

# The *Sylvie and Bruno* Books as Victorian Novel



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THE *Sylvie and Bruno* BOOKS TOGETHER FORM LEWIS CARROLL'S MOST AMBITIOUS literary work. Yet the general public is hardly aware of its existence. This is a great shame, for the work is more interesting and rewarding than it is generally given credit for being. While perhaps not a great work or an ideally conceived one, it contains many delightful examples of Carroll's brand of nonsense and is unique in the Carroll canon in that that consistently attempts to address an adult audience. The antiutopia of Outland, the charming escapism of Elfland (Fairyland), and the witty and significant talk of Elveston (England) are separately interesting.<sup>1</sup> However, full appreciation and understanding of the *Sylvie and Bruno* books depends on seeing that they are based on a carefully articulated plan.

The volume titled *Sylvie and Bruno* was published in 1889, and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* was published in 1893. This publication history perhaps gives the impression that Carroll first wrote *Sylvie and Bruno*, that is, Volume I of the full work, as a self-contained work and then produced a sequel four years later. But his own story of the writing is of a general assembling between 1885 and 1889 of substantially the whole of the two volumes. He had been gathering material with a book in view for many years; he claims to have done very little new writing when he came to put these pieces together. It was the great length of the completed manuscript that dictated the two-part publication. We know certainly that some of the illustrations

that go with Volume II were among the first illustrator Harry Furniss worked up in consultation with Carroll.<sup>2</sup> The narrative (the plot is summarized in note 1) is continuous between the two volumes, and many incidents of Volume I find their natural resolution in Volume II. Carroll has also developed an elaborate pattern of character parallels that unifies the work stylistically.<sup>3</sup>

But I think it is worthwhile to make the point that Volume I is not complete as it stands. Carroll describes it as having a "sort of conclusion," which he supposed had fooled all but one of his little girl friends when the volume was originally published by itself. But surely readers of ordinary sensibility would not think a work complete that ended without an overturning of the misrule of the Sub-Warden. And Arthur's sort of conclusion in deciding to set out for India is acceptable only in his personal history. The narrative needs a resolution of Lady Muriel's feelings as well. Yet at the end of Volume I we feel very strongly that Lady Muriel cannot bear to hear Eric talk to her of love despite his official status as her fiancé: "But Lady Muriel heard him not: something had gone wrong with her glove, which entirely engrossed her attention." (I.xxii.467)

Carroll clearly intended us to have a single work in two volumes called *Sylvie and Bruno*. The diverse materials of this book are all rather neatly interwoven. There are minor discrepancies. Bruno, the son of the Elf king, should probably not report himself the servant of Oberon or say that he can sneak somebody into that king's hall because he knows one of the waiters, as he does in "Bruno's Revenge." (I.xv.398, 402) And the Narrator should certainly not condescendingly address the reader as a Child, as he does suddenly in "Fairy-Sylvie."<sup>4</sup> (I.xiv.389) But such discrepancies chiefly involve details in a number of self-contained early stories Carroll has incorporated, stories that inspired the longer work but are not always perfectly consistent with it. Discrepancies do not typically involve details of the English and Outlandish plot or the transition from Volume I to Volume II.

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## II

The whole *Sylvie and Bruno* deserves special critical study of a structural sort. There are thematic implications to the elaborate method of storytelling Carroll has adopted. The great technical skill with which he manages the constant movement between dream and reality is generally acknowledged.<sup>5</sup> But I think many readers are unhappy that Carroll chose so often to drift away from the nonsense of Outland and the antiutopia of Mein Herr's other world, and I do not think such readers have typically considered what is illustrated thematically by the very process of this constant movement from one kind of reality to another.

In the *Alice* books we may say that nonsense exists for its own sake. Perhaps one reason for the lesser popularity of *Sylvie and Bruno* is that Carroll was not content simply to copy himself in this genre, a point he makes in the Preface to Volume I. The *Alice* books have a structure of dream and a texture of nonsense. *Sylvie and Bruno*

has the texture of dream itself. It presents dreaming, the various states of ecstacy Carroll tabulates in the Preface to Volume II, much the way the *Alice* books present nonsense. Nonsense may be said to have a higher order of logical consistency than ordinary reality. At least, the way nonsense works is by assuming a higher order of logical consistency than the complexities of our everyday language commonly allow.<sup>6</sup> There *are* many and wonderful nonsense details in *Sylvie and Bruno*, but these have a different feel than the nonsense details of the *Alice* books. There often seems to be an insistent moral purpose to the *Sylvie and Bruno* nonsense. The *Alice* books are about another reality. In them dream has taken us outside normal reality to a place where we agree to suspend normal expectations. A new logic confronts us with its rigorous but alien consistencies. And we know we are dreaming. The plot is in fact resolved only by a waking up.

*Sylvie and Bruno* makes no such simple leap to another reality. It concerns the borderline between dreaming and waking, but there is no confrontation. The first line of the dedicatory poem suggests a theme: "Is all our Life, then, but a dream. . . ?" We learn in the course of the work that the rigorous logic of nonsense is not so unreal after all. Of course, we also learn that the events of life work themselves out with unreal rightness in the end even in the "real" world. Normal expectations are shown to be underestimations of the power of love to influence events. A character such as Arthur Forester could not enter the world of either *Alice* without destroying the dream. The problem is that he is too logical. He operates in the same way that nonsense characters do, by taking problems to their logical extreme. But the problems are themselves real problems under real rules in his case. That is, the problems are real *moral* problems. And neither he nor Carroll questions the rules of Victorian Christianity under which moral decisions are to be made. In fact, Arthur often makes us go back and reexamine the full meaning of the rule. Through him we see the assumptions behind the normal expectations of our moral universe. He lectures us wittily on everything—and usually knows what he is talking about.

In a sense Carroll even finally chips away at our expectations of what nonsense itself should amount to. Bruno functions as a normal nonsense character. He is also logically consistent. But through him we see the assumptions behind the most normal things in our natural world, rather than as with Arthur in our moral universe. Bruno talks "real" nonsense. He is the one who can see "about a thousand and four" pigs in a field because, though he cannot be sure about the thousand, it is just the four he can be sure about. (II.v.565) He is the one who can see "*nuffin!*" in the box of Black Light ("It were too dark!") because, as the Professor explains, that is exactly what the untrained eye would see. (II.xxi.713)

Mein Herr, the Professor as he appears in the real-world scenes at Elveston, to some extent fuses nonsense and moral purpose. He might even be seen as returning the absolute consistencies of logic to the real world when he inevitably enters that world. On his planet they do everything the English way—but they go all the way. They try the two-party system, for example, not only in politics but in life, dividing their

farmers and soldiers into teams of those who try to get the work done and those who try to prevent the others from doing it. Coming from the nonsense world of extreme logic and logical extremes, Mein Herr sometimes seems absurd to the characters of the real world who are incompletely educated to the moral purposes of the universe, as when Lady Muriel asks him to explain the curious experiments he participated in to try to improve dinner-party conversation. She, of course, thinks he is merely talking about "small-talk," but the whole point of the bizarre series of experiments is that people do not talk to each other enough about serious things. The real world needs the higher logic of Mein Herr just as it needs the invisible matchmaking of Sylvie and Bruno and the circle ruled by Sylvie's Jewel.

The logical nonsense of Mein Herr skirts the arbitrary abandon so appropriate to the two worlds of the *Alice* books by requiring us to think about the meaning of things in the real world. This is nicely shown in the incident of Fortunatus's Purse, an imaginative literary use by Carroll of the mathematical conception of the Klein bottle. We are familiar with the Möbius strip, a closed band with a half-twist in it that has the peculiar property of being a single continuous surface with only one side. The Klein bottle is the extension of this conception to an additional dimension. It is a single continuous surface without inside or outside. Mein Herr suggests that Lady Muriel construct Fortunatus's Purse, a purse with all the world's riches in it, by sewing handkerchiefs together in a particular way. The first step is to make two handkerchiefs into a Möbius strip with a slit for the mouth of the purse. When Lady Muriel has done this, Mein Herr tells her that now all she has to do is sew a third handkerchief to the four exposed sides and she will have a purse of which the inside is continuous with the outside. Lady Muriel, having grasped the principle, puts the purse aside for final sewing up after tea. (II.vii.577-79) She is wise to do so, for the two-dimensional curiosity of the Möbius strip can assume a tangible physicality in our world, but the Klein bottle exists only in the fantasies of non-Euclidian geometers.<sup>7</sup>

Mein Herr presents Lady Muriel and us with the conception of inside as outside. But Lady Muriel's discretion avoids a confrontation between logic and reality. Fortunatus's Purse both exists in the real world and does not. All the riches of the world are available to those who love. The task Carroll set for himself in *Sylvie and Bruno* was to sensitize his readers to this sort of hyper-reality. Fortunatus's Purse may be taken as an emblem of the theme of the work, that love is teachable and its power is boundless. We must learn to reach the depths of love contained in Fortunatus's Purse. And this love is all around us if we know how to look for it aright.

In the *Alice* books dream may be seen as an escape from our normal reality. Dream has a more psychologically sophisticated (or adult) function in *Sylvie and Bruno*. The Red God dreams a new game of creation, but the reader is quite awake through it all—or at least confident that he *can* awake to reality. But *Sylvie and Bruno* is contrived to make it much more difficult for the reader to maintain this sort of psychical distance from the material.<sup>8</sup> He drifts in and out of Fairyland with the Narrator. Thus he is gradually taught to understand that the limits of reality are blurred, that it is not

so easy to say that this is the world of reality while that is the world of nonsense and fantasy. Ruth Berman has plausibly suggested that what she calls the dullness of the English scenes ("earnestness" would perhaps be more relevant and charitable) has a structural significance at least for the modern reader of the novel in making the Fairyland and particularly the Outland scenes seem more lively, more free, and finally more "real" in contrast.<sup>9</sup>

Dreaming functions in *Sylvie and Bruno* as problem solving—as it often does in life. Dreams can restructure reality by omitting, changing, and adding details so that we can work out at least partial solutions to the continuing problems we have in the real world. This can sometimes be materially helpful, and it can often be psychologically helpful. In *Sylvie and Bruno* the characters of dream are vitally necessary to the solving of problems in the real world. Because they are, the work becomes a flux of reality and dream. It is no accident that here we find Carroll inventing the Time Machine (he is several years before Wells<sup>10</sup>). An Outlandish Watch would be pointless in Wonderland because there we have lost all sense of what time it "really" is; the Mad Hatter's watch "doesn't tell what o'clock it is." But real time and eerie time exist simultaneously in the world of *Sylvie and Bruno*, and Carroll means for us to discover that neither is all there is. Reality is not enough; we need nonsense too. Drifting into a world of fantasy is not an escape from reality but a significant education about the nature of life. And reality is not an escape from nonsense. Our education goes on everywhere. Arthur teaches us most directly, but there are professors everywhere in this work (and college officers, the Warden and Sub-Warden). And it is only natural that the Narrator's dreams discover Bruno at his lessons, twiddling his eyes to see what letters do not spell, for example, and then seeing in EVIL only LIVE backwards. (II.i.529) Eric Lindon learns the greatest lesson, that God answers prayer. This too is a lesson of love. And if we do not learn the lesson of love . . . why, we turn into porcupines.

### III

That *Sylvie and Bruno* attempts to show the playful underside of a rather prim moral and religious view of reality, that it illustrates what we might call a leavening of reality with nonsense, has probably been understood by everyone who has read it. But the complementary point seems to have been equally important to Carroll, and perhaps too many readers come to the book from the *Alice's* with fixed expectations. Do we want to hear that nonsense sometimes has to give place to reality, to a Carrollian reality of moral platitudes and sentimentality? And Carroll's moral view of reality does seem to be the source of our trouble. Side by side with his nonsense, Carroll presents an ostensibly real world whose values are sentimental and where events fall out according to the artifices of romance. The plot that animates and coordinates the two worlds is certainly a romance.

The genuine weaknesses of the novel for modern tastes all have to do with its nature as Victorian romance. There is, of course, a kind of general sentimentality to the whole treatment of love and religion. But there are also, admittedly, occasions when Carroll is rather more insistent than he should be even on his own terms if the book is to stand alone and actually demonstrate its theme of love and not simply proclaim it. An instance occurs when the Narrator has described Lady Muriel as "all that is good":

"—and sweet," Arthur went on, "and pure, and self-denying, and true-hearted, and—" he broke off hastily, as if he could not trust himself to say more on a subject so sacred and so precious. Silence followed: and I leaned back drowsily in my easy-chair, filled with bright and beautiful imaginings of Arthur and his lady-love, and of all the peace and happiness in store for them. (I.vi.330)

Most such sentimental excursions occur, however, in the fairy material. Somehow when Sylvie and Bruno pass through the Garden Door of Outland into the larger Fairyland beyond, Carroll seems to lose his sense of proportions and to give over his novelist's task of evoking emotional response. This is a common enough lapse for a Victorian novelist; Dickens lapses this way all too often. What is interesting is that in *Sylvie and Bruno* Carroll also on occasion manages to satirize what is conventionally sentimentalized. At one point Arthur is asked if he will not allow that someone is a sweet girl. He answers, "Oh, certainly. As sweet as *eau sucrée*, if you choose—and nearly as interesting!" (II.x.611) While there is much in Dickens that is not sentimental, I do not recall any incident that actually questions the sentimental system of values.

While we may not enjoy Carroll's Victorian sentimentality in this book, we can at least see that it is there for a definite purpose. This is a heavily moral book. It is a perennially difficult task for the writer to make his good characters interesting; Carroll has at least attempted to give some substantive life to his world of good. There is even a kind of narrative plausibility to his sentimentalizing of Sylvie. I find Sylvie the least rounded and least satisfactory of the main characters.<sup>11</sup> The ending of the book could serve nicely as a *locus classicus* of Victorian sentimentality about feminine sweetness. The Narrator listens for a word from "Sylvie's sweet lips" but thinks that he hears instead "not Sylvie's but an angel's voice . . . whispering." (II.xxv.749) Yet is not such a characterization of Sylvie as angel better justified by the plot and theme of this book than, for example, the similar characterization of Agnes Wickfield in *David Copperfield*? Sylvie is in fact a supernatural being who exists to do good. The whole order of fairies exists in the book to show us in outline the workings of love. Sylvie's Jewel is merely the physical embodiment of a psychological truth for Carroll: "For I'm sure it is nothing but Love!" (II.xix.693) The legend of the Jewel is both Sylvie will love all and all will

love Sylvie (we cannot tell which) because to love is to be loved. The plot should be seen as a real attempt to demonstrate this point.

The sophisticated modern reader is almost bound to be unhappy with such a qualitative resolution of plot. He has nothing against love, but he would rather see it growing out of plot than magically justifying the most agreeable but unlikely developments. The resurrection of Arthur is like something out of Mrs. Radcliffe. But Carroll obviously did not see it that way. There is certainly a moral purpose behind his vision. And this sort of moral plot manipulation was a common feature of the Victorian novel. Carroll's contrivance is really rather clean and direct compared to the long-missing heirs and mistaken identities of Dickens.

But of course we do not usually come to *Sylvie and Bruno* from *Our Mutual Friend*. We come from the *Alice* books with the expectation of nonsense. And there is enough to reward our expectation so that we do not reshape it but rather find the book interesting in parts and not quite right. If we saw *Sylvie and Bruno* in its proper context as a Victorian novel, it would not be *Bleak House* or *Vanity Fair* or *The Egoist* because it is obviously not in the mainstream of novelistic development. But it does bear comparison, structurally, with *Wuthering Heights*. It is even more daring structurally. Both works are infused with the sentiments of the age and yet combine traditional materials in completely original ways.

And like the plot of *Wuthering Heights*, the plot of *Sylvie and Bruno* is pure romance. *Wuthering Heights* is a psychological study of the power of passion. But the conclusion of the plot, when it comes, is still a happy marriage that incidentally resolves the inheritance of two estates. *Sylvie and Bruno* ends with the conversion of the godless, the metamorphosis of the loveless, the resurrection of the good, and the reuniting of lovers. The complications that delay the righting of the universe in each novel also owe a lot to the tradition of romance. Romance multiplies improbabilities and coincidences to show the underlying neatness of a cosmic plan—exactly the way David Goldknopf has so astutely shown to be typical of the Victorian novel.<sup>12</sup> Emily Brontë's young Cathy must symmetrically marry her cousins on both sides to resolve the passions of the senior generation, something the girl can only have the power to do because she was born into a family with such a neat genealogy. Carroll's Arthur must die to live—to live happily ever after with Lady Muriel in the knowledge that Eric has found God.

To say that *Sylvie and Bruno* is a romance in this sense means that it is a proof through narrative that reality has the moral purpose we wish it did. Such books exist to tell us what life cannot. To put the matter in the sharpest perspective, we may quote Miss Prism in *The Importance of Being Earnest*: "The good ended happily, and the bad unhappily. That is what Fiction means." Such a view of reality is implied by *Sylvie and Bruno*, implied structurally as well as thematically. The good do end happily, but the plot of the book exists almost exclusively for the morality. The characters are less important for themselves than because they illustrate the moral. Of course, the texture of the book, the texture of dream movement between Fairyland

and the world of reality, often diverts us, sugarcoats the pill. But events are being manipulated to make a point about the way things should work out in the real world. That is the whole reason why things do happen in the book. And the fact that things do work out as they do is explicitly attributed to the power of a higher Providence than the Narrator's art. "I *know* that God answers prayer!" (I.xxv.501)

The test here is surely the supposed death and miraculous salvation of Arthur. We get to see Lady Muriel's faith bring her through the loss of her lover on their very wedding day. But then the high-comedy lovers get a second chance, and we know that when Arthur recovers they will have a perfect marriage of love.<sup>13</sup> Of course the grave objection may be made to such a plot that reality seldom illustrates either perfect grief or happy marriage. This is, in substance, exactly the objection always made to romance (but it isn't true!). If we consider this manipulation of plot for moral purpose against the background of Victorian fiction, we see that Carroll is not only well within the limits of good form but also exercising considerable literary skill to keep the sentimentality in bounds. Arthur's death is handled with a good deal more restraint than the death of Barkis or of Paul Dombey, to pick places where Dickens succeeds beautifully in his gamble for our emotional commitment. The death of Mr. Dorrit's brother is such a muddle of sentimentality and abstraction that one is not even sure it is a death scene. The interminable death of Little Nell is, of course, the classic excess. In contrast, the supposed death of Carroll's Arthur is only inferred by the reader from a newspaper clipping. When it is presented to us, the clipping makes the event seem the properly cold and arbitrary work of fate. But in retrospect the newspaper format serves the more important function of justifying the misleading information. The Narrator did not commit himself to the death. Mistakes themselves are a kind of reality. The reader is tempted to complain that he has been cheated, but his complaints ring hollow in his own mind. We are tricked but not exactly lied to. Both the seeming death and the discovery are plausibly presented. The plan is out of fashion, but it is worked expertly. Even the Narrator's disgust when he believes that Lady Muriel has too hastily agreed to marry Eric after Arthur's death is worked expertly as narrative. We may cringe when he quotes *Hamlet* to himself, "The funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage-tables." (II.xxv.744) But we also feel that the quotation as well as the sentiment is appropriate to the Narrator. His opinion *would be* both passionate and literary—and he would keep it to himself.

The whole romance structure of the work builds toward this religious validation of Arthur's supposed death. It is thus interesting that, in his notes on the drawings for *Sylvie and Bruno*, Carroll suggested Furniss draw Arthur as he would "King Arthur when he first met Guinevere."<sup>14</sup> That the *event* is arbitrary is not a flaw but a consequence of the moral point proved by it, that love can work miracles. By the standards of moral contrivance in the Victorian novel it works very well. It is a good deal less surprising than Oliver Twist's genealogy or the blinding of Mr. Rochester or the ability of Tess of the d'Urbervilles to sleep through a sexual assault. The magic of Sylvie's Jewel simply works to tie the resurrection of Arthur to the various changes



we have made and can make between eeriness and reality; it is one more transmigration from one world to another coexistent world. In this way Sylvie's Jewel performs its magic to make *Sylvie and Bruno* a single work structurally and a Victorian novel. This is in contrast to the *Alice* books, which share many elements of point of view with each other and some of these at times with *Sylvie and Bruno* but are contained by their separate dreams. The antiutopia of *Through the Looking-Glass* is very obviously structured within its dream of a chess problem. This chess problem is completely arbitrary and so does a wonderful job of organizing everything else in the nonsense book. In contrast, the incident of Arthur's resurrection is structurally arbitrary but demonstrates miraculously the morality expounded by its book. And so it is, in a higher sense, the inevitable culmination of the plot.

#### IV

We might also profitably consider the sensibleness of *Sylvie and Bruno* as part of the Victorian character of moral earnestness. Of course nonsense is a variety of logic. But *Sylvie and Bruno* also contains a lot of serious talk well expressed, serious talk that might be called socially aware. Arthur is, for example, presenting a serious and worthwhile analysis when he argues that the introduction of small stakes in card games raises the whole moral tone of the enterprise by discouraging cheating (because we take all money matters seriously) and by consequently making what cheating does occur seem repugnant rather than amusing. He recommends the introduction of betting as a cure for the silliness of croquet matches. (II.ix.597) On a number of occasions Arthur calls our attention to the difficulties of making conventional moral judgments. Victories over equal temptations, he argues, can have very different effects for the world because of irrelevant differences in environment. (II.viii.590) "If we once begin to go back beyond the fact that the *present* owner of certain property came by it honestly, and to ask whether any previous owner, in past ages, got it by fraud, would any property be secure?" (II.iii.545) Arthur is clearly Carroll's *raisonneur* despite the tentative disclaimer in the Preface to Volume II, "I do *not* hold myself responsible for *any* of the opinions expressed by the characters in my book." Nevertheless, he cannot help remarking that he sometimes feels a great sympathy for one of Arthur's arguments. Carroll does not go so far with the aesthetic principle as more modern authors. And other characters sometimes speak with Arthur's voice of earnestness. It is the Earl, for example, who argues that we should take our pleasures quickly so that we can get more of them into life—though his suggestion of listening to music played at seven times its normal speed is perhaps not the most convincing conceivable. (I.xxii.471) But Carroll's personality and thinking are clearly more a part of the personality of Arthur than they are of even the Narrator, the "Mister Sir" of Bruno, who is learning about the structure of life and so needs labels for everything.

It sometimes seems quite clear that Carroll's social conscience guided him in

selecting many of the incidents for this work—a work Carroll says “. . . had to grow out of the incidents, not the incidents out of the story.” Carroll’s concern with social causes is parallel to Dickens’s. He is not against people who adopt causes. But he is very much against simple moral equations. This we see very clearly in the incident of the Anti-Teetotal Card, which says *That’s where all the money comes from!* in answer to the Teetotal Card’s *That’s where all the money goes to!* Arthur’s analogy of giving up sleeping to set an example for people who oversleep (II.ix.599-601) shows us the importance of analyzing the problem of drinking to excess as a problem not of drink but of excess.

If anything, Carroll is too much in earnest. The particular suggestions made along the way in the work are often nonsense—betting on croquet matches, high-speed music appreciation, discontinuing overpricing at charity bazaars to cut down on moral self-satisfaction—are often nonsense or at least of no abiding importance. But the principles these suggestions force us to consider are always terribly in earnest and useful in helping us make ethical or moral discriminations. It is ironic that Carroll, who refused to play chess with bishops in nonsense books, should have felt it necessary in the preface to Volume II of *Sylvie and Bruno* to answer the charge of having in the person of Arthur condemned most sermons as foolish. (I.xix.436) It is precisely because he was one of the few people wishing to take sermons seriously that he was able to have Arthur voice the complaint. Many preachers *do* misuse their privilege from interruption to talk twaddle. Again we may doubt that Carroll’s solution—less frequent sermons—would answer to the problem now or would have answered to it in his own day. Unless we become, like the seventeenth century, an age that wants to learn from sermons and is perhaps even willing to pay lecturers for extra series in the evening, we are not likely to get good sermons no matter how infrequent.

Carroll’s earnestness is one of the defining characteristics of *Sylvie and Bruno*. The fairy material may, in fact, even be seen as existing in the work only because of his earnest religious orientation. We have remarked Carroll’s use of Victorian romance but we may go perhaps a step further and say that his specifically religious explanation of the workings of fate marks this work, despite its late date, as of the spirit of the *early* Victorian novel. Goldknopf has pointed out how a gradual reluctance develops in Dickens to attribute the fortuitous determinism of plot to God. By the time we reach Hardy, there is no God—or rather Hardy has taken over the work of God.<sup>15</sup> And the direction of the modern novel has been to eliminate improbability and coincidence from plot because it no longer wants to give them the necessary moral justification. In *Sylvie and Bruno* Carroll has all the faith in coincidence of Charlotte Brontë. He knows that God orders our lives with love, and he humbly draws back from presuming to speak for God. Because he is a gentleman in religion, he creates the middle world of Fairyland to express the workings of fate. But we know his real characters are finally in the hands of God.

## NOTES

1. Since the substance of these books is certainly nowhere near so familiar to the general reader as the stories of Carroll's other major works, a plot summary may be helpful:

The Outland country of Fairyland, we discover as the story begins, is in political flux. The Warden of Outland (who is also King of Elfland), though a saintly man with great power for good, is nonresident. His brother the Sub-Warden arranges through subterfuge and a false report of the Warden's death to have himself elected Emperor, setting aside also the hereditary rights of the Warden's cute young son Bruno in favor of Uggug, his own selfish son. Bruno is being taught goodness by his sister Sylvie. He rebels against the formalities of lessons, but his logical thinking is wonderfully advanced for a boy so young and his heart is full of love, especially for Sylvie. Having ascertained the really great extent of love in the hearts of these two children, a Beggar reveals himself to them as their father and gives Sylvie a magic Jewel to help them grow even further in love. All this history of Fairyland is revealed to the Narrator, an unnamed London lawyer or businessman, in various eerie trances during a country visit to his old friend Dr. Arthur Forester at Elveston. The Narrator meets the charming Lady Muriel Orme, Arthur's beloved. Arthur has just come into money, but he will not speak to Lady Muriel of marriage because he thinks she is in love with her cousin, Captain Eric Lindon. It is obvious Lady Muriel cannot love Eric because he has no religious convictions, yet she is worried about his soul and feels herself promised to him. Soon after Sylvie and Bruno have materialized as children in order to do works of love, the dashing Eric shows his mettle by rescuing Bruno as he is about to be hit by a train. When Eric receives a long-awaited military promotion, he claims his bride. Arthur thinks this is for the best, perhaps, since Eric will have the religious model he needs. Arthur has decided to go to India as Volume I ends.

Volume II (*Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*) begins several months later with the Narrator's discovery that Eric, in deference to Lady Muriel's religious scruples, has released her unconditionally from any obligation to him. However, she is fearful that he has released her under duress until she talks the point over with the Narrator. Arthur has hesitated to press his own suit in the circumstances. But, with the fairy help of Sylvie and Bruno and the collusion of the Narrator, the lovers quickly come together. The fairies also bring about the reformation of a drunkard and do other good works in the neighborhood. When plague breaks out in the harbor town, Arthur hurriedly marries Lady Muriel and then goes off the same morning to help. When it is all over, a newspaper clipping reports his heroic death. On his next visit to Elveston, the Narrator finds that Lady Muriel's faith has remained unshaken by the tragedy and that she also can experience the eerie state. Together they overhear Sylvie and Bruno singing about the secret of love. In Outland events reach a climax at a banquet to celebrate Uggug's birthday. The Warden-Beggar-Elfking returns and seems to cast a spell of remorse over his brother, who is left as Emperor of the place. But Prince Uggug, because he has lived without love, turns into a porcupine. In Elveston Arthur is suddenly and miraculously discovered among the survivors of the plague. He was, in fact, rescued by Eric, who now knows that there is a God who answers

- prayers. The work ends as the Elfking helps his children understand the magic Jewel better and thus see that to love is to be loved.
2. Carroll has a substantial discussion of the process of writing the book in the Preface to Volume II. My references will be to volume (I, *Sylvie and Bruno* proper; II, *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded*) and chapter, and also include page numbers from the most easily accessible edition, the Modern Library (New York: Random House, n.d.). Confirmation of Carroll's story of the writing is provided by the Diaries and by Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* (1898; rpt. Detroit: Gale Research, 1967), p. 259.
  3. The character parallels are among the most commented-on features of the work: Ruth Berman, *Patterns of Unification in Sylvie & Bruno* (Baltimore: [T. & K. Graphics], 1974), pp. 4-10; Alexander L. Taylor, *The White Knight* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1952), p. 191; Phyllis Greenacre, *Swift and Carroll* (New York: International Universities Press, 1955), p. 199.
  4. In a letter to a Mrs. Ritchie dated 24 October 1887, reprinted in Derek Hudson, *Lewis Carroll* (London: Constable, 1954), p. 285, Carroll refers to his work in progress as "one single book (a story, but for rather older readers than 'Alice')." I think Carroll was, in fact, writing a novel and not a children's book at all. A work in which the characters make jokes involving Latin tags and casually use words like *oscillations*, *zööphytic*, *adiposity*, *isochronous*, *fallible*, *bonhomme*, and *rumination* is for older children indeed. Whether the fairy material is necessarily for children or not, it is certainly inconsistent with the point of view maintained by the rest of the work for the Narrator to take any notice of the reader at all.
  5. See especially Greenacre, p. 194. Hudson has some interesting notes on the possible influence of the work's point of view, pp. 288-89.
  6. The reader will recognize my theoretical debt to Elizabeth Sewall in this passage, *The Structure of Poetry* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), especially Ch. 7, "Order and Disorder," pp. 44-58.
  7. Carroll's use of the Klein bottle here has been called to our attention by Martin Gardner in his "Mathematical Games" column, "The Games and Puzzles of Lewis Carroll, and the Answers to February's Problems," *Scientific American*, 202, 4 (March 1960), p. 172.
  8. The classical study of psychical distance in literature is Edward Bullough, "Psychical Distance as a Factor in Art and an Aesthetic Principle," *British Journal of Psychology*, 5 (1912-1913), pp. 87-118.
  9. Berman, p. 15.
  10. Lin Carter, "Have Time, Will Travel!" *Fantastic Universe*, 7 (January 1960), p. 99.
  11. Critics often assert that the fairy characters in the book are well rounded and the English characters are dull. Even Ruth Berman, who has been so careful to show us that "the line between excellence and failure in *Sylvie and Bruno* by no means coincides with the line between fantasy and realism," p. 4, sometimes seems to make this mistake. To me the contrast between Lady Muriel and Sylvie shows a striking exception to the usual generalization. Lady Muriel is charming and intelligent, and in her religious scruples about her engagement she has a real depth of character. But Sylvie does comparatively little to evoke all the sweet verbiage lavished on her. Of course, the fairies are generally more interesting. And Bruno is the most lively character in the book.

12. *The Life of the Novel* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 100-124, 159-76.
13. I cannot agree with Phyllis Greenacre that we feel Arthur's bout with the plague has rendered him sexless, pp. 196, 219. Unlike Mr. Rochester, who is too overwhelming to make a satisfactory husband without some degree of emasculation, Arthur is all along Carroll's ideal husband. The function of the plague episode is not to change Arthur but to change Eric--and incidentally to bring out certain qualities in Lady Muriel. I think that in her concentration on the implication of the book for a study of Carroll's own psychology Dr. Greenacre has sometimes misrepresented its subtlety as a literary work. There is, for example, nothing villainous about Eric from the beginning--he is simply without faith. His heroism in saving Bruno from the train suggests that Carroll tried to make him as good a man as it is possible to be without faith. And his conversion is in the quality of his life, not in its outward direction; he is not making any plans as the book ends to convert the heathens in emulation of Carroll's brother Edwin. Cf. Greenacre, p. 196.
14. Letter quoted by Collingwood, p. 260.
15. Goldknopf, pp. 167-73.