

REWRITING ALICE: VICTORIAN WOMEN'S RESPONSES TO LEWIS

CARROLL'S *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND*

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ELIZABETH MURRAY

Dr. JOYCE HUFF

BALL STATE UNIVERSITY

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Rewriting Alice: Victorian Women's Responses to Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Within a few years of Lewis Carroll's publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), other authors tried to replicate aspects of the *Alice* books. In fact, Carroll states that he even started a collection of "'books of the Alice type'" (quoted in Sigler "Authorizing" 351). According to Carolyn Sigler and Sanjay Sircar, between 150 and 200 texts were written imitating, responding to, and/or parodying Carroll's *Alice* (xi and 45). Furthermore, many of the 150 to 200 imitations were written by Victorian women, some of whom were well-known authors. Also during this period, what Anna Krugovoy Silver now calls a "culture of anorexia" was developing in Britain (27). Femininity was closely aligned with anorexia since "proper" women were supposed to exhibit behaviors, including food restriction, which were signs of anorexia. Furthermore, anorexia and its denial of hunger were related to the purity and asexuality of Victorian women. The anorexic became the image of the ideal Victorian woman. This paper will explore *Alice* imitations written by three female authors: Jean Ingelow's *Mopsa the Fairy* (1869), Juliana Horatia Ewing's "Amelia and the Dwarfs" (1870), and Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* (1874). I argue that *Alice* exhibits several features of a culture of anorexia, and in their responses to Carroll, particularly through depictions of eating and growth, Ingelow, Ewing, and Rossetti sometimes uphold and sometimes challenge this Victorian culture of anorexia. All three critique the preference for the childlike female body, which is clearly present in *Alice*, while they present a range of responses to food restriction and controlling the appetite.

For Carroll, the proper Victorian woman is the little girl who is better able to control her hunger than the adult woman. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice functions as an ideal woman because she fits within the Victorian culture of anorexia where both the appetite and body must be strictly controlled. Furthermore, the only hope for adult women, in Carroll's view, is to hold onto their childhood even into maturity. On the other hand, Ingelow, Ewing, and Rossetti, all challenge Carroll's privileging of the girl over the adult woman. For Rossetti, it is the adult woman who is the closest to achieving the self-control and denial of hunger needed to become a proper Victorian woman, and little girls must quickly learn to emulate their older role models. In other words, while Rossetti does not challenge the self-control inherent in the Victorian culture of anorexia, she does suggest that little girls are much farther from this ideal than Carroll depicts. Ingelow and Ewing present a more direct critique of both Carroll and the Victorian culture of anorexia. In contrast to Carroll's grotesque Queen in *Alice*, Ingelow's story of one girl's rapid growth into her role as an adult queen suggests that female growth is not to be controlled or restricted in order to keep the body childlike, but instead growth should be embraced due to the additional power and wisdom it brings. Finally, Ewing connects adult femininity and sexuality to both power and the ability to manipulate men. Maturation and the discovery of sexuality both become useful and positive developments in Ewing's text.

All of the works under examination in this essay were written between 1865 and 1874, a period during which anorexia nervosa came to prominence. In *Fasting Girls: The History of Anorexia Nervosa*, Joan Jacobs Brumberg notes that anorexia was "named and identified in the 1870s" (6). Furthermore, during this period eating and body size became

common preoccupations for young women. According to Brumberg, “[i]n Victorian society food and femininity were linked in such a way as to promote restrictive eating among privileged adolescent women” (174). For Victorian women, eating correctly was connected to norms for both the body and behavior. Eating incorrectly or excessively “was connected to gluttony and to physical ugliness,” while eating abstemiously and having a thin body demonstrated a woman’s “asexuality and . . . was also an expression of intelligence, sensitivity, and morality” (Brumberg 184 and 176). A woman could demonstrate her respectability and status through carefully regulating her eating and maintaining a thin body. A woman’s control of her hunger became crucial since “[d]elicate appetites [were] linked not only with femininity, but with virginity” (Michie 16). Significantly, then, eating and hunger were connected to expressions of sexuality. For women, eating was tied to Eve and the Fall since “[m]etaphors of food and hunger—always, of course, related to the larger metaphor of the Fall” (26-7). Consequently, in Victorian culture expressing hunger could be dangerous in and of itself because female hunger was associated with both the Fall and “unspeakable desires for sexuality and power” (Michie 13).

Similarly, Anna Krugovoy Silver in *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body* traces the origins of anorexia nervosa to the Victorian period. Silver argues that Victorian England had a “culture of anorexia” (19). For Silver, the “culture of anorexia” refers to the ways in which “the culture *itself* manifested an anorexic logic; in other words, that several of its gender ideologies meshed closely with the etiology of anorexia nervosa” (27). Silver suggests that Victorian women who tried to conform to “the model of the passionless or self-regulated Victorian woman” are on a continuum of anorexia

nervosa that encompasses all women's food restriction, ranging from women who have full blown cases of anorexia to women "who restrict their food intake in order to conform to feminine standards of slimness and to demonstrate their spiritual rather than carnal natures, thereby exhibit[ing] a milder form of the repression of appetite that constitutes anorexia nervosa" (11). In other words, anorexia nervosa is indicative of Victorian culture as a whole and is not just an isolated disease.

Silver also discusses the relationship between the Victorian "culture of anorexia" and children's literature. According to Silver, works of Victorian children's literature "often underpin a culture of anorexia, in which control over the body and its desires are enacted through the control of food intake" (52). Children's literature, particularly the literature written specifically for girls, is of interest because it often "praises girls for denying their appetites and limiting their consumption of food, often connecting that denial to femininity (Silver 52). Furthermore, these children's texts link both eating and body size to morality: "[t]he Victorian culture of anorexia is already apparent in children's literature that associates eating, especially for girls, with traits such as greed, lust, and aggression" (Silver 54). Eating for both adult women and young girls was linked to both physical characteristics and personal morality.

While I will be using Silver to examine the ways in which these works respond to or critique the Victorian culture of anorexia, I also want to expand on Silver's definition of this culture. Silver identifies five features of the Victorian culture of anorexia:

1. an aesthetic validation of the slender female form as the physical ideal of beauty and a concomitant fear of fat as ugly and/or unfeminine;

2. an understanding of the body as an entity that must be subordinated to the will and disciplined as an emblem of one's self control;
3. the related, gendered, belief that the perfect woman is the one who submits her physical appetites (including, but not limited to, her hunger for food and, relatedly her sexuality) to her will, and that the "good" woman is either by nature or by training more spiritual and less carnal than men;
4. the belief that the slender body corporealizes this self-mastery and/or spirituality;
5. the belief that slenderness carries particular class connotations, and most often is a sign of a woman's affluence. This last point, of course, draws an important distinction between the woman who chooses not to eat, and the woman who cannot eat because of sickness or poverty (Silver 27).

I believe that Silver has left out an important characteristic of the Victorian culture of anorexia: an obsession with childhood and the childlike body. A fear of maturation and of developing an adult body is an accepted aspect of anorexia. Brumberg notes that Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet were the first of many researchers to suggest that "anorexic girls refused food in order to keep their bodies small, thin, and childlike, thereby retarding normal sexual development and forestalling adult sexuality" (216). Anorexia nervosa then becomes a way for a woman to attempt to ensure that "her body remains childlike," asexual, and therefore desirable in a culture that values the childlike body over the adult (30). I suggest that the Victorian culture of anorexia is also characterized by a marked preference for girls over women. The desire to deny and suppress female sexuality is part of the construction of women as innocent and angelic.

The Victorian angel in the house was supposed to be pure, spiritual, dependent, and submissive even in adulthood. In a culture with these values, the pure and asexual child then becomes the epitome of the ideal woman, and this Victorian idealization of childhood innocence and girlhood is another feature of the culture of anorexia. All of the texts under examination in this paper address both the Victorian culture of anorexia as defined by Silver as well as the propensity of Victorian culture to idealize girlhood and the childlike body.

“I Hope I sha’n’t Grow any More”

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland continually refers to eating and growth. Alice frequently manipulates her body size through eating, and after some experimentation, she learns to control the growth of her body by carefully regulating her consumption. This management of the body through eating aligns the text with features two and three of Silver’s Victorian culture of anorexia. Likewise, the novel clearly exhibits a preference for the young, childlike body. The novel illustrates and upholds the Victorian culture of anorexia by suggesting that only the young girl has the ability to deny her hunger and control her appetite. The adult woman must either hold on to her childhood, and childhood innocence, or become an out of control and aggressive figure.

Throughout the novel, Alice’s eating is “subordinated to the will and disciplined as an emblem of [her] self control” (Silver 27). While Alice does eat in the novel, it is never connected to her hunger or appetite. Instead, Alice eats in order to maintain control over or to manipulate her body. For instance, Alice does not consume the cake with the words “EAT ME” written in currants because she is hungry, but because she wants to alter her size: “if it makes me grow larger, I can reach the key; and if it makes me grow

smaller, I can creep under the door: so either way I'll get into the garden, and I don't care which happens'" (18). Eating then is tied entirely to bodily changes instead of being tied to hunger. In fact, the only time Alice expresses hunger in the novel is during the trial scene when the plate of tarts "made Alice quiet hungry to look at them," and it is the appetizing appearance of the tarts that elicits this expression of hunger (110).

Significantly, Alice's expression of hunger only occurs after glimpsing the tarts, and her desire for the tarts is not connected to physical hunger but gratifying the palate. Food is not eaten to fulfill a desire or need for it, but in order to control and normalize the body. This notion of food as distanced from hunger, desire, or need can also be seen with the Mad Hatter's perpetual tea party. Tea does not continue because the Hatter, March Hare, or Dormouse are hungry or thirsty but simply because it is the time for tea. As with Alice, the connection between food and hunger is disrupted, and food is instead connected to external circumstances. Food then in the text is distanced from hunger and connected back to making the body conform to various norms for body size.

Since food is not connected to hunger but to controlling body size, Alice must learn to regulate her size through regulated consumption. When Alice first begins to manipulate her size through consumption, her body goes from one extreme to the other. She "open[s] out like the largest telescope that ever was," grows so large she cannot leave the White Rabbit's house, and grows above the treetops where she is mistaken for a serpent (20, 39, 54). Likewise, when she wants to reduce her size, she "[shuts] up like a telescope" and becomes so small that her head strikes her feet (17, 53). Not only is Alice unable to regulate her size when she first arrives in Wonderland, but she is also unable to regulate her consumption. For instance, Alice regrets her over consumption after it

results in excessive growth. After she has grown so large that she cannot leave the White Rabbit's house, Alice regrets consuming too much: “[t]hat’s quite enough—I hope I sha’n’t grow any more—As it is, I ca’n’t get out at the door—I do wish I hadn’t drunk quite so much!” (39). In addition to regulating the amount she consumes, Alice also begins to regulate what she consumes. After encountering the huge puppy, Alice notes that “she could not see anything that looked like the right thing to eat or drink under the circumstances” (46). As Alice experiments with various foods and beverages in Wonderland, she learns that she must eat the right things in the right amounts, or her body will shrink away or grow to monstrous proportions.

After encountering the Caterpillar, Alice quickly learns to regulate her size by consuming the right things, sides of the mushroom, in the right amounts. Through experimentation, Alice learns how to eat properly in order to make her body either smaller or larger depending on the dimensions of the environment she encounters. This new ability to control her changing size is linked to her ability to carefully control her consumption. In fact, the terms used to describe Alice’s consumption change once she learns how to regulate her consumption. Alice “finished off” both the potion labeled “DRINK ME” and the entire cake. However, after she meets the Caterpillar, she always “nibbles” her food. When she wants to become smaller after her encounter with the Pigeon, Alice “set to work very carefully, nibbling first at one and then at the other” side of the mushroom (56). Likewise “she began nibbling at the right-hand bit” of the mushroom when she wanted to be the right size to visit the Duchess’s house (56). When she sees the March Hare’s large house “she did not like to go nearer till she had nibbled some more of the left-hand bit of mushroom, and raised herself to about two feet high”

(67). Finally, before Alice can enter the garden after the tea party she must again “set to work nibbling at the mushroom (she had kept a piece of it in her pocket) till she was about a foot high” (78). In other words, Alice learns to take very small, regulated, and feminine portions in order to better control the size of her body and adapt it to the requirements of the environment.

Alice’s Wonderland experiences train her to succeed within a culture of anorexia since she uses eating as a means of manipulating the size of her body. Alice is conditioned to “[submit] her physical appetites . . . to her will” as her expression of hunger during the trial is denied and all of the episodes of eating are related to changing the body instead of satisfying her appetite (Silver 27). Alice’s time in Wonderland acts as a means of introducing her to both the self-denial and dismissal of appetite that would be expected of a proper Victorian woman.

In addition to illustrating two of Silver’s features of the Victorian culture of anorexia, *Alice* also exhibits an idealization of the child that links Alice to “the anorectic [who] slows the process of sexual maturation . . . and her body remains childlike” (Brumberg 30). Carroll is well known for his infatuation with young girls, including Alice Liddell, and this preference for the young girl over the adult woman is clear in *Alice*. Alice encounters a few grown women in Wonderland, yet these women are entirely repellant figures. Alice first meets the Duchess in a kitchen, which associates the Duchess with food and appetite, and quickly discovers that she treats her baby in a violent manner that convinces Alice she will “kill it in a day or two” (Carroll 63). Alice encounters the Duchess again and is not happy about this second encounter since “the Duchess was *very* ugly” and had “an uncomfortably sharp chin” which she rested on

Alice's shoulder (92-93). The Queen is also described in a repellant manner. In addition to being an out of control woman who always threatens her subjects with violence, she also directs a trial to punish the person who stole her tarts and therefore prevented her from indulging her appetite for the sweets. According to Silver, self-control is "crucial to femininity," and it is this self-control that these two adult women seem to lack (Silver 47). It is only Alice, the girl not the woman, who is able to exhibit self-control.

Moreover, the end of the novel expresses a clear preference for the childlike woman. After Alice wakes from her dream, she tells her sister about it. Alice's sister then has her own dream about Alice's future: "she would keep, through all her riper years, the simple and loving heart of her childhood" (Carroll 127). Significantly, even as a grown woman, Alice holds onto "her own child-life," and while an adult, Alice cannot escape her childhood (Carroll 127). Alice, along with the adult women in the novel, demonstrates that the ideal woman "was to remain permanently childlike, childlike even in maturity" (Gorman 6). The Queen and Duchess, who are unable to control themselves, provide a direct contrast to the ideal Victorian girl/woman who should both remain childlike and treat "the body as an entity that must be subordinated to the will and disciplined as an emblem of one's self control" (Silver 27). For Carroll, only Alice, or the young girl, is able to deny her hunger and control her appetite, and the adult woman must hold on to her childhood or risk becoming a repulsive figure.

"Stuffing Without Limit"

Speaking Likenesses, *Mopsa the Fairy*, and "Amelia and the Dwarfs" have been classified as *Alice* imitations by Sanjay Sircar and Carolyn Sigler. Sircar provides a lengthy list of "elements" that make a text an *Alice* imitation. Sircar notes that an

imitation does not have to contain every element, but it will have several. The texts examined in the rest of this paper exhibit some of the following characteristics outlined by Sircar: “a generic ‘Alice’-like little girl,” “a ‘Wonderland,’” “non-human ‘fantasy’ characters,” “growing big and small,” and “overt acknowledgements to Carroll” (27). Carolyn Sigler also records some of these same characteristics in her edition of *Alice* imitations. While all of the works discussed in this paper exhibit at least a few of the elements outlined by Sircar and/or Sigler, the focus of this paper is primarily on one characteristic: growing big and small. The three texts discussed in the remaining sections all respond to Carroll’s representation of hunger, femininity, and body size. Rossetti, Ewing, and Ingelow, while they respond differently to eating and the appetite, all demonstrate a preference for adult women which directly contradicts Carroll’s privileging of the child.

In a letter to her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti describes *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) as a “Christmas trifle, would-be in the Alice style” (quoted in Knoepfmacher 302). *Speaking Likenesses* did not gain either the popularity or praise that *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* did. Instead, the text has been “[s]eldom discussed and uniformly belittled whenever mentioned” (Knoepfmacher 310). For instance, when “surveying a recently published batch of Christmas books for children, [John] Ruskin chose to keep ‘all but one,’ including the item he had found to be the most offensive of the lot. ‘The worst’ he pronounced emphatically, ‘I consider Christina Rossetti’s. I’ve kept that for the mere wonder of it: how could she or Arthur Hughes sink so low after their pretty nursery rhymes?’” (Knoepfmacher 310). Yet, the text presents a direct challenge to Carroll’s disdain for the adult woman. While Rossetti illustrates that

hunger and appetite must be controlled, she suggests that only the adult woman is capable of doing so. Instead of emulating the child, as Carroll describes, Rossetti demonstrates that the young girl must learn to replicate the self-control of the mature woman.

Speaking Likenesses is a frame tale composed of three stories that an aunt tells her nieces while they sew. The three brief tales that comprise *Speaking Likenesses* all deal with hunger and the necessity to control and repress the appetite. When we compare the first and last tales, we can see a progression in the heroines' abilities to control hunger. Whereas Flora in the first tale is punished for her greed by dreaming of a feast in which she is forbidden to participate in, Maggie willingly controls her appetite for the chocolate she is delivering. Furthermore, Maggie's behavior mirrors that of her grandmother. Both are self-denying and more interested in helping others than in indulging themselves. Much like her grandmother, Maggie ends the story by feeding others, the three animals she rescued, and not just herself. In the three tales, Rossetti represents the female appetite as in need of discipline and control. Therefore, she upholds aspects of the Victorian culture of anorexia, self-control and denial of hunger, as identified by Silver. Furthermore, Victorian "[w]omen were expected to be more controlled than men, but were also presumed to be physiologically incapable of imposing control . . . they are helpless prisoners of their own bodies" (Shuttleworth 60). Rossetti argues against this assumption of women's inability to control their bodies by suggesting that grown women are capable of control and self-denial. This belief in a woman's ability to control her body means that Rossetti does not idealize the girl over the woman as Carroll does in *Alice*. For Rossetti, young girls must learn control from the example of a grown woman.

Therefore, only the girl who most closely resembles a grown woman is rewarded in her tale.

In the first story, Flora is celebrating her eighth birthday with several friends. The children get into a fight, and separated from the other children, Flora ends up in the “Land of Nowhere,” in order to attend a horrifying birthday party for another girl (Rossetti 338). Both portions of the story, Flora’s actual party and the dream party, are connected to food and eating. The initial conflict among the children occurs when they fight over a box of sugar plums Flora received for her birthday. The children accuse each other of taking the biggest one and of not leaving enough for everyone. This conflict is followed by a disappointing dinner during which “[e]ach dish in turn was only fit to be found fault with” (Rossetti 327). These initial encounters with food set Flora up for the horrifying dream that functions as a punishment or corrective for her greed and appetite during her birthday celebration. According to Brumberg, food restriction was a common punishment for Victorian children, and children “were routinely sent to bed without supper or refused a special sweet because they had been ‘bad.’ Denial of food was an easy, accessible parental weapon against the misbehaving child” (136). Flora’s terrifying dream acts as her punishment for displaying an unfeminine appetite during her own birthday celebration.

When Flora arrives at the dream birthday party, she is immediately confronted by tempting food. A table (the furniture can move itself in the story) approaches Flora and provides her with tea and strawberries and cream. However, before Flora can take a single bite, the “birthday Queen” tells her that she can’t eat because “‘it’s my birthday, and everything is mine’” (Rossetti 333). The Queen, who reflects Flora’s own behavior

during her birthday party, forces Flora to watch all of the children finish the meal without allowing her to eat anything. Near the end of the party, the children have another meal. During this feast, Flora was again denied food and “was reduced to look[ing] hungrily on while the rest of the company feasted, and while successive dainties placed themselves before her and retired untasted” (Rossetti 339). Furthermore, Flora witnesses the children eating vast quantities of “[c]old turkey, lobster salad, stewed mushrooms, raspberry tart, cream cheese, a bumper of champagne, a meringue, a strawberry ice, sugared pine apple, [and] some greengages” (Rossetti 339). Both of these experiences in the “Land of Nowhere” punish Flora for her own expression of appetite and failure to share graciously with her guests by forcing her to witness extreme forms of her own behavior. These children do not just eat they “stuffed quite greedily” and were “stuffing without limit” (Rossetti 334 and 339). All the time, Flora is denied food as a punishment for exhibiting greediness at her birthday party.

Between the two excessive meals, the children play two games: Hunt the Pincushion and Self Help. Both games are violent and act as a punishment for those with “abnormal” bodies. First, during Hunt the Pincushion the children would “[s]elect the smallest and weakest player (if possible let her be fat: a hump is best of all), chase her round the room, overtaking her at short intervals, and sticking pins into her here or there as it happens” (Rossetti 336). Significantly, the chosen “pincushion” was assumed to be female as well as disabled. Boys were also present at the party, yet they were not mentioned as possible choices for the pincushion. By limiting the selection to girls, and particularly girls with “abnormal” bodies, girls are labeled as already “abnormal.” The second game, Self Help, also pitted boys against helpless female victims. During this

game “The boys were players, the girls were played” (Rossetti 338). During both games (Flora was selected as the pincushion for the first game), Flora is tortured by the other children, particularly the boys. While the two meals punish Flora by forcing her to witness her own greed exhibited in a more extreme form, the games function as a physical punishment for Flora’s expression of appetite during her birthday party.

In the second story, Edith attempts to light a fire to boil a tea kettle for her family’s outdoor gipsy tea. However, Edith both fails to light the fire and forgets to put water in the kettle. While little actually happens in this story, it continues the theme of denying hunger. On her way to the site of the afternoon tea, Edith encounters a grape vine, and “she longed for a cluster of those purple grapes which, hanging high above her head, swung to and fro . . . but never within reach” (Rossetti 345). She does not pause for long as she contemplates the unreachable grapes, but similar to Flora, her appetite is denied. This episode, which retells the fable by Aesop and LaFontaine, is repeated a second time later in the story when a fox approaches the vine, fails to reach the grapes, and declares that they are sour. Finally, Edith attempts to boil the kettle are futile and the story ends before her appetite is satisfied by the gipsy tea.

The final story, functions as an example of how to both properly deny hunger and feed the self. In the story, Maggie, an orphan who lives with her grandmother, Dame Margaret, is sent to deliver a few Christmas items that a family left in Dame Margaret’s shop. During her delivery, her appetite is tested, and ultimately, she is able to resist her hunger. While Dame Margaret runs a shop that sells “burnt almonds, chocolate, and ‘sweeties’ of every flavour, all done up in elegant fancy boxes,” Maggie and Dame Margaret do not consume these items (Rossetti 351). Instead, Dame Margaret is known

for “her plain clothes and plain table” which allowed her to have the money to do “good deeds” including adopting her granddaughter (Rossetti 351). From the beginning then, Maggie and Margaret are connected to moderation as opposed to the initial indulgences of both Flora and Edith who are preparing to give in to their appetites at upcoming events, a birthday party and gipsy tea. On her way to deliver a basket shoppers had left in the store, Maggie encounters several temptations which could prevent her from completing her task. For instance, after seeing a couple of hungry birds Maggie grew “hungry from sympathy” (Rossetti 355). She even peeks into the basket to discover: “[o]nly there lay the chocolate, sweet and tempting, looking most delicious through a hole in its gilt paper” (Rossetti 355). Shortly after acknowledging her own hunger, Maggie encounters a boy who “had indeed arms, legs, a head, like ordinary people: but his face exhibited only one feature, and that was a wide mouth” (Rossetti 355). This boy personifies Maggie’s own hunger by vocalizing the hunger Maggie had begun to feel after her encounter with the birds. Furthermore, he demands the chocolate, but Maggie is able to resist by linking eating the chocolate to stealing. After braving this encounter, she successfully delivers the basket. On the way home, Maggie collects the homeless animals she encounters: a bird, cat, and dog. Once home, she “drank tea, and ate buttered toast” with her grandmother, and fed all three animals with bits of her tea and toast (Rossetti 360).

Significantly, Maggie is the only one of the three girls who ends the story with a satisfied appetite. Yet, she does not end up consuming the extravagant delicacies Flora is denied at the party. Instead, Maggie consumes modest and plain fare, and she does not consume to excess. Instead, she shares her meager meal with the animals she has

adopted. Through these actions, Maggie mirrors her grandmother's maternal denial of appetite and feeding of others. Maggie then demonstrates that "[f]eeding brings more pleasure than eating. Food, then, becomes a vehicle, when given away rather than eaten, for generosity and charity. True pleasure comes both from feeding others and denying one's own appetite" (Silver 55). Maggie then eats at just the right moment, when her eating can be shared with others. Her meal is not greedy or over indulgent, but instead it exhibits her own generosity and self-denial in the face of her own desires. Maggie's reward comes from emulating the self-control of a mature woman, her grandmother.

Taken as a whole, the three stories present a progression of responses to the appetite. First, Flora indulges and exhibits greed when confronted with tasty food. Second, Edith's anxious preparations for the gipsy tea and disobedience for taking the tea kettle back fire, and her hunger, particularly when confronted by the grapes, goes unsatisfied. Finally, Maggie's ability to resist hunger, obey her grandmother, and complete her assigned task, unlike Edith, demonstrates that she is worthy of a reward, a modest meal. Furthermore, the focus on appetite and greed in *Speaking Likenesses* is clearly gendered and linked to one of Silver's features of the Victorian culture of anorexia: "the perfect woman is the one who submits her physical appetites . . . to her will" (27). For instance, Maggie's hunger is personified in the form of the boy with the mouth who not only expresses her hunger but also convinces her to restrain herself since she "'wouldn't be a thief'" (Rosetti 356). According to Hilde Bruch "many anorexics talk about having 'a dictator who dominates me' or, 'a little man who objects when I eat' . . . the little ghost, the dictator, the 'other self' is always male (Bruch 58 quoted in Daniel 202). The mouth boy then operates as an "other self" who prevents Maggie from

indulging her appetite for the chocolate. Maggie then, who serves as the “proper” example of feminine behavior and consumption in the text, exhibits aspects of the Victorian culture of anorexia. She feeds others while refusing to give in to her appetite.

Finally, the stories directly counter Carroll’s preference for girls over women. While Carroll suggests that the adult woman should remain childlike, Rossetti only rewards the child who emulates a mature woman. Rossetti’s frustration with young girls is particularly clear in the first two stories which both include girls whose improper desires are denied. Edith is even so helpless that she cannot boil a kettle, and she must wait for her nurse to arrive with the correct supplies to light the fire (Rossetti 350). Furthermore, neither Flora nor Edith have adult women whose behavior they can model during their trials. Instead, both girls are left to their own resources and go astray. Maggie, the only one of the girls who is rewarded, closely replicates the behavior of a mature woman, her grandmother. Rossetti then does not present stories in which young girls are idealized. In contrast to Carroll’s repulsive portraits of grown women, Rossetti highlights the inabilities of girls, and suggests that they should model themselves on adult women who can control their hunger.

While Rossetti’s tales certainly exhibit the denial of hunger that fits with the Victorian culture of anorexia, her praise of maturity presents a challenge to anorexia and its aim to keep the body both small and immature. Yet, Rossetti’s representation of womanhood is problematic in that it is closely aligned with restricting the appetite and controlling consumption. Therefore, while Rossetti challenges one specific aspect of the Victorian culture of anorexia, overall, *Speaking Likenesses* reinforces the culture’s emphasis on controlling female consumption.

“Mopsa had grown indeed”

Much like Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses*, Jean Ingelow's *Mopsa the Fairy* (1869) values female maturation, and both works include older women who serve as role models for young girls. While both Rossetti and Ingelow, in contrast to Carroll, positively represent adult women they do so for different purposes. For Rossetti, female hunger is crucial, and her text favors grown women because they are more capable of controlling their appetites. However, Ingelow's text does not connect “proper” femininity to self-control. Instead, the novel suggests that growth of the body leads to additional power and wisdom.

The novel follows a young boy, Jack, as he ventures into Fairyland after stumbling upon a nest of fairies inside a hollow tree. Jack protects and cares for these fairies, especially Mopsa, until they safely travel into a kingdom of Fairyland. Then Mopsa, Jack's favorite fairy, begins to grow rapidly and is marked as a queen who needs to travel to her own kingdom. While Mopsa does not address hunger to the same extent as *Speaking Likenesses* and “Amelia and the Dwarfs,” it is concerned with female growth and presents a direct challenge to Carroll's privileging of girlhood. As discussed earlier, growth is at the heart of anorexia nervosa. The restriction of food present in anorexics is tied both to a desire for an extremely thin body and to a desire to halt the maturation process. Jack fears Mopsa's growth and wants to halt it. Yet, Mopsa continues to grow and rely on Jack's help and protection less and less. At the end of the novel, Mopsa has matured into a queen who is more than capable of ruling her subjects, while Jack has not matured at all and is forced to go back home to his mother. Mopsa then provides a challenge to Carroll's Queen in *Alice*. Carroll depicts the Queen as a repulsive grown

woman who lacks self-control and uses her power ineffectually, yet Mopsa's rapid growth is linked to increasing wisdom and power, not disintegrating self-control.

Ingelow suggests that female growth and maturity are not to be feared or halted, but instead female growth should be embraced.

The novel clearly links female body size to power. Mopsa begins the story as a fairy who is tiny and easily fits into Jack's pocket with several other fairies. Mopsa and the other fairies are quite helpless, and they rely on Jack to protect them, especially from the ravens who want to eat the fairies: "[t]here is not meat so tender; I wish I could pick their little eyes out" (Ingelow 231). Yet over the course of her adventures with Jack, Mopsa grows at a swift pace: "Mopsa had grown indeed; she had only just reached to his knee the day before, and now her little bright head, when he measured her, came as high as the second button on his waistcoat" (Ingelow 269). Furthermore, Jack becomes obsessed with tracking Mopsa's development, and he clearly fears its progress. For instance, Jack tells Mopsa that "I hope you will not go on growing so fast as this . . . or you will be as tall as my mamma in a week or two – much too big for me to play with" (Ingelow 269). Jack's careful monitoring of Mopsa's development mirrors the close monitoring of Victorian women by male physicians as described by Sally Shuttleworth: "women [were] anxiously monitoring the slightest aspect of their bodily functions, constantly under threat of medical intervention in the most overtly physical forms" (48). For Jack, Mopsa's extremely rapid growth "represented a threatening instability of physical forces that needed to be regulated and controlled" (Shuttleworth 64). Jack's sole means of intervention is the careful monitoring and measuring of Mopsa's growth. While Jack clearly fears that Mopsa's development into a mature woman, he is unable to stop

her rapid growth. Eventually, Mopsa is taller than Jack and “was exactly the same height as the Queen – for of course nobody in Fairyland is allowed to be any bigger than the Queen; so, if they are not children when they arrive, they are obliged to shrink” (Ingelow 262). After Mopsa becomes bigger than Jack, her dependence on him begins to decrease.

In addition, Jack is also concerned with how Mopsa eats. For instance, at one meal “Jack was quite ashamed of her. First she . . . took something nice out of the Queen’s plate with her fingers and ate it; and then, as she was going back, she tumbled over a melon and upset a glass of red wine, which she wiped up with her white frock; . . . and there she sat smiling, and daubing her pretty face with a piece of buttered muffin” (Ingelow 264). After watching her eat, Jack chastises Mopsa: ““you are very naughty; if you behave in this way, I shall never take you out to parties again”” (Ingelow 264). Mopsa’s behavior at this meal is certainly not a demonstration of the abstemiousness necessary in “the perfect woman who is one who submits her physical appetites . . . to her will” (Silver 27). While Jack expresses concern for both her growth and way of eating, he is the only one in Fairyland who is bothered by Mopsa. Furthermore, Jack’s careful observations of Mopsa connect to two aspects of the Victorian culture of anorexia. First, he repeatedly measures her growth in the hope that her body stays childlike. Second, he watches her eating and criticizes her behavior when it strays from the abstemiousness and control expected from the “perfect woman.”

As part of the maturation process, Mopsa begins to mirror the behavior of the older Queen. For example, the Queen tells long, prophetic stories which Mopsa eventually replicates: ““I feel as if I must tell a story too, just as the Queen does”” (Ingelow 278). Likewise, both Jack and the apple-woman (another human who has made

her way to Fairyland) note that Mopsa's speech begins to sound like the Queen's: "[t]o think of the pretty thing talking so queen-like already" (Ingelow 270). Much like Maggie in the final tale of *Speaking Likenesses*, Mopsa has an older role model on whom she can model her own behavior.

Mopsa's mind also develops at a swift rate. For instance, Jack notes that after one growth spurt she also "looked much wiser" (275). Furthermore, after she becomes a queen, "she spoke as wisely as a grown woman," although she still has some growing to do. The novel, therefore, connects bodily growth to increasing wisdom. Furthermore, this mental and physical growth establishes Mopsa's power. The power that comes with her role as the queen reaches its height when she forces Jack to return home because she no longer needs his help. Mopsa leads Jack out of her castle while "reeds were growing up between him and the great doors" (Ingelow 311). Jack tries to return to the castle, but he cannot find it among the reeds. As he is no longer necessary for Mopsa, he must leave the fairy kingdom and return home to his mother and father.

Ingelow's novel reacts against Carroll's desire to keep girls children by drastically speeding up the growth and maturation of Mopsa. She progresses from a young child in need of Jack's constant protection to a grown queen in a matter of days. While Jack hopes Mopsa will remain a child, the novel does not idealize the childish woman or the childish female body. Instead, much like Maggie in *Speaking Likenesses*, Mopsa quickly learns to emulate the behavior of the other queen she meets while traveling with Jack. It is the mature woman, not the child, who becomes the model for Mopsa's behavior. While Jack may prefer a small and immature Mopsa, he does not have the power to stop her growth and ensure that she remains childlike and dependent. Therefore, the novel

rejects the notion that the ideal Victorian woman was “to remain permanently childlike, childlike even in maturity” (Gorman 6). While *Speaking Likenesses* critiques anorexia and its aim to keep the body immature, *Mopsa the Fairy* takes this critique a step further by favoring the mature woman without the necessary focus on self-control and denial.

“Amelia’s Meals were Another Source of Trouble”

At the beginning of Juliana Horatia Ewing’s “Amelia and the Dwarfs” (1870), Amelia is a disobedient girl who breaks things, is a picky eater, and torments her mother and nurse. One evening, Amelia goes outside even after being told she is not allowed to. In a field with hay stacks, Amelia encounters a dwarf who knows of Amelia’s bad behavior, and he forces her underground to correct her behavior. Ewing presents a milder form of the Victorian culture of anorexia through Amelia’s punishment for her out of control body. Initially, Amelia’s body has not been “subordinated to the will and disciplined as an emblem of one’s self control” (Silver 27). Her punishment underground aims to correct this inability to “[submit] her physical appetite . . . to her will” (Silver 27). However, unlike Rossetti and Ingelow, Ewing focuses on the value and power of both maturation and adult sexuality. Ultimately, it is Amelia’s maturation and discovery of her sexuality that gives her the power to end her punishment and to return home.

At the beginning of the story, Amelia’s behavior is certainly out of control. She is a spoiled child who breaks objects, including a bowl and bracelet, which belong to her mother’s acquaintances. She makes rude comments when making visits and interrupts conversations at dinner parties. Likewise, she talks to her nurse in an “insolent and unladylike fashion” even after tormenting her nurse through the “wilful destruction” of her clothes (Ewing 109). Finally, Amelia’s rebellious behavior is linked to food:

“Amelia’s meals were another source of trouble” (Ewing 110). Instead of eating what she had been given, “she fancied one thing and then another; she did not like this or that; she wanted a bit cut here and there” (Ewing 110). Amelia certainly does not behave like a Victorian angel in the house who can properly control both her body and appetites.

Amelia’s rejection of some foods and demands for others goes against the typical Victorian regulation of children’s meals. In addition to punishing bad children by withholding food, meals were a way to mold the character of a child:

for children of the upper and middle classes, particularly in England, the diet was also monotonous, not from necessity as it was for the poor, but on principle.

Eating all that they were apportioned, often separately from their parents and on a very rigid schedule, these children were having instilled in them along with their food those qualities considered important to their society: frugality in the management of economic resources, asceticism in the husbanding of the body’s resources, discipline and thrift in the use of time (Gelpi 12).

The meals in Amelia’s family do not follow this norm for children. Instead, Amelia’s picky eating, demands for specific items, and wastefulness are related to a culture of anorexia. According to Brumberg, “Refusing food at the family dinner table was a silent but potent form of expression that fit within the Victorian conception of decorum at table. Refusing to eat was not as confrontational as yelling, having a tantrum, or throwing things; refusing to eat expressed emotional hostility without being flamboyant” (137). Furthermore, Brumberg suggests that girls “turned to food as a symbolic language . . . because girls’ options for self-expression outside the family were limited by parental concern and social convention . . . Young women searching for an idiom in which to say

things about themselves focused on food and the body ” (184). Amelia’s out of control behavior, particularly at the dinner table, is her way of rebelling and gaining power.

While she might not be able to control much of her life, she can control her body and what she eats. Furthermore, by breaking the normal rules for children’s meals, Amelia gets added attention and special treatment. However, this extreme behavior crosses the line between ladylike anorexia and pathology. In the Victorian culture of anorexia, women were expected to deny the self in order to take care of and feed others. Women’s food restriction was connected self-sacrifice, but Amelia’s rejection of food has selfish motives since she uses her out of control behavior to gain added power and attention.

While Amelia’s troublesome meals gained her special treatment from her parents, she is eventually disciplined for this behavior. Amelia’s final rebellious act, going to play in a field after dark, leads to her encounter with the dwarfs who send her underground to discover “‘what the trouble is you impose on other people’” (Ewing 115). While underground, Amelia is forced to wash and sew all of the clothes she had destroyed, repair all of the objects she had broken, and cook and eat all of the food she had rejected. In particular, being forced to eat all of the previously rejected food teaches Amelia that good children “[eat] all that they were apportioned” (Gelpi 12). After completing all of her assigned tasks, Amelia learns that the only way for her to return home is to trick the dwarfs into letting her go above ground to find a four leaf clover. Amelia quickly discovers that the dwarfs are intrigued by her dancing, and one “‘very smutty, and old, and weazened’” dwarf particularly enjoys dancing with “‘his arm round Amelia’s waist’” (Ewing 121). Eventually, Amelia’s dancing skills convince the dwarfs to take her above ground to dance in the moonlight. Amelia then locates a four leaf

clover and returns home. Not only then does Amelia learn the properly feminine skills of sewing, washing, and cooking, but she also learns how to please men through dancing.

While Amelia is initially punished for having an out of control body that breaks objects and demands food, her punishment initiates her into adult womanhood. It is only after Amelia has mastered “feminine” tasks that she can gain her freedom. Yet her mastery of these tasks occurs alongside her realization of her sexuality, and she uses her burgeoning sexuality to entice the dwarfs and create an opportunity for escape. Amelia the child is unable to figure out a means of escape, but the more mature Amelia, who has completed her sewing and cooking, learns how she can gain power over the male dwarfs by letting them see her dance. While the story could be seen as documenting the reeducation necessary to teach Amelia how to be properly feminine (by controlling her body and its appetites), it instead highlights the power she gains when she utilizes her sexuality in order to escape. Instead of attempting to gain power through the rejection of food, Amelia discovers the power she gains through displaying her femininity and sexuality. Amelia presents a challenge to the privileging of the asexual childlike body, and she critiques the aspect of the Victorian culture of anorexia in which “girls refused food in order to keep their bodies small, thin, and childlike, thereby retarding normal sexual development and forestalling adult sexuality” (Brumberg 216).

“Amelia and the Dwarfs,” *Speaking Likenesses*, and *Mopsa the Fairy* all challenge one aspect of the Victorian culture of anorexia present in Carroll’s novel: disgust for mature women and an idealization of the young girl. Rossetti, Ingelow, and Ewing suggest that it is the mature woman who can control herself and should stand as a model for the young girl, while Carroll suggests it is the adult woman who should model

herself after the innocent child. Instead of upholding the Victorian culture of anorexia which suggests that the childlike body and mind are the norms women of all ages should strive to achieve, these *Alice* imitations suggests that it is the child who must develop the qualities of the adult woman. Of the three authors, Ewing takes this critique the furthest by focusing on both the power of maturity and female sexuality.

The existence of 150 to 200 imitations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* speaks to both the popularity and success of the novel. Yet, the three imitations discussed here use features of Carroll's novel to offer a rebuttal of his representation of femininity. At the same time, they use some of the characteristics of *Alice* to critique aspects of Victorian culture and particularly the culture's defining of the ideal woman as perpetually childish. Furthermore, these imitations demonstrate that children's literature, even imitations, have radical potential. According to Auerbach and Knoepflmacher, "Cultural and economic pressures made it more acceptable for women to write for children than for other adults" (1). Rossetti, Ingelow, and Ewing used the genre to challenge the ways in which women were represented and defined in Victorian culture.

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