“The Hunting of the Snark” - a Victorian predator? Now you see him, now you don’t!

"Alice had been to the seaside once in her life, and had come to the general conclusion, that wherever you go to on the English coast you find a number of bathing machines in the sea, some children digging in the sand with wooden spades, then a row of lodging houses, and behind them a railway station." (‘Alice's Adventures In Wonderland’)

Or, more properly speaking, in Alice Liddell's case, the Welsh coast, and several times come to that! Visiting Llandudno recently and walking over the Great Orme with its craggy limestone headland jutting dramatically out into the Irish Sea, put me in mind of Lewis Carroll and his supposed connections with the place. Certainly, when looking out from Llandudno's West Shore at the Conway River's estuary at low tide, one could well picture his imagination being inspired by the very wide sweep of sand, stretching across to Penmaenmawr and far out, towards Anglesey and Puffin Island:

The Walrus and the Carpenter
Were walking close at hand;
They wept like anything to see
Such quantities of sand:
If this were only cleared away,'
They said, it would be grand!'

If seven maids with seven mops
Swept it for half a year,
Do you suppose,' the Walrus said,
That they could get it clear?'
I doubt it,' said the Carpenter,
And shed a bitter tear.

Llandudno's West Shore

There is no evidence, however, that Charles Dodgson ever visited Llandudno, though it is entirely possible that little Alice Liddell talked to him about her family's favourite holiday spot. She first visited the town at the age of 8 in 1861, before Carroll embarked on the rowing boat adventure that would produce *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* in November 1864. Her father was Dean of Christchurch College, Oxford, and the family stayed at Tudno Villa in North Parade, though later they had their own house built, Pen Morfa, under the Great Orme. Unfortunately, that house no longer exists, though Tudno Villa has since become the very luxurious St Tudno Hotel.

In our contemporary world with its high priorities for the protection of children and the zealous hunting down of paedophiles and sex abusers, there would quite rightly now be no tolerance at all for the relatively innocent activities of Charles Dodgson. I say ‘relatively innocent’, because there is no conclusive evidence (* but see the very end…!) that he

molested or abused little girls, or that his "friendships" with them led to any actual harm, other than that of being the recipients of lots of unctuously sentimental letters and acrostics from an Oxford don whose sense of humour (in contrast to the caustic wit of Lewis Carroll, the writer) in the letters to his child "friends", was, well, just a bit…silly! Alice herself stayed in touch with him in later life and Victorian mothers even queued up (metaphorically speaking) to let Charles Dodgson (the ceebrated photographer of no less a little "girl" than Queen Victoria in person) photograph their little daughters, quite often "artistically" unclothed, according to the fashion of the time. 'What… *innocence*!' we might now exclaim.

And innocence as a notion is wryly held up to scrutiny in the works of Lewis Carroll.

"'Oh, you can't help that,' said the Cat: 'we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.'
'How do you know I'm mad?' said Alice.
'You must be,' said the Cat, 'or you wouldn't have come here.'"

Alice *is* perfectly innocent, touchingly so – yet her innocence is continually preyed on, derided, ridiculed and subverted, time and again, by the humans and the creatures she encounters through the good offices, *not* of Charles Dodgson, but of his *alter ego*, Lewis Carroll. All the characters seem united in their efforts to break down Alice's childlike rational and logical expectations, as, for example, in an exchange between Alice and the White Queen in *Through the Looking Glass*:

'It's very good jam,' said the Queen.
'Well, I don't want any TO-DAY, at any rate.'
'You couldn't have it if you DID want it,' the Queen said. 'The rule is, jam to-morrow and jam yesterday—but never jam to-day.'
'It MUST come sometimes to "jam to-day",' Alice objected.
'No, it can't,' said the Queen. 'It's jam every OTHER day: to-day isn't any OTHER day, you know.'
'I don't understand you,' said Alice. 'It's dreadfully confusing!'
'That's the effect of living backwards,' the Queen said kindly: 'it always makes one a little giddy at first—'
'Living backwards!' Alice repeated in great astonishment. 'I never heard of such a thing!'
'—but there's one great advantage in it, that one's memory works both ways.'
I'm sure MINE only works one way,' Alice remarked. 'I can't remember things before they happen.'
'It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards,' the Queen remarked.

Reading the two Alice books is always a strangely dislocating experience, not just because of the disparity between the identities of Charles Dodgson and Lewis Carroll. On the one hand, there is the comic absurdity of Alice's encounters with weirdly adult characters, both animals and humans. They are often peremptory, like the Cheshire Cat above, or confessional (the Mock Turtle), or teasingly cryptic and obtuse. There is sheer delight in illogicality, which has its own remorseless rationale (like the White Queen living time backward in *Alice Through the Looking Glass*). While on the other hand, of course, there is a darker surrealism at play here, too. There are drugs (labelled "Drink Me" or "Take Me"), which transform the little girl psychedelically – before the term was coined - into physically fantastic shapes and contortions. There is violence, implied or real, round every corner (Tweedledum's and Tweedledee's "battle", the Mad Hatter's Tea Party, which ends with the

upending of the dormouse into the tapot, or the Queen of Hearts, obsessed with beheading everybody in sight - (*"Off with his head!);* child abuse (with the Duchess and the baby – *"Speak roughly to your little boy and beat him when he sneezes…"*).

There is also pure horror, with the Jabberwock, a monster who is himself successfully beheaded in *Looking Glass*. Dodgson sent John Tenniel's illustration to prospective mothers to see if it was not too nghtmarish. Sex? Don't forget that this was all long before Freud and his interest in dreams and the unconscious. We have a white rabbit falling down a deep hole. Alice's neck is transformed into a thick, phallic "serpent". Child cannibalism? One could read "The Walrus and the Carpenter" in *Looking Glass* as a very darkly sinister tale indeed - two strange beings, on a beach, befriend some innocent little child-oysters and invite them to go on a walk, befuddle them with their melancholic obfuscations and black humour, before eventually (and regretfully) eating them.

And yet, and yet… The stories *can* also be read as a form of empowerment. Alice, the meek and demure little girl, learns to stand up for herself, answer back and finally to flatten the deck of cards in the court scene. From being a pawn, literally, in *Through the Looking Glass* she becomes a queen, in the game of chess that runs beneath the "Looking Glass" adventures. It seems to me that close readings of the stoies and poems will reveal a hall of mirrors, where concealment is just as likely as disclosure. Characters use nonsense all the time to hide behind: to disconcert, to disarm, but also to challenge and subvert. Very often, it is 'identity' which is being challenged. *"Who are you?"* says the Caterpillar, disparagingly. *"What's your name child?"* asks the Queen of Hearts, imperiously. Reassuringly, Alice, the child, becomes more confident and resistant, as she develops in both the stories.

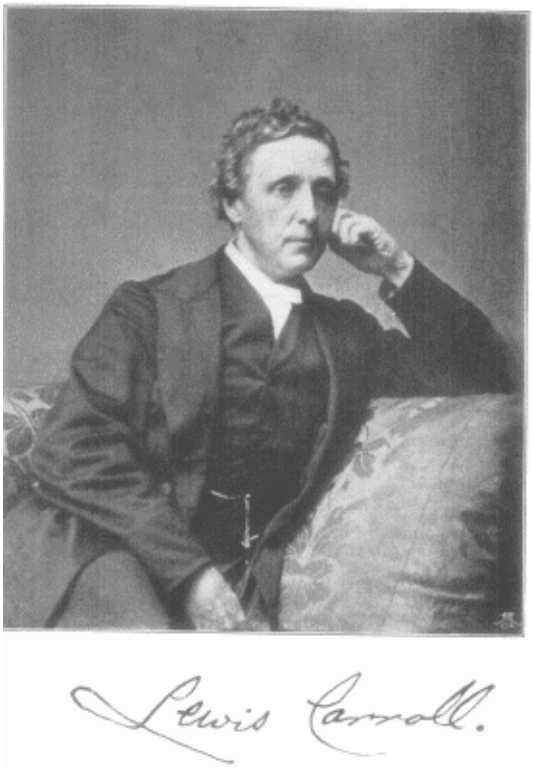
Lorina and Alice Liddell

Children love *and* fear subversion. Testing the parameters of the grown up world is, of course what growing up is all about. These parameters can seem (and may also be) arbitrary and illogical. Children are trained from an early age to be duplicitous, aren't they, ("Don't let on to your grandparents that you don't LIKE the present…"), while being taught to be honest and truthful? Carroll's world moves around just such paradoxical situations, exploiting adult double standards or hypocrisies and subverting the "normal" world: 'How the creatures order one about, and make one repeat lessons!' thought Alice; 'I might as well be at school at once.' The subversions Alice is exposed to harden her to

this world; she is no longer in a pool of her own tears at the end. As in Roald Dahl's stories, bullying, cheating, sadism and manipulation are taken much for granted and form the warp and weft of the stories.

If one were to search for more sinister motives or strategies in Dodgson's worlds, one would perhaps pause on ideas of entrapment, games playing (card games, chess games, word games, parodies, battles, even trials, tea parties – in short, 'life as games playing' with rules and winners), manipulation, "grooming" (can one really use this word in a Victorian context?) and quite arbitrary befriendings. But I would still argue that such stuff (laughed away with humour that is itself ambiguous, double-edged and carefully nuanced) is what makes these works important as *literature*.

Lewis Carroll is surely an important precursor of twentieth century modernism. Fragmentation, experimentation, dream worlds, pre-Freudian investigations of the unconscious, uncertain narrators (what exactly is Dodgson/Carroll's game?), constant questioning, parody and subversion of genres, games playing – much of what we have come to expect in modernist fictions from writers like Beckett, Kafka, Nabokov, Borges or Gabriel Garcia Marques, we see in Lewis Carroll. There is often a fine balance in the writing between concealment and disclosure. The characters and Alice talk, but what is said often conceals as much as it reveals. One might well expect such devious manipulations from someone who clearly had an attraction for little girls, an attraction that might have been not as wholly innocent, nor as wholly "artistically" pure as he let himself think.



The narrator in both works who is Lewis Carroll, a mischievous author rather than Charles Dodgson, the disinterested logician and upright Fellow of Christ Church College, Oxford, is clearly fascinated by Alice, and in a sense he is 'stalking' her in both novels. On one level, as an adult, cleverer, more experienced, and an initiator, the narrator, through his characters, seems impregnable and indeed the nonsense works to protect *him*, the narrator. He stays well hidden behind his paradoxes and riddles. His tone is gently naïve, too, and sympathetic. He understands Alice and knows what she is thinking. But there is a double game being played out. How better to fascinate and attract children than to tease them, tantalise them, make them laugh? Or should that read: 'make US laugh' - to see them so confused… crying, even? The narrator is playing with *us*, also, although we should question whether we as readers are reacting like children or like conniving adults, complicit in this harsh bullying of a small girl. It's a complicated picture all right!

There is, however, one area, where Lewis Carroll, more vulnerably, reveals a private uncertainty, where he shows, unconsciously perhaps, a deep source of anxiety, which he first transfers to Alice and later explores in another way in *The Hunting of the Snark*, published not long after the two Alice books. The anxiety is connected with the recurring motif of a loss of

identity, or even total (and mysterious) disappearance. In the twentieth century, this sense of *anomie* – of a breakdown in society and culture leading to a loss of moral identity, through war or social disruption caused by city life and industrialisation, was later to be explored by writers like Freud, Kafka, Sartre, Camus, Beckett and others. In the biography by his nephew, Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, a letter to a Miss Paine is quoted, showing Dodgson's uneasy integration of his writing persona, Lewis Carroll:

> *Christ Church, Oxford,*
> *March 8, 1880.*
>
> *I am very unwilling, usually, to give my photograph, for I don't want people, who have heard of Lewis Carroll, to be able to recognise him in the street—but I can't refuse Ada. Will you kindly take care, if any of your ordinary acquaintances (I don't speak of intimate friends) see it, that they are not told anything about the name of "Lewis Carroll"?*

An anxiety about identity, then, starts in *Wonderland* with the accusatory interrogation by the Caterpillar, *"Who are you?",* directed at Alice, who is by now very unsure of who she is. Later on, the Pigeon continues the assault:

> *'But I'm not a serpent, I tell you!' said Alice. 'I'm a—I'm a—'*
> *'Well! What are you?' said the Pigeon. 'I can see you're trying to invent something!'*
> *'I—I'm a little girl,' said Alice, rather doubtfully, as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through that day.*
> *'A likely story indeed!' said the Pigeon in a tone of the deepest contempt. 'I've seen a good many little girls in my time, but never one with such a neck as that! "No, no! You're a serpent; and there's no use denying it. I suppose you'll be telling me next that you never tasted an egg!'*

It is in the trial scene in *Wonderland* that we see this anxiety developed further with the jurors:

> *'They're putting down their names,' the Gryphon whispered in reply, 'for fear they should forget them before the end of the trial.'*

And at the end of Chapter XI *Who Stole the Tarts*? , we are left with the blunt assertion that *"…the cook had disappeared."* This disappearance is not commented upon, but let us bear it in mind. If we move to *Through the Looking Glass*, we note in particular an anxiety about loss of identity in Chapter III, *Looking Glass Insects*.

> *"She very soon came to an open field, with a wood on the other side of it: it looked much darker than the last wood, and Alice felt a LITTLE timid about going into it. However, on second thoughts, she made up her mind to go on: 'for I certainly won't go BACK,' she thought to herself, and this was the only way to the Eighth Square.*
>
> *"'This must be the wood,' she said thoughtfully to herself, 'where things have no names. I wonder what'll become of MY name when I go in? I shouldn't like to lose it at all—because they'd have to give me another, and it would be almost certain to be an ugly one. But then the fun would be trying to find the creature that had got my old name!"*

Luckily, there is the Fawn at hand to help her:

"So they walked on together though the wood, Alice with her arms clasped lovingly round the soft neck of the Fawn, till they came out into another open field, and here the Fawn gave a sudden bound into the air, and shook itself free from Alice's arms. 'I'm a Fawn!' it cried out in a voice of delight, 'and, dear me! you're a human child!' A sudden look of alarm came into its beautiful brown eyes, and in another moment it had darted away at full speed.

Alice stood looking after it, almost ready to cry with vexation at having lost her dear little fellow-traveller so suddenly. 'However, I know my name now.' she said, 'that's SOME comfort. Alice—Alice—I won't forget it again. And now, which of these finger-posts ought I to follow, I wonder?'"

It is in this same dark wood that the two ridiculous brothers fight their battle. They are like twins, with no real identities other than the labels DUM on one and DEE on the other. Yet, they succeed in making poor Alice feel even more insecure about her identity, telling her that she is simply part of the Red King's dream (he is asleep nearby).

"'You won't make yourself a bit realler by crying,' Tweedledee remarked: 'there's nothing to cry about.'
'If I wasn't real,' Alice said—half-laughing through her tears, it all seemed so ridiculous—'I shouldn't be able to cry.'
'I hope you don't suppose those are real tears?' Tweedledum interrupted in a tone of great contempt.
'I know they're talking nonsense,' Alice thought to herself: 'and it's foolish to cry about it.'"

We jump forward a few years now to 1876 and the publication of *The Hunting of the Snark*, which was apparently inspired by the other most important child friend in his life (after Alice Liddell), Gertrude Chataway, whom he met as he holidayed by the sea at Sandown in the Isle of Wight, and with whom he continued to correspond until she was in her twenties. The narrative poem starts with a typically maudlin (and nauseatingly sentimental) double acrostic poem on Gertrude Chataway's name, extolling the joys of winning childhood "hearts" such as hers. But there is nothing overly sentimental about the narrative poem itself - in "Eight Fits" - which constitutes the main poem. (We are reminded of the wordplay on the word "fit" which occurred in *Wonderland):*

'Why, there they are!' said the King triumphantly, pointing to the tarts on the table. 'Nothing can be clearer than that. Then again – "before she had this fit" - *you never had fits, my*

dear, I think?' he said to the Queen.

'Never!' said the Queen furiously, throwing an inkstand at the Lizard as she spoke. (The unfortunate little Bill had left off writing on his slate with one finger, as he found it made no mark; but he now hastily began again, using the ink, that was trickling down his face, as long as it lasted.)

'Then the words don't fit you,' said the King, looking round the court with a smile. There was a dead silence.

'It's a pun!' the King added in an offended tone, and everybody laughed.

Girt with a boyish garb for boyish task,
Eager she wields her spade—yet loves as well
Rest on a friendly knee, the tale to ask
That he delights to tell.

Rude spirits of the seething outer strife,
Unmeet to read her pure and simple spright,
Deem, if you list, such hours a Waste of life,
Empty of all delight!

Chant on, sweet maid, and rescue from annoy
Hearts that by wiser talk are unbeguiled!
Ah, happy he who owns that tenderest joy,
The heart-love of a child!

Away, fond thoughts, and vex my soul no more!
Work claims my wakeful nights, my busy days;
Albeit bright memories of that sunlit shore
Yet haunt my dreaming gaze!

The poem itself is a comic voyage or quest, absurdly nonsensical and based on a "hunt" for a *"Snark"*. It is written as a ballad in a light hearted tone of voice which seems to poke fun at the typical Victorian tales of derring-do on the high seas: finding new lands, seeking weird creatures and facing the perils of exploration, all with typical British resolve and good humour. This was an age which extolled such maritime adventures and which could read Tennyson's *Ulysses* (published 1842) without noticing all the ironies (Charles Dodgson was a great reader, apparently, of Tennyson). For six weeks in 1874, Dodgson had been under some stress, as he had been nursing Charlie Wilcox, a younger cousin of his, who was struggling with tuberculosis. It was at this time, after an early morning walk, that the final line of the poem came to him. There has also been speculation that it was linked to the sudden death of his beloved uncle, Robert Lutwidge, who was an inspector of lunatic asylums. He was killed in 1873 by one of the inmates of an asylum he was visiting.

At all events, Lewis Carroll started with the last line of the poem ("For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.") and then wrote backwards to recount the events that led up to this declaration. The poem, brilliantly illustrated by Henry Holiday, starts by detailing the various characters, who have been drawn together on this surreal voyage. There is a Bellman, who is also the captain and there is a crew, who are made up of eight others, unnamed tradesmen, also beginning with the letter B: a Boots, a Bonnet-Maker, a Barrister, a Broker, a Billiard-Marker, a Banker, a Baker and a Butcher. The Baker is,

perhaps, the most disturbing character, for he has forgotten his name. The crew, apparently, call him anything that comes into their heads: “Fry me”, “Fritter my wig!”, “Candle ends” or “Toasted cheese”. He forgets everything, including the 42 boxes with his name on, which he left behind on the beach. He makes up for this by his “courag”. He is either so brave or else so stupid, that he once went “*'paw in paw with a bear'*”, “*'Just to keep up his spirits', he said.*”

So, the story wends its absurd way on its phantasmagorical journey. We don't know *why* it is important to find the Snark nor *what* we should fear. The *“Fits”* suggest madness and dysfunctionality. There is a lot of humour developed around debates between members of the crew. The Butcher and the Beaver become friends after having been very wary of each other; the Banker is attacked by a bandersnatch and goes mad, after having tried to bribe it. But it is the Baker (or *“the man they called 'Hi!'”*) who warns them of the real danger which lurks behind their quest:

“A dear uncle of mine (after whom I was named)
Remarked, when I bade him farewell—“
“Oh, skip your dear uncle!” the Bellman exclaimed,
As he angrily tingled his bell.

“He remarked to me then," said that mildest of men,
“'If your Snark be a Snark, that is right:
Fetch it home by all means—you may serve it with greens,
And it's handy for striking a light.

"'You may seek it with thimbles—and seek it with care;
You may hunt it with forks and hope;
You may threaten its life with a railway-share;
You may charm it with smiles and soap—'”

(“That's exactly the method,” the Bellman bold
In a hasty parenthesis cried,
“That's exactly the way I have always been told
That the capture of Snarks should be tried!”)

“'But oh, beamish nephew, beware of the day,
If your Snark be a Boojum! For then
You will softly and suddenly vanish away,
And never be met with again!'”

Charles Luttwidge Dodgson, also, was named after an uncle and we note the reference back - the word “beamish”, which Carroll made up in the earlier poem on another monster, the nightmarish Jabberwock. Other words, like “uffish”, “mimsiest”, “Bandersnatch” or “the Jubjub bird” refer directly back to this poem (with the terrifying Tenniel illustration, don't forget!). The Jabberwock is beheaded and the head is brought back to a father figure, who expresses delight at what his “son” has achieved: “Come to my arms, my beamish boy!” Interestingly, in *Jabberwocky*, although there are lots of named animals and creatures, the boy and his father stay unidentified and nameless.

Later, in *The Hunting of the Snark*, the Barrister dreams that the Snark is another barrister defending a pig for having deserted his sty. When the case becomes too difficult for the judge, the Snark takes over:

"You must know—" said the Judge: but the Snark exclaimed "Fudge!
That statute is obsolete quite!
Let me tell you, my friends, the whole question depends
On an ancient manorial right.

"In the matter of Treason the pig would appear
To have aided, but scarcely abetted:
While the charge of Insolvency fails, it is clear,
If you grant the plea 'never indebted.'

"The fact of Desertion I will not dispute;
But its guilt, as I trust, is removed
(So far as relates to the costs of this suit)
By the Alibi which has been proved.

"My poor client's fate now depends on your votes."
Here the speaker sat down in his place,
And directed the Judge to refer to his notes
And briefly to sum up the case.

But the Judge said he never had summed up before;
So the Snark undertook it instead,
And summed it so well that it came to far more
Than the Witnesses ever had said!

The Snark, then, is thought to be highly intelligent, manipulative even, and is involved in trials, proving or disproving guilt, convictions and sentencing, clever enough to be barrister or judge. There is unease, to say the least, as the poem moves to its climactic "Fit", after mathematics has been invoked by the Butcher, called in to help deal with the Jubjub bird, which is somehow linked to the Snark.

"Taking Three as the subject to reason about—
A convenient number to state—
We add Seven, and Ten, and then multiply out
By One Thousand diminished by Eight.

"The result we proceed to divide, as you see,
By Nine Hundred and Ninety and Two:
Then subtract Seventeen, and the answer must be
Exactly and perfectly true.

"The method employed I would gladly explain,
While I have it so clear in my head,
If I had but the time and you had but the brain—
But much yet remains to be said.

"In one moment I've seen what has hitherto been
Enveloped in absolute mystery,
And without extra charge I will give you at large
A Lesson in Natural History."

The answer to the teasingly complicated sum is simply Three, which is the number comically insisted upon by the Bellman, their Captain. The end is, perhaps, inevitable. The Baker, who cannot remember his name, finds the fearsome beast, the Snark, who, it turns out, WAS a Boojum! The identity of the Snark (as a Boojum) is revealed, but the Baker pays the price by being *disappeared* (to use a phrase from *Catch 22*, a novel from a later age, also dealing in *anomie* with equally surrealistic and darkly paradoxical humour….)

"There is Thingumbob shouting!" the Bellman said,
"He is shouting like mad, only hark!
He is waving his hands, he is wagging his head,
He has certainly found a Snark!"

They gazed in delight, while the Butcher exclaimed
"He was always a desperate wag!"
They beheld him—their Baker—their hero unnamed—
On the top of a neighbouring crag,

Erect and sublime, for one moment of time,
In the next, that wild figure they saw
(As if stung by a spasm) plunge into a chasm,
While they waited and listened in awe.

"It's a Snark!" was the sound that first came to their ears,
And seemed almost too good to be true.
Then followed a torrent of laughter and cheers:
Then the ominous words "It's a Boo—"

Then, silence. Some fancied they heard in the air
A weary and wandering sigh
That sounded like "-jum!" but the others declare
It was only a breeze that went by.

Well, just pure comedy, perhaps, but it *is* a long poem, and there is a certain weightiness that counters its light tone of absurdity. Unlike the lonely absurdities of Edward Lear, whose characters wander through similarly fantastic landscapes but are haunted by loneliness and melancholy (*The Courtship of the Yonghy Bonghy Bo*, for example), these worlds of Carroll's are intensely social and companionable. Yet at their heart, there is, perhaps, a deeper unease than Edward Lear's solitary melancholia.

If Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was indeed haunted by existential unease, then *The Hunting of the Snark* plays out a comic version of this fear. "Lewis Carroll" is himself a sort of Snark – a monster of disguise and concealment, playing the parts of barrister, and judge, hunter and hunted, Snark and Boojum, 'disappearing' characters if found out – but

"Lewis Carroll" is also surely connected with the Baker, the innocent fool, who leaves 42 boxes on the beach identifying their owner.

Perhaps, you may feel, this is all going a bit far…? Nevertheless, I think that there is a sombre, 'underground' fear running through the works, an uncertainty of identity. Might not Kurtz, the darkly ambiguous and equally modernist protagonist of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* have also recognised this menacing fear of all identity being cut adrift in the nightmare world he inhabits, where all abuses are permitted, as he utters his final cryptic dying words:

"The horror! The horror!"?

And, just why *was* it that in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* the cook suddenly "*disappeared"*?

Further Reading

The Hunting of the Snark with the wonderful Henry Holiday illustrations
https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/c/carroll/lewis/snark/
Alice in Wonderland illustrated in colour by John Tenniel
http://www.gasl.org/refbib/Carroll_Wonderland.pdf
Alice Through the Looking Glass also illustrated in b/w by John Tenniel
http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/CarGlas.html

*N.B. A photograph has recently come to light that *may* show Lorina Liddell and *may* have been taken by Dodgson. There was speculation in a BBC documentary in 2015 on whether it was or wasn't taken by Dodgson – children may have been regularly photographed in the nude, but the child prostitution and molestation must also have been widespread.

The girl's gaze I find deeply troubling. Is it Lorina and was it really taken by Dodgson?

Here, below, is a definite photograph of Lorina taken by Dodgson to set alongside the one taken with Alice further above:

If the unknown photograph really is of Lorina (and it has been suggested that the rift between the Liddell family and Dodgson in June 1863 might have come about because he was getting too fond, *not* of Alice, but of Ina, or Lorina), then there IS something deeply disturbing in Charles Dodgson's activities and one is bound to reconsider the established view that Dodgson was merely a repressed paedophile whose activities by today's standards might seem extremely dubious, but for his day, were seen as 'artistic' and generally 'innocent'.

How would all of this go down with the good townsfolk of Llandudno, I wonder? On Christmas Eve, as a family, when I was growing up, we would all drive out to see the lights at Llandudno, which invariably included the Mad Hatter, the White Rabbit and Alice herself, innocently lit up for the festive season. Like Mickey Mouse or Paddington Bear, it was all "good for trade and tourism", no doubt.