



Two way memories and virtual realities : how science fiction works and Lewis Carrolls alice books let the reader in  
by Jennifer Kelso Farrell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts In English  
Montana State University  
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**Abstract:**

Lewis Carroll's Alice books and SF texts offer the readers something profound, they allow the reader to enter the text and to stand beside writer and character to live the text as the characters and author live the text. Both SF and the Alice books are explorations of the present that reach to the future and they are always seeking to rupture the monologisms (single-voiced dialogues that ignore the voices of others) of societies. Their continual undermining of the reader's assumptions on both the narrative level (through the use of multiple frames) and at the linguistic level (through manipulating the ambiguities in language and using defamiliarization) is what ultimately opens up the texts for readers to enter.

Narrative structures are examined using Tim Powers' Expiration Date, Tad Williams' Otherland, and Jeff Noon's Vurt. In each case the establishing of multiple frames through reversed ground rules is examined and how those multiple frames interact with each other and the readers. There is a progression in the number of multiple frames with Expiration Date being the simplest and Vurt being the most complex.

Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash, George Orwell's 1984, and Anthony Burgess' A Clockwork Orange are used to demonstrate how manipulation at the linguistic level can affect the reader and let the reader enter the text. In each novel there is a struggle between an individual and monologism. The form of the monologism may be that reprogramming unaware individuals, creating new languages, or attempting to remove individual's free thought and expression.

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This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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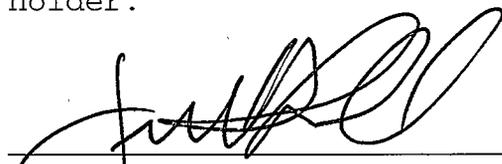
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. P. ...', written over a horizontal line.

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A handwritten date 'April 20, 2001' in black ink, written over a horizontal line.

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## ABSTRACT

Lewis Carroll's Alice books and SF texts offer the readers something profound, they allow the reader to enter the text and to stand beside writer and character to live the text as the characters and author live the text. Both SF and the Alice books are explorations of the present that reach to the future and they are always seeking to rupture the monologisms (single-voiced dialogues that ignore the voices of others) of societies. Their continual undermining of the reader's assumptions on both the narrative level (through the use of multiple frames) and at the linguistic level (through manipulating the ambiguities in language and using defamiliarization) is what ultimately opens up the texts for readers to enter.

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ENTERING THE TEXT VIA NARRATIVE STRUCTURE AND  
LINGUISTIC MANIPULATION

In an 1864 letter to the editor of *Punch* magazine, Lewis Carroll described his work, tentatively titled "Alice's Adventures Underground" with the following words:

The heroine spends an hour underground, and meets various birds, beasts, etc (no fairies), endowed with speech. The whole thing is a dream, but that I don't want revealed till the end (Cohen, 29).

From this simple description, it is hard to imagine that Carroll's work was going to be an enduring classic. And yet, nearly one hundred and fifty years later, there are very few who are not familiar with Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass. So ubiquitous are these works, in fact, that popular culture teems with references from the Alice books, but perhaps nowhere as often as in Science Fiction.

It seems as though no SF book or movie is devoid of some reference to the Alice books. Even a movie as recent as "The Matrix" uses the analogy of falling down the rabbit hole to exemplify the characters' choice to join the fight

against AI or to stay ignorant of the fact that they are living in a computer program. Several SF authors such as Jeff Noon, Roger Zelazny, and Mickey Zucker Reichert have either re-written or added to the Alice story. But mostly, the Alice books are used as signposts or touch stones for readers as they work their way through bizarre worlds and unfamiliar circumstances. It goes much deeper than just references and homage, however. On a closer inspection, the Alice books and SF are kindred spirits, performing the same function.

Both SF and the works of Carroll approach what Roland Barthes calls writerly texts. SF writer Jeff Noon<sup>1</sup> says this of Carroll and his own aspirations in a 1996 interview with Caroline Griffin: "Lewis Carroll put himself in both books as well. So he was very aware that you can actually step into a book" (2-3). Mikhail Bakhtin praises works that can put the reader and author alongside the characters in ". . .an active creation of the truth in the consciousnesses of the author, the characters, and the readers, in which all participants are equal" (Zappen, 2). Bakhtin calls this a polyphonic novel. Roland Barthes refers to texts that let the reader in as writerly texts.

Writerly texts invite the reader into the text through multiple accesses, not one of which can be called a main access. And they allow the reader to write meaning onto the text (Pennington, 57). In the words of Roland Barthes<sup>2</sup>, a writerly text is:

. . . a perpetual present, upon which no consequent language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed; the writerly text is ourselves writing. . . (Keep, et al, 1).

The opposite of a writerly text is the readerly text, that text which keeps the reader at arm's length and only allows the reader to respond to the text and to serve as a receptacle for the text in a voyeuristic way. A writerly text reveals that which the readerly text hides such as cultural construction, codes, and ideologies ([www.msu.edu/user/jensenker/980/web3.html](http://www.msu.edu/user/jensenker/980/web3.html)).

A text, according to Barthes, cuts across other texts weaving a cloth of quotations and does not have one source or origin because ". . . the quotations a text is made of are anonymous, irrecoverable, and yet already read: they are quotations without quotation marks" ("From," 60). These quotations are the result of a myriad of cultural headwaters merging and diverging in the text ("Death," 53).

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<sup>1</sup> Jeff Noon is a contemporary SF author who rewrote the Alice tales in *The Automated Alice*. His works are full of references to Lewis Carroll and he is one of a few to discuss the relationship between SF and Alice.

From this it is easy to see that a text is neither stable nor absolute. Like language, in a text there is a play at work, a continual slipping of the present into the future.

It is Carroll's and SF's natural, sensual, and expressive play with words and narrative structure that allow multiple entrances into their texts. And this can be considered an influx of mind, an irrational entrance into a text, a writerly text. Lewis Carroll's Alice books and SF texts offer the readers something profound, they allow the reader to enter the text and to stand beside writer and character to live the text as the characters and author live the text. Both SF and the Alice books are explorations of the present that reach to the future and they are always seeking to rupture the monologisms (single-voiced dialogues that ignore the voices of others) of societies. Their continual undermining of the reader's assumptions on both the narrative level (through the use of multiple frames) and at the linguistic level (through manipulating the ambiguities in language and using defamiliarization) is what ultimately opens up the texts for readers to enter.

For the purposes of this paper, SF is best understood in the words of Samuel Delaney's in "About Five Thousand

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<sup>2</sup> Several of Barthes works are used in this paper. They will be labeled by the first word in the title in the endnotes.

One Hundred and Seventy-Five Words. . ."<sup>3</sup> as being concerned with "have not happened" in all its manifestations.

SF is defined by have not happened, which includes events that might happen, will not happen, and also have not happened yet. Events that have not happened include past events which compose the parallel world (62).

Using both have not happened and the unreal allow the writer to give the reader different perspectives of the contemporary world and of contemporary life. Carroll uses Alice in this way. He puts her in unreal situations that have not happened so that the reader can see him or herself from a new position.

Both Carroll and the SF author manage to broaden the perspective of readers by changing the readers' vantagepoint, to allow readers view themselves from different times and places. Carroll manages this through multiple frames within his text, whereas in SF the multiple frames can be both inside and outside the actual text.

The first frame of any work is that of the reader. The reader, the reader's reality, and the reader's expectations form the first frame. The second frame is the reality inside the text that is set apart from the reader's

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<sup>3</sup> Several of Delaney's works are used in this paper. To avoid confusion, each essay will be referred to in the endnotes by the first word of each title.

reality by a reversed ground rule. As readers read the text they cross from frame one to frame two. Subsequent frames (of which there can be many) are also within the text and can be in a myriad of forms such as dreams, Virtual Reality, or parallel worlds. Readers cross between these frames and the second frame alongside the characters within the text.

When examining the Alice books one sees that they consist of three frames: the dream, the real world, and Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. The dream is the controlling frame (Pennington, 67). The dream serves as a mediator between reality and another world and it sets parameters that keep the two worlds apart (Hadomi, et al, 149). Alice's world, the world where she is reading a book on the banks of a stream, is reality. It is when she falls asleep and she crosses through the dream of falling and enters Wonderland that she encounters the parallel realities. Likewise, she must awaken, literally break through, the dream to reenter her reality. Like a dream, events in Wonderland do not happen in logical or chronological ways, rather the events are arbitrary, chaotic, and even violent (Henkle, 104).

Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land operate contrary to the land above ground. Where the above ground world

strives for consistency, as with mathematics, Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land operate inconsistently; likewise, where the above ground world is inconsistent, such as with language, Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land continually and forcefully ask for complete consistency (Rackin, 44). The readers follow Alice through all these frames which form a vertical path. Alice literally falls down into the dream and Wonderland and likewise, she eventually surfaces back in her reality at the end. In Looking-Glass Land, the reader steps through the looking glass beside Alice, following her as she travels. In SF, the frames can be seen as nesting within one another with frame one, that of the reader, being the largest of all the frames.

The first frame, the reader's frame, outside the book is created by SF's fantastic nature where the second frame, that of the world inside a SF text, is created by reversing at least one ground rule of the world outside the SF text (Rabkin, "SF," 170). SF texts have the distinction of serving as a multiple frame even before the text is opened for reading because it is understood that the world inside the text is already a parallel to the world outside the text. For example, in Jeff Noon's Vurt, the reversed ground rule is that humans share the waking world with

dream creatures, robots, and dogmen. In Alice, the obvious reversed ground rule is that all living creatures can talk.

By reversing ground rules, the SF writer is able to harmonize or contrast his created world against the real world and the story's characters (Delaney, "Some," 49-50). These worlds are created by the way a SF text is organized—SF writers create worlds that are either freely harmonized with, contrasted with, or played against not only the story's character, but also the given world (Rabkin, 146). The SF parallel world is usually highly plausible from the standpoint of modern Scientific knowledge, but these worlds are inhabited by alien forms with their own customs and ways of life (Hillegas, 276). This is the main component of the SF narrative style, that the SF narrative world is different from the real world and that against a backdrop of organized thinking, that difference must be apparent (Rabkin, "Fantastic," 119).

In this respect, SF is no different than other forms of fiction because all fiction uses conditions or characters that have not existed (Rabkin, SF: History, Science, Vision, 169). Yet is not enough to just use the unreal and the "have not happened." It is the way and the

means in which the unreal and the have not happened are used and to what end they serve.

Gary Wolfe says in "The Known and the Unknown: Structure and Image in Science Fiction" that the function of SF is to provide a "technological society with a ritual methodology for action" (4). Another way of seeing SF is that it attempts to bring about resolutions of social tensions and ambiguities and promote cultural continuity by reconciling the new and the old while exploring forbidden subjects ([www.marquette.edu/dept/englz/holvela/scifi.html](http://www.marquette.edu/dept/englz/holvela/scifi.html)). This second function is closer to that of the Alice books--an exploration of humankind in society.

Science fiction does not pretend to present reality; it uses parallel worlds to give readers a broader perspective by allowing them to view themselves from vantage points of different times and places (Marsalek, 3). Science fiction is ultimately about the present and contemporary world. Samuel Delaney in "Some Presumptuous Approaches to Science Fiction" makes the following claim about SF: ". . .it uses the future as a narrative convention to present significant distortions of the present. . ." (47-8).

Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land, despite their inversions and absurdities, strike the readers as familiar

renditions of a modern world, language, and behavior (Henkle, 99). As society becomes more rational, the experience of living in it becomes increasingly estranged and ". . .as the complexity of social organization increases, the power of the individual to comprehend or affect the world dwindles" (Sanders, 107). The theme of an individual becoming estranged within a complex society is seen time and time again in both SF texts and Carroll's Alice books.

In both SF and the Alice books foreign creatures, customs, and worlds are used in a way that push the boundary between "the known of human experience. . .and the unknown. . ." (Wolfe, 99). And, the Alice books, like SF, are more about the contemporary condition of humankind and less about a fantastic world. Alice is constantly thrown into situations that test her knowledge and the validity of Victorian social mores, but this also resonates with contemporary readers. Again, turning to Jeff Noon's interview, he says of the Alice books:

Then I discovered this book by Martin Gardner, called the Annotated Alice. It's brilliant. He explains every hidden meaning in there but didn't take any of the mystery away (Griffin, 1).

Because the mystery remains and the stories are so familiar, it is not just Victorian mores being tested, but

also the general malaise of the contemporary world. In this way Alice is a myth that carries down from generation to generation, a myth that still resonates with contemporary readers, a myth that survives any and all translations (Levi-Strauss, 871). The very prevalence of Alice iconography indicates this. The Alice books provide contemporary society with new archetypes while still reaching back to pull Victorian stories into the present. Likewise, SF despite its futuristic bends is not about the future.

SF has become a contemporary form of mythology that presents new themes while building on the themes of old (Butor, 162). SF texts liberally use ancient mythologies and symbols to explain contemporary society's reverence for technology. Turning again to Barthes: "Myth today. . . is a message, not a concept, idea, or object" (Lechte, 1). By allowing the reader to explore him or herself from different perspectives, SF is able to simultaneously explore humankind's condition while creating new myths based on the mythical features of scientific reason (Wolfe, 5). SF explores interaction between society and technology and the affects each has on humankind. Science fiction's mythmaking lies in its ability to continually turn the unknown into the known (Wolfe, 96). The pushing of the

boundaries of what is known and unknown pushes humankind's knowledge of its position in the universe. This mythic quality is what gives SF its position as a cultural index while simultaneously rising above being a mere cultural index (Hillegas, 280). The integration of old texts and new ideas (both cultural indexes) helps create a sense of wonder that can also be understood as that quality that myth used to have in earlier cultures (Wolfe, 95).

Because SF is mythic, it is different from other literary modes. Brooks Landon in his work "The Culture of Science Fiction" claims that

. . .it may be useful to think of SF as a language that must be learned as a mode of writing, as distinctive as poetry, complete with its reading protocols quite different from those used for reading other kinds of fiction (7).

This sentiment is echoed by Samuel Delaney in "Some Presumptuous Approaches to Science Fiction" in which he calls SF a ". . .fascinating language phenomenon" with intricate differences that set it apart from traditional modes of literature (54). Delaney repeats this again in "SF and 'Literature:' Or, the Conscience of the King" where he states that SF and literature must be thought of as entirely different texts, with different values, ways to respond, ways to make sense of the text, and two different ways of reading (87).

Roland Barthes in "Myth Today" outlines three possible ways of reading myths. The first is to look at it like the producer of myths might, by reading the myth literally. The second is to read a myth like a mythologist would, which is to allow meaning and form to distort one another. And the third way of reading a myth is to read meaning and form simultaneously (128). This third option is a dynamic way of reading because it allows the reader ". . .to receive an ambiguous signification: I respond to the constituting mechanism of myth, to its own dynamics" (128). According to Barthes, this third way of reading myth lets the reader ". . .live the myth as a story at once true and unreal" (128). Readers need to see SF and Alice in new ways that differ from how readers approach other forms of literature.

It's a protocol of acceptance. The reader must accept Alice and SF as a whole and receive the meaning and form simultaneously in order to live the story. Part of what lets the reader live the Alice and SF texts, to receive pleasure from them, is that there is a strong sense of the present world despite the futuristic or unreal worlds.

Both Carroll's worlds and SF worlds challenge naturalistic conventions by using the carnivalesque. The carnivalesque, a term attributed to Mikhail Bakhtin, is

both a linguistic and a social phenomenon. As a social phenomenon, it is a device to explore societal conditions, reverse ground rules, and establish multiple frames.

Bakhtin defines the carnivalesque as:

. . .a sociolinguistic fun fair where, as in the medieval festival of Carnival, rulers and ruled mixed on equal terms in a parodic route devoted to ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities. . . (Richter, 725).

Rather than a fun fair, in SF and Carroll's books, the carnivalesque manifests itself as odd and bizarre worlds and customs. In return, they create ". . .feelings of insecurity in the face of both nature and social order" for their characters (Pennington, 73). When Alice meets the Caterpillar in Wonderland, her insecurities rush to the surface because not only is she not the right size (natural order) but she can't even answer the simple (social) question "Who are you?" (67). In Looking-Glass Land, she experiences the same sort of insecurity when she meets the living flowers. The fact that the flowers can talk challenges natural ordering; and their constant criticizing of Alice challenges her social order. Even when she declares "If you don't hold your tongues, I'll pick you!" the flowers ignore her and go about talking, denying her the natural and social conventions that state that she, the

human, should be the only one talking (203). At every turn, Alice's expectations of both social and natural norms are challenged. Throughout the Alice books, the reader witnesses time and time again that Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land are concerned with a social/organizational harmony, no matter how disharmonious it is for Alice to take part in.

In SF, the carnivalesque manifests itself in one of the most significant games in SF—the utopia/distopia, a game of intellect that through the twisting of reality serves to raise humankind's condition through a process of maturation. (Hadomi, et al, 143). Like Carroll's worlds, the game of utopia/distopia concerns itself with social and natural organization. Unlike Carroll's world, however, the carnivalesque can not run completely throughout the utopia/distopia because then the carnivalesque will eventually impede the society's maturation (Erisman, 7). Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land are caught up in the carnivalesque and there is no movement toward maturation, except on the part of Alice.

SF uses the carnivalesque to inspire change. Wendy E. Erisman in "Inverting the Ideal World: Carnival and the Carnivalesque in Contemporary Science Fiction" explains:

By symbolically destroying and then rebuilding society, carnival both subverts and affirms the values of the community, providing a moment of contradiction within which change is imaginable (2).

As stated earlier, a key component of a community is language and the manipulation of language is one of the most dynamic ways to create change or establish boundaries between insiders and outsiders. Often when an outsider comes into contact with an unfamiliar community, one of the most difficult and important things the outsider must overcome is the language barrier. That is why verbal games are a popular way to undermine the readers' and characters' assumptions, because they establish the parameters of an existing community and the ways in which an outsider must adapt to be included in that community.

For Alice, the extreme demands for consistency in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land undermine her ability to grasp the world around her. Likewise, a SF text such as in Orwell's 1984, the continual changing of language and history undermine the character's ability to remain autonomous because all thoughts and memories are controlled by an outside source. In both the Alice books and SF works, language plays a vital role in creating societies and how individuals work within a society.

In her confrontation with the White Queen, Alice helps the disheveled chess piece put herself back together by straightening her shawl and combing her hair. Alice then remarks that the Queen needs a maid. The Queen interprets this as Alice offering herself to be a maid and so the Queen offers her the payment plan of "Twopence a week and jam every other day" (247)<sup>4</sup>. Alice explains she doesn't want to be hired and she doesn't want any jam today, to which the Queen replies: "You couldn't have it if you did want it. . . The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday-- but never jam to-day." So Alice points out that eventually it will come to jam today, but the Queen is resolute with "It's jam every other day: to-day isn't any other day, you know." This, of course, confuses Alice and the Queen tells her that's normal and that living backward does that to one. She also claims that living backward results in one's mind working both ways, as in one can remember things before they happen. Alice can't grasp this since her mind works in only one way. The Queen replies "It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards." As the reader watches Alice work through this convoluted logic, it becomes quite clear that the characters she meets are

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<sup>4</sup> All Alice quotes are from The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass with notes and introduction by Martin Gardner, 1963.

undermining Alice's naturalistic customs. Her rigid unwillingness to accept what is around her leaves her frustrated. On top of this, in this foreign world the normal rules of language obviously don't apply.

The communication of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land assails convention both logically and regarding specificity, because every word and every meaning is ambiguous. The creatures Alice meets on her journeys ". . . cannot accept language on its own grounds" because they want language to be self-sufficient and logical, two things language can never be (Rackin, 43). The illogical qualities of language are something that Carroll was aware of. In a letter to Edith Rex, Carroll says:

"My view of life is, that it's next to impossible to convince anybody of anything" because "one of the hardest things in the world is to convey a meaning accurately from one mind to another" (Blake, 68):

It is here, at this influx of mind, that Carroll works his magic, that he continually erodes not only Alice's worldly assumptions, but also the reader's narrative assumptions.

As Amy Mandelker's "The Mushroom and the Egg: Lewis Carroll's Alice as an Otherworldly Introduction to Semiotics" explains:

The games and puzzles in Alice and the numerous examples of communication failure articulate the three primary areas of semiotic investigation:

paradigmatics, or the nature of signs and referentially; syntagmatics, or the manner in which signs combine to produce utterances; and pragmatics, or the relationships between sign systems and the users of sign systems (102).

Carroll's works are not only in words, but they are about words and the endless exchanges of words between characters (Sewell, 268). And at every level, Carroll manages to undermine linguistic assumptions about verbal exchanges and the meanings of words. The Caterpillar's dissolving hookah smoke shows how signs can change, the Jabberwocky poem is an exercise in creating new words from existing signs, and several times Alice witnesses how easily language can be manipulated throughout the many conversations she holds with the inhabitants of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. Not only are there endless exchanges of words, but also of meaning.

These ambiguities in language form what Jacques Derrida refers to as free play:

The meaning—and reference—is a function of the difference, of the distance or the "spacing" between the traces, what is called, in a perfectly serious way, the "play" of differences or traces (Caputo, 100).

The traces Derrida refers to are the repeatable marks of code that build up to create the meaning. These traces contain spaces within which meaning can be made or altered. In other words, the meaning of a word is not static, but

changes relative to the meaning of the words around it (Caputo, 100). The present meaning of a word or a text has come from a prior configuration of meaning and will dissolve into a future configuration of meaning (Powell, 29). This is free play, a continual de-centering and reconfiguring of meaning.

Kathleen Blake in her book Play, Games, and Sport: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll, states that Carroll from his own experiences in mathematics knew that if mathematics was so unstable ". . .for the construction of a flawless mental world. . ." and that a flawless mental world is necessary for true communication, then a language of words and meanings ". . .even in its most formally controlled aspect, logic. . ." was even less stable (169). Both Derrida and Carroll before him, understand that language is mercurial and fluid and ripe for exploiting.

Mikhail Bakhtin also points to the multiple meanings hiding within words but for him, like Barthes, it is a multiplicity of voices, languages, cultural ideas, and intentions that dictate meaning. Bakhtin's concern with language is that of dialogue. In a dialogue there is a speaker, a respondent, and the relation that exists between the two ("Bakhtin.lect," 1). From dialogue comes heteroglossia or ". . .the collection of all the forms of

social speech, or rhetorical modes, that people use in the course of their daily lives" ("Bakhtin.lect," 2).

Heteroglossia is the complex mixing of language and worldviews, the meaning of which lies at a point between speaker and listener or writer and reader. Heteroglossia, through its variety of modes of speaking, including vocabulary and strategy, pushes language toward multiplicity. This multiplicity can become carnivalesque, another of Bakhtin's terms.

Carnavalesque, when applied to language is best understood as ". . .a general tone of laughter, this carnivalesque language is an expression of freedom from official norms and as such stands in binary opposition to the authority of church and state" (Zappen, 3).

Carnavalesque and heteroglossia demonstrate that language is always changing. For example, the words I'm writing now are not solely my own but are inhabited with my intent and after writing these words, they will be populated by another's intentions and so on (Zappen, 2).

A possible drawback to this multiplicity is that whenever anyone says anything in conversation those words exist in a context--a context which can easily be manipulated so that even ". . .the most serious utterances can be made comical" (Bakhtin, 782). Conversation for

Bakhtin is not about representation, but transmission; thus, we do not separate the personality from the words being spoken (782-3). Again, Carroll in Katherine Blake's works Play, Games, and Sports: The Literary Works of Lewis Carroll quotes Carroll himself as saying something similar to this:

No word has a meaning inseparably attached to it; a word means what the speaker intends by it, and what the hearer understands by it, and that is all (Blake, 75).

When we read a text, however, ". . .the deeper semantic and emotionally levels of discourse do not enter the game" (783). This is, however, where Derrida's traces enter the game existing between words and continually building meaning from each other. The play with the words and their meanings in an SF text is essential to this (Delaney, *Some*, 49-50).

In SF the manipulation of language is commonplace and essential to both its myth-creating properties and its multiple frames. Samuel Delaney in "About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-five Words. . ." speaks of this phenomenon in another way:

Around the meaning of any word is a certain margin in which to correct the image of the object we arrive at (in grammatical terms, to modify).

I say: dog

And an image jumps in your mind, but because I have not put it in a formal relation with anything else,

you have no way to know whether the specific image in your mind has anything to do with what I want to communicate (56).

Delaney calls this process correcting and correcting begins from the very first word in the text. Each word builds, or corrects, the image in the reader's mind as he or she follows the text. My dog is certainly going to look different than some else's dog, which is probably going to differ from the dog implied by Delaney.

Carroll and SF set themselves apart from traditional literature at a linguistic level, a level that has free play as a component. SF, in other words, has its own subjunctive level. Subjunctive is Delaney's term and he defines it in "About Five Thousand One Hundred and Seventy-Five Words" as ". . .the tension on the thread of meaning that runs between word and object" (61). The subjunctive creates an uneasy marriage with dialogism between reader and text. What the subjunctive does is allow the reader to color a blank canvas, but the text determines the size of that canvas. What prevents the text from being a monologism is that each reader will come to his or her own final picture, of which no two are alike, while still obtaining the text's message.

In SF, its subjunctivity limits the corrective process readers use as they move between words but at the same time

it gives greater freedom of word choice ("About, 62). This freedom of word choice is what may truly set SF apart from other literary modes because it creates its own language.

It is not so strange to think of SF as being different than other literary modes on a linguistic level—often drama and poetry are considered separate modes of language and thinking. Poetry renders the familiar unfamiliar and opens the mind of the reader to new previously unknown ways of combining thought (Shelley, 328). The goal here is to push the boundaries between the known and the unknown, much like the mythmaking qualities of SF and the Alice books; thus the effects of both SF writing and Carroll's writing have on the mind might actually be closer to that of poetry.

The vision (sense of wonder, if you will) that SF tries for seems to me very close to the vision of poetry, particularly as it concerned the nineteenth century Symbolists. No matter how disciplined its creation, to move into an 'unreal' world demands a brush with mysticism (Delaney, About, 64).

Delaney's mysticism and reference to poetry has to do with how SF affects the readers' minds. SF forces readers to think in new ways and to see in new ways. The language of a SF text, much like the language of poetry, slows the readers down, disorients them, and pulls them into the text. The multiple frames create worlds or frames inside and outside the text. Each new frame also slows readers

down as they attempt to learn the ways in, out, and through the frames. Ultimately, the subjunctive nature of SF works gives greater freedom to create unreal worlds. The more unreal a world, the more the reader is forced to think in new ways that turns the unfamiliar or unknown into the known. This is also illustrated throughout the Alice books.

As Alice travels through Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land, she attempts to deal with the absurdities and impossible situations using the fundamental operations of the world above ground, even as the reader doubts Alice's logic because it is all too clear to the reader that the normal operations don't apply (Rackin, 39). Alice needs to rethink what she knows and find a new way to think about herself in conjunction with what she knows about the world around her. When asked to recite school poems, the words come out wrong. When she attempts to rationalize with the Mad Hatter or Humpty Dumpty, she is left looking foolish and inept with her own language. Alice experiences this time and time again as she attempts communication with those around her, which leads her to nothing but frustration.

At first it seems that the creatures are rejecting human linguistic conventions and constructs in order to play with

language; however, they actually use those constructs to ask language to be unambiguous (Rackin, 43-4). But because language is inherently ambiguous and in a state of free play, what the creatures ask is impossible. Examples of this sort of miscommunication run through the Alice books, but here I want to use an example from the Mad Tea party:

*"Then you should say what you mean," the March Hare went on.*

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

*"Not the same thing a bit!" said the Hatter. "You might just as well say that 'I see what I eat' is the same thing as 'I eat what I see'" (95).*

Here, the Hare and the Hatter are looking for Alice to be precise and her language to be stable. And she can't accommodate them. Oddly enough is this exchange, the creatures demonstrate that they know more than Alice about ". . .the relations between meaning and saying" does (Rackin, 17).

Much of Carroll's language manipulation takes place in his renaming, or arbitrary naming, a concept referred to as de-familiarization, or parallelism. In his work "Art As Technique" Victor Shklovsky talks about the technique of making familiar objects unfamiliar, which increases the difficulty and length of perception (741). This technique when applied to language creates difficulty in communication.

Here, then, I repeat that the perception of disharmony in a harmonious context is important in parallelism. The purpose of parallelism, like the general purpose of imagery, is to transfer the usual perception of an object into the sphere of a new perception--that is, to make a unique semantic modification (746).

In Wonderland, Alice comes across the Duchess and her baby. At one point the Duchess throws the baby at Alice who finds it to be ". . . a queer-shaped little creature. . . 'just like a starfish. . .'" (86). The baby morphs into a pig and runs off into the woods. "And she began thinking over other children she knew, who might do very well as pigs, and was just saying to herself, "if one only know the right way to change them---" (87). Here the play is on the words baby and pig. When the infant is a baby, Alice treats it very differently than when it is a pig. After she leaves the Duchess, she runs into the Chesire Cat and tells it about the pig baby, to which the Cat asks "Did you say pig or fig?" Clearly the change in one word changes the entire situation.

Yet despite Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land's interest in the ambiguous margins around words, they ultimately operate as a monologic dialogue. Alice experiences a communication where the creatures demand that the semantic levels of communication be acknowledged as something stable and consistent, therefore making the communication

unconventional because the context of a word does not affect the meaning of the word. Bakhtin refers to this type of communication as monologic, a one way transmission of information where the listener is not able to participate ("Bakhtin.lect," 1). Because Wonderland operates as monologic, Alice is at the whim of the creatures' language until the end of both Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass.

Another classic example of words being seemingly arbitrarily spoken or meanings reversed is in Through the Looking Glass when Alice meets Humpty Dumpty. They have a brief conversation until Humpty decides it's his turn to choose a topic. Alice remarks to her "He talks about it just as if it was a game!" (265). That is exactly what it is to Humpty Dumpty, a game and he decides the rules. Their conversation turns to birthdays. Alice explains that she has only one birthday out of 365 days. Humpty's response is:

*"And only ONE for birthday presents, you know. There's glory for you!"*

*"I don't know what you mean by 'glory,'" Alice said. Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. "Of course you don't--til I tell you. I meant 'there's a nice knock-down argument for you!'"*

*"But 'glory' doesn't mean 'a nice knock-down argument,'" Alice objected.*

*"When I use a word," Humpty Dumpty said in a rather scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less" (268-9).*

Alice's continual reliance upon the naive belief that she can participate in a dialogue within Wonderland leaves her open to the manipulations of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land's monologism.

Alice only contains Wonderland and frees herself from its anarchy at the trial of the Knave of Hearts when she says "You're nothing but a pack of cards!" (161). By naming the cards as cards, which is exactly what they are, and because of Wonderland's strenuous demands for the stability of language, Alice is able to open up the monologic into a dialogic. The cards can not deny that they are nothing but a pack of cards. She, in essence, turns the monologue into a dialogue and reverses any arbitrariness with regards to the meaning of the cards. She establishes the margins in which they exist.

In Looking-Glass Land there is a simple case of defamiliarization when Alice is introduced to the insects of the land—the Rocking-Horse-fly, the Snap-Dragon-fly, and the Bread-and-Butter-fly (222-223). Here the simple changes in the names of the insects cause Alice to reconsider the insects and understand them in different terms. Even with these simple changes in insects' names Carroll creates new protocols for language.

The Alice books and SF works serve as contemporary mythologies that strive to break the monologisms of society through heteroglossia and the carnivalesque. They also serve as explorations of humankind's situation in technologically advancing societies. In order to do those two things, the texts must be open to the reader to enter so that the reader can live the text and gain pleasure from the text. The Alice books and SF open themselves up for the readers through the use of multiple frames which give the reader the chance to view the present from both the future and the past; and through the use of language manipulation and defamiliarization.

REVERSED GROUND RULES AND MULTIPLE FRAMES IN  
ALICE, EXPIRATION DATE, OTHERLAND, AND VURT

Reversed ground rules are key to both SF works and the Alice books because without them, there would be no way to create multiple frames. Multiple frames drive the stories and help the mythic qualities of both convey their message. The multiple frames serve to place readers in a position so that they can see themselves from new vantagepoints and perspectives. In this way the Alice books and SF text can use the future or alternate realities to explore humankind's present society and situation. The different reality is established by a reversed ground rule. Three examples of SF texts that demonstrate this are Tim Powers' Expiration Date, Tad Williams' Otherland, and Jeff Noon's Vurt.

In the Alice books, the most obvious reversed ground rule of reality is that everything in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land can speak. This reversal drives Alice's adventures. If not for everything speaking, then there would be no challenges to Alice's social mores and logic, since these challenges come from normally non-speaking

(human languages, at least) items such as flowers, eggs, cats, and rabbits. While there are other reversed ground rules in the Alice books, such as Alice's size changes, the main one that truly sets Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land apart from real life is that all creatures can speak.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is set into motion because of the White Rabbit. It is not so much that the rabbit is talking to himself that intrigues her, but the fact that the rabbit takes out a pocket watch and remarks on being late. Alice is so intrigued by this rabbit that she follows it to its hole and falls in, thus entering Wonderland. If not for the White Rabbit, Alice would ever have fallen into Wonderland.

Such reversals of ground rules serve to create multiple frames both inside and outside the texts that help drive SF stories. The first frame is that of the reader and the reader's reality. The second frame is an established textual reality. An example of the third type of frame is having a virtual world contrasted with the textual reality.

Tim Powers' Expiration Date is an example of the first type of multiple frame, that which is a multiple frame of reality. In other words, Expiration Date has two frames, the reader's frame and a textual reality that is contrasted

with the first frame. Expiration Date takes place in a contemporary America; an America that seems very real for the reader until a key ground rule is broken. In Expiration Date the ground rule broken is that ghosts do indeed exist and that there is an entire subculture that surrounds the ghosts. In this sense the ghosts are equals to the many talking creatures Alice meets on her adventures, because without the ghosts, there would be no story.

The ghosts range from confused to highly intelligent. One such intelligent ghost is Thomas Edison. His friend, Ford, saved his last breath, and thus his spirit, in a vial. Throughout the years this vial was handed down to privileged individuals for protection. Eventually it ended up in a bust of Dante in the living room of an 11-year-old boy named Kootie. In a fit of rebellion he smashes Dante, nabs the vial, and runs away. When he finds that his parents are dead, Kootie returns to the streets. Kootie is unaware of the vial's importance and while examining it, he accidentally inhales Edison's spirit.

Dropping the vial, he grabbed the steering wheel and gripped it hard, gritting his teeth, cold with sudden sweat, for he was falling with terrible speed through some kind of gulf. . .(75).

Not only is the inhalation of the spirit traumatic, but he is also innundated with Edison's memories and dreams. Eventually, Edison begins to actively take control of Kootie's mouth and body.

Throughout Expiration Date, Kootie and Edison are on the run from inhalers who want the pleasure of inhaling the two souls at once. The ghosts are, in essence, food. But they are food with a conscience. This is a direct parallel to Through the Looking Glass where at Alice's coronation she is introduced to the food. After the Red Queen introduces Alice to the Pudding, Alice decides that she, being a Queen, can cut a slice off the Pudding. The Pudding responds with:

*"I wonder how you'd like it, if I were to cut a slice out of you, you creature!" (332).*

Much like the upset Pudding, the ghosts inside an inhaler will rise up if the inhaler is weakened enough by a blockage. Also, older and wiser ghosts, such as Edison don't want to be inhaled at all, again like the Pudding and Mutton at Alice's dinner; however, what the ghosts want is of little consequence to the inhalers. Alice also demonstrates similar disregard for the food when she, as mentioned above, cuts the Pudding because she is hungry. In both Alice and Expiration Date, the existence and

behavior of non-speaking and non-existent creatures drive the stories and establish the multiple frames.

While Expiration Date is a multiple frame of reality, Tad Williams' Otherland series is an example of the second type of multiple frame, one that is both a frame of reality and contains a frame separate from both the textual reality and the reality outside the book. Otherland has three frames, the reader, the textual reality, and a frame that consists of a Virtual Reality within the text. It is the juxtaposition of Real Life (RL), the textual reality, and Virtual Reality (VR) and the characters crossing between the two that drive the story in Otherland.

Alice's journey through Wonderland seems to begin with the White Rabbit in Real Life. It isn't until she lands at the bottom of the hole and has shrunk herself using the DRINK ME bottle in an attempt to get through the little door that she realizes she has crossed over into a different reality. Like Alice drinking or eating in order to change her size to get where she wants, people in Otherland willingly and knowingly cross between RL and VR whenever the urge strikes.

The RL frame, is one of a slightly futuristic world. This is indicated by statements such as " . . .both World Wars of the previous century" ("River," 201) Since there

are no references to a Third World War, an alternate history, or an alternate world, the two World Wars give an indelible clue to the time frame. It is the 21st century, but when in the 21st century is unclear.

In this 21st century setting the Internet has grown into more than just an information outlet, VR is a way of life. To go online is called plugging in and to go off line is plugging out. Plugging in is disorienting because it is hard to adjust to VR's lack of sensation. Plugging out is a violently disorienting experience like Alice waking from her dreams. The more one plugs in, the more difficult it is to leave VR. One can literally, if one has the means and money, live in VR, never coming into direct contact with another human.

In the decades after the turn of the century, he had abandoned day-to-day use of his dying body in favor of an existence in virtual space ("River," 201)

Through the use of hydration and feeding tubes, the corporal body is kept alive while the mind is engaged in VR. Sensory nodes are used so that the person in VR can have all the sensations of RL. VR also gives an individual the capability to be anonymous or an entirely different person through the use of voice altering machines and Sims, sometimes called skins. Sims are simulated VR bodies and

depending upon equipment the body can be anyone or anything one wants.

VR is much like a dream because of the flexibility of rules, worlds, and physicality, but unlike a dream, those in VR are very aware of a difference between RL and VR. This gives people in VR a power that they don't have in RL. This power is a lack of fear. There is no fear in VR because it is not real and the individual has control over his or her actions. Because Alice can not figure out how to exit either Wonderland or Looking-Glass Land, she only knows and feels the world she's in which causes her to fear her surroundings several times.

As Alice journeys through Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land, she experiences several size changes that alter her perception of herself. Like the bodies in VR, Alice's real body is inert and sleeping in RL; yet, she fully experiences her alternate reality as though it were RL. This blurs the line between Wonderland, Looking-Glass Land and her reality (that of Victorian society and the riverbank) to the point that she believes Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land are her reality. Alice, unlike those in Otherland, can not unplug from the alternate reality or reenter it at will. She believes that where she is, is the only place she is. Alice can only be Alice (or some giant

or shrunken version) in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. Those in Otherland have the luxury of being anyone or anything they chose.

For example, one of the main characters, Xabba, uses a sim of a baboon. Another character, teenager Salome Fredericks, spends her time online as a large male. And Orlando Gardiner, a teen suffering from Progeria, a disease that causes premature aging, goes around in VR as a barbarian warrior named Thagor. Those are just a few of the myriad of Sims that an individual can don for all interactions in VR. This sort of facelessness gives unparalleled freedom for those in VR and in some cases, people in VR lose all touch with their RL selves.

He awakened in blackness. . .For a brief moment he was actually in his body and nothing else, but the horror was too much and he plunged back into his system. . .he shuddered at the thought of having to exist as he truly was ("River," 371).

VR gives such personal freedom, if not physical freedom, that people often create environments in which to live while online.

"This simulation--and all others in this entire network--are grown. The units of life begin as simple automata, organisms with very basic rules, but the more they are allowed to interact, adopt, and evolve, the more complex they become . . ."  
("City," 703).

Some of the inhabitants in these simulated worlds are real people plugged into VR called Citizens. Others are bits of data programmed to perform specific tasks. These are called Puppets. One rule in VR is that if someone is asked, "Are you a Citizen or Puppet?" one must answer honestly. Of course, since Puppets are nothing but data they are programmed to respond. The Citizens are able to move freely throughout VR.

Alice in the Alice books is a Citizen, while certain denizens of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land (for example, the Mad Hatter, March Hare, Caterpillar, White Rabbit, Tweedle Dee and Dum, and the Flowers) are Puppets because they perform very specific functions that don't alter. They have limited memories of the past and rarely speak of a future. They live in a perpetual present. Other denizens, such as the Queen of Hearts, the Chess Pieces of Looking-Glass Land, and the Chesire Cat, operate as though they are Citizens because they demonstrate an awareness above that of the other characters, even though they don't seem aware of a difference in worlds. The awareness of a difference between RL and an alternate world is what enables people to have ultimate freedom, such as in Otherland's VR.

Of course, human nature being what it is, there are those who foresee VR as a means of immortality, a way of saving the soul and brain on an electronic network. These people form the Grail Brotherhood and spend obscene amounts of money to perfect their goals. Unfortunately, their experiment results in an unstable system in which the average net user is trapped and unable to unplug from the system. And while the body remains suspended in RL, the soul, so to speak, inhabits its sim in VR as though it was RL. If the individual dies in VR, they die in RL either through a heart attack or cerebral hemorrhage. When those trapped in VR attempt to unplug, it results in excruciating pain. The body in RL goes into a coma-like state. The family of the individual puts them in a hospital, hoping for a miracle, not realizing that the mind is trapped online.

Orlando bit his lip hard, and as he felt it sting, suddenly wondered how much of his virtual behavior the suppressor circuits in his neurocannular implant were actually suppressing in RL. Was he biting his real lip right now? What if his family, or the hospital people were actually listening to all the things he was saying, watching all the things he was doing? ("River," 212).

As the story goes on, it becomes more and more difficult for the characters to remember that somewhere in RL, there is a body waiting for their return. Also, the longer they

are trapped in VR, the more realistic the sims become-- instead of merely fading away after dying, there are blood and guts and the body remains. It is at this point that fear begins to manifest and those in VR become even more like Alice in Wonderland.

For Alice in Wonderland, there is a fear of death. In Wonderland both the Queen and King of Hearts threaten individuals with execution.

*Alice began to feel very uneasy: to be sure, she had not as yet had any dispute with the Queen, but she knew that it might happen at any minute, "and then," thought she, "what would become of me? They're dreadfully fond of beheading people here: the great wonder is, that there's any one left alive?" (112).*

Eventually, Alice is threatened with beheading during the trial of the Knave of Hearts, but Alice by that time has control over her body and her mind and she escapes Wonderland. It is this sort of control that those in VR are supposed to have the entire time they are plugged in.

In Otherland, people are trapped in an alternate state, but they are aware of the difference between VR and RL. In Jeff Noon's Vurt, it is hard to distinguish between Real Life and Vurt (short for virtual reality). Vurt is also a type of the second multiple frame, but the textual reality barely resembles the reality outside the book. The drudgery of day-to-day life in Vurt has resulted in the

creation of feathers, which give access to Vurt, a movie, game, drug, and dream all wrapped in one.

"Inside a dream you have no knowledge of the waking world. It is the same with Vurt" (32). Entering Vurt is like Alice entering Looking-Glass Land. Outside of Looking-Glass Land, Alice is aware of the fact that there are two worlds, her RL and Looking-Glass Land. Inside Looking-Glass Land and Wonderland her awareness becomes blurred. When she lands in Wonderland, Alice attempts to remember the poem "Against Idleness and Mischief" which begins: "How doth the little bee . . ." What comes out is "How doth the little crocodile . . ." This example indicates that Alice is aware of two worlds, but her ability to truly remember her RL is difficult. She has vague recollections of how things operate in her RL, but when confronted or questioned by those in Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land, she is easily confused. In this sense, Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land are dreams. This is also the way of Vurt.

"It has been calculated that one night can hold six dreams only" (43). There are six feathers to represent each dream--blue, black, pink, cream, silver, and yellow. Blue, black, pink, and silver feathers have a feature called a "jerk-out" which is literally pulling oneself out

of a Vurt trip. Yellow feathers, the color of death do not have this feature. "The only way out is to finish the game" (43).

Like unplugging in Otherland, jerking out is a violent, disorienting experience, one to be avoided in favor of finishing the game. But the jerkout feature is included because sometimes the trips are too intense. If a group is tripping together, one pulling out pulls everyone out.

It is one of the knowledge feathers, a rare illegal feather composed of all the colors, named English Voodoo that starts the story of Vurt. Scrib, the main character, lost his sister Desdemona while on an English Voodoo trip. Within Vurt there is an exchange rate between RL and Vurt. The formula is: Exchange  $-R + V \pm H$ . R stands for the RL object. V is the Vurt object. H is Hobart's constant " . . . any given worth of reality can only be swapped for the equivalent worth of virtuality plus or minus .267125 of the original worth" (63). However, the worth is not material. It's dependent upon the worth of the object to the individual.

The most obvious way to make an exchange is to return to the exact Vurt the object was lost in and swap the Vurt object for the RL object. Unfortunately for Scrib, he

can't find another English Voodoo, so he can't find his sister.

Scrib and his friends, Beetle, Mandy, and Bridget search all over Manchester for an English Voodoo. Along the way they meet Tristan and Suze. Tristan is the Game Cat's brother. He lost Game Cat in a Curious Yellow and found Suze in return. This story resonates with Scrib, who desperately wants his sister back. Tristan, unlike Scrib, never went back for his brother.

Game Cat wants Scrib to become a permanent denizen of Vurt. At first Scrib resists, but eventually he gives himself to Vurt in order to free Desdemona. Scrib becomes a Vurt scribe, an apprentice of the Game Cat. If Alice had been able to stay a Queen in Looking-Glass Land, it's entirely possible that she, like Scrib, would have become an integral part of Looking-Glass Land.

Maybe you're reading it now.  
 Or maybe you're playing the feather.  
 Or maybe you're in the feather, thinking that  
 you're reading the novel, with no way of knowing  
 . . .(341).

Multiple frames are created by reversed ground rules such as the existence of ghosts, the ability to live in VR, or to take a trip using a flower. These frames exist both inside and outside the text. This gives readers new perspectives and allows them to explore the present from a

different vantagepoint. By doing so, readers are able to obtain the text's message without being entirely constrained by the text. Expiration Date, Otherland, and Vurt exhibit these qualities.

LINGUISTIC GAMES IN THE ALICE BOOKS,  
SNOW CRASH, 1984, AND A CLOCKWORK ORANGE

SF explores humankind's relationship to society and a main component of society is language. Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash, George Orwell's 1984, and Anthony Burgess' A Clockwork Orange highlight the struggle of the individual in a highly technologized world and how language also conforms to technology. In a hi-tech society language functions as code and the population is merely the programmable. Even though Carroll was writing before SF had established itself as a genre, he too is exploring how language can be used to program members of society.

Both the Alice books and SF texts are exercises in fighting against monologism, a single-voiced discourse ". . . that recognizes only itself and its object, discourse that does not recognize other people's words" (Zappen, 3). The transmission of knowledge and thought flows in only one direction. But because the Alice books and SF works are explorations of humankind in society, they showcase individuals, or groups, who are fighting against monologism.

In the Alice books, the reader witnesses several forms of linguistic manipulation. Right after falling down the rabbit hole, Alice realizes she doesn't know who she is anymore. She tries to remember all the things she should know, hoping to restore her identity.

*" . . .let's try Geography. London is the capital of Paris, and Paris is the capital of Rome, and Rome. . .no, that's all wrong, I'm certain!" (38).*

This is classic defamiliarization. In Real Life (RL), Alice probably knows her Geography, certainly she knows of what country London is the capital. But her inability to remember is a case of defamiliarization for her because these are things she should know. This also defamiliarizes the reader who has no idea where Alice is or what has caused her to forget simple Geography. This is just one of the many examples of linguistic games that Carroll plays with both the reader and Alice.

The games fall into two broad categories: defamiliarization and manipulation of the meanings of words. Both defamiliarization and manipulating words are used to slow readers down and make them accept the text. Three examples of SF texts that exemplify these traits are Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash, which uses defamiliarization; George Orwell's 1984 which contains both defamiliarization and manipulation of meaning; and Anthony Burgess' A

Clockwork Orange which is a masterful exploration of the manipulation of the meaning of words.

Neal Stephenson's Snow Crash, takes place in a futuristic America, but Stephenson's America is broken up into corporate franchises called Burbclaves, also known as Franchise-Organized Quasi-national Entities (FOQNE's), each of which have their own rules, customs, and security. They have names like Metazania, New South Africa, Narcolombia, and Mr. Lee's Greater Hong Kong (45). This is simple defamiliarization--renaming things familiar to readers in order to disorient them, but Stephenson goes even farther than just renaming parts of America, he takes defamiliarization to the language itself.

Snow Crash is also the name of a meta-virus that attacks both biologically and linguistically. The biological spread of Snow Crash can be handled with modern medicine, but the linguistic aspect proves to be a problem. The meta-virus causes all infected individuals to speak the same language. It sounds like speaking in tongues. If left unchecked, the virus creates "mental stagnation and general intellectual malaise" ("Snow Crash," 2). Snow Crash is not a new virus. It has roots deep in history and myth.

Humans have two languages wired into their brains-- acquired language, or the spoken language, and a linguistic infrastructure that can be accessed at only the right time. It manifests itself as Glossolalia. This second type of language bypasses acquired languages. Snow Crash bypasses the brain as it is absorbed through the eyes or ears and it is able to tie directly into the infrastructure of the human brain and pass the higher modes of language. The infected begins to babble in a new language without really knowing why and only those also infected can understand the babble.

Speaking words without knowing why is also found in the Alice books. When Alice is speaking with the Caterpillar, it asks her to repeat "You Are Old Father William." She finds it difficult to remember the words. The real first verse of the poem is:

"You are old, father William," the  
                   young man cried,  
 "the few locks which are left you  
 are grey;  
 You are hale, father William, a  
 hearty old man;  
 Now tell me the reason, I pray."

What comes out of Alice's mouth is:

"You are old, father William," the young man  
                   said,  
 "And your hair has become very white;  
 And yet you incessantly stand on your head--"

Do you think, at your age, it is right?" (70). The entire poem comes out altered like this. Alice is not sure why the words come out wrong because she once knew "You Are Old Father William." It is as though her brain's been reprogrammed without her knowledge, just like those struck down with the Snow Crash virus.

A librarian for the Library of Congress, Lagos, figured out what the meta-virus was and how to use it. He gave the idea to a businessman named L. Bob Rife.

"He figured out with a little venture capital, this neurolinguistic hacking could be developed as a new technology that would enable Rife to maintain possession of information that had passed into the brains of his programmers" (403).

This knowledge may not be known to the programmers, it has seeped into their circuitry, again like Alice and her inability to remember the above world. By accessing this latent information, Rife sees a way to control the technological elite in order to make himself a king of sorts. Once the hackers and programmers are under his control, it's only a matter of time before he can bring the world under his control through programming.

In Stephenson's America, the virus has found a perfect way to spread itself. It does this through the Internet, or Metaverse. An agent of the virus displays the virus on a scroll. The scroll seemingly just contains code,

but intertwined with that data is the virus. It is directly transferred to the victim's mind, breaking down their language into simple Sumerian syllables. Religion is a fantastic way to spread the meta-virus because people are not used to thoroughly thinking through religion. It is something that seeps into a passive brain; therefore, an insidious religious mantra is an excellent way to subtly transmit the virus.

Alice, being a good Victorian girl, enters Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land programmed to act a certain way. She has certain social etiquette and practices that she carries into Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land with her. Her programming is in direct contrast with the programming of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land; from the moment she lands in either land, her programming begins to change to fit in more with the land she's in. This happens without her awareness and she only realizes when directly asked to remember or recite something previously programmed in her. This is the way Snow Crash works, by insidiously reprogramming the brain of the infected.

Two programmers, Hiro and Juanita, have figured out how to stop the spread of Snow Crash. By using an ancient language called "me" that was used to transmit simple knowledge, such as how to make bread, they can reprogram

the infected. If those who are affected by Snow Crash are subjected to the me, the me will reprogram their infrastructure and release them from the meta-virus. This is in essence repeating the Tower of Babel myth.

Instead of creating a tower, in Snow Crash, all the infected join a religious cult that lives on rafts off the coast of the US, and the virus is ended by being blown up. Rife's desire to control information was a desire to create a monologism, to erase competition by purposefully denying the voices of others. The monologism in this case was not successful, however, because too few were inflicted with the virus and brought under the control of the monologism. To create a successful monologism, one must bring a significant portion of the population under its control, as in 1984.

In George Orwell's 1984, there is yet another kind of defamiliarization, the continual altering of information which helps create a one-way transmission of thought and knowledge.

All history was a palimpsest, scraped clean and reinscribed exactly as often as was necessary. In no case would it have been possible, once the deed was done, to prove that any falsification had taken place (36-7)

The people of 1984 accept without question these continual slippage of facts because it is easier than trying to keep

a hold of one's memories. The main character of 1984, Winston, is one whose mind is not so easily contained and he struggles to remember things beyond the rhetoric of the Party.

The Party and its figurehead, Big Brother, is in control of all history, art, literature, and thought. They alternate wars between two other countries--Eastasia and Eurasia, but the public thinks it has always been at war with one. This is because within the confines of the Party, at the Ministry of Truth where Winston works, history is constantly being reshaped and rewritten so that the Party looks infallible.

Actually, as Winston well knew, it was only four years since Oceania had been at war with Eastasia and in alliance with Eurasia. But that was merely a piece of furtive knowledge which he happened to possess because his memory was not satisfactorily under control. Officially the change of partners had never happened. Oceania was at war with Eurasia: therefore Oceania had always been at war with Eurasia ( ).

This use of defamiliarization helps the Party's monologism remain intact as it brings all of Oceania's inhabitants under its control. To control knowledge is to control the mind, something the Party excels at. When everyone is in agreement about the facts, no matter how manipulated they are, then there is no fear of rupturing the monologism.

This makes Winston dangerous to the Party as it puts him in danger from the Party because he is not completely under the control of the monologism, much like Alice is a free radical in the worlds of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land.

In Wonderland, to disagree or upset the Queen of Hearts is to risk at the very least a trial where the sentencing comes before evidence, but more likely one risks losing his or her head. In Looking-Glass Land the Red queen informs Alice that it is quite impossible for Alice to have lost her way since "all ways about here belong to me. . ." (206). Wonderland, Looking-Glass Land and the world of 1984 all operate as monologic discourses with all thought and rules belonging to one source and all transmission flowing in one direction. There is little to no room for disagreement with the powers that be.

One way the Party attempts to nullify history and memories is through the spread of Newspeak, a pared down vocabulary that consists of language designed ". . .to make all other modes of thought impossible" (246). Newspeak is designed so that people will say exactly what they mean.

Each reduction was a gain, since the smaller the area of choice, the smaller the temptation to take thought. Ultimately, it was hoped to make articulate speech issue from the larynx without involving the higher brain center at all (254).

Newspeak eradicates all traces of all meanings and voices in words and replaces them with only one meaning and one voice, that of the Party. It is impossible to think outside the bounds of Newspeak and outside the bounds of the Party. Newspeak is the ultimate stable language, lacking any nuances, subtleties, and expression in transmission.

In Wonderland, Alice experiences similar demands of linguistic stability in her confrontation with the Mad Hatter who aptly tells her that meaning what she says is not the same thing as saying what she means. With Newspeak, there is no distinction between intent and speech; they are one in the same since "All ambiguities and shades of meaning had been purged out of them" (247). Newspeak will not only take away thought outside of Newspeak, but in tandem with the Party's rewriting of history, Newspeak will erase memories.

Winston has vague memories of things prior to the Party's various decrees; but he is ultimately powerless against the monologic dialogue.

He tried to squeeze out some childhood memory that should tell him whether London had always been quite like this. . . But it was no use, he could not remember: nothing remained of his childhood except a series of bright-lit tableaux occurring against no background and mostly unintelligible (7).





































