

**DEAR MR. DUMBLEDORE: HANDWRITTEN AND PRINTED
INTRALITERARY TEXTS IN LEWIS CARROLL'S *ALICE* SERIES AND
J.K. ROWLING'S *HARRY POTTER* SERIES**

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Abstract

In J.K Rowling's expansive *Harry Potter* universe, intraliterary texts such as textbooks, letters, notes, and diaries function independently from their authors. These texts often pose as a didactic, instructive, and demanding presence in the series. In this thesis, I argue that this phenomenon is inextricably linked to a Victorian trend of textual obsession, as evidenced in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books. Alice's inability to ignore the "EAT ME" "DRINK ME" labels on various food and drinks demonstrates but one example of prescriptive texts. Just as Alice cannot deny the authority of texts that she reads, many characters in *Harry Potter* show a need to respond to the texts that they consume.

Not only do these texts conduct reader behaviour and inscribe meaning, they also convey status. In the *Harry Potter* series, letters grant or deny membership to the Wizarding World. Harry himself is safeguarded as a baby via one letter and invited into the Wizarding community through another. Letters, like Hagrid's, that are poorly written, relegate him to the outskirts of the Wizarding World society. I show that Rowling's series echoes the relationship of readership and literacy to middle-class membership in *Alice*. Carroll himself was a prolific letter-writer and once stated that "the proper definition of 'Man' is an animal who writes letters" (Cohen 2:663). Carroll's obsession with letters and letter-writing led to the publishing of his own letter-writing manual. Carroll and Rowling both engage in a metafictional conversation that evokes nostalgia and propriety in writing and reading.

Furthermore, this thesis engages in reader-response theory in order to examine not only the fictional readers in the text, but also the extradiegetic readers of the *Alice* and *Harry Potter* books. I identify the many possible readers surrounding *Alice* and show that Carroll's fixation on reading and writing transcends the implied readership of these texts. Although Rowling does not

directly address her extradiegetic readers with the same blatancy, she does utilize Carroll's approach to intraliterary texts. Ultimately, Rowling and Carroll are metafictionally speaking to the same spatiotemporal understanding of children's literature.

Lay Summary

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is a cultural phenomenon. The Wizarding World that Rowling has created has now spanned over twenty years and shows no sign of losing popularity among a new generation of children. This thesis views *Harry Potter* as a serious contribution to contemporary children's literature that is in conversation with Lewis Carroll's *Alice* series. This thesis argues that Rowling and Carroll understand the texts within their series, such as the labels, signposts, letters, memorandums, diaries, and textbooks, as important and authoritative entities. These texts directly affect behaviour and possess their own agency within each series. This thesis addresses the readers within and outside of the series as figures whose participation is equally as important as the fictional characters. Ultimately, I show that Rowling and Carroll share an obsession with print, handwriting, and reading.

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Dedication

For my parents, who read to me as a child.

Introduction

J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series has defined twenty-first century children's literature because of its substantial cultural, literary, social, and economic impact. The books alone have been translated into over 80 languages and have sold more than 500 million copies worldwide (J.K. Rowling Website Ltd). These figures only scrape the proverbial surface in terms of *Harry Potter's* popularity. Rowling has also published companion pieces to the series, such as *Quidditch Through the Ages* (2001), *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (2001), *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* (2007), *Hogwarts: an Incomplete and Unreliable Guide* (2016), *Short Stories from Hogwarts of Heroism, Hardship and Dangerous Hobbies* (2016), and *Short Stories from Hogwarts of Power, Politics and Pesky Poltergeists* (2016). Rowling's Wizarding World has expanded to ten feature films, two theme parks, a play, a canonized website (*Wizarding World*), computer games, board games, LEGO® sets, and countless other licensing deals. Fans can experience a Studio Tour outside of London, England to "discover the secrets of the bewitching *Harry Potter* series" (*Warner Bros*) or take a literary pilgrimage to The Elephant House, an Edinburgh café that advertises itself as the place where "J.K. Rowling . . . sat writing much of her early novels in the back room" (*The Elephant House*). Since the publication of her first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in 1997, Rowling has changed the proverbial "game" of children's literature.

Along with *Harry Potter's* popularity among children and adults alike,¹ literary criticism of the series has increased, taking it more seriously as an object of study in the past decade. In her 2009 work, *Re-Reading Harry Potter*, Suman Gupta states:

¹ Gupta states that in 2000, "30 per cent of the first three [books] in the series had been bought by and for readers who were 35 or older" (9).

Both the assertion that the *Harry Potter* books do not deserve analytical attention and the desire to maintain the innocent joy of reading them are indicative of something that itself needs serious consideration: both are indicative of a determination not to realize the possibilities of reading beyond a point, not to read *thoughtfully* . . . These do not confirm that the *Harry Potter* books cannot or should not be placed in the happening material world; these do confirm that there is a widespread determination to keep these books away from all that. The embarrassed grin and excuses with which a serious academic who happens not to be a specialist in children's literature or fantasy writing admits to reading these books (almost like admitting to reading pornographic magazines), and the supercilious surprise and condescension with which his serious colleagues greet this information establish the extent to which that blind-spot affects the scope of their visions. The outrage with which a parent grateful to the *Harry Potter* books for engaging their children greets an analytical (especially when not approbatory) remark about these books also reveals the effects of that blind-spot. (14-15)

Gupta's analysis of general academic attitudes towards critical studies of *Harry Potter* is of paramount importance to my work. Because *Harry Potter* had been dismissed by many academics as an object unworthy of serious critical consideration in the past, scholars need to justify their work on the series. Even some popular critics were resistant to the *Potter* phenomenon. In 2007, *Washington Post* book critic, Ron Charles, stated that next to the complex world of Phillip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, "Rowling's little world of good vs. evil [looks], well, childish" (*Washington Post Sunday*). This is perhaps why, in many critical perspectives on *Harry Potter*, authors still find the need to defend their analyses, such as when, in 2009, Elizabeth Heilman positioned the series "as a powerful form of social text [that deserves] serious

critical attention” (2). Both Heilman and Gupta separately confirm that Rowling’s work is an important contributor to twenty-first century children’s literature, and they have each contributed to placing the study of *Harry Potter* within academic literary criticism. In fact, *Harry Potter* analyses have become so multifaceted within academia that University of Nebraska-Lincoln’s electrochemist and professor Dr. Rebecca Lai consistently runs a chemistry course entitled: “A Muggle's Guide to Harry Potter's Chemistry.”

As *Harry Potter* criticism becomes more established in academic circles, certain veins of study have become prominent. More recent critical work has focused on locating Christianity,² gender politics,³ technology,⁴ and racism and marginalization⁵ within the series. Yet, the criticism seldom takes into account the nuances of Rowling’s neo-Victorian texts. Many scholars agree that *Harry Potter* is a neo-Victorian work in that it portrays a boarding-school story akin to Thomas Hughes’ 1857 novel, *Tom Brown’s School Days*. Elizabeth Galway points out that “the boarding schools of Rugby and Hogwarts function less as places where the characters absorb the lessons of a traditional academic curriculum, than as the means by which they gain the traits necessary for them to become ‘good future citizens’ in their respective societies” (69). However, the neo-Victorian aspect of *Harry Potter* is much more complexly faceted than Galway suggests. The ways in which Victorian ideals function in Rowling’s text demonstrate her deep knowledge

² See Richard Abanes’ *Harry Potter and the Bible: The Menace Behind the Magick*; Francis Bridger’s *A Charmed Life: The Spirituality of Potterworld*; Peter Ciacco’s “Harry Potter and Christian Theology;” and John Killinger’s *God, the Devil, and Harry Potter*.

³ See Elizabeth Heilman et al. “From Sexist to (sort-of) Feminist: Representations of Gender in the Harry Potter Series;” Rubén Jarazo-Álvarez’s “Gender, Sexuality and the War on terror in Harry Potter and *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*;” Maria Nilson’s “A Magic Manic Pixie Dream Girl? Luna Lovegood and the Concept of Postfeminism;” and Anna Wannamaker’s *Boys in Children’s Literature and Popular Culture*.

⁴ See Luigina Ciolgi’s “Magic as Technological Utopia? Unpacking Issues of Interactivity and Infrastructuring in the Potterverse” and Clyde Partin’s “Magic, Medicine, and *Harry Potter*.”

⁵ See Jackie Horne’s “Harry and the Other: Answering the Race Question in J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter;” Marion Rana’s “The Less You Lot Have Ter do with these Foreigners, the Happier Yeh’ll Be: Cultural and National Otherness in J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter Series;” Maureen Saraco’s “Squibs, Disability, and Having a Place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry;” and Tess Stockslager’s “What it Means to Be a Half-Blood: Integrity versus Fragmentation in Biracial Identity.”

of nineteenth-century social codes. Yet, this underlying neo-Victorian current is also apparent in the intraliterary texts, that is, the embedded texts *within* her series: letters, textbooks, notes, diaries, marginalia, etc. In my study of Rowling's intraliterary texts, I suggest that this examination is best done through a comparison with a Victorian children's work that also depends upon intraliterary texts in order for the narrative to function. In comparing *Harry Potter* with Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures Underground*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and *Through the Looking Glass*, I will show how intraliterary texts are used as communicative tools denoting status, exclusivity, control, and prescription in both series.

The body of criticism surrounding Carroll's work is expansive. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* alone has been edited by scholars such as David Day, Hugh Haughton, and Richard Kelly and annotated thrice by Martin Gardner. In fact, researchers have dedicated so much energy to Carroll that Jan Susina claims that "there has developed an academic industry devoted to studying Carroll that confirms the centrality of Lewis Carroll to children's literature" (1-2), which emphasizes the size and scope of the work on *Alice*. Within the last twenty-five years alone, scholarship on Carroll's work has included but is by no means limited to semiotics,⁶ logic and philosophy,⁷ representations in popular culture,⁸ food,⁹ publishing history,¹⁰ and psychoanalysis.¹¹ This is to say nothing of the research published on Carroll himself. So, if the

⁶ See Rachel Fordyce et al *Semiotics and Linguistics in Alice's World*; Yumin Chen's "Comparing the Semiotic Construction;" Angela Hart's "Do Words Have Meaning? Lacanian Theory on Carroll's Writing."

⁷ See Bernard Patten's *The Logic of Alice: Clear Thinking in Wonderland* and Richard Brian Davis' *Alice in Wonderland and Philosophy: Curiouser and Curiouser*.

⁸ See Will Brooker's *Alice's Adventures: Lewis Carroll in Popular Culture*

⁹ See Carina Garland's "Curious Appetites: Food, Desire, Gender and Subjectivity in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* Texts;" Jan Gordon's "'Alice's Apron': Digestive Models of Cognition in Nineteenth-Century Children's Literature;" Katja Jylkka's "How Little Girls Are Like Serpents, or, Food and Power in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* Books;" and Michael Parrish Lee's "Eating Things: Food, Animals, and Other Life Forms in Lewis Carroll's *Alice* Books."

¹⁰ See Zoe Jaques et al *Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass: A Publishing History*.

¹¹ See Franziska Kohlt's "'The Stupidest Tea-Party in All My Life': Lewis Carroll and Victorian Psychiatric Practice" and Christopher Lane's "Lewis Carroll and Psychoanalysis: Why Nothing Adds Up in Wonderland."

research on *Alice* is so exhaustive, why do we continue to study it? Anna Kérchy suggests that “part of Alice’s perennial appeal is her characteristic ambiguity, which makes possible a range of interpretation in adapting Lewis Carroll’s classic Wonderland stories to various media” (Dustjacket Synopsis). Kérchy makes an important observation about the fictional character Alice; she is inscrutable. Because Carroll presents Alice as willing to adapt to many scenarios both in terms of her character and the Wonderland in which she finds herself, the portrayal of Alice lends itself readily to various interpretation. This point is important for my work, as my argument requires Alice to be interpreted in a range of ways.

Although *Alice* and *Harry Potter* have been compared before,¹² they have not been analyzed together in terms of their metafictional status. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, metafiction “openly comments on its own fictional status.” Both of these series contain intraliterary texts in which there are fictional and nonfictional readers. Alice reads within the *Alice* series, but Carroll directly addresses his implied readers. Although Rowling does not address her implied readers as obviously, the function of her intraliterary texts metafictionally reveals her value of reading in general. It is these texts that I concentrate on within my research because I argue that they bring together Rowling and Carroll in an original but productive manner. This study allows me to concretely identify the degree of metafictionality within the texts. While in my work I identify the authors of intraliterary texts, unquestioningly identifying the reader is a slippery endeavour. Rowling’s readers of intraliterary texts are much more stable than Carroll’s because her readers are almost all fictional characters. Rowling interacts metafictionally with her implied readers once only, when she addresses them in the dedication of

¹² See Amy Billone’s “The Boy Who Lived: From Carroll’s Alice and Barrie’s Peter Pan to Rowling’s Harry Potter;” C.N. Manlove’s *From Alice to Harry Potter: Children’s Fantasy in England*; and Deborah O’Keefe’s *Readers in Wonderland: The Liberating Worlds of Fantasy Fiction, From Dorothy to Harry Potter*.

Deathly Hallows, as will be discussed further in Chapter Three. Yet, Rowling's series is still metafictional. In incorporating intraliterary texts, Rowling engages and plays with thematic concerns around printed and handwritten texts. However, the status of metafictionality in Carroll's series is vastly more complex. Unlike Rowling, Carroll directly addresses his readers, both implied and imagined (a distinction I make clear in Chapter Three). Because I identify so many reading parties involved in Carroll's work, addressing the theoretical framework of implied readership is imperative to defining these readers.

Whenever Rowling or Carroll include intraliterary texts within their work, they are necessarily inviting an "implied reader" into the process. The "implied reader" is a narratological term first coined by Wayne Booth in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961) as the counterpart to his theory of the "implied author." In this work, Booth identifies the "implied reader" as the author's fixed image of the recipient to the text (137-138). Following Booth's work, scholars have expanded on the concept of the implied reader. Hannelore Link (28) and Gunter Grimm (38-39) identified an "intended reader" who, unlike Booth's concept, is not fixed within the text, but exists only in the imagination of the author. Link and Grimm's reader, unlike Booth's, belongs exclusively to the author and is not constructed within the text itself. Because Link and Grimm's reader functions within the real author's mind, this allows them to deconstruct authorial intent. Link and Grimm's "intended reader" is beneficial for my thesis because one of Carroll's readers exists very much within his mind, but I also trace this reader within the text itself, which is where I deviate from Link and Grimm.

More recently, scholars have expanded the notion of the implied reader so that it can be broken up into multiple forms. Peter Hühn et al. identify the "implied reader" as "a *presumed addressee* to whom the work is directed and whose linguistic codes, ideological norms, and

aesthetic ideas must be taken into account if the work is to be understood” (302). Here, the implied reader deviates from Link and Grimm’s reader; rather than the reader merely existing in the author’s mind, this reader exists *both* in the mind and in the text. Hühn et al make a careful distinction between “implied readers” and “ideal recipients” who, although are also reading the text, are able to “understand the work in a way that optimally matches its structure and adopts the interpretive position and aesthetic standpoint put forward by the work” (302). This important distinction is imperative for my work, when who the author is writing *to* and who the author is writing *for* become separate but related entities. As I identify in this thesis, Carroll has not two distinct readers, but three. According to Hühn et al.’s definitions, one of these readers appears as an “implied reader,” which I term “the imagined child-reader” and two conform to the Hühn et al “ideal recipients,” which I refer to as “implied readers – adult and child.” These readers will be further defined and examined in Chapter Three.

Within the scholarship on narratology, implied readers seem to complicate children’s literary criticism. In *The Nimble Reader*, Roderick McGillis identifies two types of child-readers. The “innocent reader,” who is “powerless to escape the enforced quiescence reading can put upon us” and the readers who have been taught theory in order to “end their innocence” (24). For McGillis, passivity and activity are the only ways in which to understand implied child-readers. McGillis’ ideas, while certainly polarizing, are important to how I understand Carroll’s imagined child-reader. Like McGillis’ “powerless” reader, Carroll’s imagined child-reader and “Reader in the Book” is continuously at the mercy of his whims and is often the object of his humour. This too explains why Carroll’s adult and child implied readers seem to be “in on the joke” (as will be further discussed in Chapter Three). These implied readers are active enough to “end their

innocence” and participate in the metafictional aspect of *Alice* with the author/narrator, who, in the *Alice* case, I argue are synonymous.

In addition to McGillis, Neil Cocks influences the way I view Carroll’s imagined child-reader. Within children’s literature, Cocks firmly “[suggests] that an actual, real author has in mind an actual, real reader” (94). Cocks identifies five parties involved in the reading process: the real author, who writes the “second self;” the “second self” or narrator; the actual reader, who “can choose to read as ‘the Implied Reader;” the “Reader in the Book,” who “attempts to avoid reading meaning as originating at a single source;” and finally the “Implied Reader,” who is constructed by the second self (95). Cocks’ concept of five parties allows me to dissect Carroll’s many implied readers more acutely. For example, the imagined child-reader for whom I argue *Alice’s Adventures* is composed, is a threefold blend of the Hühn et al “implied reader,” McGillis’ “powerless reader,” and Cocks’ “Reader in the Book.” This imagined child-reader is the presumed addressee who cannot read meaning into the text, and who is also subject to the whims of the author.

Although in the analysis of this thesis I will provide historical context for the print and handwriting culture of the nineteenth century, I intend this study to move beyond neo-Victorianism into Rowling’s reworking of Carroll’s metafictionality. I will first address the difference in reader relationships to print culture and handwriting of intraliterary texts, which shows an imbalance of trust. In Chapter One, I argue that the representation of print culture in *Harry Potter* and *Alice* hyperbolizes the way children experience reading by dramatizing the creation of an implied reader. This chapter identifies the power and limits of printed text over their readers. While in *Harry Potter* extenuating circumstances complicate the credibility of handwriting, in both series handwriting proves to be incredibly more powerful than print in terms

of an emotional and affective reader-text relationship. This chapter demonstrates a new way to read *Alice*. Although there has been focus on Alice's reading before (as I will discuss), my thesis refreshes critical readings of *Alice*. In Chapter Two, I show how the relationships to handwriting change with the introduction of the epistolary mode. The main difference here is that letters have identifiable authors, whereas the books I discuss in Chapter One appear as authorless entities that carry with them different, less trustworthy authority. Chapter Two delves into the complicated and sometimes comedic world of letters and enriches the current understanding of Wizarding class structure. Chapter Three expands my argument to conclusively address the readers of intraliterary texts. This chapter works with reader-response theory, which, according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, is a body of work "that [focuses] on the responses of readers to literary works, rather than on the works themselves considered as self-contained entities." This theory allows me to identify the many possibilities of implied and actual readers within the intraliterary and actual texts. This chapter in particular is where I see metafictionality as an outward expansion from the text, over time gathering more cultural momentum. It is in this chapter where my study makes the most crucial intervention in studies of the relations between Rowling and Carroll because this is where I show that the authors "talk" in the same spatiotemporal area. In the *Philosopher's Stone*, when witnessing an infant Harry being left on the doorsteps of his relatives, Professor McGonagall states: "I wouldn't be surprised if today was known as Harry Potter day in the future – there will be books written about Harry – every child in the world will know his name" (13). As usual, McGonagall proves highly perceptive.

Chapter One: Books with Brains – Authority, Instruction, and Danger

Within the *Alice* and *Harry Potter* series, there are many instances in which written or printed texts directly affect character behaviour. Curiously, these internal texts act ametafictionally; that is, these texts *are* fiction within fiction, but they *do not* always function metafictionally. Rather than expressing self-consciousness regarding their own fictional state, the internal texts of *Alice* and *Harry* are mostly instructive and often act according to their own agenda. For this reason, I will hereafter refer to these types of texts as “intraliterary texts,” which allows for the possibility of texts to express agency. Often, these texts are literally authorless (such as with the many food labels in *Alice*), which removes and replaces authorial intent with textual agency. However, when authors are known, textual intent can be intensified, and produce a more complex relationship with their readers. This concept suggests that the texts can act as separate entities from their authors and can, at times, have the ability to express their own unique set of ideas. This idea also suggests that intraliterary texts require a fictional reader in order to activate a series of behaviours. These texts contain authority in that they are able to cause an involuntary reaction from their reader, but they also live in an indefinite limbo, waiting to be read.

While this idea of textual authority requires an application of reader-response theory, intraliterary texts move beyond this analytical framework when they act dictatorially. In order to accomplish this action, the texts present written words as universally trustworthy and undeniably accurate. However, because the intraliterary texts possess the ability to affect behavioural change, they can also place their diegetic readers in harm’s way.¹³ In this sense, intraliterary texts

¹³ In this project, I understand “diegetic” as Gérard Genette uses the term: as the spatiotemporal universe in which the narrative takes place.

also possesses the ability to convey malicious intent. For these reasons, the intraliterary texts within *Alice* and *Harry Potter* are not only authoritative, they are also often dangerous to their fictive readers. This also suggests that readers within these texts are always at risk of reading and unintentionally invoking a situation they cannot undo.

Because intraliterary texts necessarily require a reader, reader-response theory informs the way in which the intraliterary texts of *Alice* and *Harry Potter* operate. Reader-response criticism focuses “upon the way in which an individual reader experiences a text, charting that process with the help of psychological or psychoanalytic models” (Bertens 96). Many prominent figures, such as I.A. Richards, Louise Rosenblatt, and Stanley Fish, regard authorial intention as less important or even less relevant to critical analysis than reader interpretation (Greene 1147). However, Michel Foucault points out that authorial intention is still seen as influential where “the name of the author remains at the contours of texts—separating one from the other, defining their form, and characterizing their mode of existence” (123). Although I agree that the author certainly plays a role in a reader’s understanding of a text, I argue that analyzing the internal texts of *Alice* and *Harry Potter* necessarily requires an analysis of reader response due to reader reactions that are often involuntary. In “The Death of the Author,” Roland Barthes argues against the critical approach of analyzing texts through authorial intention. Indeed, Barthes claims that “a text’s unity lies not in its origin, but in its destination” (148). For Barthes, the reader of the text plays the role of activation, whereas the author ceases to exist after writing. In this way, “The reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost” (148). Barthes’ theory of reader agency suggests that in reading a text, the reader necessarily engages in a mutual exchange; the text inscribes quotations and the reader provides meaning. The intraliterary written and printed texts in *Alice* and *Harry Potter* provide a

literal enactment of Barthes' theory because they show that written words continually invoke trust and action from the characters who read the texts.

However, instead of inscribing quotations, these words inscribe instruction. This idea is where my understanding of intraliterary texts departs from traditional reader-response theory. C.S. Lewis briefly touches on the idea of texts functioning through readers when he states that “[words] are exquisitely detailed compulsions on a mind willing and able to be so compelled” (89). For my research, Lewis's analysis begins to bridge the gap between reader-response theory and my investigation into intraliterary texts because he not only notices the importance of readership, but also the possibility of textual agency. Similarly, Wolfgang Iser acknowledges that texts are actively involved in reader-response, which he refers to as “a network of response-inviting structures” (34). Like Lewis, Iser *almost* entertains the idea of textual agency, but does not fully appreciate a text's ability to effect behavioural change in its reader. This oversight is due to the problematic factor that scholars notice in reader-response theory, which envisions the reader as an extradiegetic reader, that is, one who is part of “the real public” (Genette 229).

In order for intraliterary texts in *Harry Potter* and *Alice* to function as I have discussed above, they require a character to read them. The readers of texts in these series are an integral factor in the reader-response exchange because the dramatization of the fictional reader brings to life a dramatization of the implied reader so often referenced in reader-response. Prior to the emergence of reader-response criticism, New Criticism opposed “the methods of literary analysis prevailing in academia in the first part of the twentieth century” (Bressler 32). Instead, these critics view texts as self-sufficient and therefore reject analysis of origin or effect. New Critics W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley discounted the critical value of authorial intent altogether, stating: “the intentional fallacy is a romantic one” (“The Intentional Fallacy” 471). Wimsatt and

Beardsley had also vociferously opposed the idea that literary affect is significant in critical work, claiming that when critics analyze a poem's affect, the object of the investigation is lost: "The outcome of either Fallacy, the Intentional or the Affective, is that the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical judgment, tends to disappear" ("The Affective Fallacy" 47). While Wimsatt and Beardsley argue that analyzing affect overshadows the text, I propose instead that reader affect demonstrates textual agency. Unlike reader-response theory or New Criticism, the readers of intraliterary texts are not theoretical constructs, and so they *require* analyses of affect. When the readers in *Harry Potter* and *Alice* partake in behaviours directly suggested by intraliterary texts, they are also confirming the overwhelming and undeniable power that the texts themselves possess.

Alice's Trust and Mistrust of Handwriting and Printed Text

Within the intraliterary texts of *Alice*, a hierarchy of influence exists between forms. Intraliterary texts that are handwritten tend to force a more intense reaction than those that are printed. For example, when Alice encounters a hand-labeled bottle "beautifully printed in large letters" (*Alice's Adventures* 13¹⁴) and later a cake "beautifully marked in currants" (*Alice's Adventures* 14), she responds to them positively, and immediately carries out the instructions to eat and drink. In fact, this response becomes ingrained in Alice, and she soon habitually eats and drinks when presented with food. This occurs again when Alice grows to an enormous size after drinking a bottle in the White Rabbit's house even though "there was no label this time . . . but nevertheless she uncorked it and put it to her lips" (*Alice's Adventures* 32), suggesting that textual instruction has long-term prescriptive consequences. As will be further discussed below,

¹⁴ I assume that this label is done by hand through Tenniel's original illustrations.

the *Harry Potter* series frequently mimics this strategy. The varied reactions demonstrate that while intraliterary texts cause a reaction from their reader, some forms are valued as more personally instructive than others. This change in value occurs because even when confronted with alternate explanations or truths, printed text remains unchangeable. Walter Ong explains the inflexible nature of printed text:

The author might be challenged if only he or she could be reached, but the author cannot be reached in any book. There is no way to directly refute a text. After absolutely total and devastating refutation, it says exactly the same thing as before. This is one reason why ‘the book says’ is probably tantamount to ‘it is true’ . . . A text stating what the whole world knows is false will state falsehood forever, so long as the text exists. Texts are inherently contumacious. (78)

Because readers cannot question or ever conclusively understand the meaning of printed text, it remains frustratingly out of reach. Handwriting, however, lends itself to changeability. Ong explains that the far more fluid and intimate handwriting is often trusted over print: “Print situates words in space more relentlessly than writing ever did. Writing moves words from sound world to a world of visual space, but print locks words into position in this space” (119). This more “natural” writing garners trust from a reader. The presence of often misleading and sometimes malicious printed texts, such as “Jabberwocky” in *Alice*, exemplify this phenomenon.

Alice’s relationship to “Jabberwocky” demonstrates her complicated relationship with printed textual authority. In *Through the Looking Glass*, Alice comes across the poem and quickly recognizes it as a looking-glass book, which requires a mirror in order to be read. The most common understanding of this poem is that “Jabberwocky” functions as “a parody of current philological scholarship and the nineteenth-century revival of early English texts”

(Haughton 329n11). However, others, such as Nancy Goldfarb, argue that this moment is a portmanteau that Carroll “purposely utilizes . . . to suggest a deeper truth about language” (86). As in Goldfarb’s analysis, much of the criticism surrounding this poem focuses mostly on the content and not on the form. While the meaning of “Jabberwocky” has been intensely scrutinized, Alice’s reaction to the text is rarely addressed. Alice’s reaction to “Jabberwocky” shows her reluctance to accept printed words as quickly as she does the handwriting on the labels. Upon reading the poem, Alice finds it “rather hard to understand” (134). Alice’s initial response to the text is one of confusion because it does not act according to her expectations of poems. Alice reflects on her understanding of poetry in general when she tells Humpty Dumpty that she “*had* some poetry repeated to [her] much easier than [“Jabberwocky”], by – Tweedledee” (189). Here, Alice establishes that she possesses the ability to interpret poetry, but that this is not the kind of poetry with which she is familiar. In fact, the text seems purposefully to evade interpretation.

Not only is “Jabberwocky” written in a different “language” (131), but also the words themselves refuse definition. This ambiguity is most clear when Alice quizzes Humpty Dumpty about the poem’s meaning, and he offers definitions to every word. Although Humpty Dumpty’s dissection of the text is clearly inaccurate, as “both his highly arbitrary attitude towards language and his intellectual over-confidence may make him a suspect guide to [“Jabberwocky’s”] meaning” (Haughton 345n10), he and Alice do come to a consensus together. Humpty Dumpty’s untrustworthiness adds to the mystification surrounding the text’s intent, but it is the text, not Humpty Dumpty, that stumps Alice. Because this text is in print and not handwriting, Alice finds herself distanced from it. For Alice, “Jabberwocky” is the literal culmination of fixed print culture. Alice finds printed text to be more alienating than the “beautiful” handwritten bottle

labels, which causes her difficulty when connecting with the poem. When Alice accepts Humpty Dumpty's explanation, she also recognizes that she may never fully understand printed text because she cannot ask the poem to explain its own meaning. Above all, Alice is searching for the text's intent, which she cannot access through Humpty Dumpty. In fact, Alice herself acknowledges textual agency: "it seems to fill my head with ideas – only I don't know what they are" (134). Alice realizes that the text contains meaning, but she is unable to access it on her own. Although Alice never fully understands "Jabberwocky," she does show that she differentiates value between handwriting and printed text, as evidenced through her immediate trust of hand-printed labels. Partially, this distrust is due to the anonymity implied by printed texts. Just as the words vex Alice, so too does the impersonally unreachable (or unreadable) aspect of the text's format. While handwriting indicates individuality, for Alice, printed text emits a sense of murky collectivism. When met with these texts, what Alice understands (or what she believes she *should* understand) is unstable. For these reasons, "Jabberwocky" demonstrates Alice's hierarchical understanding of print versus handwritten culture.

The figures of authority in *Alice* emphasize the power of handwritten words through memorandum books in *Through the Looking Glass*. When the White King faints after being carried by Alice, she attempts to revive him. Instead of using water to "throw over him . . . she could find nothing but a bottle of ink" (130). The King, recovered, then immediately begins to write in his memorandum book. As an explanation for this odd episode, Jan Susina explains that this interchange may reveal ink as "Carroll's liquid of choice" (56). However, this moment also demonstrates an association between writing and power. In order to be considered conscious and return fully to his monarchical role, the King must demonstrate his ability to write. This significant event depicts one of Alice's first encounters with the characters on the other side of

the looking glass. The characters immediately welcome her through an establishment of power associations, namely, the fixed relationship between written words and figures of authority.

However, the White King's power pales in comparison to the authority of memorandum books.¹⁵ Upon his revival, the White King attempts to record his experience, but finds the pencil "writes all manner of things [he does not] intend" (131). Without his knowledge, Alice takes hold of the King's pencil and writes for him. The King's assumption that the pencil writes on its own demonstrates a belief in texts as self-generating. In this sense, the King believes that the pencil records the truth of his feelings, regardless of his own authorial agency. Lionel Morton suggests that memories are "vaguely distressing" in the *Alice* books (289), and that the White King's need to record his memories for fear of losing them altogether demonstrates "comic grief" (293). Indeed, when Alice writes *for* the King, he does not recognize his own memories, further emphasizing Morton's argument. The King only notices Alice's "hand" in the writing at the White Queen's announcement: "That's not a memorandum of *your* feelings!" (131). The Queen's remark highlights the King's blind trust of written words and his acceptance of written text authority. Before the Queen's interruption, the King's only explanation is that the text self-writes. Similarly, when Humpty Dumpty asks Alice to calculate a sum, he insists that she provide it "in writing" (185) rather than verbally.¹⁶ Alice complies and presents her memorandum book to Humpty Dumpty, and he immediately approves. Alice notices that Humpty Dumpty views the sum incorrectly because he inverts the book. Dismissing her, Humpty Dumpty insists that the calculation still "*seems to be done right*" (186). Dov Samet suggests that

¹⁵ Although popularized in the eighteenth century, memorandum books were still a feature of nineteenth-century public life. Memorandum books, or "pocket journals," were a place to record everything from finances to meetings, and "allowed their owners to participate in a growing trend for anticipating and recording their own movements within time" (Colclough 160).

¹⁶ This comment also implies legal connotations suggesting that Humpty Dumpty trusts legal administration, even if he does not know entirely how it works. I want to thank Marie Loughlin for this point.

this incident evidences Humpty Dumpty's possible illiteracy (539n2). However, Humpty Dumpty refuses to believe Alice's sum *until* she writes it down. Humpty Dumpty may be illiterate, but he demonstrates more trust in written words than spoken words. When Alice notices that the book is upside down, Humpty Dumpty brushes her aside, already confident in the truth of her memorandum book. Written words prove authoritative for Humpty Dumpty and the White King. The characters understand memorandum books as both immediately trustworthy and ultimately truthful.

Prescriptive and (Sometimes) Dangerous Written Words in *Alice*

Not only does *Alice* present the handwritten word as trustworthy, but the series also posits the intraliterary texts as dictatorial. Whenever Alice encounters written words, she immediately understands them as instructive. While falling down the rabbit hole, Alice comes across a jar labeled "orange marmalade" and tries to eat from it but finds that "to her great disappointment it [is] empty" (*Adventures* 10). Alice's peculiar attempt to eat *while* falling demonstrates the imposing power of written words. Alice cannot read text without immediately responding. A jar with a food label demands to be eaten, and so, without consideration of her physical state of hunger or danger, Alice attempts to eat. Carina Garland argues that in *Alice's Adventures*, "Hunger . . . is representative of desire" and Alice's constant eating shows how "Carroll exercises this desiring control over his heroine in regards to her appetite" (28). Garland argues that labeled food objects force Alice to eat "simply because she has been instructed to, without expressing any hunger" (28). While Garland insists that Carroll's desire for ultimate bodily control compels Alice to eat without desire, I argue that written words give her no choice.

Alice demonstrates this non-decision making when she comes across a bottle labeled “DRINK ME.” Alice resolves her only reservation about drinking the strange liquid when she checks to “see whether it’s marked ‘poison’ or not” (*Alice’s Adventures* 13).¹⁷ While Alice displays some contemplation, she certainly shows little regard for her body. Alice drinks the liquid simply because the bottle tells her to do so. Carol Mavor agrees that Alice’s reading is the source of her action: “Alice’s reading is eating, her eating is reading” (101). Mavor furthers this argument when she suggests that “Alice might say ‘I read what I eat’ is the same as ‘I eat what I read’” (101). The instructive nature of written words leaves Alice with no room to make her own decisions, and so she shrinks to ten inches high. Upon finding a cake with the words “EAT ME” written in currants,¹⁸ Alice does not pause to contemplate the consequences. Alice’s only thought before consuming the cake indicates even less caution than her previous encounters with food and drink: “Well, I’ll eat it” (*Adventures* 14). Similarly, when Alice comes upon two “finger posts,” pointing in the same direction, she immediately follows them (*Looking Glass* 154). Alice does not previously signal that she is looking for these signs, but because they are text, she believes she “ought to follow” them (154). One of the signs is marked “TO TWEEDLEDUM’S HOUSE” and the other “TO THE HOUSE OF TWEEDLEDEE,” which causes Alice to worry about the possibility of having to choose between directions at a divided road. Alice, unable to obey two opposing instructions at once, will reach a mental impasse if such a situation arises. Luckily, Alice realizes that “they live at the *same* house” (154). Because written words propel Alice into immediate action, competing instructions produce anxiety for her. This event

¹⁷ Rather than showing actual concern, this contemplation satires children’s books such as Elizabeth Turner’s *Cautionary Tales* in order to “[poke] fun at the moralistic literature for children” (Haughton 301n6)

¹⁸ Although writing with food is not technically handwriting, it is writing by hand, so for the sake of this argument, I consider it handwriting.

demonstrates that Carroll presents written words as necessarily authoritative in the *Alice* books, which Alice finds impossible to disobey.

Because reading for Alice means obeying, she often finds herself physically endangered. When she follows the “EAT ME” and “DRINK ME” labels, Alice’s body shrinks and grows uncontrollably. Whitney Elaine Jones argues that Alice’s changing body size relates to her change in creativity: “Alice’s unstable body expresses the risks and rewards of flirting with a narrative of artistic growth” (4). Others, such as Hugh Haughton, argue that Alice’s changing size is “a sign of Carroll’s psychological realism” (301n7). These scholars show that Alice’s physical changes are multifaceted. The many interpretations of Alice’s transformations give me space to demonstrate that these rapid changes can also represent the danger of blindly obeying text. Alice is under the continual threat of reading. Because she cannot ignore written words, Wonderland continually punishes her through the forced stretching and shrinking of her body. Upon finding a bottle in the White Rabbit’s house, Alice impulsively drinks it, even though “there [is] no label this time with the words ‘DRINK ME’” (*Adventures* 32). Recalling instruction from previous labels, Alice drinks the liquid “nevertheless” (*Adventures* 32). Even though Alice understands the potentially dangerous consequences from past experience, she finds herself unable to resist the prescriptive nature of implied text. Alice admits to not contemplating the outcome too carefully, but “[she knows] *something* interesting is sure to happen” (32). Indeed, her body grows so large that she “[has] to stoop to save her neck from being broken” (32). In this event, the implication of written words physically threatens Alice. Although many scholars have argued about her bodily transformations, my understanding of these episodes is that ultimately, Alice is always in danger of encountering words that might hurt her.

Trust and Mistrust of Handwriting and Printed Words in *Harry Potter*

Like *Alice*, the intraliterary texts in *Harry Potter* display differing degrees of trustworthiness depending on their medium. One of the most reliable books within the series is *Hogwarts: A History*. Hermione refers to this book repeatedly, taking its information as fact. In *Philosopher's Stone*, Hermione informs Harry that the ceiling of the Great Hall is “bewitched,” and reveals that she “read about it in *Hogwarts: A History*” (125). This instance is Harry’s first experience of Hermione’s dependence on the book. Hermione’s knowledge of this text also eases many anxieties. For example, in *Prisoner of Azkaban* when the students sleep in the Great Hall after Sirius Black breaks into the castle, Hermione soothes her friends through recitations of *Hogwarts: A History*, reassuring Harry and Ron that complex enchantments protect the castle from intruders (172). Similarly, in *Goblet of Fire*, Hermione informs Harry and Ron that “everyone who’s read *Hogwarts: A History*” knows that spells conceal the entirety of Hogwarts from prying eyes (141). Hermione even confesses emotional attachment to the book. At one point, she “[wishes she] hadn’t left [her] copy at home” (*Chamber* 156), and at another, she decides to take *Hogwarts: A History* with her when packing for their year abroad, for no other reason than she “just [doesn’t] think [she’d] feel right if [she] didn’t have it” (*Hallows* 76). Harry and Ron never question Hermione’s reliance on and attachment to this book. In turn, they completely trust the information that comes from the text. In fact, the only negative criticism of *Hogwarts: A History* emerges when Hermione realizes that the book contains no mention of the Hogwarts House Elves, which she calls “Revised History” (*Goblet* 200). Although upset by this information, Hermione excuses her beloved book through an explanation of prevalent wizarding attitudes towards house elves: “we are *all* colluding in the oppression of a hundred slaves!” (201 emphasis added). In this dialogue, Hermione removes the blame from the selective historical text

and places it securely on the shoulders of all who attend Hogwarts, leaving the text intact as a source of truth. Hermione's relationship to *Hogwarts: A History* indicates a certain level of indestructible and unchangeable trust. Like the memorandum books in *Through the Looking Glass*, *Hogwarts: A History* is largely authoritative. This text cannot be altered, questioned, or misinterpreted in any meaningful way. Curiously, Rowling never lists an author for *Hogwarts: A History*.¹⁹ The author's anonymity adds to the text's omniscience. Similar to the King's acceptance of written authority, Harry, Ron, and Hermione accept *Hogwarts: A History* as indisputable truth.

Yet, within the Wizarding World, there is a hierarchy of printed text. *The Daily Prophet* demonstrates that among the wizarding community, there is an innate distrust of certain kinds of print culture. The *Prophet* acts as *the* source of reliable information for the Wizarding World. Although there are other publications such as *The Quibbler* or *Witch Weekly*, the *Prophet* is the only publication that nearly every Wizarding house reads regularly for their source of news. However, many witches and wizards practice caution when reading this wizarding newspaper, because it is as much sensationalist entertainment as it is unbiased reportage. Attitudes towards the *Prophet* differ throughout the series because the newspaper's reputation undergoes significant change. Early in the series, the Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge worries about the *Prophet* reporting on instances that cause the wizarding community to doubt his competency, such as when Sirius Black escapes after capture at Hogwarts: "the *Daily Prophet* is going to have a field day" (*Azkaban* 446). Fudge's concern shows that, at this time, the *Prophet* operates like independent third-party media because it is willing and even actively looking to report on events that cause Fudge to appear in bad light. Arthur Weasley verbalizes this reputation when he notes

¹⁹ Although often attributed to Bathilda Bagshot (known author of *A History of Magic*), Rowling never explicitly lists Bagshot as an author of *Hogwarts: A History* within the *Harry Potter* series.

that after the Death Eaters' appearance at the Quidditch World Cup "[reporters have] been ferreting around all week, looking for more Ministry mess-ups to report" (*Goblet* 130). As an employee of the Ministry, Arthur fears that an unfavourable article could be printed, suggesting that the *Prophet*, at this point in the series, produces unbiased truths.

However, the *Prophet's* relationship to the Ministry quickly changes to one of allegiance, as Nicholas Sheltroun explains: "For the second half of the series, the *Daily Prophet* protects the interests of Cornelius Fudge and other Ministers of Magic. . . . [T]he *Prophet* long denies the return of Lord Voldemort and presents Harry as a disturbed, attention-hungry boy" (62). After this point, the majority of the Wizarding community expresses discontent and distrust in the *Prophet*. In *Half-Blood Prince*, Horace Slughorn admits that after hearing conflicting rumours about the Wizarding World "one doesn't know what to believe, the *Prophet* has been known to print inaccuracies, make mistakes" (*Half-Blood* 122). Importantly in this moment, Slughorn's language places blame on the print itself, not the journalists or editors. While hiding abroad and concealed behind enchantments, Harry witnesses a company of wanted Muggleborns avoiding capture. This group, which includes Dean Thomas, Dirk Cresswell, Ted Tonks, and the goblin, Griphook, discuss circulating rumours. When Cresswell mentions an article in the *Prophet*, Tonks immediately dismisses him: "The *Prophet*? . . . You deserve to be lied to if you're still reading that muck, Dirk" (*Hallows* 344). Both Slughorn and Tonks demonstrate the widespread feeling of distrust in the *Prophet*. These instances show that a printed text possesses the ability to produce suspicion among its readership. Like Alice's frustration with "Jabberwocky," this occurs because these readers are never able to access textual intention which produces distrust. Like "Jabberwocky," the *Prophet* has textual agency that can cause a disconnect from its readers. The *Prophet*, however, is closely linked to the Ministry and for that reason, its readers treat it with

more wariness than Alice does “Jabberwocky.” Both literally and figuratively, newspapers are suspiciously movable. The photographs on the pages even move, adding to the Wizarding community’s ambivalent feeling towards newspapers. As I have shown, the cultural meaning of the *Prophet* transforms throughout the series, which I suggest contributes to its unstable status and reputation. This reputation demonstrates my contention that in this series, printed text is, at the very least, suspicious, and at the most, completely fallacious.

Wizards and witches show a much more favourable attitude towards handwriting than printed text. When Harry obtains his copy of *Advanced Potion Making*, it is the Half-Blood Prince’s handwriting that elicits a response in Harry, not the printed text.²⁰ Although Harry expresses fondness for books, such as *Quidditch Through the Ages* (*Philosopher’s* 194), he idolizes his copy of *Advanced Potion Making*. In *Half-Blood Prince*, Professor Slughorn loans Harry a used copy of the textbook *Advanced Potion Making*, which Harry notices “to his annoyance . . . that the previous owner had scribbled all over” (158). However, Harry quickly realizes that the added scrawl contains useful potion making tips and even invented spells. Harry’s relationship to the textbook quickly turns from annoyance to reverence. This shift occurs because the handwriting within the printed textbook causes Harry to trust the Half-Blood Prince’s words. Because handwriting is more of an intimate experience, it often sounds more like spoken word. Ong explains that “the written word cannot defend itself as the natural spoken word can: real speech and thought always exist essentially in a context of give-and-take between real persons” (78). The marginalia or the scrawls of thought and editing that Harry reads across

²⁰ While in the possession of the used textbook *Advanced Potion Making*, Harry is unaware that the same copy was previously owned by Professor Severus Snape, who used the pseudonym “The Half-Blood Prince” while he attended Hogwarts as a student. Snape constructed this pseudonym as a private identity for himself, and there is no indication within the books that anyone other than Snape knew or used this name while he attended Hogwarts as a student or indeed, up until the moment Snape revealed this identity to Harry (*Half-Blood Prince* 503).

the pages of an unmoving printed text liken themselves to actual speech. This “naturalness” contrasted with the rigid printed text gives Harry a sense of access to textual intent because it feels intimate, more like a personal conversation than a textbook for the masses. Harry’s positive response to the marginalia in the textbook occurs perhaps in part because it is a rare record of the original owner’s reading, rather than writing.²¹ The marginalia is in conversation with the book, not with Harry, which allows Harry to take up the safe space of an innocuous witness to a private conversation. Harry’s relationship to this text also shows that reader inscriptions have the ability to transform the content of the printed book into a conversation between the printed text and two distinct readers that transcends supposed spatiotemporal limits.

Harry soon acknowledges that the book consumes his free time, admitting that “he [does] not usually lie in bed reading his textbooks” (198). This relationship to the text causes Harry to be highly defensive and combative when challenged, which demonstrates his loyalty to written words. Harry continuously reminds a wary Hermione that “[he] has learned more from the Half-Blood Prince than Snape or Slughorn have taught [him]” (254). Part of the reason that Harry reveres the text is that within its pages Harry finds undeniable truth. The book continually provides improved methods of potion making, which deviate from the official instructions. The successful potions that come from using the Prince’s tips cause Harry to rely on the book much more heavily than Hermione ever relies on *Hogwarts: A History*. Harry connects to the text so strongly that he emotionally bonds to it. At one point, Harry even refers to the book as a living entity: “the book that had become a kind of guide and friend” (437). Importantly, Harry distinguishes the book from the (at this point, unknown) author. Interestingly, Harry does not concern himself with the identity of the author. Harry does “[wonder] vaguely” about the Half-

²¹ I want to thank Emily Murphy for this important point.

Blood Prince but seems more interested in the handwriting than the author (163). In fact, when Hermione attempts to find out the identity of the author, Harry tells her to “drop it” (446).

Harry’s unwillingness to research the Prince’s true identity demonstrates that his attachment is to the handwriting, not the person who writes. Harry’s friendship is with the script inside of his textbook, distinct from the Half-Blood Prince.

Like Hermione and *Hogwarts: A History*, Harry’s book ultimately disappoints him. When Harry defends himself from Draco Malfoy, he uses an untested spell from the text. In the process, Harry almost kills Malfoy. Like Hermione, Harry excuses the book: “What had the Prince been thinking to *copy* such a spell into his book?” (437 emphasis added). Importantly, Harry assumes that the spell was not *invented*; it was merely copied from another source. Like Hermione, Harry creates a justification to preserve the text’s status as authoritative and trustworthy. Mary Freier argues that Harry even “grieves for the book” when events force him to hide it (3). Indeed, when Harry believes Snape will destroy the text, Harry refuses to “let it happen” (437). Harry’s emotional bond with his copy of *Advanced Potion Making* is similar to Hermione’s bond with *Hogwarts: A History*, albeit much more intense. The way in which the *Harry Potter* series presents intraliterary texts is reminiscent of Alice’s and the King’s memorandum books in *Through the Looking Glass*. Harry’s and Hermione’s books are above suspicion of falsehoods because, in Humpty Dumpty’s words, they “[*seem*] to be done right.” Although the distinction between handwritten and printed text is less prominent in *Harry Potter* than in *Alice*, there still remains a value hierarchy. Although through the series Rowling emphasizes Hermione’s relationships to books, that relationship is never as strong as the bond Harry forms with the script in his textbook. This distinction suggests that handwritten texts contain the ability to form closer relationships with their readers than printed ones.

Instructive and (Sometimes) Dangerous Words in *Harry Potter*

Prescriptive texts in the *Harry Potter* series are occasionally benign, but more often than not they possess malintent. In *Deathly Hallows*, when Dumbledore bequeaths Hermione his copy of *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* in his will, Dumbledore notes that he leaves Hermione the book “in hopes that she will find it entertaining and instructive” (100). Dumbledore’s note sets off a series of behaviours in Hermione reminiscent of Alice, the written words urging Hermione to search *The Tales of Beedle the Bard* for meaning and she obliges, but she repeatedly fails. Crucially, a distinction must be made here between author and text. Hermione’s behavioural response occurs not because Dumbledore provides this instruction, but because *handwritten* textual authority compels her to do so. Because the note is handwritten and not printed, Hermione’s willingness to comply is immediately evident. As soon as Hermione receives the book, she “[flicks] through it” (106). However, unlike Alice, who immediately satisfies the demands of the written words by eating, drinking, or following signs, Hermione does not. Hermione cannot fulfill the script’s requirement to find meaning within the book, which causes her to study it at every spare moment. While stuck in Grimmauld Place, Hermione “[whiles] away the wait . . . by studying *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*” (163). Again, Hermione fails in finding meaning in the text. Because Dumbledore’s written words demand her action, she tries again: “Hermione [curls up] in one of the sagging armchairs with *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*” (257). Hermione’s repetitive and seemingly unproductive behaviour receives Harry’s attention, who cannot understand why she returns to the book “which [is] not, after all, very long” (257). This unusual behaviour looks, to Harry, like irrationality. However, Hermione, like Alice, responds to the textual stimulus and acts accordingly. When she finally fulfills the text’s

requirements, Hermione stops searching. The action that satisfies the text's demands occurs when Hermione shows Harry the Hallows symbol: "Look at that symbol . . . it isn't a rune and it's not in the syllabary either" (257). At this moment, Hermione finally fulfills the written words' instruction that she had initially attempted months earlier. This explains why after this encounter with Harry, Rowling never depicts Hermione studying the text again, even though Xenophilius Lovegood is yet to fully explain the mystery of the Hallows. According to the prescriptive text, Hermione's job is not to explore the importance of the Deathly Hallows; rather, she is meant to find the *meaning* of the symbol within *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*. When Hermione shows Harry a unique symbol, she also discovers meaning in the text.

While Alice immediately acts upon reading the texts she encounters, the political atmosphere purposefully thwarts Hermione. During a period in which Death Eaters continually attempt to capture the trio, the text intentionally tries to mislead others, so that only Hermione can glean its meaning through continual study. In order to accomplish this, the text can only be discernable to Hermione. Because necessity cloaks the text's prescriptiveness in secrecy, Hermione's success takes multiple attempts of repeated behaviour. This text most overtly displays textual agency because it is decidedly designed for the interpretation of a single specific individual. This intraliterary text presents Hermione with written words she cannot disobey, causing her ritualistic study of *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*.

A more intensified version of Dumbledore's words to Hermione is Ginny's reaction to Tom Riddle's diary. Over the course of a year, Tom Riddle possesses Ginny Weasley through his diary. Rowling later reveals Riddle's diary to be a Horcrux, an object in which lived "a fragment of [Voldemort's] soul" (*Half-Blood* 416). However, in the magical world, possessing another soul via Horcrux takes time. When Harry wears a Horcrux in the form of a locket around

his neck fulltime for safekeeping, it takes days before the magic begins to affect him. Upon realizing physical closeness to the Horcrux affects mental condition, Harry, Ron, and Hermione take turns wearing the locket. Although Harry confirms that the Horcrux does not possess him while he wears it (*Hallows* 233), he does admit that every time he takes his turn to wear the locket, “the reward [is] twelve hours of increased fear and anxiety” (*Hallows* 237). This reflection shows that although Horcruxes interfere with normal mental functioning over a short period of time, actual soul possession takes much longer. In *Chamber of Secrets*, Tom Riddle does not take partial control of Ginny Weasley for several weeks, as the first time Harry hears the Basilisk’s voice occurs near the end of September (126). This period between late August when Ginny first receives the diary (66), and late September when she “[opens] the Chamber of Secrets” (327) is critical. During this time, Ginny Weasley obeys written words *without* the excuse of absolute soul possession. Upon discovering that the diary writes to Ginny, crucially, she *writes back*. At this point, Ginny is not possessed; rather, she is compelled to respond to written words. This exemplifies the instructive authority of written words. Instead of questioning the source, Ginny responds.²²

Her continual dialogue with the diary shows that Ginny, like Alice, is unable to disobey text. As a handwritten entity, the diary produces curiosity from its reader. Ong explains that “writing is always a kind of imitation talking, and in a diary [we] therefore [are] pretending that [we are] talking to [ourselves]” (101). The more naturalistic dialogue-esque form of the diary removes any lingering wariness for Ginny. This period, in which Tom Riddle “[grows] stronger and stronger on a diet of [Ginny’s] deepest fears” (327), indicates Ginny’s compliance. Her trust

²² This is a vast difference from young Severus Snape, who also *writes back* to an intraliterary text. However, Snape writes to a printed text, *Advanced Potion Making*. Snape, unlike Ginny, is not faced with the seductive and personable words of directly addressed handwriting.

in handwritten texts coupled with her inability to ignore written instruction demonstrate submission to a textual authority. When she writes back to Riddle, Ginny wholeheartedly complies with the prompt of instructional text,²³ which then allows Riddle to possess her soul. Like Alice, Ginny does not contemplate the consequences of obeying written words.

Not only are the intraliterary devices in *Harry Potter* instructional, they are also, frequently, extremely dangerous. Within the series, Freier notes that “Books . . . are often presented as nearly alive and as dangerous” (3), while Lisa Hopkins argues that books are “dynamic and transformative” (29) because they can affect physical change on bodies. Both scholars point to books within *Harry Potter* as potentially dangerous entities. Harry encounters dangerous books in his very first year. While sneaking into the restricted section of the library, Harry pulls a book from the shelf and “A piercing, blood-curdling shriek split the silence” (*Philosopher’s* 221). Although he does not know the contents or even the title of the black and silver book, Harry finds the scream emanating from the book so startling that he knocks over his lamp and flees. Indeed, Ron even warns Harry about books in *Chamber of Secrets* when Harry finds Riddle’s diary:

You’d be surprised . . . Some of the books the Ministry’s confiscated – Dad’s told me – there was one that burned your eyes out. And everyone who read *Sonnets of a Sorcerer* spoke in limericks for the rest of their lives. And some old witch in Bath had a book that you could *never stop reading!* You just had to wander around with your nose in it, trying to do everything one-handed. (244)

²³ This also serves as Ginny participating in a “speech act,” a concept developed by J.L. Austin, who recognized that speech not only presents information, but also can perform action. In this instance, Ginny’s locutionary response involves direct and immediate action. I want to thank Emily Murphy for this point.

In this extract, Ron introduces Harry to a Wizarding “book culture” (Teare 336) with which he is unfamiliar. In the Muggle world, books do not physically threaten, harm, or ensnare their readers. However, in the Wizarding World, much like Wonderland, intraliterary texts act upon their own accord and with their own agenda. These books are so unlike their relatively benign Muggle cousins that they force Harry to adapt. In the most literal way, Harry must learn to be an alert reader in order to survive this environment.

Harry receives another, albeit second-hand, warning at the end of *Chamber of Secrets*. While reprimanding his daughter, Ginny, Arthur Weasley reminds her to “Never trust anything that can think for itself *if you can't see where it keeps its brain*” (348). Books, especially overtly *thinking* books, are an inherent and ever-present threat to the Wizarding population. Even books that should be “safe” pose as threats to the students. In his third year, Harry receives *The Monster Book of Monsters* from Hagrid for his upcoming Care of Magical Creatures class. The book attacks Harry, “biting” his hand and even “[shuddering] angrily” when Harry attempts to wrangle it closed with his belt (*Prisoner* 15). Presumably, Harry could let his guard down around school textbooks, but this event shows that the institution accepts the threatening aspect of books as a natural part of Wizarding book culture. Rowling’s wizarding books are often even more nightmarish than the texts that force Alice into action in Wonderland. These texts, often unprovoked, intentionally attack, maim, and trick their readers. Like Alice, the characters in the Wizarding World must maintain a degree of wariness around words that might mean them harm.

The authoritative nature of these textbooks combined with ill will sometimes culminates into real harm to the characters. In Harry’s second year at Hogwarts, Riddle’s diary renders Ginny near death on the stone floors of the Chamber of Secrets. When Harry arrives, Riddle informs him that “there isn’t much life left in [Ginny]: she put too much into the diary”

(*Chamber* 330). This diary not only physically hurts Ginny, but also expresses a desire to kill her. Riddle reveals to Harry that “[Ginny’s] soul happened to be exactly what [he] wanted” (327). This diary’s entire purpose is to consume a soul. In this instance, a book imbued with magic premeditates murder in order to make itself stronger. The diary serves as perhaps the most extreme version of Arthur’s warning: thinking books are dangerous books.

Like Ginny, who is blamed for setting the Basilisk onto the students of Hogwarts, Harry finds himself entangled as an unwilling accessory to violence with his copy of *Advanced Potion Making*. In fact, when Ginny finds out about his textbook, she immediately raises alarm because of her past: “You’ve been taking orders from something someone wrote in a book, Harry?” (*Half-Blood* 161). Harry reassures Ginny that the two books are unrelated, but his experience with his textbook causes bodily harm twice. When Harry decides to try out one of the handwritten spells he finds in his textbook, *Levicorpus*, he accidentally causes a sleeping Ron to “[dangle] upside-down in midair, as though an invisible hook [has] hoisted him up by the ankle” (200). While Harry and Ron decide that the Half-Blood Prince intended the spell as a joke, Hermione recognizes a much more sinister motive: “Dangling people upside-down by the ankle? . . . Who puts their time and energy into making up spells like that?” (201). Behind the spell, Hermione concludes that the written text is inherently malicious. In this sense, the text does harm Ron, as the spells’ intention is to, at the least, humiliate, and at the most, totally incapacitate. When Harry finds the spell *Sectumsempra* in his textbook, the only description that accompanies it states: “For Enemies” (372). Without fully understanding its effects, Harry uses the spell to defend himself from Malfoy. However, the spell shocks Harry when it slashes at Malfoy’s flesh like “an invisible sword” (435). The curse’s effects leave Harry dumbfounded, but confirm Hermione’s suspicions that there *is* malicious intent involved with the marginalia. Even with the

multiple warnings regarding the dangers of books, Harry struggles to accept that a book with which he bonded can also inflict harm. Just as Alice consumes labeled food and drink without fully understanding the consequences, Harry trusts a text without acknowledging its possible ulterior motives. The way in which the *Harry Potter* series portrays intraliterary texts demonstrates that books possess textual agency which sometimes entails the ability to cause harm, much like the labels which incessantly stretch and shrink Alice's body.

This comparison between handwritten and printed intraliterary texts in *Alice* and *Harry* enriches the overall conversation regarding these works because I have shown that these works are much more complex when handling the intraliterary text and its readers. Like *Alice*, *Harry Potter*'s intraliterary texts act with agency. The *Alice* series presents the memorandum books as not only trustworthy, but also entirely truthful. In *Harry Potter*, Hermione's and Harry's relationships to *Hogwarts: A History* and *Advanced Potion Making*, respectively, take the idea of agential texts and extend it. These intraliterary texts demonstrate that there is a reader-response at work wherein readers like Harry and Ginny respond automatically like Alice to handwritten instruction. Not only are these texts assumed to be reliable, but they are also often prescriptive in that they demand action from their reader, demonstrating their textual agency. The insistent voices of "EAT ME" and "DRINK ME" echo in Riddle's diary and the Half-Blood Prince's *Advanced Potion Making*. These prescriptive texts force their reader into action, often without narratorial acknowledgement or explanation. Such an overwhelming presence often results in danger or harm to the reader or those around them. Alice finds herself under continual threat from the possibility of obeying texts that may hurt her. When she grows and shrinks, the written words push Alice to points of being "very uncomfortable" (*Adventures* 32). Alice lives perpetually at the mercy of the dictatorial texts around her. Like Alice, Harry finds himself in a

world where books are threatening. In the Wizarding World, books frequently scream, bite, maim, and ensnare their readers. Knowledge of dangerous books is so widespread that Harry receives several warnings regarding their deceptive behaviour. However, until Harry witnesses for himself the consequences of prescriptive books through Riddle's diary and his own *Advanced Potion Making*, he struggles to grasp the lurking threat that books pose. These intraliterary texts in *Alice* and *Harry Potter* indicate an overarching idea that written words contain the capacity to affect behavioural change because of their ability to possess textual agency.

Chapter Two: Status and Faux-Privacy in Letters and Letter-Writing

Letter-writing during the Victorian period was simultaneously an effective mode of communication and a marker of class. In *Posting It: The Victorian Revolution in Letter Writing*, Catherine Golden argues that the Victorians “considered penmanship a mark of good breeding and where the language and contents of a letter determined one’s character” (123). In the early nineteenth century, sending letters through the postal system was laborious and expensive. Not only were postage costs high, prepayment of postage was also “often considered an indirect social slur on the recipient,” and was therefore uncommon (Golden 43). However, in 1840, social reformer Rowland Hill’s successful campaign for the “penny post” stipulated that letters weighing less than one ounce would cost a single penny (Koehler 4). Hill’s revolutionary invention of the postage stamp allowed for the prepayment of letter delivery which resulted in a profitable and efficient Post Office system. These changes made it possible for the postage system to expand drastically, as more people could afford to send letters more frequently. With the new affordability of posting letters, the use of the British Post Office was no longer reserved exclusively for the elite – those who could afford to send letters.

As the output of letters increased, the Victorians established letter-writing as a mode of wider social participation, and it became a leisure activity of the middle class. Although epistolary practices remained a factor in class distinction post reform, the activity expanded to include the middle class. The proliferation of letter-writing manuals published during the latter half of the nineteenth century dictated proper writing methods and suggested appropriate responses. Along with letter-writing manuals, the use of envelopes evolved to depict external messages for the broader public to decipher. Nearing the end of the nineteenth century, the meaning of the letter expanded from that of a private correspondence between two parties to a

broader indication of one's relationships and overall status. The private letter quickly became a semi-public document that marked an individual's public standing.

Scholars have represented the typical Victorian middle-class experience through a gendered understanding of public and private spheres,²⁴ and for this demographic, the ideal of domesticity was inherently linked to privacy. To support this argument, historians often cite Coventry Patmore's 1854 poem, *The Angel in the House*, because it separates public from private life for nineteenth-century men and women. Carol Christ states that it is the "angel" or wife "who could create a sanctuary both from the anxieties of modern life and for those values no longer confirmed by religious faith or relevant to modern business" (148). Historians show that this female icon encompasses a Victorian idealization of domesticity, one that depended on ignorance. The phrase "angel in the house" became a common expression that refers to the model middle-class woman who knows little to nothing of the busy and often morally corrupt male-dominated public life. Instead, her moral superiority enables her to provide a virtuous haven for her husband and children. She is a restorative figure that men could worship as a being "free from . . . conflicting desires" (Christ 152). However, in order to sustain the lifestyle of "the angel in the house," the Victorian family requires certain economic means as well as this "angel's" lack of knowledge about the gritty reality of the outside world. Her family's status as members of the middle-class are ensured simply because her husband could afford her ignorance.

²⁴ See Joan Burstyn's *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood* and Karen Chase's *The Spectacle of Intimacy: A Public Life for the Victorian Family*.

However, recent scholarship questions the extent to which the ideal of public and private divisions were enacted. Martha Vicinus states that the “fluidity of the larger world of Victorian England, with the constant challenges of industrialization and urbanization, meant that women could not remain within a static role of domesticity” (x). Vicinus suggests that while middle-class Victorians may have outwardly projected an idealistic image of themselves, their reality was much more complicated. In expanding Vicinus’s critique, I apply Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity to reconsider Victorian ideologies of gender and privacy. Butler argues that “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (34). Butler’s argument that the “doing” of gender creates gender itself emphasizes the importance of public perception when applied to the Victorians. For the Victorian middle-class, that women *performed* as “the angel in the house” for the public sphere was much more important than their actual experience because the performance demonstrated their belonging to a certain class. In order to maintain their social status, Victorians needed to perform appropriate domesticity that the public could witness. This idea of a private performance for the public is one that is most evident in the practice of letter-writing.

Although letters are by convention private in both their content and form, Victorians treated them as public documents even though they contained confidential information. Karin Koehler argues that “the Victorian era gave rise to an augmented preoccupation with privacy, especially privacy of communication” (43). Koehler cites the popularization of envelopes, writing desks, and post boxes as evidence of a new obsession with personal privacy (43). However, I contend that the act of appearing to be concerned with privacy was, in fact, a mode of participation in a public performance. Envelopes, in particular, were designed to convey messages to those without access to the letter’s contents. Envelopes with black borders, for

example, brought news of the death of a loved one, while lace-trimmed envelopes contained messages of adoration and love (Golden 195). Even stamps, when placed in certain positions “conveyed a hidden message to the receiver, such as ‘I love you,’ ‘I think of you,’ ‘Yes,’ ‘No,’ or even ‘Goodbye, Sweetheart’” (Golden 105). Why, if the message contained within an envelope was confidential, would there be made such a spectacle of the exterior? I suggest that letter-writing in the nineteenth century was not only a mode of communication with friends and family, it was also a way of showing an individual’s ability to partake in the distinctly middle-class *performance* of privacy. These carefully adorned envelopes purposefully revealed the contents of the letters to the public. The common depiction of middle-class Victorians as a private people is both accurate and misleading. Karin Chase argues that “one of the leading features of the age . . . [is] the extent to which domestic life itself was impelled toward acts of exposure and display” (7). The envelopes, writing desks, stationary, and specialty stamps (such as those released by Lewis Carroll in 1890) suggests that the letter within the envelope might have been of secondary importance. The not-so-secret exterior messages of grief, affection, or friendship indicate that the target audience included but was *not* limited to the addressee. These letters were for all to see. If the public could not witness and confirm that an individual’s life was private, that individual could not, paradoxically, claim access to the leisurely activity of middle-class privacy.

The Victorian preoccupation with the creation of correct and appropriate letters indicates an obsession with the *process* of sending and receiving letters. In middle-class Victorian boarding schools such as Thomas Arnold’s Rugby School, boys were taught the art of letter writing (Stanley 117). Arnold himself would often use imaginary letters from important historical figures in his instruction at Rugby School in order to “awaken a new and real interest

in [the subject matter]" (Stanley 117). Arnold's use of imaginary letters from culturally important men implies that part of a man's success was, at the very least, correlated to his ability to write letters. That letter-writing was both taught and used as a tool of instruction shows that epistolary practice was valued by students and teachers as a skill in which one could, with practice, one day be proficient. For boys, letter-writing was seen as an asset enabling career-related success.

While letter-writing was an important skill for a Victorian boy's future profession, a Victorian girl was encouraged to explore letter-writing as a talent she could display in her social life. In her nineteenth-century prescriptive book, *The Daughters of England* (1842), author Sarah Stickney Ellis recommends letter-writing as an activity that is "highly advantageous to young women, who, on the termination of their scholastic exercises, require . . . some frequently recurring mental occupation, to render their education complete" (201). Ellis regards letter-writing as both a practical application of a woman's education and an act of preventing a decaying mind. Ellis emphasizes that she cannot overstate the importance of letter-writing in her text, especially for women. In this book geared towards young middle-class women, she remarks that "the art of writing a really good letter ranks unquestionably amongst the most valuable accomplishments of woman, and next to that of conversing well" (201). This statement implies a marked connection between letter-writing, education, gender, and class. Without an education, a young woman cannot write well, and without well-written letters, a young woman cannot participate appropriately within her social circles, for "the ranks of society are . . . thronged with individuals closely assimilated in their habits and ways of thinking" (Ellis 211). Ellis's emphasis on "proper" correspondence throughout her text instructs young women to maintain the established "habits and ways of thinking" of the middle class. Ellis defines her idea of "proper"

social conduct as “the *right* use of all of [an individual’s] knowledge and all [their] accomplishments” (13 emphasis added). Ellis stresses the overall expectation of utilizing skills appropriate to one’s class and sex, because enacting these skills is a sign of belonging. Ellis’ idea of “proper” social conduct applies equally to letter-writing, because epistolary practice is also a form of social behaviour. For the Victorians, letter-writing reflected both an individual’s current and future social standing. A schoolboy’s epistolary skills indicated that he might one day become a successful middle-class man, whereas a schoolgirl’s letter-writing talents showed off her expensive education in forms appropriate to her sex, such as conversation.

Along with childhood instruction, the sheer volume of published letter-writing manuals during this era, of which Golden insists there were “countless” (217), suggests that perfecting one’s letter-writing was a lifelong pursuit. These manuals are extraordinarily detailed and tediously specific. Victorian letter manuals consist of often hundreds of examples which encourage the reader to copy them directly or adapt for their own use. In his manual *The New and Complete Universal Letter-Writer* (1850), Thomas Cooke provides sample letters that are entirely concerned with proper form, politeness, and tone, and “carefully appropriated to the various occurrences of life” (“Preface” v). The specificity in subject matter of the letters ranges from love (“From a Young Gentleman to His Father, Pleading Excuse for Some Indiscretions into which He Had Fallen through the Passion of Love,” Cooke 66), to business (“From a Young Man Bred to the Sea, Requesting of a Relation a Small Sum of Money, to Enable Him to Proceed on a Voyage,” Cooke 49), to education (“From a Lady to Her Daughter at Boarding-School, Reprehending Her for Neglect of Writing,” Cooke 27). While these texts do act, in part, as literal manuals, they also serve as snippets of epistolary stories. On the copyright page of Cooke’s manual, he hints at this dual purpose: “Upwards of two hundred original, instructive, and

entertaining letters, which may serve as copies for inditing [sic] letters on the most useful and important subjects” (emphasis added). The sample letters, then, are not only instructive, but are also amusing. The Victorian fascination with the display of privacy manifests itself in these letters as a window into an (imaginary) individual’s private life. Indeed, Chase argues that “by the end of the 1850s, the fascination with family life watched itself in a mirror” (215). The *process* of writing letters is integral to the Victorian practice of taking pleasure in the observation (and self-observation) of performing private domestic tasks.

Lewis Carroll’s Letters

Lewis Carroll’s preoccupation with letters both alphabetic and epistolary reveals his understanding of the relationship between letter-writing, class, and education. In his edition of Carrollian letters, Morten Cohen estimates that the “prolific” author penned approximately two thousand letters a year (*Preface* 1:xvi).²⁵ These letters were not quick notes to friends or colleagues, they were extensively and meticulously thought out. In fact, when Carroll wrote to children (and even sometimes to adults) his letters appeared game-like; they included puns, riddles, and visual humour (Susina 51). These were elaborate letters in which Carroll invested much of his time. Jan Susina describes Carroll as “a man who was obsessed with the letters of the alphabet and the process of letter writing” (49). Carroll’s “obsession” hardly surprises most scholars, who attribute this “play” in both his letters and his published works to his extensive training as a logician and mathematician. Francis Huxley, for example, claims that Carroll enacts a “performance” in his writing, while “flirting with language, logic, mathematics, and

²⁵ Charles Lutwidge Dodgson adopted his pseudonym “Lewis Carroll” in 1855 when *The Train* published a set of his verses (Susina 12). From then on, Carroll alternated between signing his letters as “C.L. Dodgson” and “Lewis Carroll.” For the sake of clarity in this section, I will be using “Lewis Carroll.”

metaphysics at the same time” (12). Certainly, Carroll’s fictional writing involves these themes, but when explaining Carroll’s choice of letters as his favourite form (as indicated by the sheer number which he authored), most scholarly explanations are not entirely satisfactory.

However, Carroll once illuminated his literary preference with great clarity in a letter to actress and friend, Marion Terry. Carroll writes: “I’m beginning to think that the proper definition of ‘Man’ is an animal who writes letters” (Cohen 2:663). In this letter, Carroll reveals his personal belief in the rigidity of class hierarchies. Carroll was part of an era in which Western science attempted to distinguish not only between “man” and “beast,” but also between “man,” and “Man.”²⁶ Some Victorian thinkers distinguished between human races using “scientific” ideas, such as phrenology, to justify racial and class hierarchies. That Carroll distinguishes himself as a civilized man through letter-writing supports Golden’s assertion that good penmanship equalled “good breeding” (123). Although Cohen argues that Carroll “spent his life in the service of others . . . [and] letter writing itself was often for him another way of doing something for others” (*Preface* 1:xv), I argue that this construct of Carroll’s personality demonstrates, at the very least, a rose-tinted description of a man who was a product of a society consumed with class separation. Carroll lived in an era when, for the middle class, “the dream of impenetrable walls was the dream of an orderly society” (Chase 155). Of critical importance to the middle class was the ability to distinguish themselves from the lower classes. Regarding his overall outlook, Susina states that Carroll “was a bit of a snob who hungered after aristocracy” (110). Susina may believe that Carroll wanted to climb the proverbial ladder, but I contend that Carroll’s idea of letters and letter-writing show that he was more preoccupied with maintaining

²⁶ See Beddoe, John. *The Races of Britain*. Trübner & Co., 1862.; Hunt, James. “On the Negro’s Place in Nature.” *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London*, vol. 2 (1864): 15-56.; Huxley, Thomas. *Man’s Place in Nature*. D. Appleton & Co., 1863.; and Owen, Richard. “On the Characters, Principles of Division, and Primary Groups of the Class Mammalia.” *Proc Linnean Society: Zoology*, 1858.

class distinctions than with overcoming them. Lewis Carroll, like others of his class, illustrated these distinctions by writing letters that displayed their extensive educations and training in penmanship and etiquette.

Carroll clearly suggests a hierarchical attitude in his own 1890 letter-writing manual, *Eight or Nine Wise Words About Letter-Writing*. As indicated by his thorough instructions on format (“don’t fill *more* than a page and a half with apologies for not having written sooner!” 14), decorum (“make your winding-up *at least as friendly as his*; in fact, even if a shade *more* friendly, it will do no harm!” 21), and advice on maintaining a detailed letter registry (“a pleasant occupation for a rainy day, or at any time that you feel disinclined for more severe mental work” 35), Carroll intends this manual for a class who write letters not out of necessity, but for pleasure. Some of Carroll’s instructions comment satirically on the overcomplexity of letter-writing, but that only emphasizes that to Carroll, all of letter writing is pleasure, a pleasure which can only be afforded by people within the middle class or higher. Carroll may have been writing in service to “young girls whose friendship he so ardently cultivated,” as Cohen claims (“Preface” 1:xv), but his audience almost always remained within the strict boundaries of his class. Carroll’s letters show that writing for pleasure reaffirms one’s status as a member of that class. When Carroll defines Man as “an animal who writes letters,” he leaves out an implied adjective: Man is an animal who writes *proper* letters. Carroll’s definition suggests that those who cannot write “properly” are certainly less civilized (perhaps even less human) than those who participate in his favourite literary mode.

Metacommunicating Status through Letter-Writing in *Alice*

The aforementioned Victorian ideas connecting letters to status, education, and domesticity appear frequently within Carroll's work. For example, *Alice* often correlates letter-writing with social rank. In this series, the ability to handwrite well and participate in sending and receiving letters are signs of middle-class status. Often, these letters are so significant that they become metacommunicative objects. Whereas the intraliterary texts examined in my first chapter were ametafictional, here the letters have a metacommunicative function.

Metacommunication, or the "communication which takes place alongside a given act of communication . . . to supplement or enhance it" (*OED*) indicates that in addition to content, the letter also sends non-lexical cues denoting status. Metacommunication is evident through the deference given to that which is handwritten and through the circumstances surrounding the giving and receiving of the letter.

In *Alice's Adventures*, Alice observes the most obvious appearance of a letter when she is in the vicinity of a high-ranking member of Wonderland. While Alice watches from a distance, the Fish-Footman arrives at the Duchess' house to deliver an invitation to play croquet with the Queen of Hearts. In observing the pomp of the Fish-Footman and the Frog-Footman, Alice also witnesses the public act of sending and receiving letters. While Alice laughs at the absurd circumstance of the footmen bowing to each other and repeating and rephrasing the announcement of the arrival of an invitation, she is at the same time witnessing the public performance of privacy. The exaggerated exchange between the footmen occurs because of the letter, not because they are paying particular deference to each other. Carroll reinforces that the respectful behaviour is only associated with the letter when Alice approaches the Frog-Footman and he barely acknowledges her, "sitting on the ground near the door, [and] staring stupidly up

into the sky” (*Looking Glass* 50). The Frog-Footman does not employ a spectacle of welcoming to Alice, whom he has never met. Instead, his ritualistic behaviour emerges only when the letter does. The letter, then, is metacommunicative beyond its meaning as a physical object, as it also conveys social position of the sender and addressee. Because it signals social status, the appearance of this invitation has the ability to set into motion a series of behaviours.

Carroll establishes the letter as an object that signifies class, and also uses letters as a way of placing girls firmly within the bounds of domestic ideology. Near the beginning of *Alice’s Adventures*, Alice finds she has grown to a great height after eating a cake labelled “EAT ME.” Alice’s first concern is not how she will return to normal height, but how she will maintain proper communication with her feet. Alice imagines how she will address her feet on page 17:

Alice’s Right Foot, Esq.
Hearthrug,
near the Fender
(with Alice’s Love)

While this excerpt functions as a clever pun on “footnote” (*Susina* 51), Alice also reveals a primary concern of hers: etiquette. By composing a note to her feet, Alice shows that at her young age she possesses the skills to properly send a letter. Clara Mucci argues that Alice is “at the same time both a child and a little Victorian adult living in a time that was particularly rigid and appreciative of good manners” (118). Part of Alice’s portrayal as a mini-Victorian adult includes her ability to function as a member of the Victorian elite. Alice’s education and her ability to write appropriate letters is but one example of an ideal middle-class Victorian girl. Because of this social education, Alice adheres to conventions that keep her within a domestic sphere. As an “angel in the house in-training,” Alice attempts to outwardly portray a girl who makes socially appropriate decisions. Even if her “footnote” appears ludicrous or irrelevant to

her predicament, Alice's concern for maintaining contact demonstrates a girl concerned with the self-scrutiny of a publicly displayed domestic life. Although her worries may be misplaced and without consequence, Alice's childhood instruction compels her to prioritize social customs that reinforce her middle-class status over other, more pressing issues, such as the state of her physical body.

Class Exclusion through Improper Letters in *Alice*

While Carroll emphasizes schoolgirl middle-class status through *proper* letter-writing, the *improper* letters that appear within his texts mark the lower class. In his texts, Carroll shows that in order to participate in certain social circles successfully, an individual must demonstrate their ability to write letters. The Knave of Hearts' trial in *Alice's Adventures* demonstrates an improper letter. As evidence that the Knave stole the Queen's tarts, the White Rabbit, acting as court clerk, produces a letter. This chapter, in which the Knave is falsely accused, has conclusively been cited by scholars as a series of moments that serve as "peculiar parodies of the British legal procedure" (Siemann 433). However, scholars often overlook the importance of the letter as object. When the letter appears as "evidence" of the Knave's guilt, the White Rabbit acknowledges that "[he has not] opened it" preceding the trial (104). The White Rabbit's ignorance about the contents of the letter supports the parodic effect of this trial. Nonetheless, in this dialogue, the White Rabbit indicates that the letter is folded, concealing its contents. Carroll demonstrates a deviation from social customs when the White Rabbit pronounces that the letter "isn't directed at all" to an addressee (104).²⁷ Catherine Siemann explains that although

²⁷ This moment is also evocative of Charles Dickens' 1852 novel, *Bleak House*, not only in its portrayal of an ineffective judicial system, but also in its anxieties surrounding literacy. Tatiana Nunez argues that in this novel, "the material objects of literacy, such as papers and documents, often function as plot devices while simultaneously highlighting the divide between literate and illiterate characters" (277). I want to thank Emily Murphy for this point.

Wonderland and Looking-Glass country are *not* England incarnate, they “*are* governed according to British notions of rules and order, albeit British notions presented in a distorted manner” (434). Because the letter does not hint at its content on the outside via an addressee or metacommunicative cues such as coloured borders, this letter does not fit within expected conventions. When the White Rabbit opens the letter to reveal that it is neither in the prisoner’s handwriting nor signed by the prisoner himself, the King concludes that the Knave must be guilty, because if he were innocent, “[he would] have signed [his] name like an honest man” (105). Although the King’s comments are comedic, they also reveal this is yet another example of an unfulfilled custom. According to Victorian letter-writing conventions, everything about this letter is entirely inappropriate. The Knave, then, is not only accused of stealing the Queen’s tarts, he is also metacommunicatively accused of falsely parading as a member of the middle class, when “his” letter-writing skills are so clearly substandard.

While this incident portrays the Knave as on trial for his class membership, Alice’s response to the King’s conviction indicates a different contention. Alice’s main disagreement with the evidence is that the King “[does not] even know what [the letter’s] about!” (105). Alice’s discomfort is not with the potential of a falsely accused prisoner, but with a text inappropriately described as a letter. In fact, it is the categorization of the text as a letter that confuses the entire court. This “letter” has no external addressee, no hint at an embellished envelope, no proper signature, and no formulaic epistolary content. The White Rabbit verbalizes these issues when he correctly identifies the handwritten note as a letter that “isn’t a letter after all” (104). After the “letter,” which happens to be a set of verses, is read aloud, Alice confirms that she “[does not] believe there’s an atom of meaning in it” (106). The letter has no meaning not because the poem itself is void of significance, but because it is a poem and therefore lacks

both the metacommunicative impact of a letter and the communicative content and mode of the Victorian letter as a middle-class genre. The King's attempts to convince the court of the Knave's guilt and the Queen's condemnation amplify Alice's outrage until she finally proclaims that the King and Queen speak of nothing but "stuff and nonsense" (107). Alice denounces the trial of the Knave of Hearts as "nonsense" primarily because the evidence provided is incorrectly categorized as a letter. The chapter's title, "Alice's Evidence," implies that Alice herself gives testimony to the court. However, Alice's role is as bystander and not as witness, plaintiff, or defendant. Alice's evidence appears when she announces that the court is "nothing but a pack of cards" (108), thereby signalling her understanding of Wonderland as a dream. In this moment, Alice also notices that the court is, itself, composed of "paper" characters, a nod to her training in distinguishing proper from improper. When Alice notices the flimsy, two-dimensional paper-like quality of the characters surrounding her, a Butlerian understanding of the letters as constitutive and performative of the middle-class subject allows us to see Alice as fully "recognizing" Wonderland as fictional. Alice displays her "evidence" through her ability to determine the proper function and form of a letter, demonstrating her effective education as a member of the middle-class outside of Wonderland. Alice's prescriptive approach to the epistolary form forces her to reject the poem as a proper letter, thereby reaffirming the rigid definitions of genre and communication that accompany her class experiences.

Status Denotation and Letter-Writing in *Harry Potter*

Like Carroll, Rowling shows that letters in *Harry Potter* demonstrate class inclusion. Appropriately, the first letter in the *Harry Potter* series welcomes middle-class Harry into a world of letters and letter writing. Before leaving an infant Harry on the doorstep of his relatives,

Dumbledore “[takes] a letter out of his cloak . . . [and tucks] it inside Harry’s blankets”

(*Philosopher’s* 16). In this scene, Rowling implies that the entire explanation and instruction for Harry’s appearance and care resides within the contents of that letter. However, the Dursleys are an unwelcoming family to their wizarding relatives and refuse to “hold with such nonsense”

(*Philosopher’s* 1). Given that Dumbledore provides the explanation for Harry’s arrival and the Dursleys’ responsibility to him only through a letter, the Dursleys’ choice to care for Harry is surprising. Even Professor McGonagall, who supports Dumbledore so ardently, has difficulty digesting this idea: “Really, Dumbledore, you think you can explain all this in a letter?”

(*Philosopher’s* 14). Although Rowling never reveals the contents, the appearance of the letter along with the baby marks Harry’s status. The letter grants legitimacy to Harry as a worthwhile individual. With the life and wellbeing of a baby depending on the words written inside, the letter functions as a metacommunicative object. Despite their overt hostility towards their magical relatives and the Wizarding World, the Dursleys take on guardianship of Harry, further cementing the letter’s ability to act as a powerful persuasive force. This letter possesses the ability to change behaviour, indicating that the physical letter itself conveys status in addition to the content.

One of the more obvious associations between status and letters is the Hogwarts acceptance letter. Before Harry receives his letter, he lives on the margins of society. The Dursleys’ treatment of Harry physically and psychologically relegates him to the outskirts of their family; he sleeps under the stairs, is not invited to family celebrations, only wears his cousin Dudley’s oversized clothes, and often acts as housekeeper for the family. Not only do the Dursleys mistreat Harry, but he is also rejected by his peers. At school, Harry is “laughed at for his baggy clothes and Sellotaped glasses” (*Philosopher’s* 25-26). However, when Harry receives

his Hogwarts acceptance letter, he experiences his first taste of Wizarding superiority. The letter invites Harry into a prestigious world, inaccessible to the Dursleys:

HOGWARTS SCHOOL OF WITCHCRAFT AND WIZARDRY

Headmaster: Albus Dumbledore (Order of Merlin, First Class, Grand Sorc., Chf.
Warlock, Supreme Mugwump, International Confed. of Wizards)

Dear Mr. Potter,

We are pleased to inform you that you have a place at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Please find enclosed a list of all necessary books and equipment. Term begins on 1 September. We await your owl by no later than 31 July.

Yours Sincerely,

Minerva McGonagall

Deputy Headmistress

Before Harry even reads the contents of his letter, he is bombarded with the social status that comes with membership to the Wizarding World. Dumbledore's extensive list of credentials following his name gives Harry an insight into the possibilities attached to an education at Hogwarts. The formality of the letter accompanied by the titles of "Headmaster" and "Headmistress" implies that Harry is invited to an elite Victorian-esque boarding school. Professor McGonagall's confirmation that Harry has "a place at Hogwarts" further emphasizes the exclusivity that accompanies this letter. The experience of Harry's Aunt Petunia best highlights the selective membership that comes with the Hogwarts acceptance letter. Severus Snape's memories show that she writes to Dumbledore asking to be considered. Harry's mother, Lily, reveals Petunia's attempt to gain admission to the school: "You didn't think it was such a

freak's school when you wrote to the Headmaster and begged him to take you" (*Hallows* 546). Petunia, unlike her sister, does not receive the Hogwarts acceptance letter, which would give her access to this exclusive world. Importantly, Dumbledore rejects Petunia via a letter, sealing her fate as a decidedly non-member of the Wizarding community (*Hallows* 546-547). When Petunia is denied access to an acceptance letter, she is then also denied access to the social advantages that accompany it. The Hogwarts acceptance letter is perhaps the most recognizable form of epistolary metacommunication within the *Harry Potter* series because it literally invites Harry into a community with extremely limited access. This letter acts as a ticket into a secret world dominated by a select few. The Hogwarts acceptance letter occupies a metacommunicative space that signals superior social status.

Letters also denote status when they sometimes maintain and reinforce middle-class female domesticity. Ginny Weasley attempts to maintain herself within the middle-class idealization of Victorian girls through her letters. In the *Chamber of Secrets*, Ginny finds a diary and writes habitually to the memory of Lord Voldemort, whom she knows as Tom Riddle. In this unusual situation in which a diary "talks back," Ginny chooses to write in the form of letters. Considering the sheer number of letters exchanged between them over the school year, it is significant that Ginny maintains a tone appropriate to Victorian letter-writing. Riddle even recalls the year as "*boring*, having to listen to the silly little troubles of an eleven-year-old girl" (327). Although Riddle may find it boring, Ginny engages in gendered conversation suitable for her age and sex. Riddle may complain of her "pitiful worries and woes" (328), but according to the ideal gendered vision of "the angel in the house," a woman should not know the "gritty" details and corruptions of the outside world. Ginny's "pitiful" worries demonstrate her class-appropriate ignorance. Ginny is not yet a woman, but she certainly is practicing for that eventual

role. Even as Riddle begins to control her and Ginny grows increasingly concerned, her epistolary form never wavers. Riddle recalls Ginny's many diary entries during this period:

Dear Tom, I can't remember where I was on the night of Hallowe'en, but a cat was attacked and I've got paint all down my front. Dear Tom, Percy keeps telling me I'm pale and I'm not myself. I think he suspects me... There was another attack today and I don't know where I was. Tom, what am I going to do? I think I'm going mad... I think I'm the one attacking everyone, Tom! (328)

The repetition of "Dear Tom" reveals Ginny's training as a middle-class Victorian girl. Even when she is at her most distressed, Ginny still takes the time to properly address her letters. This shows her concern for projecting the gendered ideal of private letters. Despite the mounting evidence and lapses in memory, Ginny clings to her ignorance. When she thrice repeats the phrase "I think," Ginny leaves room for doubt. Although suspicious, Ginny remains inconclusive about her guilt. Because she does not directly confess to committing the acts, Ginny preserves her ignorance. This uncertainty enables the eleven-year-old to maintain her "angel-in-the-house-in-training" status. Finally, when Ginny attempts to dispose of the diary, she does so within a gendered domestic space – the girls' toilets (328). Ginny's letters reveal that her first concern is for the appropriate behaviour of her sex, and she attempts to maintain her epistolary conduct within a prescribed Victorian ideal. Even when there are more pressing issues at stake, Ginny maintains her status as a middle-class member through careful attention to epistolary form.

Middle-Class Exclusion through Improper Letters in *Harry Potter*

Like Carroll, Rowling shows that conventionally improper letters prevent appropriate middle-class social interaction. Rowling portrays the Gamekeeper and later Care of Magical

Creatures professor, Hagrid, as an oversized, parodic “gentle giant.” Hagrid’s lack of intelligence is often the basis for many instances of humour throughout the series. Hagrid, who was expelled from Hogwarts when he was only thirteen years old (*Chamber* 293), lacks both the appropriate social and intellectual education to participate in the middle-class social circles that Hogwarts boasts. Hagrid’s letters are often extremely short, grammatically incorrect, and immature both in quality and formality. For example, when Hagrid sends a letter to Dumbledore in *The Philosopher’s Stone*, it reads as follows:

DEAR MR DUMBLEDORE,
 GIVEN HARRY HIS LETTER.
 TAKING HIM TO BUY HIS THINGS TOMORROW.
 WEATHER’S HORRIBLE. HOPE YOU’RE WELL.
 HAGRID. (56)

Hagrid’s sentence fragments and terse structure indicate his position as an individual without the skills to participate and perform fully within the class-driven pseudo-Victorian social system of Hogwarts. The capitalization of his words emphasizes Hagrid’s brutish and abrupt style of communication. Hagrid even greets Dumbledore inappropriately, addressing him incorrectly as “Mr.” instead of his proper title, “Professor.” According to M’Balía Thomas, Alisa Russell, and Hannah Warren, Hagrid’s personal navigation of the class structure at Hogwarts “reflects the institutionally *unsanctioned* nature of his own educational experience” (4). Hagrid’s letters show that like his magical education, his social education is incomplete. Often, Hagrid’s handwriting is described as “hardly legible” (*Azkaban* 346) and an “untidy scrawl” (*Philosopher’s* 145), especially when showing emotional distress and “[his] enormous teardrops [smudge] the ink so badly in places that it [is] very difficult to read” (*Azkaban* 310). When Hagrid’s letters appear

illegible, they bewilder his addressees. Hagrid's letters break Carroll's "golden Rule [sic] . . . *Write legibly.*" (*Eight or Nine Wise Words* 12), further demonstrating the half-giant's inability to keep up with his socially superior correspondents. Hagrid's letters exclude him from fully participating in the prolific letter-writing society at Hogwarts and the larger wizarding community.

In contrast to Hagrid's letters, which are entirely informational, Sirius Black's letters convey not only a complete education, but also a sense of refinement. Like Hagrid, Sirius is a social outcast. Having been falsely accused of betraying his friends to Lord Voldemort and spending thirteen years in wizard prison, Sirius' appearances in the series involve laying low and avoiding arrest until his death in *Order of the Phoenix*. However, unlike Hagrid, Sirius has completed his education at Hogwarts. Sirius is also a descendent of "the noble and most ancient House of Black" (*Phoenix* 90). Sirius' letters to Harry are lengthy and detail-rich: "[the owl] was the best I could find and he did seem eager for the job" (*Azkaban* 459), and appropriately cordial: "My best to Ron and Hermione" (*Goblet* 190). The contrast between Hagrid's letters to Harry and Sirius' letters to Harry reveals a social chasm. Both men take up space on the outskirts of society. Hagrid lives in a hut "on the edge of the Forbidden Forest" (*Philosopher's* 149) and Sirius, at times, lives in "mountainside caves" around wizarding villages (*Goblet* 506). Yet, Hagrid's correspondence is often a source of comedy, whereas Sirius' letters bring advice and comfort. When Hagrid is too afraid to speak Voldemort's name, Harry suggests that he write it down, to which Hagrid replies: "Nah – can't spell it" (*Philosopher's* 59). Rowling finds this combined moment of humour and pathos in Hagrid's borderline illiteracy. In contrast, Sirius' words of warning and advice occupy Harry's mind long after he reads them (*Goblet* 191). The way in which Rowling treats the letters of Hagrid and Sirius are oppositional. Where one is

mocked, the other is given deference. Rowling distinguishes the characters' respective social classes through their letters. Although a social pariah, Sirius' noble birth and robust education allow him to slip unnoticed into the tone and form of the middle class, whereas Hagrid remains half-wizard and half-educated, relegating him and his letters truly to the outskirts of society, permanently marked as lower class. Hagrid's letters demonstrate that when inappropriate letters appear, social interaction stalls.

Even when Dumbledore appoints him as the Care of Magical Creatures instructor, students do not pay appropriate deference to Hagrid. The students continually question Hagrid's methods and subject matter. When Hagrid attempts to instruct the class on Blast-Ended Skrewts, even Hermione finds his teaching objectionable: "the best thing to do would be to stamp on the [Skrewts]" (*Goblet* 167). Regardless of his professional status, Hagrid cannot navigate appropriate social conventions, which prevents his entry into the middle class. The example of Sirius shows that although unwelcome in most social circles, his letters afford him a certain permanent acceptability that Hagrid will never attain. Sirius' navigation of the letter system in the Wizarding World demonstrates that the ability to perform this activity is part of the expectations of the middle class. Hagrid, having never received the correct instruction, cannot access this status, which is most evident when his students constantly undermine and reject him as an authority figure in Hogwarts.

For the Victorians, letters and letter-writing are intensely connected to the maintenance of class structure and domestic idealism. In *Alice* and *Harry Potter*, letters operate within the regulatory boundaries of Victorian domesticity and status. In these texts, letters function as public displays of private documents that depict class. The letters manifest a Victorian need to project an ideal society that encourages men and boys to exhibit their expensive education but

urges women and girls to maintain themselves within a domestic setting. Letters not only signify social status in a metacommunicative manner, but also demonstrate the middle-class value of participating appropriately within their social circles. Victorian educational institutions valued a strict social structure in which knowledge and social skills are differentiating factors between individuals. The careful production of letters was meant to display ideal private lives to the public. School instruction and letter-writing manuals encouraged youth of the middle class to employ letters as a direct reflection of their place in society. In both the *Alice* books and the *Harry Potter* series, Carroll and Rowling reinforce this idea of class as related to letter writing through the portrayal of “false” and inadequate letters that do not correspond appropriately with the prescribed and expected epistolary form. Individuals who cannot master proper letter-writing are judged in terms of their ability to perform within certain social circles. The pseudo-privacy of letters demonstrated both the middle-class value of domestic idealism and the affluence required to attain such a lifestyle. Carroll and Rowling use the metacommunicative status of letters to indicate social status. They also employ letters to demonstrate young Victorian girls attempting to perform appropriate domestic ideals, even if they are not always successful. Those, like Hagrid, who are unable to produce appropriate letters are relegated to the edges of society, becoming objects of comedy and spectacle. As Carroll claims, the Victorian middle class understand a proper person to be “a man . . . who writes letters.” Like the *Alice* books, the *Harry Potter* series adheres to this rule by portraying letters as metacommunicative vehicles denoting class and belonging. In these texts, letters and envelopes not only reveal glimpses into the contents, they also convey character, social class, and educational superiority.

Chapter Three: Manipulating the Letter-Reader

One of the more sinister ways in which letters function within the *Alice* books is as modes of physical and psychological control. In his texts, Carroll sets a standard for the association between letters and control. This relationship between letters and power manifests itself through the construction of the *Alice* series. While the *Alice* books contain few overt references to letter writing, the word games contained within them suggest that the books themselves are an extension of Carroll's favourite literary mode. Carroll first told the *Alice* stories to the daughter of the Dean of Christ Church, Alice Liddell, while he rowed with the Liddell daughters on the River Thames (Jones et al 9). Carroll's fascination with wordplay and letter-writing culminated in the sending and receiving of game-like letters to his many girl-child friends. Alice Liddell was but one of many children with whom Carroll engaged in wordplay, so much so that Jan Susina argues that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* "is an elaborately illustrated letter" (49). Importantly, Susina identifies that Carroll's "letter" is intended for the historical Alice Liddell, specifically in *Alice's Adventures Underground*, which was then transitioned into *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. It is my contention that Carroll is *not* writing to the historical Alice Liddell, but an imagined Alice, which will be further discussed below. The similarity in style and form of Carroll's letters to children and *Alice's Adventures* is no coincidence. In his introduction to the *Alice* books, Hugh Haughton argues that in Carroll's letters, "making a 'dear child' puzzled was a central thread . . . and clearly this is central to the Alice stories" (lvi). Carroll best reveals this attitude in his letter-writing manual, *Eight or Nine Wise Words* in which he refers to Edmund Hoyle's "golden rule, 'when in doubt, win the trick' [which is] admirable for Real [sic] life" (35). Carroll always "wins the trick" of writing letters by controlling the way in which the *Alice* books are read. That is, in his letters, Carroll wins the

“game” of letter-writing through the manipulation of his imagined child-reader, and in the *Alice* series, the author applies this technique to his imagined child reader.

Lewis Carroll and the Three Alices: Carroll’s Imagined Child-Reader

If the *Alice* books are indeed one long letter, Carroll’s narrator almost certainly writes to an already established idealized Victorian child. In his influential book, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture*, Thomas Kincaid argues that the ideal Victorian child “is not, in itself, anything. Any image, body or being we can hollow out, purify, exalt, abuse, and locate sneakily in a field of desire will do for us as a ‘child’” (5). Kincaid’s description is an extension of the well-established Victorian “Cult of the Child,” in which children, especially female children, were worshipped because they were figures onto which an ideal of innocence could be projected. Indeed, Kincaid explains that within this realm of thinking, “innocence was not only ‘protected’ but inculcated and enforced” (72). Perhaps more important than the child itself was the grown man’s relationship to the child. Adult men, especially writers, who subscribed to the Cult of the Child, revered the child not only as a pure soul but also as a Christ-like figure because merely by her innocent presence, she could soothe his troubles. In her work, *In the Shadow of the Dream Child: A New Understanding of Lewis Carroll*, Karoline Leach contends that Carroll takes part in the Victorian Cult of the Child because “to worship her was to worship purity; more importantly, perhaps, to be seen to worship her was to be seen to possess that all-important purity by association” (63), for she was “the cleanser of his grubby soul” (71). Identifying his reader as this innocent and naïve child moves her into a particular subject position. A child decidedly without her own agenda or foreknowledge lends herself to easy authorial manipulation. In order to more clearly identify Carroll’s imagined child-reader, I recognize three distinct Alice figures

in Carroll's life. The first is the historical Alice, the real girl with whom Carroll shared many experiences, but who also grew up, married, had children, and died in 1934. The second Alice is the character in Carroll's books, who finds herself in Wonderland conversing with mice, rabbits, and flowers. Importantly, this Alice reads too (as discussed in my first and second chapter). The third Alice is Carroll's imagined child-reader. She is his perfect Victorian dreamchild; she is innocent, ignorant, and willing to accept instruction. Complicating matters is the existence of two implied readers – both adult and child. The implied readers differ from the imagined child-reader because these readers, importantly, are the intended audience for the series, but *not* the intended recipient of the "letter." It is the third Alice that remains central to my argument: the girl to whom Carroll writes his "letter," the *Alice* books, to which I refer below as the *Alice* letter.

In order to write to his imagined child-reader, Carroll places himself squarely within the text. Because Carroll writes to an imagined child-reader, he is also necessarily the narrator. Although it is sometimes misguided to conflate author and narrator, Carroll's case is singular because of the way his letters work. Carroll plays games with his child-reader through his letters, necessitating a direct relationship between the writer and the reader. This is why it is my suggestion that Carroll and the narrator are one and the same. Carroll most clearly demonstrates this identification between author and narrator when he chooses a pseudonym for himself (Moktefi 15). Lewis Carroll the letter-writer is a separate entity from Charles Lutwidge Dodgson the Christ Church mathematics lecturer. A pseudonym allows Carroll to construct himself as a character within his own work, which in turn provides him with the flexibility to function as the narrator. Although scholars often reference Carroll's narrator, actual critique of the narrator is surprisingly sparse. In his study of Carroll's narrator, William Blackburn does not entertain a conflation between narrator and author (137). However, scholarship shows that Carroll *does* exist

in the text. Jan Susina, Carol Mavor, and John Skinner agree that Carroll places a self-portrait of himself as Charles Dodgson in the text via the Dodo character in *Alice's Adventures*.²⁸ Similarly, scholars such as Alexander Taylor and Hugh Haughton suggest that Carroll arrives incarnate as the White Knight in *Through the Looking Glass*. These characters demonstrate Carroll's tendency to place himself within the text as an important part of his narrative. Because scholars have established Carroll's existence (albeit in different forms) within his text, my argument simply expands this notion in order to apply it to the narrator. Of course, a pseudonym and the presence of Carroll/Dodgson avatars within the text do not demonstrate an auto-fictional narrative figure alone. These components are only evidence of a larger trend in Carroll's work to place himself within his texts.

When Carroll published *Alice's Adventures* and *Looking Glass*, he created a third and fourth reader: the implied child-reader and the implied adult-reader. Wayne Booth first identified the "implied reader" as a counterpart to the "implied author:" "the reader whom the implied author *writes to*" (423). Booth's work has since been utilized in order to establish a better understanding of constructing implied readers. Wolfgang Iser, for example, identifies that "the text provokes certain expectations which in turn we project onto the text in such a way that we reduce the polysemantic possibilities to a single interpretation" (*The Implied Reader* 285). In his *Alice* books, Carroll establishes two implied readers. The first, and perhaps most obvious, is the implied child-reader. This reader was created when Carroll published the books with the intention of public consumption. From paratextual evidence, Carroll's implied child-reader is clearly a well-educated, imaginative child.²⁹ Carroll addresses this reader in the epilogue poem

²⁸ These scholars agree that Carroll chose the Dodo as a representative figure because of the stutter he had throughout the majority of his life which meant that he sometimes introduced himself as "Charles Do-Dodgson."

²⁹ For this reader, gender is not necessarily implied.

of *Through the Looking Glass*, “A Boat, Beneath a Sunny Sky.” In this poem, Carroll identifies “Children yet, the tale to hear” (13). Here, Carroll imagines children consuming the *Alice* books. These children, who are “dreaming as the days go by” (17) are children of leisure. They have the time and attention needed in order to “lovingly . . . nestle near” (15) to a loved one while they are read *Alice*. These are firmly middle-class children.

Carroll’s second implied reader, the adult reader, is less obviously situated in the text. Carroll’s constant political allusions and contemporary commentary suggests that this reader is firstly, male, and secondly, a man who spends time in the public arena. I contend that this reader is male because of the many references to the male-dominated public life. In *Alice’s Adventures*, When Alice participates in a “caucus race” with various Wonderland creatures, Haughton identifies this as a moment of political mockery because “the idea of a ‘caucus race’ undermines the whole idea of a caucus as well as that of a race” (305n3). Carroll’s commentary on the contemporary political scene demonstrates that his implied reader is a man who would be quite familiar with and receptive to such ridicule. Similarly, when Alice meets a “paper man” in *Looking Glass*, Haughton identifies this man as Benjamin Disraeli, the nineteenth-century British Prime Minister who oft found himself featured in newspapers (336n6). These examples show that not only was Carroll writing for a child, but he was also writing for a well-educated man (perhaps the implied child’s father or professor), ostensibly with associations and interests in politics. Importantly, while Carroll’s texts clearly construct two implied readers, these are distinctly different from his imagined child-reader. While Carroll writes *for* his implied readers, he unmistakably writes *to* his imagined reader.

If the “third” Alice, Carroll’s imagined child-reader, is indeed the subject of Carroll’s authorial intent, many of his asides then address her, not the implied reader. While Kincaid

largely identifies “the child” as a genderless figure, Carroll’s imagined child is most certainly female. Carroll reveals his intended audience when his narrator engages metafictionally with his reader. When Alice imagines curtsying whilst falling through the air, the narrator asks the reader: “Do you think you could do it?” (*Alice’s Adventures* 11). This whimsical inquiry demonstrates not only Carroll’s constant engagement with child play and imagination, but it also reveals Carroll’s imagined reader, a child who either engages regularly or is encouraged to engage regularly in the female act of curtsying. While this example alone does not definitively suggest that Carroll’s imagined child-reader is a girl, he certainly solidifies this theory with the inclusion of paratexts. Of course, the epilogue poem of *Through the Looking Glass*, “A Boat, Beneath a Sunny Sky,” acrostically spells out ALICE PLEASANCE LIDDELL, which has intrigued many scholars regarding the nature of their relationship.³⁰ However, I contest that this poem indicates Carroll writes not to the Alice Liddell he knows personally, but to an Alice he creates. Revealingly, Carroll refers to Alice as a ghost-like figure: “Still she haunts me, phantomwise, / Alice moving under skies, / Never seen by waking eyes” (10-12). Here, Carroll remembers not the real Alice Liddell, but the Alice he has created, who only “comes alive” when he writes to her. Similarly, in the prefatory poem of *Through the Looking Glass*, “Child of the Pure Unclouded Brow,” Carroll addresses a romanticized idea of Alice Liddell, the girl with the “pure unclouded brow” (1), who is unsullied by worldly problems and whose “loving smile will surely hail / The love-gift of a fairy-tale” (5-6). The construction of this perfect, uncorrupted being provides Carroll with an easily controllable subject. The key to understanding Carroll’s ideal child-reader is that he preserves her through nostalgia, which he alludes to in lines 31-36:

³⁰ See Karoline Leach’s *In the Shadow of the Dream Child: A New Understanding of Lewis Carroll*; Robert Phillips’ *Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll’s Dreamchild as seen through the Critic’s Looking-Glasses, 1865-1971*; and Jan Susina’s *The Place of Lewis Carol in Children’s Literature*.

And though the shadow of a sigh
 May tremble through the story,
 For "happy summer days" gone by,
 And vanish'd summer glory--
 It shall not touch with breath of bale,
 The pleasure of our fairy-tale.

Memory empties her of any semblance of a real child with agency, which allows Carroll to govern this reader readily, thus moving her through the narrative of Wonderland as he sees fit. It is this imagined middle-class girl child-reader to whom Carroll writes and over whom he exercises control. The way in which the narrator manipulates the child-reader throughout the books shows that this “*Alice* letter” is overwhelmingly an exercise in omniscient power, meant to guide the child-reader, willingly or unwillingly, through the narrative.

Manipulating the Imagined Child Reader in *Alice*

Throughout his narration, Carroll consistently manipulates his imagined child-reader through the texts. However, as many scholars have suggested, Carroll’s content is not his only tool in manipulating his child-reader. Mou-Lan Wong postulates that Carroll also influences his reader through the physical layout of the *Alice* series, arguing that Carroll employs “the mechanics of the page as a medium for the interaction of text, reader, and illustration” (144). For example, in *Through the Looking Glass*, Tenniel’s illustrations show Alice on one page entering the looking glass, and on the next, exiting through the other side. Wong identifies this careful formatting as “the movement of Alice physically portrayed by the turning of the page” (143). Similarly, Iché’s examination of Carroll’s exacting publishing process shows that “nothing was left to chance, no detail overlooked by the meticulous author” (4). These scholars demonstrate

the extent of Carroll's obsession with the child-reader's experience of *Alice*. While Iché suggests certain elements of Carroll's interactive *Alice* series gives the child-reader agency (10-12), the narrator's unending, often disruptive commentary coupled with the physical components of his texts force the child-reader into a singular, pre-planned experience of Wonderland.

Carroll uses caution when expressing power over his child-reader in order to feign reader agency. Initially, the narrator denies his authorial power over the tale in his *Alice's Adventures* prefatory poem "All in the Golden Afternoon," when he describes himself as "one poor voice" (5) among three girls. Virginie Iché explains that in this poem, "the author's persona repeatedly denies his authority over the text and lays emphasis on his weakness . . . and limited role in the outcome of the tale" (2). In order to provide the reader with a false sense of agency, Carroll sets the narrator up as merely a teller of "the tale of Wonderland . . . / [after] its quaint events were hammered out" (30-33). Carroll's mock fatigue positions him as an impartial guide through Wonderland, allowing his child-reader to believe that she has some semblance of control over how she perceives the adventure. However, while Carroll is downplaying his own role in the crafting of the story, he repeatedly emphasizes the meekness of the girls' physical bodies while rowing the boat through pejorative phrases such as "with little skill," "little arms," and "little hands" (3,4,5). Iché argues that these descriptions "imply that the three passengers are too frail to influence the course of the boat/narrative" (2). In extending this argument, I suggest that although Carroll depicts the girls as weak, he certainly allows them to *believe* that they are steering the boat/narrative: "While little hands make vain pretence / Our wanderings to guide" (5-6). Carroll then, presents the boat ride as an experience in which the girls *think* they are in control, but they are most certainly not. This line is especially important when considering Carroll's imagined child-reader, because he continually positions the narrative as an experience

in which the reader is simply joining in on an adventure, rather than being led deliberately to specific conclusions. Although quite plainly presenting himself as a benign entity, this narrator possesses much more power than he ever acknowledges.

In fact, the narrator's countless clarifications and addendums within the text indicate a certain anxiety about the potential misinterpretation of the text. These interjections occur throughout all *Alice* books, encapsulated by parentheses. Within the first chapter alone of *Alice's Adventures*, eleven narratorial comments appear. While certainly a stylistic choice, this editorial-like voice constantly tells the reader how the *Alice* letter *should* be read. When Alice meets the Gryphon, the narrator interrupts the narrative in order to instruct the reader: "if you don't know what a Gryphon is, look at the picture" (*Alice Underground* 285). This moment reveals Carroll's preoccupation with the reception of his text. In order to gain the intended understanding, Carroll's reader must follow directions. When the narrator depicts the King of Hearts wearing a crown over his wig, the narrator then clarifies to the child reader: "look at the frontispiece if you want to see how he did it" (*Alice's Adventures* 95). For the child-reader, part of the "game" of Carroll's letter-writing is following his many directions. Similarly, when officers of the court suppress an insubordinate guinea pig, the narrator interjects: "As [suppress] is rather a hard word, I will just explain to you how it was done" (*Alice's Adventures* 99). Carroll constantly defines and educates the reader because along with her assumed innocence comes a degree of assumed ignorance. Carroll's imagined child-reader lacks knowledge of all kinds, allowing him to fill in these gaps himself as he sees fit. Iché observes that Carroll's child-reader "still has a great deal to learn" (7), which is why Carroll narration is not only entertaining, it is also didactic.

The narrator's constant guiding of the reader's journey through Wonderland focuses the reader's attention on certain aspects of the *Alice* letter, thereby providing Carroll space to address

his adult implied reader. For example, when Alice finds herself inexplicably on a train in *Through the Looking Glass* and the passengers appear to bully her whilst singing, Alice seems noticeably frustrated:

Alice thought to herself “Then there’s no use in speaking.” The voices didn’t join in *this* time, as she hadn’t spoken, but, to her great surprise, they all *thought* in chorus (I hope you understand what *thinking in chorus* means, for I must confess that *I* don’t), “Better say nothing at all! Language is worth a thousand pounds a word!” (146)

Hugh Haughton explains this odd scene by situating it within the contemporary public realm: “the world of politics and newspapers” (336n5). However, Carroll’s interjection clearly draws the imagined child-reader’s attention away from the situation and towards his own musings. The child-reader, then, avoids the need for contemplation of potential Carrollian social commentary. While the guard and the passengers seem consumed by the amount things cost (“his time is worth a thousand pounds a minute,” “the land there is worth a thousand pounds an inch,” “the smoke alone is worth a thousand pounds a puff” 146), Carroll’s child-reader does not need to dwell on such matters. Her ignorance necessarily means that she would not understand Carroll’s social commentary. This distraction allows Carroll to pass judgements on issues of journalism and newspapers without entangling his child-reader. Carroll diverts the child-reader in order to keep her whole and unspoiled by issues beyond her ken. However, simultaneously, Alice is able to engage in wordplay with the passengers, as she repeats their phrase using her own understanding (“Language is worth a thousand pounds a word!”) without fully appreciating the characters’ meaning. Carroll’s (mis)directions consistently lead the child-reader into an understanding of the text that fits into Carroll’s preoccupation with his idealized innocent child.

Carroll's instruments of manipulation are an expression of power over his letter recipient. This is a factor apparent in the letters of *Harry Potter*.

Surveillance Letters in *Harry Potter*

Where Carroll shows a preoccupation with metafictional control of his reader, Rowling mimics this behaviour through similar techniques. In *Harry Potter*, methods of manipulation and control through letters are more straightforward than in Carroll's works because Rowling's letter writer and recipient are usually identified. Rowling's books are not an "elaborately illustrated letter" to a child, nor is her narrator as entwined within the dynamics of letter-writing. The relationship between author, narrator, and reader(s) is much more stable. In fact, the only instance in which Rowling addresses her implied readers directly is in the dedication of *Deathly Hallows*: "and to you, if you have stuck with Harry until the very end." Unlike Carroll, Rowling demonstrates caution when separating the world of fantasy from reality. Within Rowling's series there are multiple writers and recipients. Instead of manipulating one entity (the child-reader), many of Rowling's characters experience the overwhelming authority of letters. One critical aspect of manipulative letters in Rowling's books that is absent in Carroll's is the idea of surveillance monitoring. Because *Harry Potter* contains so many more overt and detailed appearances of letters, it also allows for a consideration of the social contexts of letter production. The sheer number and integration of letter production in the Wizarding World allows Rowling to take Carroll's idea of controlling the letter's recipient and transforms it into a new extreme through the writer.

The wizarding community corresponds almost exclusively through letters handwritten with ink and quill, carried by impossibly accurate owls. Dumbledore's letters are often

disturbingly precise in their delivery, which suggests the unnerving surveillance that is perpetually at work in Harry's world. When Harry first receives his letter of acceptance to the school of witchcraft and wizardry, he finds it addressed to:

Mr. H. Potter

The Cupboard under the Stairs

4 Privet Drive

Little Whinging

Surrey (*Philosopher's* 36)

While the address certainly has a comedic, if slightly melancholic, tone to it, the eeriness of the address's precision cannot be overstated. Aaron Yu Kwan Chan argues that the letters Harry receives from the school reveal "that the fictional world of *Harry Potter* epitomises a surveillance society" (2). Indeed, as Vernon Dursley attempts to escape the onslaught of letters, his paranoia appears uncomfortably more than justified. The letters follow Harry as the Dursleys move him, addressing him at "The Smallest Bedroom, 4 Privet Drive" (41), "Room 17, Railview Hotel" (45), and finally, "The Floor, Hut-on-the-Rock, The Sea" (55). Similarly, when Dumbledore senses that Petunia may break her promise in *Order of the Phoenix*, within minutes she receives a letter addressed to "Petunia Dursley, The Kitchen" (217). These addresses that depict an individual's whereabouts in both time and space at any given moment are a particularly unsettling of the mechanism of magic because they immediately effect change in behaviour: Harry ultimately enrolls at Hogwarts and Petunia keeps her promise. Dumbledore's ability to track whomever he sees fit at all times has contributed to his reputation for being omniscient. In fact, Dumbledore's admirers often attribute this surveillance to one of his quirks: "Letters from school,' said Mr. Weasley... 'Dumbledore already knows you're here, Harry – doesn't miss a

trick, that man.” (Rowling *Chamber* 45). However, Dumbledore is not the only figure who maintains this level of wizarding surveillance. While Dumbledore appears as the most prominent figure employing omniscience to direct his letters, many other characters and institutions use this ability in order to manipulate, control, and effect behavioural changes.

Just as Dumbledore exhibits an incredible ability to observe his students, the Ministry of Magic demonstrates that it also has access to this technology. In *Chamber of Secrets*, Dobby the House Elf uses a Hover Charm in the Dursley household and within a matter of minutes, an owl appears through the open dining room window, bearing a letter from the Ministry addressed to Harry:

Dear Mr. Potter,

We have received intelligence that a Hover Charm was used at your place of residence this evening at twelve minutes past nine.

As you know, underage wizards are not permitted to perform spells outside school, and further spellwork on your part may lead to expulsion from said school (Decree for the Reasonable Restriction of Underage Sorcery, 1875, Paragraph C).

We would also ask you to remember that any magical activity which risks notice by members of the non-magical community (Muggles) is a serious offense, under section 13 of the International Confederation of Warlocks’ Statute of Secrecy.

Enjoy your holidays!

Yours sincerely,

Mafalda Hopkirk

Improper Use of Magic Office

Ministry of Magic

This letter reveals several particularly unnerving details about the extent of surveillance in this world. The Ministry is not only aware of the *exact* time that a spell is cast, but also *which* particular spell is used. Knowledge of this kind removes any semblance of privacy that Harry perhaps previously believed he possessed. However, this letter also reveals gaps in the Ministry's surveillance system. It is, after all, Dobby and not Harry who conjures the charm, indicating that a considerable blind spot exists within the Ministry. This is not the Ministry's only surveillance mistake. After running away from the Dursleys in his third year, Harry finds himself at a wizarding pub with the Minister for Magic, Cornelius Fudge, who recognizes this error: "Don't want to lose you again, do we?" (*Azkaban* 49). These two examples demonstrate the Ministry's anxiety surrounding a loss of control over its citizens. Regardless of its gaps, the Ministry clearly means to threaten and intimidate Harry in order to change his behaviour through letters. In fact, letters that cause an inordinate amount of stress and chaos prove to be the Ministry's most useful tactic in terms of maintaining desirable behaviour.

Before entering his fifth year at Hogwarts, Harry casts the Patronus Charm to protect himself and his cousin, Dudley from Dementors that they encounter near the Dursley house and within a matter of minutes Harry receives three letters that each cause immediate behavioural changes. The first letter, from the Ministry, declares that Harry's behaviour warrants both an expulsion from Hogwarts and the destruction of his wand (*Phoenix* 25). This letter is enough to send Harry into temporary shock, preventing him, at least momentarily, from conjuring any more magic: "Inside his head, all was icy and numb" (25). After the brief shock, Harry decides to leave the house and jinx Vernon Dursley upon his exit (26). However, while raising his wand to his uncle, he receives a letter from Arthur Weasley, detailing Dumbledore's arrival at the Ministry in order to plead Harry's case. This second letter causes an instant behavioural

transformation: “Right . . . I’ve changed my mind, I’m staying” (27). Harry then accepts yet another letter from Mafalda, arriving exactly twenty-two minutes after the first. This letter revises the original statements and declares that Harry “may retain [his] wand . . . [and] consider [himself] suspended from school pending further enquiries” (31). While Dumbledore’s words ultimately pacify the Ministry, the whiplash-inducing letters flying into the Dursley house produce an environment of chaos. At the third owl, Vernon’s frustration climaxes (“Enough – effing – *owls*” 30) and Harry lingers in a state of anxiety (“his fears [are] by no means banished” 31). These letters cause both mayhem and confusion among Harry and the Dursleys. The constant barrage of owls and quick changes of mind from both Harry and the Ministry indicates the power of letters to regulate Harry’s behaviour. Harry’s status as a student changes from enrolled to expelled to suspended within minutes. These swift changes imply that not only is Harry’s membership in the Wizarding World extremely fragile, but it is also always at risk of being arbitrarily taken away from him through letters. The Ministry’s use of letters to dismiss and then readmit Harry conveys his unstable student and wizarding status. Letters, it seems, have the power to force Harry into submission.

Howlers in *Harry Potter*

For Wizarding families, the presence of speaking letters called “Howlers” in the *Harry Potter* series puts private matters on public display for the wider Wizarding community, in an attempt to modify the Howler recipient’s behaviour. The first encounter with a Howler in the series occurs while Harry and Ron are sitting in the Great Hall at breakfast and Ron’s family owl delivers a bright red envelope (*Chamber* 91). As is customary for Victorians, the envelope denotes the contents of the letter (as I have discussed in Chapter One). The function of the

Howler is so universally understood in the Wizarding community that students prepare themselves before it opens, “looking at it as though they [expect] it to explode” (91). The shared meaning of the envelope indicates that the wizards, like the Victorians, produce private documents geared towards the observation of the public. When the Howler explodes in the voice of Mrs. Weasley, not one student in the Great Hall misses her words, which are “a hundred times louder than usual, [make] the plates and spoons rattle on the table, and [echo] deafeningly off the stone walls” (92). Mrs. Weasley unmistakably means for her condemnation to be witnessed by Ron’s schoolmates. The nature of Howlers to openly shame their addressee has led Roni Natov to describe them as “loud, public scoldings [sic] sent by parents to humiliate and ultimately to control children” which produces a “familiar sense of childhood shame” (321). While Natov ultimately reduces this phenomenon to an instance of shame coupled with “emphatic humour” (321), the peer-packed backdrop of the situation adds a layer of intentional public humiliation. Mrs. Weasley, having attended Hogwarts herself, is certainly aware that mail at the school is delivered daily over breakfast in the Great Hall, where students and teachers are present. Mrs. Weasley’s decision to send the Howler indicates that she intends to be seen scolding her son. This Howler demonstrates her need to show the public world that even if her son does not, Mrs. Weasley, certainly shares the behavioural expectations of the institution. This decision helps Mrs. Weasley in maintaining her own reputation as a “good parent.” Evidently, when it comes to effecting behavioural change, to be *seen* reprimanding a child is just as important as reprimanding the child at all.

Neville Longbottom also receives several Howlers during his time at Hogwarts, although curiously, Neville’s Howlers *are* the punishment, not the warning. When Ron receives his Howler, his mother threatens him: “IF YOU PUT ANOTHER TOE OUT OF LINE WE’LL

BRING YOU STRAIGHT BACK HOME” (*Chamber* 92). Mrs. Weasley’s threat to remove Ron from Hogwarts indicates that the magical school is a privilege for her children, not a right. However, Ron’s position as a wizard is entirely secure. He does not linger on the edges of the magical community as a Half-Blood, a Muggle-Born, or a Squib.³¹ Instead, the Weasleys are established Pure-Bloods, even if they are considered Blood-Traitors³² due to their affinity for Muggles. Because of their blood status, Molly Weasley may be able to remove Ron from Hogwarts, but she is unable to permanently expunge him from the wizarding community. Unlike Ron, Neville’s membership in the Wizarding World is always precarious because he is a wizard with poor magical abilities.³³ When he receives a Howler in his third year from his grandmother while in the company of his schoolmates, the public reminder of his failures is his worst form of punishment. In this instance, Neville brings shame to his family for allowing a potentially dangerous criminal to access the Gryffindor dormitory. As the owl post arrives over breakfast, the students “[recognize] the letter as a Howler at once” (*Azkaban* 289). Neville, wanting to avoid prying ears, “[seizes] the envelope, and holding it before him like a bomb, [sprints] out of the Hall” (289). However, Howlers demand to be heard upon delivery, and Neville cannot prevent the Howler from exploding into his grandmother’s voice, “magically magnified to a hundred times its usual volume” in the Entrance Hall and declaring the shame he has brought on the family (289). For Neville, this is the ultimate form of punishment because his grandmother

³¹ In *Chamber of Secrets*, Ron explains that “A Squib is someone who was born into a wizarding family but hasn’t got any magic powers” (154).

³² Harry’s godfather, Sirius Black, explains that the Pure-Blood wizarding families are few when showing Harry the Black family tree: “The pure-blood families are all interrelated . . . Molly and I are cousins by marriage and Arthur’s something like my second cousin once removed. But there’s no point looking for them on here – if ever a family was a bunch of blood traitors it’s the Weasleys” (*Phoenix* 155).

³³ Neville admits that even though he came from a wizarding family, they were doubtful of his abilities: “[they] thought I was a Muggle for ages . . . you should have seen their faces when I got in [to Hogwarts] – they thought I might not be magic enough to come, you see” (*Philosopher’s* 134). In many cases, Neville’s inabilities are mocked. For example, when Hagrid uses Neville as an example when discussing the arbitrariness of blood status: “Look at Neville Longbottom – he’s pure-blood and he can hardly stand a cauldron the right way up” (*Chamber* 121).

publicly reveals his wizarding deficiencies. This idea of publicly denouncing someone's character through a private medium is one which Koehler argues is reflective of Victorian life. Koehler states that often in Victorian literature, "private letters readily become instruments of public (though not necessarily official) exposure, control, and punishment" (44). Neville's experience with Howlers certainly falls under the latter, as his exposure as a wizarding failure could easily result in his expulsion from the wizarding community.

Although most prevalent among students, Howlers can also be addressed to adults, often producing similarly degradational effects. When Aunt Petunia receives a Howler for attempting to remove Harry from her home, Harry, familiar with the process of receiving Howlers, advises her to "get it over with, [because] it'll happen anyway" (*Phoenix* 37). When Aunt Petunia ignores Harry and the envelope bursts into flames, Dumbledore's "awful voice [fills] the kitchen" (37). Where Ron and Neville both experience their Howlers in front of their schoolmates, as noted above, Aunt Petunia receives one directly from the Headmaster in her home. Therefore, the purpose of these Howlers is not only for a parent to shame a child as Natov suggests but can also be used to publicly threaten adults. Ron and Neville are exposed in front of their schoolmates as a rule-breaker and deficient wizard, respectively so that their behaviour is exposed to their peers. However, Aunt Petunia's Howler arrives from the Hogwarts Headmaster, showing that his authoritative power extends beyond the walls of Hogwarts. In the Howler, Dumbledore alludes to a binding verbal contract Petunia made years ago, the details of which Rowling never makes clear. Regardless, Aunt Petunia's behaviour is kept in check through a reference that exposes a private matter to the rest of her family.³⁴ When he explains this incident,

³⁴ Perhaps compounding the severity of Dumbledore's methods of control, this moment also serves as an example of Foucault's theory of power at work, as presented in his 1975 work, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, in which he argues that controlling bodies through observance and record combined with the internalization of discipline creates "docile bodies" which can then be more easily manipulated and exploited by the institution.

Dumbledore admits to Harry that he possesses unusual control over Petunia: “I thought... that she might need reminding of the pact she had sealed by taking you” (*Phoenix* 770). Although Rowling does not divulge the details of the pact itself, exposing her as someone who breaks promises allows Dumbledore to manipulate Petunia’s choices according to his desires. These unavoidable, bursting letters demonstrate that Howlers are but one way in which thinly veiled threats and public condemnation control members (and outsiders) of the Wizarding community. The appearance of Howlers is an explicit attempt to regulate bodies by revealing wrongdoings to public groups, thereby humiliating the recipient into avoiding repeat behaviour.

Harry Potter’s Hate Mail

An interesting moment in which letters do not have the intended behavioural effect arises when characters receive hate mail. There are several explanations as to why hate mail in *Harry Potter* has more comedic effect than behavioural change, the most important of which is the identity of the writers. In *Goblet of Fire*, when journalist Rita Skeeter publishes a scathing piece on Harry and Hermione’s alleged relationship, Hermione soon finds herself on the receiving end of *Witch Weekly*’s most unforgiving readers. The letters include threats, insults to her character and blood status, and even attempts to physically disfigure her:

“Oh, how ridiculous –” She thrust the letter at Harry, who saw that it was not handwritten, but composed from pasted letters that seemed to have been cut out of the *Daily Prophet*.
YoU are a Wicked giRl. HaRRy PottEr desErves Better. gO Back wherE yoU CAME from mUggle.

“They’re all like it!” said Hermione desperately, opening one letter after another. “*“Harry Potter can do much better than the likes of you...” “You deserve to be boiled in frog-spawn...’ ouch!”*”

She had opened the last envelope. And yellowish green liquid smelling strongly of petrol gushed over her hands which began to erupt in large yellow boils. (456)

Hermione’s experience with hate mail reveals an odd aspect of letter writing: certain kinds of letter harassment and abuse are funny in the context of the Wizarding World. The child-like pasted letters, the reference to frog-spawn, and the gooey substance reminiscent of a practical joke all indicate that Rowling constructs a moment of humour in this scene. However, this also reveals a darker side of letter-writing in *Harry Potter*. It seems as though any witch or wizard can find a person’s whereabouts through letters. The only information about Hermione’s location revealed to the harassing readers of *Witch Weekly* is that she is a Hogwarts student. As long as the mail is addressed to her, Hermione receives the letters. This is troubling because although Rowling presents the boils that Hermione receives as comedic due to its temporality (Hermione is cured after a quick trip to the Hospital Wing), it begs the question as to what other kinds of danger mail poses. In fact, this very question is addressed when Ron reads another letter after he sends Hermione to Madame Pomfrey for boil treatment: “*I will be sending you a curse by next post as soon as I can find a big enough envelope*” (457). Why are these letters humorous and not behaviour-modifying akin to Howlers? The answer, I suggest, lies in the letter-writers. The readers of *Witch Weekly*, a local gossip magazine, cannot be taken seriously because Rowling reduces them to the likes of Harry Potter fan-girls (even though their gender is never disclosed). The motivation and recipient are also important gendered considerations for this incident. These threats are based on perceived romantic competition and are sent to a woman, whose reaction is

to disregard any actual danger.³⁵ The hate-writers' infantilized behaviour is reminiscent of mail-in fan club antics and so their threats pose more of a nuisance than actual harassment.

However, Hermione is not the only character to receive hate mail. When Rita Skeeter releases yet another article, this one entitled "Dumbledore's Giant Mistake," she reveals Hagrid to be part giant. Hagrid soon finds his hate mail just as unpleasant as Hermione's, informing him that he should be "put down" and that he should "jump in a lake" (*Goblet* 459). Rather than gender, it is race that motivates the hate mail. In this instance, Hagrid's mail has a much more damaging emotional effect than Hermione's; Hagrid quickly attempts to resign from his post as professor for Care of Magical Creatures (*Goblet* 383). This response is perhaps due to the article being published in the more reputable *Daily Prophet*, therefore giving its readers (later hate-mail-writers) more credence than *Witch Weekly*. Interestingly, Dumbledore provides Hagrid with reassurance not through his own kind words, but through, once again, letters:

I have shown you the letters from the countless parents who remember you from their own days here, telling me in no uncertain terms that, if I sacked you, they would have something to say about it (382)

The *Daily Prophet* readers who desire Hagrid to resign (or worse) do not have as much sway as those who write in support of Hagrid, indicated by Hagrid's decision to resume his position as professor. Once again, letters intended to modify behaviour are unsuccessful and again, the reason is due to the identity of the writers. The audience of the *Daily Prophet*, although in many ways superior to the readers of *Witch Weekly*, are still functioning through anonymity. That anonymity reduces their power to effect behavioural change through letter-writing because as I

³⁵ I want to thank Emily Murphy for this point.

have shown, letters from known sources such as Dumbledore, the Ministry, or parents, contain more social authority.

Like the *Alice* books, the *Harry Potter* series portrays letters as an entity with the capability of modifying behaviour, but underneath these letters lies an extreme world of surveillance and bodily control. In order to produce his desired reading of *Alice*, Carroll must guide his child-reader through the books with a firm hand. His tactics of manipulation force his child-reader to remain squarely within her allocated position of the ideal, innocent, and importantly, ignorant, girl. This particular reader allows Carroll to misdirect her, so that he may produce social commentary while she concentrates on other aspects of the text. Carroll leaves no part of his *Alice* letter up to chance, even concerning himself with the publication of his work. This is all done to ensure that Carroll “wins the trick” of letter writing, which is to say, he assumes the position of ultimate authority. He is successful in guiding his reader through Wonderland as he desires. The letters in the neo-Victorian Wizarding world also directly affect behavioural change. Surveillance letters police individuals, adding an unnerving layer of constant overhead scrutiny and omniscient power to the books. Although Howlers are certainly more direct in achieving changes in the recipient character, they act like an amplified version of Carroll’s directions to his child-reader by ultimately prompting her to participate in certain activities, like curtsying. Both of these series demonstrate an obsession with the function and form of writing, reading, and printing. They manipulate, control, and guide their diegetic and extradiegetic readers through the texts. These moments are where Rowling speaks to Carroll, where they are both “playing” at letter-writing.

Conclusion

My examination of *Alice* and *Harry Potter* shows that intraliterary texts function within and beyond the series. Chapter One establishes that intraliterary texts possess the ability to act with agency. This chapter also shows the differing degrees of trustworthiness depending on the textual medium. Chapter One shows how prescriptive texts force their readers into action and prove to be an overwhelming presence which can result in danger or harm to the reader or those around them. Building on this idea of intraliterary texts as important entities within the two series, in Chapter Two I argue that letters socioeconomically define their authors. I demonstrate how letters in both series function as gatekeepers to their strict hierarchical worlds. Finally, in Chapter Three, I argue that intraliterary texts are not only agential, they also modify their readers' behaviour. These texts manipulate and guide all of their readers (both diegetic and extradiegetic) as intended.

Although this project started as an investigation into the degree of neo-Victorianism of *Harry Potter*, I believe that my investigation into the texts has grown beyond a comparison of genre and regeneration. My study shows that the cognition of, communication through, information from, and relationship to the printed and handwritten text speaks to the authority, power, and class distinctions at work in each society. Beyond this consideration, I show that intraliterary texts demonstrate an obsession with fiction and an obsession with the book and writing in all of its forms. My thesis establishes that metafiction drives these series because this fixation overpowers the narratives, overtakes characters, changes plot, and steers story. Although Rowling does not "talk" to her readers as directly as Carroll does, the intraliterary texts in her books demonstrate an acute awareness and playfulness with all things reading, writing, and printing. In Rowling's series, handwriting is a pure expression of productivity. The prolific

letters and texts in *Harry Potter* carry a sense of nostalgia with them, imbued personally if not purposefully by Rowling. This feeling is one of reaching back, a preservation of selfhood that has since gone. These moments are where Rowling and Carroll are speaking to each other, or at least speaking into the same spatiotemporal area.

One benefit that my study of intraliterary texts provides is an uncovering and recognition of many issues yet to be acknowledged in Rowling's work. Specifically, the idea of magic as technology is an idea yet to be fully examined. Although there certainly are researchers who have recently regarded magic in *Harry Potter* as technology,³⁶ a thorough dissection of its innerworkings is still a relatively new and unexplored endeavour. Through my research on letters in the series, it quickly became evident that the technology of magic is messy and unclear. For example, when I examined the letter sent to Harry from the Ministry in *Chamber of Secrets*, I found technological inconsistencies that I could not explain. When at the Dursley home over the summer in *Chamber of Secrets*, Harry is mistakenly blamed for a Hover Charm cast by Dobby the House Elf. The Ministry might be responding to an intersection of a set of data points, such as time, place, spell, and proximity to a wizard in order to connect this charm to Harry, an underage wizard who should not be conducting magic outside of school. How and when the Ministry chooses to respond to this data is unclear, but the response is indicative of a system at work. This theory about technology is worth pursuing as an object of study because it will uncloud the ambiguities surrounding magical operations in the Wizarding World.³⁷

Although I have spotlighted the culture of letter-writing and receiving in *Harry Potter*, I believe that there is a great need to further investigate the technology of letters. For example, in

³⁶ See Luigina Ciolfi's "Magic as Technological Utopia?" and Maryann Nguyen's "Flirting with Posthuman Technologies in Harry Potter."

³⁷ I want to thank Emily Murphy for this point.

Chapter Two, I briefly gesture to the uncanny ability of owls to find their recipient without fail. However, I was unable in this space to address the complexities of this aspect of mail. How is it that in *Goblet of Fire*, Harry's owl, Hedwig, is able to continually locate Sirius Black and deliver him letters when highly skilled wizard catchers (Aurors) are unable? Although perhaps an oversight on Rowling's part, it suggests to me that there is an inability to track the owls themselves. In *Chamber of Secrets*, the Gryffindor Ghost, Nearly Headless Nick indicates that ghosts communicate via letter. Nick tells Harry that he was rejected from joining the Headless Hunt (an event organized by other ghosts) through the medium of "a transparent letter" (129). Not only does this beg questions about the materiality of letters, it also provokes a conversation about the nature and abilities of ghosts in *Harry Potter*. There is still much to be said and examined about the exact technology of letters at work in this series, which I believe is enriched by my study of letters as a cultural medium.

A step forward from my research in the future will be the study of instruction, spells, and incantations in *Harry Potter*. Spells are informatic because they involve the practice of information processing and act as an interface for magic. In fact, even textbooks are performative in this way because they convey printed spells which are then transformed into incantation.³⁸ From my research, I understand that handwriting has an important relationship to voice, as is evident in Tom Riddle's diaries. However, incantations are literally enacted print, and in order to enact that print correctly there is an exact way to speak them, as evidenced by Hermione's refrain "It's Wing-gar-dium Levi-o-sa" (*Philosopher's Stone* 184). In fact, spells are so sensitive to pronunciation and enunciation that Professor Flitwick warns his students: "never forget Wizard Baruffio, who said 's' instead of 'f' and found himself on the floor with a buffalo on his chest"

³⁸ I want to thank Marie Loughlin for this point.

(*Philosopher's Stone* 184). Therefore, voice is associated with the authority of self-presence, and it gains that authority when it is modeled correctly. Not only are they associated with voice, spells are also often coupled with particular movements (as Professor Flitwick reminds us, “swish and flick!” 184). The series also presents the possibility of creating new spells. In Chapter Two, I briefly signal that when he was a student at Hogwarts, Snape, as the Half-Blood Prince, creates the spells *Sectumsempra* and *Levicorpus* in his copy of the assigned textbook, *Advanced Potion Making*. Crucially, Snape *writes the spells down*, which incites me to question whether writing (or printing) is a necessary step in spell-making. All of these factors compounded demonstrate that casting spells is a much more complex set of behaviours in combination with the understanding that spells function in some sort of relation to printed or handwritten text.

Beyond the reading and writing of *Harry Potter*, an important aspect of the series that this thesis has brought to the surface is the issue of surveillance in the Wizarding World. In Chapter Three, I address the uncanny surveillance of both Dumbledore and the Ministry of Magic as it relates to letters. Although I was unable to fully address this idea in its totality, this is an important part of Rowling's work that deserves critical attention. Some scholars like Aaron Chan have focused on this aspect of *Harry* primarily as a balancing act of power. However, in addition to Chan's dissection, I suggest that there is a digital component to Rowling's Wizarding World. This entire series constructs magical knowledge as a superhighway of ideas and agency, akin to the internet. *The Philosopher's Stone* was published in 1997, at the precipice of a newly internet-embedded culture. This new way of communicating enabled governments to become massive data-gathering surveillance institutions, as Julia Angwin argues in *Dragnet Nation*. It is possible that Rowling's magic is actually a comment on this new society of internet, speed, and

extreme surveillance in the age of the internet. This topic is one worthy of further academic attention.³⁹

My work also shows that Lewis Carroll still has much to offer current scholarship both in terms of how his work allows us to read contemporary literature and in terms of work yet to be done on *Alice*. Most importantly, more investigation into the nature and function of the narrator in *Alice* is still required. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, scholarship on the *Alice* narrator remains an area of uncertainty. Although I have offered one reading of the narrator (as Carroll's own personality), there is certainly room to enrich, expand upon, and understand this important figure.

The transformative power of magic is terrifying. In *Harry Potter*, a degree of respect is required to work with magic, for it has sometimes irreversible and unintended effects. This is true, too, of the transformative power of reading. The readers in these books and indeed the extradiegetic readers in this world cannot unread a text. Alice learns this lesson as she reads her way through Wonderland, emphasizing, perhaps, how much readers cannot take out of their heads. In this way, metafiction is unintentionally and intentionally the focus and obsession of Rowling and Carroll. In these series, these authors engage with and reflect on a permanent nostalgic renaissance of the process of reading, writing, and printing.

³⁹ I want to thank Emily Murphy for this point.

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