolic structure of Wonderland society.

Though the structures seem to be arbitrary, Alice must acknowledge that within the context of society they gain meaning.

Alice finally learns to accept the fluid nature of signification and in doing so takes control of both the linguistic sign and her own size. She realizes that, though arbitrary and therefore fluid, signifying structures are in fact meaningful within the Symbolic. Lionel Morton explains this shift of power within the scene saying that “Her evidence at the Wonderland trial, ‘you’re nothing but a pack of cards!’ is far more powerful than the Queen’s ‘Off with his head!’” (305). Because she has learned to participate in the Symbolic discourse, she has gained power over the signifier. Thus she returns to her “normal” size having accepted and wielded the fluid nature of signification, and subsequently returns to her primary reality, psychologically refreshed.

Alice’s dream is chaotic and confusing, but she does not remember it as a negative experience. When Alice wakes she, “got up and ran off, thinking while she ran, as well she might, what a wonderful dream it had been” (Carroll *Wonderland* 76). The fear and tension created by her fractured and lacking subject is already present in her subconscious long before her adventure in Wonderland. Her adventure becomes a signifying system in which she can stand face-to-face with the forces plaguing her unconscious mind and confront them.

Alice’s adventure is psychologically resonant for both the child and adult reader because it explores the fractured nature of subjectivity and the arbitrary status of Symbolic structures. As Alice sets off into the nonsense world of Wonderland, she embarks on a journey into the fabric of her unconscious. According to Brian Attebery, “every fantasy is descriptive psychology” (31). Thus, to borrow the words of twentieth century philosopher of the occult, Marc Edmund Jones, within Wonderland “consciousness becomes tangible” (par. 1). Alice’s unconscious now has developed a voice, which will communicate the latent fears and repressions

connected to her journey from child to adult. Ranckin expresses the texts psychological function saying that “Her literal quest serves, vicariously, as the reader’s metaphorical search for meaning in the lawless, haphazard universe of his deepest consciousness” (313). By creating a world of nonsense, Wonderland communicates a truth about the arbitrary nature of the Symbolic, and consequently of language and social structure that every subconscious knows to be accurate.

For the child reader, Alice’s adventure down the rabbit hole is an exploration of fears both conscious and unconscious connected to the entrance into the Symbolic order. Like Alice, the child does not understand the structures of the adult world. They are frequently as nonsensical as Wonderland itself. However, the child cannot consciously admit that these nonsensical structures might in fact be arbitrary and therefore unable to support their own identity formation. The tension between the whole “me” and the lacking “I” signifier is felt unconsciously, but cannot be expressed by the conscious mind. As Bruno Bettelheim suggests, these fears are too psychologically threatening to be faced by the conscious mind, but they must be faced just the same. Alice’s adventure offers the child a chance to explore the arbitrary nature of the Symbolic in an imagistic, non-threatening way. In the end, Alice accepts the fluid nature of the Symbolic and by the time she escapes the courtroom has entered the Symbolic just a little bit more than she had at the beginning of her adventure. Just so, by facing unconscious fears connected to the arbitrary and incomprehensible nature of adult structures, the child has accepted the Symbolic just a little more by the end of his experience in Alice’s Wonderland.

For the adult reader, Wonderland functions differently. The last scene of the texts reflects this psychological function. The text does not end with Alice, but with her sister thinking of Alice’s experience. As Alice runs off to tea, she begins “thinking of little Alice and all her wonderful Adventures, till she too began dreaming after a fashion” (76). She begins rehearsing

Alice's adventure in her own mind, gaining pleasure from the nostalgia of fantasy. Alice's imagistic exploration of subjectivity creates for the adult reader the opportunity to experience a sense of nostalgia, of longing for a personal fantasy of wholeness and longing to venture back into the innocent refusal of fluidity that is childhood. Nostalgic longings for the supposed unity of the Imaginary conflict with Symbolic forces in the unconscious throughout the life of the subject. Wonderland allows the reader to connect to the nostalgic desire for the Imaginary. By experiencing such nostalgia, the adult reader gains both a momentary escape from the pressures of social structure and a renewed sense of wonder, a renewed faith in the structures of society. By inverting Symbolic structures, Wonderland reinscribes the necessity of those structures. Thus the reader faces the truth of the arbitrary nature of the Symbolic while at the same time gaining an appreciation for those arbitrary structures.

Wonderland also offers the adult reader a much needed exploration of the arbitrary nature of the Symbolic itself. Donald Rackin observes that "the adult reader almost invariably responds with the only defense left open to him in the face of unquestionable chaos--he laughs . . . . The essence of Alice's adventures beneath commonly accepted ground is the grimmest comedy conceivable, the comedy of man's absurd condition in an apparently meaningless world" (314). Within Wonderland, the reader can observe the otherwise terrifying truth of his "absurd condition." If contemplated in real time, in the "real" world, this truth is too destructive to face. However, in the fictional world of Wonderland, the reader can recognize the truth of arbitrary existence and laugh at the absurdity, thus experiencing Tolkien's moment of eucatastrophe and returning from the fictional experience renewed.

Alice is no allegory, presenting a translatable image of reality, thinly veiled behind metaphor. The text does not seem in fact to mirror society at all. Rather, it mirrors the role of

society within the unconscious. It criticizes the role of reality, yes, but only by presenting truth about the unconscious ignored by society. We return to Alice because we know that what she has to say about the subconscious, about childhood, about psychological confusion and the arbitrary nature of societal rules, is true. It is within the subversion of society, within the questioning of structure, that Alice stumbles upon the truth of the fractured subject. Theorists describe fantasy as the map to the unconscious. Lacan's image of the fractured subject offers an explanation for why we need the map in the first place. Within Wonderland, the reader discovers a mirror showing his own chaos-riddled unconscious and discovers the solace of illuminating repression. The child finds images of the fears and struggles inherent in maturity. The adult finds a reminder that the structures of society are as arbitrary as they seem, but are still valuable, thus achieving psychological expression and showing the underbelly of the conscious world.

## Chapter 3:

## Creation of the Social Subject in Looking Glass Land

*“Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
 The years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
 Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?  
 Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,  
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight  
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!” (William Wordsworth 355)*

*Alice's Adventure Through the Looking Glass* delves into the acquisition of the social structures forced on the subject upon entrance into the Symbolic. The Symbolic must be understood as both the structures of language and the governing voice of the Other, of society. In order to create the concept of the lacking “I,” the subject must interact with society. The fractured subject is fluid because, rather than being founded around some internal concept of the self, it is based in the experience of lack that defines language. If the “I” is governed by society, then the “I” must be presented in fantasy as subordinate to its Symbolic context and created by its surroundings. Thus, an analysis of the subject position must explore the society in which that position is created.

Fantasy becomes an exploration of the internal, individual psyche and the structures of society all at the same time. Each exploration is necessary to the other because these differing aspects of the Symbolic are indiscrete. As Noelle McAfee describes it, the speaking being is that which will “emerge in that fold between language and culture” (2). In other words, full entrance into the Symbolic, and therefore the development as a speaking subject, requires both strata of the Symbolic to act upon the subject, the linguistic and the social. In *Wonderland*, Alice struggles with the tension between the innate “me” and the signifier “I” in the unconscious and is ultimately encouraged to join the realm of the Symbolic. However, once through the Looking

Glass, Alice encounters a mirror image of her own social reality that questions the value of the Symbolic signification encouraged in Wonderland. *Through the Looking Glass* lets the reader a question the structure and stability of the social signifier/signified relationship. Looking Glass Land holds a mirror to the social structures of the Symbolic order and in doing so, questions the price of the Imaginary that must be paid in order to join these structures.

Alice began her adventure through Wonderland by rejecting influences of the Symbolic. As her adventure through Looking Glass opens, she attempts to understand the desire of the Other through role playing. Using the kitten, she attempts to become the voice of society, creating rules and images of normalcy so as to better understand how to exist within society herself. The text opens with Alice conversing with one of Dinah's kittens. She reprimands the kitten, telling it, "Dinah ought to have taught you better manners" (Carroll *Looking Glass* 85). She goes on to lecture the kitten about its many faults and the ways in which it has failed to live up to standards of good behavior. By treating the kitten in this way, Alice rehearses her own desire to absorb and adhere to the structures of society, to achieve "better manners" and be that which the Other of society demands she become. Just as Bruno Bettelheim suggests, Alice uses play and daydreams to explore her own position in society. However, that game does not offer a rich enough field of images with which to fully explore insecurities related to acquisition of social structure. She must enter a more complete form of fantasy in order to fully explore her own place within social structure.

Just like her experience with the kitten, her adventure through Looking Glass Land explores what it means to exist as a subject within society. Like the face on the Looking Glass clock, through the mirror aspects of existence unnoticed in the primary reality suddenly gain personality and demand to be seen face to face. By creating a mirror image of reality, Looking

Glass Land explores the arbitrary nature of social signification and presents to Alice the true nature of existing within the Symbolic, inevitably questioning the value and necessity of existing within the Symbolic structures of society.

As soon as Alice leaves the house and truly enters Looking Glass Land, she confronts a reversal of order. She longs to reach the hill beyond the garden. However, with every attempt to reach the hill, she ends up farther from it. Each time she sets out the path leads her back to the house. In one attempt, when she stumbles upon a garden of talking flowers, the Rose advises her “to walk the other way” (96) away from her goal. Though this seems like nonsense to Alice, when she tries, she succeeds and she reaches her goal. Once through the mirror, Alice can only reach the object of her desire by following the rules of Looking Glass Land. If she neglects the structures of Looking Glass Land, she winds up back at the house where she will have to pass back through the mirror and her adventure will end. Thus she learns that in order to continue exploring her own subjectivity, she must follow the rules.

As Alice acknowledges the necessity of conformity, she encounters the “other” that she had been searching for even on the other side of the mirror. As the subject enters the Symbolic order, it begins to personify the will of the Other, the Symbolic structures of society, in the physical form of another person. This person serves as an other (little o) for the subject. Through relating to this other and observing their position in the Other of society, the subject creates an image of its own place in the structure of society (Sharpe par. 4). The other (little o) becomes a means by which the child negotiates the Other (big O) and thus begins to desire existence as a speaking social subject. Thus, as Lacan says, “maturation becomes henceforth dependent, in man, on a cultural mediation” (737).

Alice desires to find an “other” image in the kitten on the other side of the mirror, but the kitten is not actually a speaking subject within the Symbolic and therefore cannot fulfill that role. The Red Queen is Alice’s other within Looking Glass Land. She is a speaking subject, a member of the structure in Looking Glass Land. Alice is excited to talk to a “real Queen” and will throughout her journey express a desire to be a Queen. Within the signifying system of the story, the Queens (both Red and White) serve as Alice’s other, that member of society from whom Alice desires recognition. Her entire journey will revolve around becoming a Queen and receiving recognition from her “other,” the Queens. According to James Kincaid, “The Red Queen ... is a model for Alice, a symbol of what the child will become” (95). Thus, in Looking Glass Land, Alice has a specific goal and instructions on how to reach it. Here she must somehow function within a structure to reach an ultimate and specific end, and must do it in an orderly, square-by-square manner. She must successfully interact with the citizens of this realm, and become one herself if she can. Her goal was never to join the ranks of the Wonderland folk, but through the Looking Glass, Alice wants to follow the Red Queen’s orders to become a queen herself and in so doing satisfy the Desire of the Other.

Lacan describes the need to become the desire of the Other as an integral part of subject formation. He says, “If I have said that the unconscious is the discourse of the Other (with a capital O), it is in order to indicate the beyond in which the recognition of desire is bound up with the desire for recognition” (Lacan 754). Matthew Sharpe describes this desire for recognition:

Lacan's stress, however, is that, from a very early age, the child’s attempts to satisfy these needs become caught up in the dialectics of its exchanges with others. Because its sense of self is only ever garnered from identifying with the

images of these others (or itself in the mirror, as a kind of other), Lacan argues that it demonstrably belongs to humans to desire--directly--as or through another or others. (Sharpe par. 7)

This desire for recognition by the Other so ingrained within the psyche of the child becomes a sort of catalyst for social signification. Alice seeks the crown only at the prompting of the Red Queen: “in the Eighth Square we shall be Queens together, and it's all feasting and fun!” (Carroll *Looking Glass* 99). She sees in the Queen a reflection of her own mirrored self, a goal, a desire. She desires to fulfill the Queen’s desire by becoming like her, by accepting her social structures. Just as Alice will seek the crown at the suggestion of the Red Queen, the child will follow the image of her other into social subjectification.

Alice’s conversation with the Red Queen marks the first appearance of an other (little o) signifier within the text. By learning to follow the rules, Alice has reached her other from whom she will learn how to play the game of the Symbolic in Looking Glass Land. Her conversation with the Red Queen consists almost entirely of rules: “Look up, speak nicely, and don't twiddle your fingers all the time . . . . Curtsey while you`re thinking what to say, it saves time . . . open your mouth a *little* wider when you speak, and always say ‘your Majesty’” (Carroll *Looking Glass* 96). The Red Queen teaches her to play the game and gives her a place on the playing board, hence drawing Alice into the Symbolic social order of Looking Glass Land.

However, the order of the Red Queen is not the order of the armchair world. The social and physical structures of Looking Glass Land are by no means synonymous with those of Alice’s primary reality. The Red Queen demonstrates this new order in her use of signifiers during her conversation with Alice: “when you say ‘garden,’--I've seen gardens, compared with which this would be a wilderness . . . I could show you hills, in comparison with which you'd call

that a valley . . . I've heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!" (97). The commands she gives Alice seem nonsensical. Certainly, curtsying while you speak doesn't really save time. Even here, in the image of social structure, Looking Glass land presents "a rather desperate defense of the life of the imagination" (Kincaid 95). According to Kincaid,

The Red Queen's refusal to accept words as definite and final explanations of experience . . . not only contributes to an important theme which involves just this relationship between the abstractions of language and the vitality of real experience, but also affirms a reality beyond the confines of a dictionary and Alice's common sense. (95)

Thus, even in the image of Alice's other, the image that drives Alice to strive for social structure, Looking Glass Land plants a still, small hint at something other than dictionary knowledge and social signification. Still, Alice must follow her other and seek her crown at the end of the board. Though Alice contests the Queen's logic, she must still follow her instructions to reach the other side of the game. Whether or not the order of Looking Glass Land makes sense, Alice must follow the social structures, must play the game, in order to achieve her goal and take her rightful place on the board as a queen.

Looking Glass Land creates a mirror image of social structures within the armchair world and by doing so serves as a criticism of social structure and of the necessity to enter the Symbolic system of social signification. Meaning within the Queen's signifiers and within her commands can appear as a mirror of the armchair world. Social structures and Symbolic systems can be mirrored, thus emphasizing the arbitrary nature of the signifier/signified relationship. The signified/signifier relationship is fluid and therefore can be changed, flipped. Just as Wonderland

deconstructs the personal signifier, Looking Glass Land deconstructs social structure. However, while Wonderland ultimately supported the necessity for Symbolic signification within linguistic structure, Looking Glass Land presents a potentially subversive argument in light of entrance into the Symbolic. In order to accept linguistic signification, the subject must also adhere to the social function of the Symbolic. While the subject longs to do this, longs to serve as the desire of the Other, the inverted systems of Looking Glass Land suggest that social signification is not the prize the subject believes it to be, that the subject must make sacrifices in order to adhere to the desire of the Other and continue in the process of subject formation.

In order to understand the subversive side of the Symbolic presented in the text, the reader must also investigate its treatment of the Imaginary. In the land through the Looking Glass, Alice's encounter with both the Gnat and the Fawn most clearly depicts the Imaginary. The Gnat first introduces the potentially positive effects of living outside the Symbolic system of society by questioning the value of linguistic signification through a name. He asks Alice about the insects in her world, to which she responds,

“I can tell you the names of some of them.”

“Of course they answer to their names?” the Gnat remarked carelessly.

“I never knew them do it.”

“What's the use of their having names” the Gnat said, “if they won't answer to them?”

“No use to *them*,” said Alice; “but it's useful to the people who name them, I suppose. If not, why do things have names at all?” (103).

The Gnat has no response to this final question, but rather refers to a place in the wood where there are no names, a place Alice will soon have to explore. However, the question of

signification is by no means over for the Gnat. Alice goes on to list the names of a number of common insects: horsefly, dragonfly, butterfly. The Gnat responds to these by describing the rocking-horse fly, the snap-dragon fly, and the bread-and-butter fly, all inhabitants of Looking Glass Land. These insects appear exactly as they sound, with their physical construction and their lifestyle corresponding perfectly to their names, thus creating a question concerning the logic of names like butterfly that have very little to do with the actual composition of the creature. These names do nothing for the insects of our world. They do not recognize them, nor are they accurately described by them. They are simply social constructs created to identify but failing to define them.

The danger of being defined by a signifier creeps into the text through the plight of the poor bread-and-butter fly, who lives on nothing but weak tea with cream. Alice wonders, “suppose it couldn’t find any?” to which the Gnat responds, “it would die of course” (104). “‘But that must happen very often,’ Alice remarked thoughtfully. ‘It always happens,’ said the Gnat” (104). Thus, determination by social construct is dangerous, but signification without definition is pointless. Names cannot, must not, define the make-up of the subject. However, that implies that signification within Alice’s primary reality is arbitrary, that names are not definitive. Alice supports this concept in her own thoughts as she approaches the dark woods:

“This must be the wood,” she said thoughtfully to herself, “where things have no names. I wonder what’ll become of *my* name when I go in? I shouldn’t like to lose it at all--because they’d have to give me another, and it would be almost certain to be an ugly one. But then the fun would be, trying to find the creature that had got my old name ... just fancy calling everything you met ‘Alice,’ till one of them answered!” (Carroll *Looking Glass* 105)

Even in her internal musings, Alice must admit to herself that her own name is arbitrary. Were her name to be replaced, she would continue to be herself, unchanged by the shift in her social signification. However, despite its arbitrary nature she must have a signifier.

The Gnat presents another solution to this conundrum of signification. Without a name, he ventures, a person would not have to abide by the commands of authority figures. “Only think how convenient it would be,” he says, “if the governess wanted to call you to your lessons, she would call out ‘come here--,’ and there she would have to leave off, because there wouldn't be any name for her to call” (Carroll 104). One would be unsignified, beyond the system of language, and therefore beyond the grasp and rules of society. Here lies the beginning of *Looking Glass Land's* true subversive message. The Gnat must continually make puns emphasizing the potentially arbitrary nature of language. But though the puns are his, he sighs himself away wishing Alice had made them herself and in doing so had acknowledged doubt in the Symbolic order. He and his punned questioning of names create a criticism of Symbolic signification.

Humpty Dumpty reiterates the question of names. When Alice introduces herself he immediately demands to know what her name means, stating that every name must mean something. “My name means the shape I am,” he says. “With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost” (Carroll *Looking Glass* 127). Thus, “Humpty Dumpty is produced by the phonemes of his own nature” (Burke 233). His name and his self are inextricable. Again, *Looking Glass* names seem based in immediate reality, therefore calling into question the fact that primary reality names are nothing more than social constructs. Humpty Dumpty's theory on words creates an even deeper dimension to the question of linguistic signification:

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less.”

“The question is,” said Alice, “whether you can make words mean so many different things.”

“The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master--that's all.” (130)

Thus, Humpty Dumpty finishes his theory on linguistic signification by creating the sense that all linguistic meaning is arbitrary. According to critic Carolyn Burke, Humpty Dumpty, “takes the words, but the meanings evaporate” (235). In the words of Kincaid, “He joins with the other characters in attacking Alice’s smug linguistic certainty” (96) and in doing so questions the power of language. Who is to be master? A name, as a word, can mean whatever one likes, but Humpty Dumpty’s words also have wills of their own. The very nature of the question implies that a struggle for mastery occurs. At the end of his recitation, the reader must wonder, “is it Humpty Dumpty who breaks off after ‘but,’ or ‘but’ which breaks off the discourse?” (Burke 236). Like the question of names in the wood with the Gnat, being mastered and defined by language is dangerous, but a language without foundation is arbitrary. To define one’s self by a social signifier, to accept one’s name as self-reflective is a dangerous game, but still Alice pushes on to the end of the game in order to reach her own social signification.

Once within the wood with no names, Alice does in fact lose her name and the names of everything else around her. She has entered the realm of the Imaginary, a place completely free of signification. She travels through the woods with a Fawn. The Fawn does not fear Alice in the forest because they have no names and therefore no past of fear and violence. However, when they leave the forest and rediscover their names, the Fawn runs from Alice in terror: “‘I’m a Fawn!’ it cried out in a voice of delight, ‘and, dear me! you’re a human child!’ A sudden look of

alarm came into its beautiful brown eyes, and in another moment it had darted away at full speed” (106). She is heartbroken by the loss of her companion. “‘However, I know my name now.’ she said, ‘that's some comfort’” (Carroll *Looking Glass* 106). And with that, she immediately moves on towards her goal, counting on consolation for her loss through her existence in the Symbolic structure.

Here, Carroll’s text questions the very necessity of becoming a signified speaking subject. Without a name, Alice is free from the designated roles and demands she must inherit in the Symbolic. Without the Symbolic, she is free to love whom she chooses, to obey no one, to live without the assumed position inherited within a social role. The Fawn runs away when he discovers that she is a human child, not when he discovers she is Alice. Thus her "I" position is not necessarily true to her internal identity. Without the "I" position, she and the Fawn are not Other, are not foreign to each other. Without signification, language cannot require Alice to identify herself as separate from the companionship she desires. With signification within the Symbolic, she and the fawn must be enemies. Humans of the past have wounded deer of the past, therefore the fawn fears the human child. Alice has inherited the role forced upon her by her social context and must exist in a pre-designated role within her contextual Symbolic. Here, the Symbolic is not an escape from chaos or a way to achieve the binary necessary to subject formation. It is a guillotine separating signifier from signified, separating the “me” and the “I,” and therefore trapping Alice in a controlled state of identity. Alice leaves the forest and accepts the loss of her companion because of the promise of becoming queen at the end of the game. If she follows the rules and plays the game, she will be rewarded with her crown, her social role. So, she leaves each friend and adventure, fulfills each task assigned her, and continues to the happiness promised her by society.

Perhaps the clearest example of having to leave that which is precious behind occurs in the scene where Alice meets the White Knight. James Kincaid suggests that this scene embodies the theme of Alice's adventure through Looking Glass Land saying, "a drawing of the White Knight is used as a frontispiece, indicating the central focus of this book: the gentle and comic values Alice is leaving behind" (94). The White Knight serves as the signifier for all that is wonderful outside of the Symbolic and all that must be given up upon entrance into social structure. The text says:

Of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly. Years afterwards she could bring the whole scene back again, as if it had been only yesterday--the mild blue eyes and kindly smile of the Knight--the setting sun gleaming through his hair, and shining on his armour in a blaze of light that quite dazzled her--the horse quietly moving about, with the reins hanging loose on his neck, cropping the grass at her feet--and the black shadows of the forest behind--all this she took in like a picture, as, with one hand shading her eyes, she leant against a tree, watching the strange pair, and listening, in a half-dream, to the melancholy music of the song. (Carroll *Looking Glass* 149)

The White Knight rescues her from being captured by the Red Knight and therefore enables her to continue her quest for social signification. However, instead of being instantly grateful for his assistance, she worries that the result of the battle might arrest her continuation to the eighth square. She doesn't "want to be anyone's prisoner," she "wants to be Queen" (Carroll *Looking Glass* 143). So, the White Knight must give her up to let her continue, and she must leave him behind to reach her goal. They walk together across the seventh square. Events in this scene

question the arbitrary nature of the linguistic sign, but more importantly, Alice enjoys one of her companions and is a joy to him as well. She assists him as he repeatedly falls off his horse. He sings her a song and she remembers him more clearly than any other aspect of Looking Glass Land. However, Alice can think of nothing but moving on and reaching the eighth square. When he offers to sing her a song of his own invention, her first response is to ask, "is it long?" (148).

Alice passes through all the temptations to remain in the Imaginary and follows the rules of the Symbolic structure to finally become queen, but when she gets there, she discovers her reward isn't as wonderful as society led her to believe it would be. Whereas the adventure in Wonderland encouraged maturity and presented it as a positive and inevitable end, Alice's adventure on the other side of the mirror abandons the beauty and innocence of the Imaginary for a terrifying and seemingly senseless chaos. Looking Glass Land questions the very value of the Symbolic structure of society. Yes, by leaving behind the nonsense of the Imaginary, Alice became a speaking subject and took her appropriate position in the game of society, but playing by the rules of the chess game doesn't ever necessarily bring Alice the satisfaction she expected. Her crown does not save her from chaos. The party to celebrate her achievement isn't a party at all, but a truly chaotic disaster. In fact, the most frightening and ridiculous scene of the story is the dinner celebrating her achievement. Carroll describes the scene:

There was not a moment to be lost. Already several of the guests were lying down in the dishes, and the soup-ladle was walking up the table towards Alice's chair, and beckoning to her impatiently to get out of its way. "I can't stand this any longer!" she cried, as she jumped up and seized the tablecloth with both hands: one good pull, and plates, dishes, guests and candles came crashing down together in a heap on the floor. (166)

Subjectivity and subsequent citizenship within the Symbolic does not gain her control or comfort. It does not fulfill her desires. Alice leaves behind friends and wonders to be yelled at by a pudding and a soup-ladle. The rules of society never ultimately achieve anything worth having and in the end of the book, Alice returns to her own reality and carries on with her day as if nothing ever happened, attributing the entire adventure to kittens.

Wonderland explores the psychological effects and implications of existing as a lacking subject, and while it does subvert or at least redefine the signifier/signified relationship, in the end it acknowledges the necessity of coming to terms with the Symbolic and leaving Wonderland behind. Looking Glass has an entirely different agenda. In Wonderland, Alice conquers her size changes as well as her fears of the chaos and the characters around her. She overcomes her identity crisis and re-enters the primary reality ready to be a citizen of the Symbolic, having dealt with her unconscious fears of her own growing subjectivity. Like her sister before her, she will continue to develop into a successful citizen of the Symbolic. Wonderland certainly has elements of both Symbolic and Imaginary influences. The story realizes the psychological conflict between the Symbolic and the Imaginary. However, within the conflict, the Imaginary and the Symbolic possess specific roles and characteristics: the Imaginary is confusing and even threatening at times; the polarized Symbolic system has to be righted in order for the conflict of identity to be solved, supporting order, at least on a personal level. In the end, Alice returns to her primary reality having overcome the chaos of an arbitrary Symbolic structure. The Symbolic has to appear complete, and therefore a move into the realm of the Symbolic is a positive move within the story. The Imaginary is exciting and the object of desire, but turns out to be both frightening and destructive and the speaking subject must ultimately abandon it.

Looking Glass seems to present a very different relationship with the Symbolic and the role of the Other in the development of the subject. Whereas Wonderland conquers chaos, Looking Glass seems to admit its inevitability. The Symbolic, rather than the Imaginary, governs this dreamland, this glance into the unconscious mind. Looking Glass Land is a world of structure and rules. Alice must follow the rules in order to reach a specific object: she must become Queen and fulfill her position on the game board. She has not chosen this position or set out on an adventure to find it, but rather has had it thrust upon her by an authority, a character already entrenched within the system. It becomes her socially constructed signifier. But, like the signifiers explored by the Gnat and Humpty-Dumpty, its meaning is based entirely upon social context and is therefore arbitrary in nature.

Unlike the ending of Wonderland that seems to support the adventure as necessary to maturation, Looking Glass ends still questioning the role of society in the formation of the subject. Like the objects within the sheep's shop and the scented reeds in square five, Alice cannot quite seize her desire for subjectification. This image of elusive desire is Looking Glass Land's finest example of the breakdown of the signifier. The subject cannot capture that which is truly desired. She can never fully realize her desire for the Other, her drive for signification. Like the wares on the shelves, we know there is something we want, but when we try to pin it down, it is always just a little out of reach. And like the reeds, when we think we've finally reached it, we discover our arms are filled with nothing but dry and fragrant-less remains of that for which we search. The Symbolic cannot fulfill desire. Her other, in the form of the Queens, turn out to have nothing of value to say. In the end, her experiences with them devolve into pure chaos and they become heavy weights asleep on her lap (Carroll *Looking Glass* 162). Alice's social

signification, her negotiation of the Other through the Symbolic, does not bring her the satisfaction she desires.

A scene that was removed from the original manuscript just before publication perhaps most clearly expresses the message of Looking Glass Land. In this scene dubbed “The Wasp in the Wig,” Alice meets an old wasp behind a tree. He tells her the story of his life, the tale behind the hideous wig he wears:

When I was young, my ringlets waved  
And curled and crinkled on my head:  
And then they said “You should be shaved,  
And wear a yellow wig instead.”  
But when I followed their advice,  
And they had noticed the effect,  
They said I did not look so nice  
As they had ventured to expect.  
They said it did not fit, and so  
It made me look extremely plain:  
But what was I to do, you know?  
My ringlets would not grow again.  
So now that I am old and grey,  
And all my hair is nearly gone,  
They take my wig from me and say  
‘How can you put such rubbish on?’ (154-155)

The wasp gave up his ringlets to conform to the dictates of society, to fulfill and therefore become the desire of the Other. His tale is the last thing Alice hears before she reaches the eighth square. His sorrow is her last warning of the dangers of social signification. Her wig “fits very well” (155) the Wasp tells her. She has yet to shave off her metaphoric ringlets for the demands of the Symbolic. Since she has yet to enter the eighth square and has not yet donned her crown of signification, she has yet to conform to the structures of society. Kincaid describes the message of Looking Glass land: “The Alice books are, above all, about growing up, and they recognize both the melancholy of the loss of Eden and the child’s rude and tragic haste to leave its innocence” (93). The Wasp, like the White Knight with whom he shares a chapter, is Looking Glass Land’s attempt to convince Alice to reject Symbolic signification and savor the joys of her childhood.

However, while Looking Glass Land illuminates the sacrifices made to define oneself within the structures of the Symbolic, the text does not deny the need for signification, the need to find meaning by relating to the Other. Just as Alice tells Humpty Dumpty, in the end, “one can’t help growing older” (Carroll *Looking Glass* 128), and Alice must accept Symbolic signification. In her last moment in Looking Glass Land, she shakes the Red Queen back into the kitten she began the adventure with. However, “she cannot really shake off the Red Queen, because the Red Queen in is her, not the kitten: the Queen is the desire . . . to grow up and be an adult” (Morton 306). Though entrance into the Symbolic does require the sacrifice of the Imaginary, Alice cannot help but grow up and join the ranks of the social Other. In the words of the Red Queen, “You should have meant! What do you suppose is the use of a child without any meaning? Even a joke should have some meaning--and a child's more important than a joke, I hope. You couldn't deny that, even if you tried with both hands” (Carroll *Looking Glass* 158). As

in Wonderland, Alice must find meaning as a speaking subject within the context of the Symbolic, despite the fluid nature of the signifier and subsequent arbitrary function of social structure.

Carroll summarizes the psychological value of the text in its final question. Was Alice's experience the product of her own dream or the dream of the Red King? Is identity found in one's own person? Is it to be created by social signification? It's no coincidence that Carroll's last charge within the Alice books is not directed toward Alice but toward the reader. The question of the arbitrary nature of the Symbolic explored throughout Alice's adventures has been just this question of the Red King. Throughout her adventures, Alice has faced the emotional tension created by the question of ontology. Has the King created Alice, or has Alice created the King? Though Carroll never offers an answer to the question, perhaps Alice's travel through the world of her unconscious implies that true signification, true subject formation, lies not in either realm but in the essence of their conflict. By experiencing both, but existing as both a complete "me" and a fluid "I," the speaking subject can speak from a position of individual identity, and fractured though it may be, can approach the world with the confidence of a self.

## Chapter 4: Desire of Neverland

*"But pleasures are like poppies spread;  
You seize the flower, its bloom is shed."  
(Robert Burns 99)*

Perhaps more clearly than any earlier fantasy author, J.M. Barrie introduces his story *Peter Pan* as the tale of a journey through the mind of a child. Barrie first describes Neverland to the reader as "a map of a person's mind" (6). Wendy's adventure into Neverland is immediately established as a journey into her own unconscious mind before her journey has even begun. Within the map, Barrie describes varying forces vying for attention. Neverland is made up of "astonishing splashes of colour here and there, and coral reefs and rakish-looking craft in the offing, and savages and lonely lairs, and gnomes who are mostly tailors" (6). If this were all that were on the map it would be simple, easy to understand. However,

there is also first day at school, religion, fathers, the Round Pond, needlework, murders, hangings, verbs that take the dative, chocolate-pudding day, getting into braces, say ninety-nine, threepence for pulling out your tooth yourself, and so on; and either these are part of the island or they are another map showing through.  
(6)

All of these forces together form the imagination and the unconscious experience of the individual. Wendy, as an emerging speaking subject, must learn to deal with both these maps, the map of color and imagination and the map of social structures, simultaneously. In doing so, she learns to relate successfully to her seemingly conflicting desires for Imaginary wholeness and Symbolic social signification. Each character and situation she encounters in Neverland and in

her original world serves as a representation and a signification of these unconscious processes at work in her world.

The characters in Barrie's text act as signifiers in a system. The characters do not express per se, the individual complexities of the human experience. Rather, they show the processes of the unconscious and within the system of the text become the embodied form of unconscious processes.

Psychoanalyst and literary critic Julia Kristeva deals closely with Lacanian theory in her work and bases her own theories around the concept of the Lacanian subject. Like those of Lacan, her theories assume that linguistic signification plays a major role in the formation of the unconscious mind. Noelle McAfee paraphrasing Kelly Oliver explains Julia Kristeva's theory concerning linguistic signification:

Instead of lamenting what is lost, absent, or impossible in language, Kristeva marvels at this other realm [bodily experience] that makes its way into language.

The force of language is [a] living driving force transferred into language.

Signification is like a transfusion of the living body into language. (15)

Peter is sort of a reversed process of linguistic signification. He is language embodied as desire once again. Peter has "rent the film that obscures the Neverland" (Barrie 9). In his person, he tears the veil between the conscious and the unconscious; repressed desires have returned in a physical form. He embodies the desire to return to Neverland. If Neverland acts as an image of the unconscious mind, as Barrie's description implies, author Karen Coats suggests that Peter plays a role much akin to Lacan's concept of *jouissance* on the island. (91) She builds an argument connecting him to Mrs. Darling through which she demonstrates this role.

In Lacanian theory, *jouissance* refers to the unity experienced with the mother in the mirror stage. Throughout life, the subject longs to return to this supposed state of wholeness. After the subject enters into the Symbolic, every desire experienced by the subject will essentially be a desire to return to this wholeness. The subject will repress this desire reflect it onto the desire for other things within the Symbolic. The desire for *jouissance* is not necessarily enjoyment, but rather a desire for pleasure that will reach a point of overload (Homer 89-90). In the French language at large, *jouissance* refers to the experience of pleasure to the point of pain, particularly in relation to sexuality. Building from the definition, Lacanian theory assumes *jouissance* to be ultimate fulfillment, but this ultimate, pleasing wholeness must be sacrificed upon entrance into the Symbolic. However, though it has been sacrificed, the subject can still experience traces of *jouissance* by connecting with an object of desire and through art (Coats 93).

Peter is Wendy's *jouissance* returned from its repression within the unconscious mind. The veil between consciousness and unconsciousness has been rent and *jouissance* has broken free. Though Wendy has sacrificed her *jouissance* in order to enter the Symbolic realm of language, her desire for unity remains repressed in her unconscious. When Wendy encounters Peter, she recognizes in him a reflection of her own desires. Within him, she sees a reflection of herself and what she longs to be. Barrie says, "She meant that he was her size in both mind and body; she didn't know how she knew, she just knew" (7). Like within the original Lacanian mirror stage, Wendy looks at a reflection of herself in another and sees an image of unity and uncastrated wholeness. Thus, she is drawn back into the original fantasy of wholeness created during the original mirror stage. During the mirror stage, the infant sees a whole image of himself in the mirror and sees whole forms around him and determines from these observations

that wholeness must be achievable (Lacan 735). Like the infant, Wendy has seen an image of wholeness in Peter Pan and assumed that she too can achieve a similar wholeness. She must travel to Neverland to once again identify the gap between the whole “me” position of the Imaginary and lacking “I” position of the Symbolic. Her journey with Peter thus becomes an attempt to relate to and maneuver through her relationship with her own lack, with her desire for *jouissance*.

Understanding the role of Mrs. Darling and Peter in the text relies heavily on the interpretation of Mrs. Darling’s kiss. Barrie introduces Mrs. Darling by describing her thus:

a lovely lady, with a romantic mind and such a sweet mocking mouth. Her romantic mind was like the tiny boxes, one within the other, that come from the puzzling East, however many you discover there is always one more; and her sweet mocking mouth had one kiss on it that Wendy could never get, though there it was, perfectly conspicuous in the right-hand corner (3).

Her kiss is totally unreachable by anyone, and the inner box of her mind exists entirely unknown to her husband.

Coats argues that *jouissance* can be experienced in three distinct forms she identifies as sexual *jouissance*, feminine *jouissance*, and for lack of a more precise signifier, textual *jouissance*, each of which Barrie expresses through the description of Mrs. Darling. She posits that the interior box is Mrs. Darling’s sexual *jouissance*, undiscovered within her marriage, the implications of which will be explored with the dissection of Mr. Darling’s character. The kiss is her feminine *jouissance*, which Lacanian theory describes as the ability possessed by women to channel the Imaginary in a way wholly unknown to them (92). Men can sense this other level of pleasure, this intrinsic connection to *jouissance*, but they can never experience it themselves or

understand its true nature. Thus, Mr. Darling must give up ever getting Mrs. Darling's kiss, her feminine *jouissance*. The text creates an immediate connection between Peter and *jouissance* through Mrs. Darling. When Peter first appears to the reader, Barrie writes, "If you or I or Wendy had been there, we should have seen that he was very like Mrs. Darling's kiss" (9). His connection to Mrs. Darling will continue throughout the text. After the children have left the nursery with Peter, the narrator says, "Mrs. Darling never upbraided Peter; there was something in the right hand corner of her mouth that wanted her to not call Peter names" (11). It is also Mrs. Darling who first discovers the notion of Peter in her children's minds and Mrs. Darling who senses his pending arrival the night the children leave. Bearing this concept of feminine *jouissance* in mind, it is by no means surprising that Barrie connects Mrs. Darling and Peter at various points throughout their descriptions.

Peter also functions as *jouissance* in the world of Neverland. He is the catalyst that makes Neverland an active entity. Barrie writes, "Feeling that Peter was on his way back, the Neverland had again woke into life" (37). If Peter isn't on the island, "when pirates and lost boys meet they merely bite their thumbs at each other" (Barrie 37). Much as the unconscious does not form until the subject realizes lack and desire appears to cover the hole within the Symbolic and maneuver a relationship with *jouissance*, so Neverland lacks activity without Peter. The actions of the Neverland inhabitants immediately preceding Peter's return to the island look oddly reminiscent of the cycle of desire posited within Lacanian theory:

the lost boys were out looking for Peter, the pirates were out looking for lost boys, the redskins were out looking for pirates, and the beasts were out looking for the redskins. They were going round and round the island, but they did not meet because they were all going at the same rate. (Barrie 37)

When Peter (*jouissance*) is present, the inhabitants of the island begin an apparently endless pursuit of their own demise. Lacanian theory argues that all drives are essentially death drives, meaning they strive for their own demise, creating in the subject a desire to pitch headfirst into the nothing that is the object of their desire (Chiesa 143). The subject never achieves this destruction in life, just as the characters never complete the circle of pursuit in Neverland. According to Barrie, the blind nature of the pursuit “shows how real the island was” (41). In the daydream, the children can achieve their desires; in the real world, they can never fully realize their desire for *jouissance*. Even if the subject acquires the object of desire, this object will never fully satisfy the desire for *jouissance*. Thus, the island is not a mere daydream, but the embodiment of the unconscious mind, as real as any other experience Wendy has ever had.

Barrie also describes Peter as “the only boy on the island who could neither write nor spell. He was above that sort of thing” (57). All the other characters are speaking subjects. They have existed as members of society; have learned to speak, read, and write; and have entered the Symbolic. Even if they have escaped society, they are citizens of the Symbolic order and subject to the signifying system. However, Peter is beyond the Symbolic order. He is an uncastrated entity. His wholeness and lack of Symbolic subjectivity allows him to function as the signifier of Wendy’s *jouissance* within the system of the text (Coats 91). Significantly, Peter first appears in the text not as a character, but rather as a word, a signifier. Barrie writes, “Occasionally in her travels through her children’s minds Mrs. Darling found things she could not understand, and of these quite the most perplexing was the word Peter ... the name stood out in bolder letters than any of the other words” (7). Thus, as a signifier beyond the Symbolic, Peter represents Wendy’s *jouissance*.

Peter's initial introduction to Wendy also reflects this connection to *jouissance*. He first encounters Wendy while he sits outside the nursery window listening to her tell stories. Though "she was just slightly disappointed when he admitted that he came to the nursery window not to see her but to listen to stories" (Barrie 24), this initial connection supports Peter's role as *jouissance* within Wendy's Neverland. As previously stated, Lacanian *jouissance* can be experienced through the telling of stories in what we will be calling textual *jouissance*. Through stories, the subject explores the lack experienced subconsciously. So Peter's first connection to Wendy becomes much like a microcosm of the psychological purpose of the book itself. Through the telling of stories, Wendy is brought into contact with an embodiment of her *jouissance* itself, who leaves behind the remnant of Lacanian *jouissance* in the form of his shadow.

As a woman, and therefore as a possessor of feminine *jouissance*, Wendy knows just what to do with Peter's shadow. "It must be sewn on,' she said, just a little patronizingly" (Barrie 20). Her domestic tendency and her clearly "female" ability to sew creates for her the opportunity to deal with the remnant of *jouissance* in a way that the text implies a boy never could. Peter takes little interest in her brothers, the boys, but is highly connected to Wendy herself, because "one girl is more use than twenty boys" (21).

In this introductory scene, Peter's connection to Wendy's sexual *jouissance* also becomes blatantly clear. From Wendy's "womanly" pouting to Peter's complimenting comments concerning girls, flirtation permeates the scene. However, the sexual interest appears to be entirely on the side of Wendy. While Peter is certainly interested in continuing to be with Wendy, "there can be no denying that it was she who first tempted him" (Barrie 25). Wendy first

initiates the kiss, and subsequently the thimble shared between them. When Tinker Bell pinches Wendy for kissing Peter, “Peter could not understand why, but Wendy understood” (24).

Tinker Bell’s role in the equation is simple yet profound. She expresses the physical, sexual side of *jouissance*. She understands Wendy’s attraction to Peter. The *jouissance* of Peter Pan is innocent and joyful. Tinker Bell becomes the sexual side of his nature. Her character expresses itself almost entirely through physical action. She is constantly referred to in a physical sense, much more so than the other characters. She is always pinching, flying, glowing; even her language implies the physical action of ringing bells. Significantly, she is also the only character referred to as being of another social class. Even Captain Hook is of a respectable social class, but Tinker bell is described as “quite a common fairy” of the working class; “she is called Tinker Bell because she mends the pots and kettles” (23). This denotation as “common” suggests that she perhaps is an example of an inappropriate reaction of *jouissance*. Her overtly sexual reaction to Peter and her physical and linguistic crudeness imply that there is a side to the pursuit of *jouissance* that the socially acceptable Victorian girl should not experience. Though Coats does not elaborate on Tinker Bell’s role in the book beyond acknowledging her as a representation of sexuality, she does aptly describe her connection to Peter, saying, “the sexual nature of *jouissance* is never far from its innocent face, even if the innocent face cannot recognize it” (95).

As Wendy encounters influences within the world of the unconscious mind, she is able to maneuver through her own questions and tensions concerning the relationship between her “me” and “I” position. Though Wendy is already a citizen of the Symbolic realm of language, she is still intrinsically linked to her *jouissance*. The mind deals with *jouissance* and remnants of the Imaginary through retroactive, unconscious acknowledgement of desire. The unconscious forms only after entering the Symbolic. Then the subject must sort out the residue of the Imaginary

through desire. Thus, as a child, Wendy must face her recurring desire for her sacrificed *jouissance*. Through her relationship with the characters of Neverland, she can negotiate these desires and face her *jouissance* in a tangible way. Normally, in reality beyond the signifying system of Barrie's story, influences of the Symbolic and the drive to adhere to the system of the Other would silence the siren (or shall we say mermaid?) call of the Imaginary and subsequently keep the subject from ever actually encountering *jouissance* in any satisfying sort of way. However, as Barrie sets off to explore the relationship between these two realms, this entrance into the Other of the Symbolic happens a little differently.

The text begins with Wendy in a world where the rules of the Symbolic seem ridiculous. Mr. Darling serves as signification of the Symbolic order. Barrie describes him as "one of those deep ones who knew about stocks and shares" (Barrie 3). He constantly attempts to gain respect and to live by the standards of society. His character is one of rules and sense and numbers. In the story, he is the law of the father in the most literal, paternal sense possible. However, Mr. Darling is also portrayed as a rather bumbling character, unable to tie his own tie and afraid of a cup of medicine. He is unable to connect to either aspects of Mrs. Darling's *jouissance*, and while this could give some interesting insight into Barrie's opinion of sexual pleasure in marriage, it even more appropriately expresses the relationship between the Symbolic order and *jouissance* itself. In order to enter the Symbolic, the subject must sacrifice *jouissance* and understand it only as a sense of lack. As a speaking subject and member of the Symbolic signifying system, the subject must be split and therefore unable to access the unity of *jouissance*. Sexual pleasure aside, Mr. Darling forms a strikingly clear image of the presence of the Symbolic order within Barrie's signifying system.

Mrs. Darling, though not as ridiculous as her husband, is herself unable to access or even recognize *jouissance*. Barrie says that “now that she was married and full of sense she quite doubted whether there was any such person” (7) as Peter Pan. Barrie’s choice to connect her disbelief with her marriage rather than her age is crucial to the interpretation of this passage. Mrs. Darling’s inability to access her *jouissance* is not caused by her maturity. Rather, it is her intrinsic connection to the signifier of the Symbolic that keeps her from believing in Peter Pan. Wendy sees in her mother the secret kiss, the ability to connect to *jouissance*. However, her mother is a castrated subject who has been fully integrated into the Symbolic. She has sacrificed her belief in Peter Pan, her experience of *jouissance*, to a ridiculous Symbolic.

Coats presents an interesting argument for the concept of the Symbolic of Wendy’s nursery as ridiculous. She posits that Nana the dog represents the role of society in the Darling household. Her role in the Darling family is first described in the text: “Mrs. Darling loved to have everything just so, and Mr. Darling had a passion for being exactly like his neighbours; so, of course, they had a nurse. As they were poor, owing to the amount of milk the children drank, this nurse was a prim Newfoundland dog, called Nana” (5). Coats argues, “A respectable middle-class household requires a nurse and servants, but the Darlings are too poor. Nana functions quite adequately as a nurse” (93). Nana makes it possible for the Darlings to exist in the social class they desire. She keeps the children tidy and cared for. Coats goes on to say that, “Part of her job in preserving respectability is to keep Peter Pan out of the house” (93). Thus, Nana represents the other, more literal force that would normally compel the rejection of the Imaginary. Ironically, she is the presence of social norms within the text.

Within Nana’s character, before the adventure of Neverland even begins, the reader finds Barrie’s first potential criticism of social structure. Wendy lives in a world where the Symbolic

structures are ridiculous. The character signifying the presence of the Symbolic runs from medicine and cannot tie his own tie. Likewise, the voice of society, the influence that keeps the family grounded in the Other of their social class is not even a person. Rather, a dog, the simulacrum of a nurse, keeps them grounded within the Symbolic structure of society. Wendy's Symbolic world is ridiculous. Ann Alston describes Mr. Darling in her book *Family in English Children's Literature* saying, "Wendy's father is presented as a self-centered fool who banishes himself to the dog kennel as he blames himself for errors leading to Peter Pan taking Wendy and the boys away from home to Neverland" (40). She suggests the text "adheres to other forms of children's literature in its emphasis on the sanctuary of home and the departure from and return home, and yet at times seems to mock the cliché of home" (80). The story thus both values and criticizes the concept of home as potentially ridiculous. Ultimately, Mr. Darling's foolishness removes Nana from the nursery and allows Peter Pan to enter. Thus, when these forces are removed from the nursery, ironically one by the other, and *jouissance* comes to claim its remnant, Wendy is tempted to leave behind the ridiculous Symbolic and pursue the unity of her desire.

The Symbolic structures with which Wendy is confronted in the nursery are arbitrary, ridiculous, and as fluid and unable to signify as pretending a Newfoundland is a nurse. The Symbolic forces surrounding Wendy driving her to grow up and join society seem powerless and foolish in the face of her own desire for *jouissance*. However, domestic roles and social structure still fascinate Wendy. Part of the attraction of Neverland revolves around a chance to explore those structures:

"Wendy," he said, the sly one, "you could tuck us in at night."

"Oo!"

“None of us has ever been tucked in at night.”

“Oo,” and her arms went out to him.

“And you could darn our clothes, and make pockets for us. None of us has any pockets.”

How could she resist? “Of course it’s awfully fascinating!” she cried. (25)

The chance to live in the adult world, to function as a developed speaking subject in full relation to the Other, is fascinating and tempting even in its emptiness.

Neverland does not turn out to be the promised land of psychological unity Wendy expects to find when she comes in contact with her *jouissance*. Rather, Neverland is a world of lack. The (m)other is not present. Thus, for Wendy, reunion with *jouissance* does not actually fill the gap between signified and signifier. There is no unity, no safety, only lack that becomes masked in the *objet a* of the lost boys. By relating to them, Wendy is able to mask her own lack brought to light through her relationship with Peter. Wendy longs for unity with Peter. However, Peter is only interested in make-believe. Peter says to Wendy, “You are so queer ... and Tiger Lily is just the same. There is something she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother” (78). As the signifier of *jouissance*, he is incapable of relating to the desire of the Other himself. He is uncastrated, and thus does not crave the unity Wendy seeks through him. Unable to fill her lack, she negotiates her relationship to her *jouissance* through the *objet a* of the Lost Boys.

The *objet a* plays an important role in Lacanian subject formation. In Lacanian theory, the original fantasy of the unconscious mind, or in other words, the occurrence that first creates the rift between conscious and unconscious, is rooted in a desire for the supposed wholeness experience in the Imaginary. This means that the subject becomes constituted when faced with his own desire for Imaginary unity, which Lacan expressed in algebraic form as  $\$ \diamond a$ , meaning

that the subject becomes divided by its encounter with the object of desire the *objet a*. At the point when the child realizes lack and enters into the Symbolic, "the purely negative lack of demand is reversed and positivized into the being of desire as lack-of-being" (Chiesa 6). Lack becomes translated into desire. Thus, as the subject embraces the Symbolic and encounters the gap between signifier and signified, a desire for the *objet a* masks personal lack. This *objet a* becomes a representation for the subject's desire for *jouissance*. The *objet a* must "relate the barred subject to the real lack in the Symbolic, that of the real *objet a*" while simultaneously covering that lack through the Imaginary construction of the *objet a* (Chiesa 142). The real *objet a* is a hole in the Other, or rather is the residue of the Real and therefore of *jouissance*. Through the construct of the *objet a* as residual *jouissance*, the true lack of *jouissance* becomes real to the subject.

In Neverland, the Lost Boys become Wendy's connection to Peter. She cannot achieve unity with Peter, so she chooses to relate to him through the family unit she creates. She and Peter construct a mock family together, and through this expression of social structure, Wendy is able to build a relationship with him: "'Ah, old lady,' Peter said aside to Wendy, warming himself by the fire and looking down at her as she sat turning a heel, 'there is nothing more pleasant of an evening for you and me when the day's toil is over than to rest by the fire with the little ones near by'" (Barrie 77). By creating a family setting in which Peter must play a role, she can mask her lack of unity with him. However, the mask of the family unit also reminds her that Peter does not in fact fulfill her need for unity; she cannot relate to her *jouissance*. This is demonstrated in a conversation between Wendy and Peter:

"But [the children] are ours, Peter, yours and mine."

"But not really, Wendy?" he asked anxiously.

“Not if you don’t wish it,” she replied; and she distinctly heard his sigh of relief.

“Peter”, she asked, trying to speak firmly, “What are your exact feelings for me?”

“Those of a devoted son, Wendy.”

“I thought so,” she said, and went and sat by herself at the extreme end of the room.

“You are so queer,” he said, frankly puzzled, “and Tiger Lily is just the same. There is something she wants to be to me, but she says it is not my mother.”

“No, indeed, it is not,” Wendy replied with frightful emphasis. (Barrie 78)

Wendy longs for a spousal relationship with Peter, a physical union with her *jouissance*.

However, Peter is not a member of the symbolic realm and therefore cannot experience desire for unity. Thus, Wendy must employ the social roles she learned from the Symbolic to create an artificial relationship to her desire. She begins to discover the true value of the structures that seemed so ridiculous at the beginning of her adventure. She becomes mother to the Lost Boys.

Upon her arrival to Neverland, the boys beg her,

“O Wendy lady, be our mother.” “Ought I?” Wendy said, all shining. “Of course it’s frightfully fascinating, but you see I am only a little girl. I have no real experience.”

“That doesn’t matter,” said Peter, as if he were the only person present who knew all about it, though he was really the one who knew least. “What we need is just a nice motherly person.” “Oh dear!” Wendy said, “you see I feel that is exactly what I am.” (Barrie 52)

And immediately, Wendy begins practicing the social structures she has watched performed within her primary reality.

Over the course of her adventure, her experiment with the domestic roles proves to be the only security available in the land of her unconscious. Though life with Peter, life in contact with *jouissance*, is exciting, it is not always enjoyable and is by no means safe. Lacanian theory defines *jouissance* not as enjoyment, but rather as pleasure to the point of pain. In his book *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism*, Hunt describes Peter as the ultimate image of the paradox between the desire for youth and the admittance of the inevitability of death:

Thus, Peter is death itself as well as the desire for eternal childhood . . . . The true paradox of the “never” in Neverland is in its double meaning of stark denial--on the one hand, the refusal of the self to conceive of its own end and, on the other, the absolute reality of death. When Peter first appears, he is described as “lovely” but “clad in skeleton leaves and the juices that ooze out of trees” (Barrie 10). Both boy eternal and rotting corpse, he arrives like a dream of immortality come true but also like a plague deadly to children--like ageing and death, he empties the nursery. (96- 97)

Coats defines *jouissance* as “the point where life and death fuse” (95), saying that Peter, as both eternal, unsignified youth and the harbinger of death “illustrates perfectly the link between *jouissance* and the death drives” (95). In the text, the children are unsafe because they are with Peter. *Jouissance* is not the experience of enjoyment, but rather the drive of a desire to its own destruction. Their pleasure is not guaranteed. Barrie says, “there was always the possibility that next time you fell he would let you go” (30). In Wonderland, only Wendy’s experiment in domestic social structure provides enjoyment and safety. Alston describes her use of social roles saying, “Wendy, representing the traditional good mother, saves the boys as she polices their desires through forbidding them to eat the cake. Wendy embodies the ideal of the perfect mother

as she acts as the controlling force who saves the boys from their downfall” (117). Her duty as a mother saves the Lost Boys from the cake planted by Hook to kill them. When the pirates leave the cake, “Wendy snatched it from the hands of her children, so that in time it lost its succulence, and became as hard as a stone, and was used as a missile, and Hook fell over it in the dark” (58). Through domestic structures, she is able to build a relationship with her *objet a* and is able to protect that relationship from the destructive qualities of the Symbolic. By protecting her relationship with the Lost Boys, Wendy protects her relationship with Peter. This relationship with Peter as *jouissance* is absolutely necessary to her survival in Neverland. Without Peter’s kiss, Tootles’ arrow would have killed her upon her arrival to Neverland. However, only through the structures of the Symbolic can she acknowledge and internalize her lack. Though within the nursery the rules of the Symbolic seem ridiculous, as her encounter with her desire progresses, she relies even more heavily on the social structures she has been taught.

Through her adventures Wendy comes to realize that she must acknowledge and exist in both the Symbolic and the Imaginary realms in order to maintain her subjectivity. The scene in which Peter must first battle Captain Hook becomes a sort of microcosmic example of the message Wendy learns in Neverland. Hook himself plays an important role within the signifying system of the text. The narrator describes him as “a *raconteur* of repute. He was never more sinister than when he was most polite, which is probably the truest test of breeding; and the elegance of his diction, even when he was swearing, no less than the distinction of his demeanour, showed him one of a different caste from his crew” (Barrie 39). Later in the text, he is described as having

been at a famous public school; and its traditions still clung to him like garments, with which indeed they are largely concerned. Thus it was offensive to him even

now to board a ship in the same dress in which he grappled her; and he still adhered in his walk to the school's distinguished slouch. But above all he retained the passion for good form. (99)

As *raconteur* and lover of good form, he is the presence of social structure within Neverland. He also connects to the formative role of linguistic structure in the unconscious. Like Peter, he appears within the text as a word rather than as a character. He is the presence of the Symbolic within Neverland. Though his name is James Hook, he is referred to within the text not by his name but by his linguistic signifier, "as he wrote himself, Jas. Hook" (Barrie 39). In *Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism*, Peter Hunt describes Hook's role in the text saying, "An obvious analogue for Mr. Darling (in productions of the play, the roles were often performed by the same actor), Hook is the time-burdened adult living with the painful consciousness of mortality and with a romantic sense of adulthood as the loss of perceptual and emotional force" (98). Just as Mr. Darling represents the Symbolic law of the father in the nursery, Hook brings a Symbolic presence into the world of her unconscious. Unlike Mr. Darling, he presents the sinister, dangerous side of the Symbolic, which leads inevitably to death. He is the adversary of her *jouissance*, striving to separate her mind from its Imaginary influences.

While the battle between Hook and Pan itself is rich with its own implications, Wendy's experience directly following the battle resonates with her quest for subjectivity. Hook has wounded Peter in the battle and left him unable to fly. Thus, Peter and Wendy cannot fly away from Marooner's Rock, and are fated to drown if they cannot find a creative means of escape. Wendy survives by flying away from the rock on a kite. However, in order to survive, she must leave Peter behind: "She clung to him; she refused to go without him; but with a 'Good-bye,

Wendy,' he pushed her from the rock; and in a few minutes she was borne out of his sight" (Barrie 69). To survive an attack of Hook the Symbolic, Wendy must sacrifice her *jouissance* to the rising tide. This seems only logical within a Lacanian interpretation of the text. *Jouissance* must be sacrificed in order to exist as a subject within the Symbolic. What happens to Peter after Wendy has left is where Lacanian theory becomes interesting.

Wendy leaves Peter on the rock believing him to be doomed by the rising water. However, though she leaves Peter behind, he is not destroyed. Rather, he is saved by the love of a mother. As he awaits death on the rock, a Neverbird approaches him on her floating nest: "She had come to save him, to give him her nest, though there were eggs in it . . . I can suppose only that, like Mrs. Darling and the rest of them, she was melted because he had all his first teeth" (Barrie 71). He, in turn, returns her eggs to her in a contrivance of the Symbolic, a pirate's hat. Like the bird, Wendy will find a way to reconnect to her *jouissance* through her feminine social role. However, she will also have to give her own children to *jouissance*, but they will be returned unharmed into the Symbolic. Thus, maternal instinct returns Wendy's *jouissance*. In turn, this instinct becomes a Symbolic connection between social construct and *jouissance*.

These forces culminate as Wendy and the Lost Boys set off to leave Neverland. In her last domestic duty, Wendy leaves Peter his medicine. However, as a signifier of social structure, it is poisoned by the Symbolic and becomes an element to destroy *jouissance*. Only through the interference of Tinker Bell (sexual expression) can Peter be saved. Thus the reader learns that through sexual expression, Wendy will be able to continue connecting with her *jouissance*. Peter is then able to continue to the pirate ship where Wendy and the Lost Boys are captives and free them from the stifling forces of the Symbolic. Peter battles Hook, but he does not kill him single-

handedly. Rather, the ticking crocodile that has been following him throughout the text devours Hook. In his book *Literature for Children*, Hunt describes the crocodile saying,

The ticking crocodile is death itself (when the clock runs down, the prey is caught) or it is ourselves, doomed to the brief lifespans measured by our ticking hearts . . . . For Hook, Peter and the ticking crocodile are doubles, each a living symbol of relentless temporality . . . . Hook is bemused by the image of the innocent and inviolable child, but his anxiety and anger are thereby deepened, not assuaged. In symmetrical fashion Peter hates Hook, the adult who seems to the child to embody the facts of generation, time and mortality. Not surprisingly, Pan slays Hook only to become him. (97-98)

Though Peter successfully conquers Hook and thus establishes the inability for the Symbolic to ever truly quell *jouissance*, in the end, even his victory cannot avoid the inevitability of Symbolic signification. He has unwittingly created an image of the inevitability of time to wear on every subject of the Symbolic, of death to ultimately conquer, and of the next generation to ultimately take center stage. Hook fears him because he is “the pristine image of childhood and the past” (Hunt *Literature for Children* 98) and therefore ultimately of death and the rise of youth as a new generation. Peter fulfills this role as he himself takes Hook’s place on the pirate ship: “he sat long in the cabin with Hook’s cigar-holder in his mouth and one hand clenched, all but the forefinger, which he bent and held threateningly aloft like a hook” (112). Hunt goes on to say, “Peter exemplifies a vitiated or defunct psychocultural strategy against the fear of death” (98). Though Pan remains the unsigned image of *jouissance*, even his victory over the Symbolic points to the inevitable forces of time and signification. His victory only gains the means with which Wendy returns to the nursery.

Wendy has learned the true value of Symbolic structure and must return to the nursery. She must establish her subjectivity by maneuver between her *jouissance* and her place within the Symbolic system of society. Peter does conquer Hook, thus acknowledging that Wendy will never fully sacrifice her *jouissance* to the Symbolic.

Peter exists and enters the nursery to subvert Wendy's journey into the realm of the Symbolic, to both undermine and enable the continued formation of her subject position. As *jouissance*, he enables her to acknowledge and experience her lack as a speaking, castrated subject, while simultaneously masking her lack, giving her an opportunity to see beyond the Symbolic and thus to see possibilities that were unthinkable from the nursery. Wendy travels to Neverland to learn that she cannot exist in the Symbolic alone; the Symbolic is meaningless without the influence of the Imaginary, without desire for *jouissance*. Wendy can never be satisfied in the Symbolic alone. Just as Neverland is not an active, thriving world without Peter Pan, the individual cannot achieve subjectivity without the unconscious, and the original fantasy that gives life to the unconscious cannot form without the siren call of the Imaginary, *jouissance*.

Though Wendy does leave Neverland and return to her parents, she is not required to leave Peter behind entirely. She returns to Neverland with Peter until he forgets to come for her. However, even after Wendy is grown up and has a daughter of her own, unlike her mother before her, she still believes in Peter Pan. Just as she brought Peter to her mother, so her daughter brings Peter back to her. Like the eggs in the Neverbird's nest, her daughter, her maternity, her acceptance of her place in the Symbolic, all become the means by which she is allowed once again to connect to her own *jouissance*, her way to negotiate through her desire.

Like Wendy, the reader enters a signifying system that explores the deepest most unconscious and repressed desires of the human experience. There, under the guise of simple

children's fiction, the reader finds the unconscious peace that can only come from unearthing those tensions of being that drive our every action. In his book *Mindscales, the Geographies of Imagined Worlds*, George Edgar Slusser describes the value of reading Barrie's text:

The trick is to read on because to read on is . . . to fly out of our windows and reach the island of Neverland. To read on is to follow the map of the child's mind . . . . That world is an Edenic anarchy that will free our souls from having to be "mature" in the most negative sense, or to be--also in the negative—"little adults." To go there is to attempt to be whole. (231)

Within *Peter Pan*, the adult and child reader alike encounter a system in which they can explore what it means to desire Imaginary wholeness and can rediscover the moment of eucatastrophe, the *sehnsucht* derived from the experience of connecting to jouissance through the written word. Wendy's story of flight and desire is our story, the story of the speaking subject. Since rarely do boys from beyond the stars fly through our windows at night, we must rely on her journey to reinstall our faith in the Symbolic. Just as her stories draw Peter to the window, so Barrie's tale draws the reader for a moment toward the shadow of sacrificed *jouissance*.

## Chapter 5: Epilogue

*" in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself . . . I see with a myriad of eyes, but it is still I who see. Here . . . I transcend myself; and I am never more myself than when I do" (Lewis An Experiment in Criticism 141).*

It is psychologically necessary for the speaking subject to experience the freedom of the secondary reality. Wonderland, the Looking Glass, and Neverland all momentarily suspend the finality of entrance into the Symbolic and examine the nature of maturity as defined in society. These worlds change the signifier/signified relationship, shift the power of the Other over the subject shifts, and questions the necessity to join the norms and customs of. The fictional world offers the reader a chance to escape inward to a world of possibilities unthinkable in the armchair world. Though eventually Alice must grow up, Wendy must leave Neverland, and the reader must join the Other of society, for a moment, anything is possible. The fictional worlds broaden the reader's horizons of psychological possibilities. This is the truth behind the escapist value of literature. David Whitely describes this escapist value saying,

Good fantasy writing is not really a retreat from the difficulties of the world into an imaginative safe haven, even though the wish-fulfillment elements of many fantasy narratives may act with restorative power . . . The inventiveness of fantasy becomes empty if it is merely self-serving, but rich and interesting if it allows identifiable human dilemmas to be explored from new angles. (182)

There, in the pages of fantasy literature, the reader discovers a world in which the dilemmas of human existence, both conscious and unconscious, can be illuminated, deconstructed, and put back together again in the search for psychological fulfillment.

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, and *Peter Pan* each addresses similar aspects of the anxiety generated by the lack inherent in the Symbolic order. Though each story deals with these anxieties differently, they each identify with the arbitrary nature of Symbolic structure and the desire for a return to the sense of wholeness in the Imaginary. The structures in each story admit the arbitrary nature of the Symbolic and by holding a mirror to reality, expose this arbitrary nature in a real, tangible way to the reader. By exposing this arbitrary nature, fantasy allows readers to admit the fluid nature of their own relationship to the Other of society, a state too dangerous to confront otherwise. Admission of the arbitrary nature of the Symbolic creates a moment of eucatastrophe, a moment in which the *sehnsucht* of the Imaginary can be glimpsed. The *ostranie* created by the inversion of Symbolic structure renews the reader's faith in order itself for the reader. Symbolic order is arbitrary, but by mirroring it, the story proves that there is an order to be mirrored, an order that remains intelligible even when inverted. The order is deconstructed, but it does not break down. Wonderland runs on a strict order. Though the Hatter and his friends seem to have a very different idea of what constitutes polite and rude behavior than Alice had expected, they certainly establish their own set of acceptable behaviors. Their rules at times invert those of the surface world, but as in all of Wonderland, rules are present just the same:

“Then you should say what you mean,” the March Hare went on.

“I do,” Alice hastily replied; “at least--at least I mean what I say--that's the same thing, you know.”

“Not the same thing a bit!” said the Hatter. “You might just as well say that ‘I see what I eat’ is the same thing as ‘I eat what I see!’”

“You might just as well say,” added the March Hare, “that ‘I like what I get’ is the same thing as ‘I get what I like!’” (Carroll 41)

The nonsense of Wonderland, linguistic or otherwise, inverts order, but it does not destroy it. Flescher discusses the true nature of nonsense: “It is the existent or implicit order which distinguishes nonsense from the absurd. It is the departure from this order which distinguishes nonsense from sense” (129). Thus, throughout the nonsense of Wonderland, Symbolic structure survives. The chess game in Looking Glass Land, the card soldiers of Wonderland, the rules of the Red Queen, all exhibit the survival of Symbolic order. Though it may be arbitrary, the Symbolic persists and withstands the nonsense of fantasy, therefore showing itself to be strong enough to support the signified identity of the reader.

By examining the child character’s experience with Symbolic and Imaginary influence, the fantasy texts also explore the nature of maturity itself. Bettelheim claims that maturity requires the child to relinquish childhood dependencies, overcome narcissistic disappointments and Oedipal dilemmas, gain a sense of self-worth and confidence, and develop a concept of morality that governs society. Thus, “growing up” requires entrance into the Symbolic structures language and society, and therefore requires the sacrifice of *jouissance*. However, the subject never actually overcomes these narcissistic disappointments and Oedipal dilemmas that find their roots in the fantasy of the Imaginary, but only represses them. Thus, fantasy assists the child to understand the requirements of maturity, the necessity of repressing desires for the Imaginary. Wendy and Alice exhibit the truth of maturation. They must both leave their wonderful worlds of imagination. However, neither is required to abandon their *jouissance* entirely. Rather, they each connect to their desire for the Imaginary by reliving their own adventures through fantasy, just as the reader does with the texts.

These fantasy stories also allow the reader to explore momentarily the desire for wonderful things, the desire for *sehnsucht* by exploring the unconscious desire for the sense of whole connected to the Imaginary. By connecting to the fantasy character's exploration of the Imaginary realm, the reader is able to catch a glimpse of personal *jouissance*. Just as Wendy's stories bring Peter Pan to her window, the fantasy stories give face and voice to the reader's own desires. Peter Hunt describes the psychological value of Barrie's story:

Peter, then, embodies both repressed adult wishes and the absence or loss of childhood, the lack that breeds regressive desire. That desire, while exposed and partly satisfied in fantasy writing, requires the assuring frame structure of children's literature . . . . But here the initial frame invokes only to repudiate the dream of eternal childhood and thus educates the adult reader in the elusive ways of desire that perpetuate lack even as they promise to assuage it . . . . only after childhood ends can the adult reconstitute it as the object of desire. (*Literature for Children* 96)

The childhood of the fantasy character becomes the embodied expression of the adult reader's desire to recapture the Imaginary. Through the child character's own struggles with the tension between Imaginary and Symbolic desires, the adult and child reader alike is able to explore the nature of their own desires.

Herein lies the psychological release experienced by the reader within fantasy. Karen Coats describes the value of Carroll and Barrie's texts saying:

We find in Lacan a theory of desire . . . as an opening in the surface of the Other, that which allows, indeed compels, the traversing of distances between oneself and others, between oneself and Otherness. What these writers seem to have done

is to traverse the distance between the page and the unconscious as Other, creating characters that operate as bridges between the Real and the Symbolic at the level of the Imaginary (rather than the Symptom). (79)

These texts offer a new realm that explore the tension between Symbolic and Imaginary, and the reader can rediscover what it truly means to exist as a speaking subject in the gap created by these two realms. The reader establishes, questions, and explores his own arbitrary position within the Symbolic Other of society and simultaneously admits and entertains the desire for Imaginary wholeness inherent in Symbolic. For one shining moment, the concept of something beyond the arbitrary nature of the Symbolic can be seen as a reality. In that moment, the text shows the underside of the conscious world releases and exorcizes the tensions and fears repressed within the “mature” conscious mind. The repression that fantasy helped form in the conscious mind of the child is now expressed and released in the mind of the adult, leading to psychological consolation. Fantasy therefore fills an active role in both the creation of psychological repression and the salvation from it, making it an integral part of the formation of the Lacanian subject.

## Glossary

**Imaginary** (Imaginary Order)- pre- Symbolic state in which the subject creates fantasy images of himself and his ideal object of desire. In this state, the subject appears as whole to himself, and his fundamental object of desire appears whole. This state will continue to exert influence over the unconscious throughout the life of the subject.

**Jouissance**- refers literally to an unbearable level of enjoyment; refers to the ideal imaginary wholeness supposedly experienced before entrance into the Symbolic; is sought through a relationship to the objet a, but can never be obtained.

**Mirror Stage**- Between 6 and 18 months, the child identifies with his own image (either in a literal mirror reflection or by identifying other individuals as separate entities). This marks a recognition of one's self as "I," and creates a fantasy of the whole self.

**Objet petit a** (objet a)- unattainable object of desire; sought through relation to the other in order to fulfill desire for jouissance

**Other/other:**

-The little other is a projection of the unconscious identified during and after the mirror stage; describes both the other people in whom the subject acknowledges personal likeness, and the image of the subject's own body in the mirror. This other is used to create an Imaginary definition of the self.

-The big Other is the image of the Symbolic as seen by each individual subject; it is society, law, and structure that demands adherence from the subject; the Other thus can be another subject and also structures of the Symbolic order which govern the relationship with that other subject.

**Sign**- anything that signifies meaning; in linguistic terms, refers to words; comprised of the signifier and signified

-signifier- the form which the sign takes

-signified- the concept that is represented

**Subject**- the fluid "I" position from which the individual addresses society

**Symbolic** (Symbolic Order)- order of linguistic structure, intersubject relations, and social law; all structures and conventions of society comprise the Symbolic; entrance into the Symbolic requires the acceptance of lack, which will exist in tension with the fantasy images created in the Imaginary throughout the life of the subject.

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