

Harry Potter Through the Looking-Glass: Wordplay and Language in the Works of Lewis Carroll and J. K. Rowling

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At first glance, the Victorian Lewis Carroll's *Alice* books¹ and J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series have very little in common.² However, at a closer look, there are interesting correspondences between these two authors. In this paper I intend to draw some parallels between their works. For Carroll, as for Rowling, language and wordplay are very important, particularly in the creation of a magical world, and I intend to show that both authors derive their ingenious ideas related to language from similar principles.

More specifically, I would like to point out the following connections between these works: a) the importance of naming and names in general; b) the use of the performative quality of language and how it is vastly extended and amplified; c) how linguistic conventions and their associated social conventions are being challenged and different ones are being set up to define the 'magical' world; and, finally, d) the underlying theme of logic versus imagination common to both.

For Lewis Carroll names are very important. In his *Symbolic Logic* he gives a definition of the name; he mentions that a name is a word, or phrase, which represents a given thing; it 'conveys the idea of a Thing, *with* the idea of an Adjunct [an adjunct being an "Attribute or set of Attributes"]' (Carroll, *Symbolic Logic* 1, 4½). Of course Carroll is talking about names of things in general but, as we shall see, and as he himself believed, all the meanings of a word can come into play, and in Wonderland this definition extends to personal names. In *Alice in Wonderland*, most of the creatures Alice meets do not have personal names, or rather their personal name and general name coincide; their name is "A Substantive conveying the idea of a Thing with the ideas of *all* the Attributes" (Carroll, *Symbolic Logic* 5), that is, it is informing us what they are. The white rabbit's name is White Rabbit, the mouse is called Mouse and the dodo is called Dodo. In Wonderland these, however, are also personal names, since they denote a "one-Member Class" (Carroll, *Symbolic Logic* 2 ½). All through her journey in Wonderland, the question that poses most problems to Alice is who she is.³ Rather than creating a content

¹ *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking-Glass* published in 1865 and 1871 respectively.

² A similarity one could, however, point out is that, even though both writers' works are usually classified as children's literature, they have an extraordinary success among the adult public. This, in my opinion, is due, amongst other reasons, to the similar way that both Carroll and Rowling play with language within their works, a similarity that I intend to point out in this paper.

³ To the caterpillar's demanding question "Who are you?" Alice responds very truthfully "I — I hardly know, Sir, just at present — at least I know who I *was* when I got up this

for her name — either her personal (Alice) or classification name (human child) — as she evolves, Alice treats her name as something with a specific unchangeable meaning and, therefore, by changing, she is ‘growing out of her name’ and is no longer sure about who she is. In Carroll’s world, the name must reflect the person and the person must be true to his/her name, and Alice goes through too many changes to be sure of hers.

In *Through the Looking-Glass* the importance of one’s name is stressed even more. When Alice sees Humpty-Dumpty she recognises him instantly “as if his name were written all over his face” (Carroll, *The Annotated Alice* 218). He, on the other hand, is disappointed by Alice’s name and asks to know what it means. At Alice’s puzzlement, he expresses Carroll’s idea that a name *must* mean something.⁴ Since for Lewis Carroll the name is not merely the reflection of one’s identity but part of the identity itself, he was fascinated by the possibility of a person’s losing or forgetting his personal name (Sutherland 133). In *Through the Looking-Glass*, when Alice enters the wood-where-things-have-no-name, she forgets who she is; she loses both her personal name (Alice) and her attribute (human child). Without her name, she is no longer a threat to the fawn she meets. The fawn is afraid of her name, or rather the name she should have in Wonderland, where names convey the nature of things, a name that contains information about its bearer — ‘human child’. For Alice is ‘a stupid name enough’ according to Humpty Dumpty since it does not reveal anything concerning its possessor.⁵

In J. K. Rowling’s universe, names are also of great importance. Rowling is always careful of her choice of names. It is indicative that her first stories told to her sister when they were children⁶ had as characters, amongst others, a rabbit called Rabbit and a giant bee called Miss Bee. The reluctance to name the characters, although

morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.”; and when the caterpillar demands that she explains herself, her response is “I can’t explain *myself*, I’m afraid, Sir, (...) because I’m not myself, you see.”, Lewis Carroll, *The Annotated Alice, The Definitive Edition*. Ed. Martin Gardner. London: Penguin Books, 2001, p.49.

⁴ “[M]y name means the shape I am — and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.”(.219). His remark is more acute than he knows since Alice has indeed, in her previous adventure in Wonderland, been many shapes and sizes.

⁵ Similarly, when Tweedledum is telling Alice that ‘she is not real’ (198) he could be referring to her *name* being *unreal*, since, as Carroll points out, ‘Just as a Class is said to be Real, or Unreal, according as there *is*, or *is not*, an existing Thing in it, so also a Name is said to be *Real*, or *Unreal*, according as there *is*, or *is not*, an existing Thing represented by it’ (Carroll, *Symbolic Logic* 4 ½).

⁶ Carroll’s influence is quite obvious in the story told to her sister Di, where Di — who is the main character — is falling down a rabbit hole. Cf., J.K.Rowling, ‘The Not Especially Fascinating Life so Far of J. K. Rowling.’ *Rowling tells the story of her life*. www.cliphoto.com/potter/rowling1.htm

probably not conscious — since Rowling was then five or six years old — might express the notion that a name is so important that, if the right one cannot be found, it is best not to use one at all and be content with the more general noun that would at least convey some traits of the character. After all, Rowling grew up to be a collector of names and admits her fascination.⁷

In the Wizarding World witches and wizards have unique names⁸ and in most cases their names seem to reflect their personalities or point out a particular specificity of theirs. It seems as though one cannot be a good person when named Malfoy (especially with a first name such as Lucius or Draco) or a lenient teacher with a first name such as Severus (Snape); it seems only natural that *Arsenius* Jigger should have written a book on *Magical Drafts and Potions*; Professor Emeric *Switch* a *Guide to Transfiguration*; *Vindictus* Viridian a book on the latest revenge curses; and anyone would agree that Remus Lupin is a very apt name indeed for a werewolf. In fact, the less developed a character is in Rowling's world, the more revealing is his or her name, which often seems to be taking the place of a brief outline of the character.

Of course, the name of Lord Voldemort himself is also very telling. In *The Chamber of Secrets* we learn that Lord Voldemort's name was in fact Tom Marvolo Riddle and that he, despising his *Muggle* father, changed it to Lord Voldemort. He has therefore coined a name to suit himself. However, this name is an anagram,⁹ denoting perhaps that, even though he despises his origins, he cannot escape from who he is. On closer inspection, we see that his name already contains his future transformation: Tom the — perhaps, marvellous (Marvolo)? — riddle. Tom has to solve that riddle to discover what is hidden within him, who he is. The new name he makes for himself gives also a lot of information about his character. The title he accredits himself with (Lord) denotes his aspiration to dominate and contrasts with his simple name (Tom) and origin. In that sense, those two names are complementary; they are the reflection of his character, his

⁷ “I am a bit of a name freak. [...] I collect them. You know, if I hear a good name, I have got to write it down. And it will probably crop up somewhere.”, interview with Larry King, *CNN's Larry King Live*. 20 October 2000, www.angelfire.com/mi3/cookarama/kingint.html

⁸ With one exception, in *The Goblet of Fire*, where synonymity (Barty Crouch and his son have the same name) is used to serve the plot.

⁹ Anagrams were also one of Carroll's favourite word games and he often amused himself and his friends by making up anagrams of prominent politicians' names that revealed what Carroll believed to be some aspect of their personality. For example, one of his anagrams of William Ewart Gladstone (British prime minister in 1868) was “Wild agitator! Means well”; an anagram for Edward Vaughan Kenealy, a notorious Victorian barrister with a violent temper, was “Ah! We dread an ugly knave”. Cf. *Rediscovered Lewis Carroll Puzzles*, compiled and edited by Edward Wakeling. (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1995) 25.

history, who he was, what he aspired to be, and who he became. His name simply evolved and followed the transformation of his character, which already existed in germ within him and his name.¹⁰

In Rowling's world it seems that the connection between a name and its bearer becomes even stronger in the afterlife, even if it means that the name has to change somewhat. This is effected either by the addition to the name of one of the main attributes of the character, e.g. Moaning Myrtle,¹¹ or by the loss of the previous name and the acquisition of a new one made to suit the bearer, e.g., the Fat Friar, Peeves? and Nearly Headless Nick. Following Carroll's definition, these names are reflecting their possessor's attributes. Ghosts are particularly apt to have those names since, by their essence, they are shadows of their former selves and can therefore easily be pinned down to one main characteristic.

As we can already see, Rowling's work has a very subtle way of responding to and communicating with Carroll's. One case in point is Nearly Headless Nick, who could be viewed as a character-homage to Carroll, as his official name is Sir Nicolas de Mimsy-Porpington — "mimsy" being one of Carroll's portmanteau words in the *Jabberwocky* (a combination of 'flimsy' and 'miserable', as Humpty Dumpty explains to Alice)¹² — and his 'Deathday Party' is a playful reference to Humpty Dumpty's 'un-birthday presents'. The idea itself of the nearly decapitated ghost could have been inspired from Carroll's Humpty Dumpty since, when Alice is shaking hands with him, he smiles and his grin is so wide that Alice is afraid his head might come off¹³; grinning like that he must certainly be looking 'nearly headless'. Decapitation is, after all, the favourite sport of the Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* ('Off with his/her head!'); and we cannot help but thinking that, were the two imaginary worlds of the authors in question to meet, the society of beheaded ghosts — from which Sir Nicolas, being only 'nearly' headless, is excluded, — would include many of Wonderland's creatures. Rowling's references are not, however, merely a sign of recognition towards a great writer; her response to Carroll is playful and establishes a form of dialogue between the two of them. One such correspondence that

¹⁰ His quest for immortality is also inevitably inscribed in his new name, as Voldemort could also be interpreted, as 'stealing from death' (Vol de mort), stealing its secrets and gaining eternal life.

¹¹ Moaning Murtle is a ghost haunting the toilets, re-enacting over and over again the final moments of her life (crying in the toilets) and hence extending her name with her characteristic attribute as a ghost.

¹² As it is pointed out by Martin Gardner, this is a word Carroll was fond of, since it is one of the eight nonsense words invented by Carroll for the *Jabberwocky* that Carroll uses again in *The Hunting of the Snark*, *The Annotated Alice* 161, note 21.

¹³ 'If he smiled much more the ends of his mouth might meet behind', she thought: 'and then I don't know *what* would happen to his head! I'm afraid it would come off!', *The Annotated Alice* .220.

was, unfortunately, finally omitted was a ballad sung by Sir Nicolas¹⁴ which explained how he became ‘nearly headless’ and was in the vein of Carroll’s ‘You are Old Father William’ (*The Annotated Alice* 52-54).

This correspondence between name and bearer I have pointed out in the works of both Carroll and Rowling could be seen either as a specificity of these magical worlds where everyone has the name they ‘deserve’ or as a suggestion that names have the power to shape their bearer’s character. If we accept this second hypothesis, then naming resumes its original function as an act of creation. Naming is, after all, considered to be the primal linguistic act, the creative act *par excellence*. In the Bible, the creative power of language, and in particular, speech, is the source of all life; God’s ‘Let there be light’ produces light. Lower in the hierarchy, man uses that power too. For man, naming is knowing, and therefore mastering, and so Adam, as master, names the animals that surround him. The power of God to conjure by naming is, to a certain extent, analogous to the power of the author, who, in the image of God, creates with words.

This amazing power of creation through language that the writer has is also given a place and operates within the magical worlds of both authors. In the Wizarding World created by Rowling, words are acts in their own right. In our world, language has some performative qualities — that is, one can do certain things just by saying what one is doing (e.g., one can thank someone by saying ‘Thank you’). In his theory of language as act, J. L. Austin refers to those statements as ‘explicit performative utterances’. In Rowling’s Wizarding World this performative quality of some words and expressions is vastly extended and amplified. Spells are in fact performative utterances with the difference that their performance extends to the tangible, the material.

Spells could thus be viewed as symbolising the creative power of language. The choice of Latin or pseudo-Latin words for the spells is very important. First of all, this is a way of distinguishing the everyday ‘worn out’ words for things from the spells which could make these things appear or happen. Latin is the ideal language to draw from, but, since for a better effect the spells need to be understood by the reader without great difficulty, the option of pseudo-Latin words, which would still make a substantial difference and give the illusion of magical power (*expelliarmus* certainly sounds more like a spell than something like ‘weapon fly away’), is preferred. Latin has, rightly or wrongly, been connected with magic, since it brings to mind the medieval times and witch hunts, and is therefore the ‘expected’ language to be used. As Robert Sutherland points out,

In English, the long words which produce emotional responses are often Latinate in origin. Their effect perhaps lies in their carrying with them as a

¹⁴ The ballad that was included in the first draft of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* can be found on the World Wide Web at the following address:
www.jkrowling.com/textonly/extrastuff_view.cfm?id=11

result of their derivation an air of scholarly authority — scientific, juridical, ecclesiastical — which, because of the words' restricted use and magisterial sound, conveys to hearers ignorant of the words' meanings a profound finality. (Sutherland 223)

The castle, the robes and quills, and the whole medieval scenery of the Wizarding World contribute to that effect and create the atmosphere of this parallel world, making it just different enough to be able to stand successfully next to our familiar world. Rowling herself has said, 'I enjoy feeling that wizards would continue to use this dead language in their everyday life' (Vander Ark); and the contrast emerging from the use of a dead language to bring to life everything that can be imagined is certainly not lost and adds to the appeal, the atmosphere, and even to the credibility.

Like names in Rowling's work, spells are very specific and informative. Spells are in fact nothing more than the expression of a wish in a formulaic way and require nothing else apart from concentration and a flick of the wizard's wand. There is no unintelligible 'hocus pocus'; *Reducio* reduces the size of an object, *Lumos* produces light, *Reparo* repairs, and so on. The power of language is absolute since all one has to do to make something happen is to correctly pronounce the word.

Seen in this light, the conjuring power of language has its dangers, and it is not surprising that wizards are reluctant to name Lord Voldemort, the incarnation of evil. If names and words are so powerful, then, by refusing to say his name, wizards are not merely expressing their fear or their wish that 'You-know-who' did not exist, they are also denying him the power he would draw from the utterance of his name.¹⁵

The power of words to conjure the things they name is also very much present in Lewis Carroll's world, even though it is presented in a different way. One could say that in Wonderland and Looking-Glass land words themselves act as conjuring spells. Anything that can be named is granted existence. Alice meets all sorts of creatures, from mythical ones, such as a unicorn or a gryphon,¹⁶ to incredible creatures created solely by

¹⁵ Only those who are strong enough to confront him (like Dumbledore or Harry) pronounce his name. The conjuring power of the utterance of one's name is, after all, a very old belief, and even to the present day many people would not utter the devil's name for fear of inviting him.

¹⁶ Mythical or 'magical' beasts — as they are referred to — are also present in Rowling's wizarding world, where young wizards learn about them in books (Newt Scamander's *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*) and even meet them occasionally. In Rowling's world, the magical creatures know about people, and it is only Muggles who are ignorant of their existence; in Carroll's through the looking-glass world, when Alice meets a Unicorn, it is two separate worlds that meet. The unicorn believes children to be as much a fabulous monster as Alice believed the unicorns to be. But seeing is not enough, and for each to ascertain the other's existence, they need to make a mutual pact to believe in each other: 'Well, now that we *have* seen each other', said the Unicorn, 'if you'll believe in me, I'll believe in you. Is that a bargain?' (The Annotated Alice 241).

language, such as the Mock Turtle (which owes its existence to the name of a dish), the Mad Hatter (from the expression ‘Mad as a hatter’), the Bread-and-butter-fly (pun on the word butterfly), Humpty-Dumpty (character in a nursery rhyme), and the Jabberwock. Anything that is pronounced is real in Carroll’s world, and if the word is invented, the thing comes instantly into existence.

Language does not only resume its creative power in Wonderland, it also works like a spell on the creatures it brings to life, imprisoning them in an inescapable fate. Thus the Tweedledum and Tweedledee brothers of the nursery rhyme have no other choice than to fulfil what the rhyme describes of their actions and are therefore impelled constantly to have a battle over a spoiled rattle. Obligated to re-enact this fight over and over again, they decide to ‘fight till six, and then have dinner’ and are wishing for the ‘monstrous crow’ to appear so that they can stop the fight, just as the nursery rhyme describes and decrees.¹⁷ In the same way, when Alice meets Humpty Dumpty sitting on the wall, she is afraid that he will inevitably ‘have a great fall’ and expresses her concern to him. In this context, we cannot help but think that the same power that keeps Tweedledum and Tweedledee fighting and Humpty Dumpty sitting on the wall is inevitably going to make Alice wander in Wonderland forever, imprisoned in Lewis Carroll’s world of words.

Now that we have ascertained the extraordinary power that language holds in both authors’ imaginary worlds, let us see how language is used to give character and consistency to these worlds. Since language reflects the structure of a given society, the differences in language mirror the differences between these worlds and our own. In Lewis Carroll’s work, the most important difference between Alice and the creatures she encounters, and the reason why she fails to communicate with most of them, is that they take everything literally. Carroll builds his seemingly ‘irrational’ world on the strictly logical and structured world of mathematics and logic. He sees language through logic, and from that point of view linguistic conventions seem completely irrational. It seems that for Carroll the literal meaning of a metaphor, for example, comes forth, and its image prevails. He seems to observe language like a foreigner, or like a child, as if he does not grasp the function of metaphors and takes everything literally. That is the attitude adopted by all inhabitants of Wonderland, and it reflects a different way of viewing language and communication.

Some metaphors become, with time, set phrases completely integrated into the language. However, in Wonderland the creatures do not understand any kind of linguistic convention. The Mad Hatter is not surprised that Alice has never spoken to Time since she avows ‘beating’ time in music lessons — something that Time cannot stand — as he himself has been imprisoned for ‘murdering’ Time when singing wrongly (*The Annotated*

¹⁷ ‘Tweedledum and Tweedledee/Agreed to have a battle;/ For Tweedledum said
Tweedledee/ Had spoiled his nice new rattle./ Just then flew down a monstrous crow,/ As
black as a tar-barrel;/ Which frightened both the heroes so,/ They quite forgot their
quarrel’ (189-190)

Alice 75, 77). Relative pronouns lose their referential quality in Wonderland, and words that have second and third meanings are not interpreted based on context, since its inhabitants openly disregard linguistic conventions. Taken literally, linguistic conventions obstruct communication: the door cannot be ‘answered’ unless it has spoken (273), and ‘stopping a minute’ is impossible since it ‘goes by so fearfully quick’ (238). It seems that in Wonderland no one is allowed to give a different meaning to words or expressions, since no one will follow the convention. In other words ‘The question is [...] which is to be master — that’s all’ (224), as Humpty Dumpty points out, and in Wonderland words are their own masters. Wonderland is a place where logic — taken to its extremes — becomes illogical.¹⁸ Wonderland is not ‘a world of total freedom, where no rules seem to apply and arbitrariness characterises social and linguistic behaviour’ (Hidalgo Downing), but rather a tyranny of language where the individual word has primacy over the linguistic system as a whole.

Rowling is also using the literal meaning of language to stress the differences of the Wizarding World. The literal meaning of everyday words and expressions is subtly and comically recalled to us by little details such as Bertie Bott’s Every Flavour Beans — ‘When they say every flavour, they *mean* every flavour — you know’ (*PS* 78) —, having along with chocolate and peppermint, flavours such as liver and tripe, vomit or earwax¹⁹. But there are also many other instances where the literality of language is a source of inspiration for the creation of this parallel world of wizards. In Harry Potter’s world, language expressions become literally possible by the use of magic. For example, the expression ‘to put something out of one’s mind’ is actually happening in Rowling’s world with the help of the ‘pensieve’, a receptacle in which a wizard can temporarily store the thoughts that he takes out of his/her mind. Through this sort of ‘reversing of origins’ for some expressions — for it could be argued that this suggests that the expression is not an abstract metaphor incorporated into everyday language but rather that it originated from the literal description of an act in a world where this act is possible — Rowling is certainly pointing out the power of metaphor to ingrain itself in our linguistic habits to the extent that we stop seeing it. The fact that incredible metaphoric expressions have become part of our everyday vocabulary is stressed by making the metaphoric expression literal (that is, possible) in the Wizarding World and thus reminding us that it is only a figure of speech.

In Rowling’s world linguistic conventions and their functions are understood by wizards and witches, but, since the wizarding world differs from our own, so do the set

¹⁸ In fact ‘Carroll stands at the opposite pole from the true nonsense-writer. [...] Instead of blithely departing from the rules, as the nonsense-writer does, the absurdist persists in adhering to them long after it has ceased to be sensible to do so, and regardless of the extravagances which thereby result. This is what Carroll and his characters habitually do’ (Heath 47).

¹⁹ This brings also to mind the taste of the potion Alice drinks in Wonderland that had a ‘mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pineapple, roast turkey, toffy, and hot buttered toast.

phrases and expressions used. Expressions such as ‘no use crying over spilt potion’, and ‘hold your hippogriffs!’, set apart the community of wizards by illustrating how language reflects life, while at the same time they draw attention to their absurdity. Humour serves the same purpose, and, in *The Goblet of Fire*, Dumbledore remembers a joke about ‘a troll, a hag and a leprechaun who all go to a bar...’ (165).

As both Carroll and Rowling are very much aware, the arbitrariness of language is best illustrated with the extreme cases of set phrases that have long lost their literal meaning. Part of our every day language is fixed, ‘dead’ in the sense that it is no longer subject to change but remains as a fossil. The repeated refusal of the Wonderland creatures to accept ‘irrational’ set phrases and the wizards’ unfamiliar expressions based on the ones familiar to us, help uncover the arbitrariness and reject the ‘petrification’ of some elements of the language, which otherwise pass undetected.

Another favourite tool to uncover the absurdities of language for both Carroll and Rowling is the use of puns. A pun is created by the conscious use of an equivocal word to produce an ambiguity, and Carroll’s work contains many of those entertaining ambiguities. The ambiguity could be due either to similar sounding words (homophones) or to the multiple meanings a word might have. For example, the Knight’s helmet won’t come off because it is *fast* as lightning (*The Annotated Alice* 253) and the wind is as *strong* as soup (249). In a similar vein, but using a more subtle ambiguity, Dumbledore assures that ‘scars can come in useful’ only to illustrate his opinion by revealing that he has one ‘which is a perfect map of the London underground’ (*PS* 17). In a different kind of wordplay, to Harry’s question ‘What’s the difference between a stalagmite and a stalactite?’ Hagrid answers that ‘Stalagmite’s got an “m” in it’ (*PS* 58). This example illustrates how, like Carroll, Rowling is viewing a word as an entity in itself, taken apart from its function.

Thus, both authors are offering the reader a fresh look at linguistic conventions that is as delightful as it is refreshing. By making us see language from a different point of view, they invite us to see life itself with a fresh look.

Finally, I would like to draw attention to a major underlying theme common to both authors’ works: the opposition of logic versus imagination. Of course this theme runs through both works in many different levels and is expressed with a variety of ways, and could be the subject of a whole different paper. Due to time and space constraints, I will, therefore, merely suggest some connections between the two authors concerning this theme.

This opposition is often illustrated in Carroll’s puzzles. In order for a puzzle to be solved, one has to think unconventionally and use logic in an imaginative way. Carroll was very fond of puzzles and created many for his child friends, most of them related to language — ranging from anagrams, acrostics and rebuses, to games of his own invention, such as ‘doublets’ (Wakeling). If his jokes are often based on faulty syllogisms, in order to solve his puzzles one needs to think like the Wonderland creatures, that is, free one’s thought of conventions.

As a mathematician, Carroll knew that categorisation and classification are indispensable to the understanding of the world. But he also must have felt it as

something that is artificially dividing a whole and therefore misleading when used unwisely. It is not, in my opinion, a coincidence if in his book *Symbolic Logic* some pages are numbered with fractions ($1\frac{1}{2}$, $2\frac{1}{2}$, $3\frac{1}{2}$ and $4\frac{1}{2}$) and that those pages are referring to ‘Classification’, ‘Dichotomy’, and ‘Name’. Any classification is, by its nature, restrictive and incomplete. Through his *Alice* books, Carroll seems to say that order and logic need imagination in order to form a complete, healthy view on life. What Wonderland is teaching us is to think unconventionally *with* logic, and this is achieved only if logic and imagination are no longer opposed but are working together.

The same idea seems to run through Rowling’s work, and it is also symbolised by a fraction: platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ is not just the gateway between two worlds, it is the place these two worlds come into contact; it is logic and imagination coming together to give us a new, more complete, perception on life and remind us that the ‘golden mean’ is always somewhere in between. In Rowling’s work imagination belongs to the world of wizardry, and it comes in opposition with logic when Muggle and Wizarding Worlds are confronted.²⁰ As Rowling herself points out: ‘The book is really about the power of imagination. What Harry is learning to do is develop his full potential. Wizardry is just the analogy I use.’ (Kirk)

For both authors, childhood is the world of magic, and if one can retain some of that magic, then logic and imagination will no longer be opposed. Rowling’s Muggles and Carroll’s adults are one and the same thing. But while Carroll is taking us on a trip into the magic world of childhood from where we come back refreshed but knowing we visited a place that exists only in dreams, Rowling is bringing magic into the real world, by creating a full-sized, realistic parallel world that exists alongside our own, if only we could find platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$. Magic is seeing life from a different point of view, and for Carroll, as for Rowling, a fresh perception of language is the means to bring magic into the world.

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²⁰ Mr Dursley, as a true Muggle, does not “approve of imagination” (PS 10); on the other hand, young wizards have to learn to use their imagination in order to become good wizards (i.e. lessons on how to repel a Bogart).

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