

Chapter One

Introduction

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865),¹ renowned as fantasy literature,² depicts Alice's fascinating adventures in the underground world, where Alice comes across numerous peculiar speaking creatures and thrilling events. Before the nineteenth century, literature of fantasy generally lacked public attention and preference.³ Not until the nineteenth century did fantasy literature gain its popularity in children literature. In the early nineteenth century, the fantastic, continuing the advocacy of rationality in the eighteenth century, was regarded as irrational, unpractical, ridiculous, and superstitious. It could only find its place in children literature to inspire thinking for little children. As Donald Rackin indicates:

¹ Lewis Carroll is the pseudonym of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson (1832-1898). His *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) was originally entitled *Alice's Adventures under Ground* (1862-63), "a comically disguised subversion of the above-ground world's accepted, more or less 'official' grounds of meaning and order" (Rackin, *Nonsense, Sense, and Meaning* 35). In the following part of the essay, *Alice in Wonderland* will be used in the abbreviated form of the title, and *AIW* will be used as the reference preceding page numbers in the parentheses. In this thesis, *Alice in Wonderland*, together with *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*, abbreviated *Through the Looking-Glass (TLG)*, are quoted from *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking Glass* (1999), being generally called the *Alice* books.

² Carroll is known for writing fantasies; as Eric S. Rabkin indicates, "In the world of English speakers, perhaps the paradigmatic fantasist is the delightful Lewis Carroll" (226). Furthermore, many critics categorize *Alice in Wonderland* as a work of fantasy. Richard Feldstein views *Alice in Wonderland* as the production of fantasy, a world of the unconscious (150). Linda M. Shires discusses the mode of fantasy (along with the modes of parody and nonsense) in *Alice in Wonderland*, seeing fantasy functionally as a way to question reality (286). Donald Rackin indicates *Alice* books as "the delightful *Alice* fantasies" and "seriocomic fantasies" (*Nonsense, Sense, and Meaning* 21). Sarah Gilead's "Magic Abjured: Closure in Children's Fantasy Fiction" directly categorizes *Alice in Wonderland* as the work of children's fantasy literature. She discusses the common form of children's fantasy fictions, i.e. the return-to-reality closings, including the Return as *Bildung*, the Return as Narrative Repression (which *Alice in Wonderland* fits into), and the Return as Tragic Ambiguity. Most importantly, in Rabkin's *The Fantastic in Literature*, Rabkin uses Carroll's *Alice* books as standard examples of fantasy literature, constantly quoting the *Alice* books throughout the whole book.

³ Some fantastic works, however, are still remarkable before the nineteenth century: to name a few, *Beowulf* (ca. 800-850), *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (ca. 1375-1400), Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* (1485), Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* (1590), Christopher Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* (the A text 1604; the B text 1616), John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1674) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726).

Until well into the twentieth century the *Alices* were seen almost exclusively as children's literature. Their popularity derived from the liberating imaginative experience they offered young readers reared on a dreary diet of unimaginative, 'useful' texts devised to improve their minds, morals, and manners. (*Nonsense, Sense, and Meaning* 20)

Another saying is that in order to create a way for escaping reality, most Victorian authors "choose instead to seem to be addressing children" (Rabkin 95). It is under such a condition that Carroll's works become the famous fantasy literature for children. His most celebrated stories, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, were dedicated to the three Liddell sisters, especially his beloved Alice Liddell.⁴ However, it would be a mistake to state that the *Alice* books only appeal to children. In the 1920s and 1930s, being recognized as "seriocomic fantasies," the *Alice* books received "the sort of professional critical attention usually devoted to literature meant exclusively for grown-ups" (Rackin, *Nonsense, Sense, and Meaning* 21).

In *Alice in Wonderland*, Wonderland is a fantastic place where everything, compared to the overground, frustrates any logical interpretations. Those nonsensical conversations and dislocated events in Wonderland arouse critics' interests in reading *Alice in Wonderland* from the aspects of linguistics, logic and paradox. Still others examine it from Alice's dissonant identity problems, imperial behaviors or topics of game, death, etc. Even more critics undertake the subject from psychological

⁴ For one thing, Alice is the name of the protagonist in both of *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. For another thing, in *Alice in Wonderland*, Alice talks to the Cheshire Cat that "the March Hare will be much the most interesting, and perhaps, as this is *May*, it wo'n't [won't] be raving mad" (*AIW* 66-67, italics mine), we know that the month in the story is May. Later, in the mad tea-party, Alice answers the Hatter that the day of the month is the fourth (*AIW* 71), specifying that the date in the story is May 4, the birthday of Alice Liddell (*AIW* 73n6).

aspects—the Freudian interpretation of dreams, or the symptom of schizophrenia and simulacrum.⁵ Martin Gardner proposes that “the *Alice* books lend themselves readily to any type of symbolic interpretation—political, metaphysical, or Freudian” (“Introduction to *The Annotated Alice*” xiv). Alwin L. Baum also remarks that much of the popularity of *Alice in Wonderland* is “due to the sophisticated problems in physics, metaphysics, logic and semantics which surface during the course of Alice’s wanderings” (65, italics mine). However, whatever various the criticisms are, very few attempts have been tried to interpret *Alice in Wonderland* as fantasy literature from the aspect of Alice’s “wanderings” in the subterranean world, i.e. a travel to a fantastic land with a female child protagonist.

Being confined to the houses and characterized as passive and graceful, females chance to venture out. To travel (alone) has thus been difficult for females through centuries: before the nineteenth century, “travel for women meant traveling with a male chaperone . . . with one’s husband” (Blanton 44). Not until the nineteenth century, as Casey Blanton suggests, could females adventure to places with free will and begin to “travel alone to distant places far from the confines of home” (44). However, “even as late as the mid-nineteenth century,” to travel alone is still considered “a dangerous and probably licentious endeavor for a woman to undertake” (Blanton 45), not to mention for a little girl like Alice.⁶ Females are typified as pure,

⁵ For more details, see Rackin’s “Critical Reception of the *Alice* Books” (*Nonsense, Sense, and Meaning* 20-31), in which he introduces and summarizes several critiques of *Alice in Wonderland*. For example, in psychoanalytic aspects, there are William Empson’s “*Alice in Wonderland: The Child as Swain*,” Florence Becker Lennon’s *Victoria through the Looking-Glass: The Life of Lewis Carroll*, and Phyllis Greenacre’s *Swift and Carroll: A Psychoanalytic Study of Two Lives*. In philosophical aspects, there are Peter Heath’s *The Philosopher’s Alice*, Peter Alexander’s “Logic and the Humour of Lewis Carroll,” Elizabeth Sewell’s *The Field of Nonsense* and Kathleen Blake’s *Play, Games, and Sport: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll*.

⁶ Many critics deem Alice as a nineteenth-century Victorian child. For one thing, the *Alice* books are typically Victorian in Carroll’s blurring of beginnings (Gordon 18), and much of the wit of the *Alice*

meek and placid in the Victorian society; especially above the level of the bourgeoisie, females are shaped and educated as gracious ladies. They are, in Coventry Kersey Dighton Patmore's term, the "angel in the house."⁷ The public arena is the stage mainly for those active, powerful and adventurous males: "The public sphere of business, politics and professional life was defined as the male sphere. The private sphere of love, the emotions and domesticity was defined as the sphere of women" (Gorham 4). Therefore, one of the ways to quench females' thirst for traveling (alone) is through imaginative writings. Traveling in a fanciful world realizes females' desires of leaving home for far distant places, and fantasy literature is the genre that effectuates these imaginary travels.

Fantasy provides people in restricted societies a way out to the world of the unlimited. Restrained by the rigorous rules and morals, people create a free unbound world of wonder through fantasy to activate their imagination. This kind of fantasy usually drifts along with the motif of travel, in which a series of fantastic adventures are carried out. Many of the protagonists in fantasy travel literature are females.⁸

books is "interwoven with Victorian events and customs . . ." (Gardner, "*More Annotated Alice*" xxiii). Rackin also declares that "the *Alice* books . . . offer important clues to the dynamics of Victorian and post-Victorian thought, ideology, and behavior" (*Nonsense, Sense, and Meaning* 24). For another thing, the story was for the first time told to three charming Liddell sisters on a boat trip up the Thames on a Victorian afternoon in 1862 (*AIW* 7n.1). Therefore, Jan B. Gordon in his "The *Alice* Books and the Metaphors of Victorian Childhood" views Alice as a Victorian child. Nina Auerbach in her "Alice and Wonderland: A Curious Child" states directly that "Alice . . . stands as one image of the Victorian middle-class child" (31); in her "Falling Alice, Fallen Women, and Victorian Dream Children," Auerbach further bases her article on the presumption that Alice is a Victorian golden child (47).

⁷ Written by Patmore, "The Angel in the House" is a four-part long poem about Patmore's celebration of his sympathetic, charming and unselfish wife. According to Deborah Gorham, "[T]he ideal woman was willing to be dependent on men and submissive to them, and she would have a preference for a life restricted to the confines of home. She would be innocent, pure, gentle and self-sacrificing" (4). The term "angel in the house" is later used to refer to females who embody the Victorian feminine ideal.

⁸ Similar to Carroll's *Alice* books, Lyman Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) and James Matthew Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904) are both novels of fantasy with a female protagonist/traveler, Dorothy and Wendy respectively, journeying from the real world to a land of wonder. Like Alice, living in a confined place and a pedestrian society, Dorothy and Wendy can only free themselves through the authors' uses of the imaginative Land of Oz and the Never-Never Land.

Fantasy gives females a chance to go out of the house and to experience exciting events. It provides females, for example, in the restrained Victorian society with the possibility of quitting being a typical “angel in the house.” Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* can be read as being fashioned out of this untrammelled imagination, which frees the little girl, Alice, from the confinement of Victorian ideologies and opens a whole new perspective of travel.

The French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze, has read *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* from the aspects of Carroll’s uses of nonsense and paradoxes as well as Alice’s identity problems. In his *The Logic of Sense* (1990), Deleuze begins with discussions on Alice, whom he constantly refers to throughout the whole book.⁹ By employing Deleuzian theory, Julian Wolfreys in her “*Alice: An Architecture of Knowledges? or, Identities in Dispute*” examines Alice’s destabilized identity which is “becoming-homeless” and “becoming-child.” In addition, Catherine Driscoll in “The Little Girl” researches into Alice’s “becoming-woman,” which is “a way of understanding the transformative power and desire of the ‘subject’—the way identity escapes from the repressive codes of the Subject” (1476).

Being different from their discussions on Alice’s identity problems, this thesis mainly focuses on the issue of *travel*. The central theoretical concern in this thesis is established on the book *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), written by Deleuze and his collaborator, Félix Guattari. What has been dramatized in *A Thousand Plateau* is the “enterprise of desubjectification” (Shukin 145). It is a text

⁹ In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze discusses the “doubles,” “paradox,” “schizophrenic elements,” “infinite identity,” “pure event of becoming,” “reversals,” “surface,” and so on in *Alice’s in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. Moreover, in “Lewis Carroll,” Deleuze talks about the combat of depths in Carroll’s works: “Everything in depth is horrible, everything is nonsense” (21). He states that the uniqueness of Carroll is “to have allowed nothing to pass through sense, but to have played out everything in nonsense” (22).

that

continuously invokes phenomena that evade domestication . . . by Western culture: ‘nomad thought’, ‘primitive societies’, ‘the East’, war machines, music, packs, swarms, tribes, anomalies, becoming-woman, becoming-child, becoming-animal, -vegetable, -mineral, -molecular, sadomasochism, drugs, and so on. (Shukin 146)

This thesis centers its discussions on nomadology and becoming, which are mainly derived from Deleuze’s ideas, as Massumi points out that

Guattari . . . is fascinated with phenomena of subjective redundancy (resonance, refrain, black hole), whereas Deleuze prefers to emphasize ‘lines of escape’ from subjectivity . . . many of the properly philosophical concepts were originated by Deleuze. On the other hand, many key semiotic concepts used in *A Thousand Plateaus* are of Guattari’s devising . . . (151)

This thesis takes Deleuze’s philosophical concepts of nomadology and becoming into concern. According to Claire Colebrook, what Deleuze is doing “is more than the presentation of a theory. His corpus is also a challenge to work, create and effect—rather than interpret” (16), and what Deleuze offers “is a different way of thinking questions” (15). This thesis also tries to offer readers a means to work, create and effect, providing them with a different angle to work with the questions lurking in *Alice in Wonderland*—the aspects from travel with the topics of traveling spatiotemporality, the nature of travel, and the role of the traveler within the frame of fantasy.

Chapter Two deals with the philosophical theories employed in this thesis,

discussing the psychoanalytical theory of the unconscious, the theory of fantasy in literature, and the motif of travel in fantasy literature. The discussions on the relationship between the unconscious and reality will be introduced first. Deleuze has considered the relationship between the unconscious and reality as inseparable: “[T]he unconscious, by means of slips, parapraxes or symptoms, opens to becomings unconscious production is real and turned towards life” (Conley 21). In addition, psychoanalytic theorists from Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan to Slavoj Žižek have all demonstrated the inseparable relationship between the unconscious and reality. It is this inseparable relationship that makes Alice’s travel in her dreamland being effective and possible in the real world. Once the presupposition that the unconscious is closely related to reality is established, the nature of a traveler (whether he/she moves as a nomad or not) could be analyzed under the framework of the unconscious by using Deleuze’s nomadology and becoming theory. However, it is Syed Manzurul Islam who, basing his discussions on the theory of Deleuze in his *The Ethics of Travel: From Marco Polo to Kafka* (1996), brings nomadology and becoming theory into the field of travel theory, dividing travel into two categories—nomadic travel and sedentary travel. By folding Deleuze’s and Islam’s theories together, this thesis intends to develop a new perspective on travel account.

After discussing the theoretical framework of this thesis, Chapter Three deals specifically with the issue of traveling spatiotemporality in the fantastic Wonderland, exploring the spatiotemporal nature of Wonderland and the way it affects the nature of travel. According to Islam, a nomadic traveler will travel along the smooth nomad space while eluding the present, whereas a sedentary traveler will confine herself/himself to rigid space and limited temporality. The smooth and fluid

spatiotemporality of the former is what Islam considers as the prerequisite element of a real travel. Therefore, the spatiotemporal framework of a travel will have impacts on the nature of a traveler (nomadic or sedentary). It is also “the loss of the space-time dimension” that “provides a key to understanding the unconscious” (Petersen 428). The study on spatiotemporality thus could help us understand the unconscious dream-scenario of *Alice in Wonderland*. This thesis will argue that the spatiotemporality of Wonderland threatens and dissolves the common understanding of the unities in geographical space and linear temporality, exemplifying Wonderland as a rhizome with centerless and interchangeable nature and with the unlimited time as Aion. All of these make Alice’s travel differ from the routine one in the world above and make it an approximate nomadic one. The multi-dimensional spatiotemporal nature of Wonderland pushes Alice forward onto the road of becoming a nomadic traveler, providing her with a good foundation to become a real traveler.

Chapter Four analyzes traveler’s (Alice’s) encounter with the other and her role as a traveler in the fantastic journey. Whether a traveler could get rid of the confinement of her/his cultural breeding and social confinement or not would influence her/his traveling speed as well as her/his initiation into the process of becoming. Islam, borrowing from Deleuze’s theory of nomadology and becoming, argues that a nomadic traveler will move with speed of intensity, while a sedentary traveler only moves without really moving to any other place at all, for he/she still limits herself/himself within the invisible wall of the original culture. Therefore, the condition of Alice’s encounter with Wonderland’s creatures and her traveling speed will lead her either to the road of a nomadic travel or to a sedentary one. Although the spatiotemporal nature of Wonderland leads Alice easily into the process of becoming

in nomadic travel, Alice as a sedentary traveler still lacks a final move to free herself in Wonderland. Her final waking-up to the real world by violently resisting those crads in the court of justice is an evidence of her reluctance to integrate herself into Wonderland's creatures, making her stay on the road of going from a sedentary traveler to a nomadic one.

As a whole, after exploring the theoretical background of this thesis in Chapter Two, Chapter Three and Chapter Four attempt to examine three aspects of travel in *Alice in Wonderland*: the traveling spatiotemporal framework, the nature of the travel and the traveler herself, probing the possibility of Alice's nomadic travel in Wonderland and her role as a traveler in encountering those foreign creatures. Whereas Islam's nomadic travel is the one of which the traveler undergoes the Deleuzian process of becoming-other, sedentary travel is the one of which the traveler guards herself/himself against encountering the other. Alice's travel in Wonderland in some ways combines both the attributes of the nomadic and the sedentary travels, making her vacillate between these two poles and continuously in the process of becoming-(nomadic) traveler but never fully become one.