In 1859, Charles Darwin published his *On the Origin of Species*. Just three short years later, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson first amused Alice Liddell and her sisters with a story about a spunky heroine named Alice and her adventures underground. In 1865, *Alice in Wonderland* was published under the pen-name Lewis Carroll. The Victorian Age was one of profound intellectual change where the verities of Christianity were challenged by a new conception of nature and animals’ place in it. Just when Victorian intellectual thought was seeking to decipher and rewrite the rules by which nature conducted itself, Carroll invented an alternative world where not only do nonsense and disorder triumph, but where power is redefined and authority and hierarchy between species obliterated. In the story, Alice converses with a myriad of creatures who possess varying degrees of intelligence, cleverness and human qualities. The animals and creatures Alice meets are also of varying sizes, temperaments and, most importantly, of intellect. I will argue that anthropomorphism in Carroll’s writing critiques the Darwinian notion of the hierarchy and progression of species. By shifting the power of physical size, satirizing notions of evolution, devolution, and extinction, Carroll succeeds in flipping the traditional predator-prey power dynamic on its head, suggesting that Darwin’s dark view of ‘survival of the fittest’ need not be so dark.

Historians and literary critics alike have pointed to the presence of Darwinism in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* books, but also more generally in the Victorian intellectual discourse that sought to impose order and logic on nature. By the time *Alice in Wonderland* was published in 1865, Darwinian ideas of natural selection, survival of the fittest, species and evolution were gaining momentum but had not quite attained complete credibility amongst either laymen or intellectuals. This would later shift in the nineteenth century as Victorians became increasingly fascinated with the social implications of Darwinism. In 1883, for example, G.A. Farini

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1 Mariam Hanna graduated from the University of Toronto having completed a specialist in History with a double minor in English and Ethics. She is now a law student at the Schulich School of Law, Dalhousie University. A version of this essay was originally submitted to Professor Kirsten Schut's HIS495: Topics in European History: History and Animals Winter 2018. The original title was *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. James T. Costa notes that Darwin “dropped the ‘On’ from the title in the sixth edition of 1872. The reason for the change is unclear; perhaps Darwin came to prefer the more declarative tone of *The Origin of Species,*” James T. Costa, *The Annotated Origin: A Facsimile of the First Edition of On the Origin of Species,* (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 2009), iii.

2 Dodgson sent Alice Liddell a manuscript copy titled *Alice’s Adventures Underground* in 1864, two years after he originally told her the story. The facsimile of Dodgson's manuscript is now kept at the British Library, in London. In *Alice's Recollections of Carrollian Days*, she writes: that “Nearly all of Alice’s Adventures Underground was told on that blazing summer afternoon with the heat haze shimmering over the meadows” See Lewis Carroll, *From the Letters of Lewis Carroll* and *From Lewis Carroll’s Diary*, ed. Gray J. Donald found in *Alice in Wonderland*, Third Norton Critical Edition, (London: W.W. Norton & Company), 266.
displayed Karo, a “seven-year-old girl…whose small dark-skinned body was covered in soft, brown hair” as the “missing link” between human and animal. The enthusiastic search for the “missing link” between humans and animals demonstrates an implicit acceptance of evolution. Karo’s case also suggests that the acceptance of Darwinian ideas of evolution had filtered down from strictly intellectual circles to popular entertainment by the late 1800s. Although only one example, many others could be used to support the point. Darwinian scientific ideas in Victorian popular, literary and intellectual culture were certainly gaining ground in the popular imagination. Carroll’s theistic leanings at the time of Alice in Wonderland’s publication were likely still considered mildly conservative even if by the end of the nineteenth-century they were to become oddly conservative (and may seem radically conservative by twenty-first century standards).

How familiar was Lewis Carroll with the scientific trends of his time? Carroll’s private library, compiled in 2005 by Charlie Lovett, paints a picture of a man who actively kept up with the scientific discourse of his day. Laura White notes, “Carroll was an ardent lover of nature, an avid reader of natural history book, and an informed consumer of then-contemporary science. His library included works by Faraday, Whewell and Darwin…[and] he attended dissections, scientific lectures, [and] astronomical presentations.” Carroll’s library also reveals a markedly theistic leaning in that it excluded scientific works by his contemporaries who “were noted for their commitment to agnosticism.” White notes that “most of the texts Carroll owned that concern Darwin’s theories are by critics, not supporters” While it is true that we can not definitively glean Carroll’s thoughts on evolution simply by examining the books he purchased, the exclusion of categorically agnostic—but popular—authors taken with his own career in the church suggests a distinctively theistic stance to the rise of the natural sciences.

However, Carroll’s outlook on Darwinism in particular, and the emerging natural sciences more generally, seems to have been one of distrust, incredulity and mockery rather than ardent disapproval or rejection. In her analysis of evolution’s role in Victorian children’s

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3 Marlene Tromp, *Victorian Freaks: The Context of Freakery in Britain*, (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2008), 134. Tromp actually goes on to argue that this trend began as a result of the publication of On the Origin of Species. She writes that “after the publication of On the Origin…in 1859…half-animal, half-human characters became easily defined as ‘missing links’ in an increasingly fluid chain of being,” 135.
6 White, *The Alice Books*, 43.
literature, Jessica Straley notes that Carroll’s parody in the *Alice* books, allowed his readers to take control of the flux of evolutionary biology to impose direction onto the seeming inevitability of change.”

Even beyond the *Alice* books, Carroll’s slightly amused stance in regards to Darwinian ideas shines through. On December 26th, 1872, Carroll records in his diary evidence of a correspondence with Darwin himself: “Mr. C. Darwin whose book on The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals I am reading…I have given a print of ‘No Lessons today’”

The photograph ‘No Lessons today,’ depicts a young girl, Flora, grinning at the camera in a manner that seems to contradicted Darwin’s belief that strong facial expression had no place in art because they harkened to the primitive past of humans. Sending this photograph to Darwin seems to have been Carroll’s comical attempt to provide evidence to the contrary.

Flora’s contorted smile in ‘No Lessons today’ and the public’s fascination with Karo both harken to a deeper Victorian fascination with ‘liminal’ creatures whether they were humans who exhibited animalistic qualities and behaviours, or were animals (as some believed Karo to be) with human characteristics. This phenomenon is reflected in Victorian attitudes towards their pets. Anthropomorphism seems to have made pet-keeping a possible and desirable trend in Victorian society. However, it is important to recognize that Victorian beliefs that encouraged sympathy for “passive animal sufferers” became increasingly problematic when domestic animals such as cats and dogs acted violently. Violent pets “destabilized the Victorian division between the world of the private, domestic relationships and the public world of competition and conflict.”

Carroll’s world dismantles the division between animal and human entirely by removing one of the key barriers between animals and humans: speech. Alice is most uncomfortable when the animals and creatures in Wonderland continue to contradict, challenge and engage in aggressive tête-à-tête. Later in this essay, I will show that Carroll creates an even more chaotic world by dissolving social barriers that separated the public and private spheres.

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9 White, *The Alice Books*, 64. ‘No Lessons Today’ refers to a photograph taken by Carroll of a young Flora Rankin grinning delightedly—almost wickedly—at the camera. The book in question discusses the absence of strong facial expressions in art. White argues, convincingly, that Carroll sent the photograph with a tongue in cheek intention to demonstrate to Darwin that strong facial expressions, such as Flora’s grin, were not necessarily incongruent with art or beauty.


12 Laura White takes this point further by arguing that “The nonsense of anthropomorphism, in which anything—even cards, flowers, or pudding—may take on human characteristics, is part of Carroll’s satiric response to [the Darwinian] incipient blurring of lines,” White, *Alice Books*, 110-11.
One of the most transparent instances of Darwinism in Alice in Wonderland is in Alice’s exchange with the Dodo bird which is thought to have gone extinct in 1662. The presence of the extinct Dodo bird in Wonderland immediately signals a key Darwinian theme in the book. Its presence can be interpreted in multiple ways. On the one hand, the Dodo in Wonderland could be understood as Carroll’s tongue-in-cheek jab at Darwinian concerns with species extinction. On the other hand, Carroll could be yielding to Darwinian theories about ‘survival of the fittest’ by allowing the Dodo bird to exist only in a ‘dream’ space like Wonderland. In either case, the presence of the Dodo and Alice’s muddled recitation of Watts’ poem establishes a “network of evolutionary references...[imported] from a Darwinian world of aggression,” that indicate a deliberate effort to introduce complex scientific themes in his writing for children.13

Talking animals were an increasingly common feature in the emerging genre of Victorian children’s literature. Yet, it is not so much that animals in Wonderland talk, but what they say and how they say it. Agency, power, authority and logic play significant roles in Alice’s interactions with different animals. All the animals in Wonderland talk, they all seem to think, many perform social roles (the Duchess, the Frog-Footman, the King and Queen of Hearts etc.), and some even live in houses.14 Even more strangely, John Tenniel’s illustrations depict nearly all the animals dressed in human-like clothing: the White Rabbit wears a waistcoat and carries a pocket-watch, the King and Queen of Hearts wear crowns, the Caterpillar smokes a hookah wearing what appears to be a coat.15 In fact, it is the White Rabbit’s waistcoat and pocket watch, not the fact that he exclaims, “Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be too late!” that first causes Alice to take notice of him and “[start] to her feet” with “burning curiosity.”16

Outside of Wonderland, animals function quite differently in relation to humans. Alice’s cat, Dinah, for example, is greatly loved by Alice. But Dinah is also a dumb pet, entirely unable to articulate her own ‘tale’ like the Mouse who laments of his woes to Alice. Nevertheless, unlike the Wonderland animals who are simply referred to by their species; the Mouse, the Caterpillar, the Cheshire Cat, the White Rabbit—or when there are two of the species—the Frog-Footman and the Fish-Footman, Dinah, the dumb pet, has a name. Why did Carroll give Dinah a name—but not a voice—and not any of the other animals? Perhaps, Dinah, unlike the other animals fits comfortably in a hierarchy. Alice knows exactly what Dinah’s role is in relation to

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13 Straley, Evolution and Imagination, 87.
herself. Unlike with the other animals, Alice does not have to worry about offending Dinah or second-guessing where she stands when she interacts with her. Giving her a name suggests a measure of stability that Carroll seems to attribute to Alice’s ‘real’ world outside of Wonderland.

Alice struggles to understand the hierarchy in Wonderland and negotiate her own place in it because the animals do not necessarily follow a strict, predictable predatory-prey dichotomy. Carroll subverts the readers expectation that the traditional predator, such Dinah the cat, is cleverer than her prey. Carroll flips this on its head by making the Mouse an eloquent, clever creature able to converse (and even out-pun Alice) while robbing Dinah the cat of a voice entirely. Dinah, the traditionally more potent predator, can neither converse nor engage in word play—she is just a dumb pet, whereas the Mouse, the weaker prey, is endowed with reason, intelligence and agency to tell his own “tale.”

The White Rabbit is another interesting creature. What is curious about the Rabbit is his liminal role as an animal-looking but human-behaving creature. Liminal creatures that do not comfortably fit into either the human world or the animal world were of great interest to Darwinist who searched for “missing links” to explain the divide between humans and their ancestral primates. As a child, Alice’s role in this chain of progression is similarly contentious because, as a child, she would not have fit comfortably in the adult world. Indeed, Alice has a much easier time slipping into Wonderland than her elder sister at the end of the book who merely “dreams” herself in Wonderland. As a child, still growing, still developing, still evolving—so to speak—into a fully-grown human, Alice is herself a ‘missing link’ of sorts. Nevertheless, Alice remains apart from the other animals especially in the last scene when she denounces all the animals and chaos of Wonderland and thus succeeds in slipping out of the world. In this final scene Carroll restores the ‘real’ hierarchy that places the human above the animal and inanimate. Thus, while Alice does not initially think it strange that the White Rabbit talks (which sets her slightly apart from adult humans), the barrier between the animal and the human is still easier for her to cross. Because she is a child who has still to learn the “markers and rules,” between animal and human and because she “exists in a space of play in which

17 Carroll, Alice in Wonderland. The chapter in which Alice listens to the Mouse’s tale is called “A Caucus Race and a Long Tale” 20-25.
18 Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, 96.
19 Tess Cossett, “Child’s Place in Nature: Talking Animals in Victorian Children’s Fiction,” Nineteenth-Century Contexts vol 23, no. 4 (2002): 480. Cossett argues that “while the child appears then almost as a "missing link" between animal and human, primitive and civilized, at the same time a hierarchy is assumed, inferior/superior animals, primitive/civilized man.”
boundaries could potentially be transgressed,” Alice’s chaotic existence as an equal to animals in Wonderland is not transgressive but amusing.20

Carroll also restructures social and political power dynamics, and authority in his imagined Wonderland by making the biggest and most assertive creatures sometimes spout the most nonsense. For example, the King of hearts—who is neither human nor animal, but a liminal non-human, non-animal creature—is always assertive and yet he is also always ridiculous. Like the Queen, he frequently shouts nonsense assertively only to be corrected by the White Rabbit. The final court scene illustrates the subtle power dynamics astutely:

“What do you know about this business?” the King said to Alice.
“Nothing,” said Alice.
“Nothing whatever?” persisted the King.
“Nothing whatever,” said Alice.

“That’s very important,” the King said, turning to the jury. They were just beginning to write this down on their slates, when the White Rabbit interrupted: Unimportant, your Majesty means, of course,” he said, in a very respectful tone, but frowning and making faces at him as he spoke.

“Unimportant, of course, I meant,” the King hastily said, and went on to himself in an undertone, “important—unimportant—unimportant—important—” as if he were trying which word sounded best.21

In this instance, it is the White Rabbit who is more intelligent, directs the conversation and holds the real power. Yet he still addresses the King “respectfully.” The King, meanwhile readily receives his corrections and thus, ostensibly, retains his social power and authority but still dissolves into nonsense by repeating the words till they utterly lose their meaning.

In another instance, Alice meets the Frog-Footman. Alice does not seek conversation with this creature because he is a servant that an upper-middle class girl like herself would not typically interact with. The barrier here is not of the natural order but of a social order. Indeed, when Alice asks him questions and he refuses to answer to her satisfaction, she exclaims: “there is no use talking to him, he is perfectly idiotic!” harkening to Victorian ideas that co-related class

20 According to Cossett, another interesting direction for this argument would be to consider that many of the animals in Wonderland are adults. The King and Queen especially are mature cards, yet Alice, the human child is able to dismantle their authority. The White Rabbit similarly is presumably an adult, yet Alice seems to be on the same level with him and converses with him like an equal. The exception is the Caterpillar which Alice seems to have more respect for even though, in terms of development, he is likely the same age as her (Coslett, “Child’s Place in Nature,” 476).

21 Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, 95.
and intelligence. In other ways too, Wonderland seems to dismantle rigid social spheres. Jennifer Geer points out that Wonderland dismantles “domestic order” by infusing “traditionally feminine spaces such as kitchens, croquet grounds, gardens, and tea-tables” with the “contentious, competitive values [of the] Victorian public sphere.” Thus, the divide between women’s spaces, like those between human and animal melt away in Wonderland, further complicating Alice’s sense of self and identity.

Self and identity are significant themes in another way as well. Alice’s place in the Wonderland hierarchy fluctuates as her height and identity shift. One scholar points out that Alice’s identity crisis throughout the novel are in and of themselves a parody and subtle critique of Darwinism: “Alice’s repeated identity crises, from her inability to distinguish herself from other little girls to her failure to posit little girls as a category discrete from other animals, reveal our vulnerability to scientific classification.” Part of this identity confusion stems from the fact that “Alice thinks that she must remain completely unaltered in order to be the same person; for her any change threatens to turn her into another girl altogether.” The Caterpillar’s vexing question “Who are you?” flusters Alice and she responds “I—I hardly know, Sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have changed several times since then.” This line of thought further deteriorates into nonsense when the Caterpillar demands that Alice “Explain [herself]!” Alice responds, “I ca’n’t explain, myself, I’m afraid, Sir…because I’m not myself, you see.”

Alice experiences a similar—but markedly different—identity crisis in her conversation with the Pigeon at the end of the chapter “Advice from a Caterpillar.” In this episode, the Pigeon, accuses Alice of being a Serpent out to steal its eggs. When Alice insists that she is not a Serpent, the Pigeon aggressively asks her a similarly vexing question: “What are you?” (emphasis mine). This is apparently an easier question than “Who are you?” because Alice “doubtfully” ventures “I—I’m a little girl.” Notably, Alice’s response is doubtful because she “remember[s] the number of changes she had gone through, that day.” The Pigeon’s response muddles Alice even further: “I’ve seen a good many little girls in my time, but never one with

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22 Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, 44.
24 Straley, Evolution and Imagination, 97.
26 Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, 34.
27 Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, 34.
28 Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, 42.
such a neck as that! No, no! You’re a serpent; and there is no denying it...you’ll be telling me next that you never tasted an egg!” Alice, quite logically argues back that “little girls eat eggs quiet as much as serpents do.”

The Pigeon however, sticks to his definition and responds that “if they do, why, then they’re a kind of serpent.” In both these instances, Alice is unsure where to base her identity resulting in circular conversations that answer no questions and satisfy neither party. Classifications and naming elude Alice and dissolve her conversations with the Caterpillar and the Pigeon into nonsense that “disrupts the coherency of categories like the ‘self’ and the ‘human’.”

Natural science were especially concerned with classification, naming and ordering of species and by exposing the arbitrariness of naming and classifications, Carroll reveals how easily such categories can deteriorate.

In *Alice in Wonderland*, Carroll frequently uses humour to poke fun at, parody and satirize Darwinian notions of evolution. The Caterpillar which will literally evolve into a butterfly is portrayed as wiser, older and more knowledgeable than the human child, Alice: he assertively asks her questions, smokes a hookah, Alice refers to him as “sir,” and asks for his guidance and advice. This is a strange dynamic because there is no apparent reason for the Caterpillar’s superiority over Alice: they are both exactly the same physical size at this point—three inches and in terms of development, the Caterpillar, who is not yet a butterfly or even a chrysalis, is just as immature as the child Alice. The only thing the Caterpillar possess more than Alice is knowledge of Wonderland but even in this field he is unhelpful: he tells her the mushroom will make her grow or shrink but does not tell her which side will have which effect. The changes in physical size that are so distressing to Alice—distressing to the point of spurring identity crises in which she can no longer identify *who* or *what* she is—are entirely natural to the Caterpillar.

Alice’s muddled version of Isaac Watts’ ‘Against Idleness and Mischief” a poem recited by Victorian school-children, likewise parody’s both the rise of the natural sciences in education and the pedagogical practices that encouraged rote memorization over understanding. In Alice’s

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29 Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, 42.
30 Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*, 42.
31 Straley, *Evolution and Imagination*, 97. I am indebted to Jessica Straley for the basis of this argument. She argues that “the pigeon has a perfectly serviceable definition of serpent: an animal with a long neck that eats eggs. If this is the extent of the definition—and for her purpose, it is all that is necessary—then Alice is a serpent. As long as Alice agrees to argue on the Pigeon’s terms, in which the word “serpent” signals real-world referents like appearance (long neck) and behaviour (eats eggs), then she cannot defend any distinction between ‘little girl’ and ‘serpent’ ”Straley, *Evolution and Imagination*, 94.
version of Watts’ poem, the industrious bee who “labour[s] hard” to store its “sweet food” is misremembered as a predatory crocodile who “welcomes little fishes in/With gently smiling jaws.”33 According to scholar Jessica Straley, this instance “herald[s] a transitional moment for science education in England: in the 1860s, the lessons in natural theology’s benignly designed universe were under threat of being usurped by Darwinian images of self-preservation and the survival of the fittest.”34 Darwin shatters the image of Watts’ peaceful, industrious nature in the following passage:

“We behold the face of nature bright with gladness…we do not see, or we forget, that the birds which are idly singing round us mostly live on insects or seeds, and are thus constantly destroying life; or we forget how largely these songstingers or their eggs, or their nestlings, are destroyed by birds and beasts of prey.”35

Violent competition for resources is a common theme in Darwin’s On the Origin. Just as Darwin writes that animals in nature must always be in—often violent—competition for survival, creatures in Carroll’s Wonderland are uncooperative, competitive and threatening. Alice’s interaction with the Pigeon parallels this passage quite closely. The Pigeon who may initially seem like a harmonious, industrious contributor to nature, comes off a stressed bird, wary of strange creatures and frightened to death of predatory, egg-eating snakes. Of course, in this instance, the Pigeon is also a ridiculous creature—he accuses a little girl of being a snake simply being she is tall and has eat eggs. The Pigeon’s plight—snakes—is real but his maniac fear of predators is comical. In this way, Carroll succeeds in poking fun at the Darwinian view of a doom-and-gloom predatory nature without resorting to Watts’ unrealistically rosy representation.

Humour in Alice’s interactions with various creatures is critical both to children’s genre but also to parody and satire in general. Yet, even when Carroll’s Alice books parodied Darwinism, they did not attack the ideas overtly or offer the reader any counter-arguments. In fact, one scholar parallels the works of Carroll and Darwin by pointing out that both writers defied and challenged the “sacred orders of Victorian thinking.”36 Carroll’s use of nonsense conformed to the “Darwinian revolution” that “subject[ed] the rigidities of an ethical, social and religious world…to [a] destructive analysis.”37 However, where Darwin’s evolutionary theory

33 Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, 16.
34 Straley, Evolution and Imagination, 87.
36 Straley, Evolution and Imagination, 88.
37 Straley, Evolution and Imagination, 88.
“destabilized the natural order” and offered “no methods by which to manage the disturbance that it created,” Carroll’s literary pedagogy “revel[ed] in fluidity and adaptation” and “negotiated questions of change and continuity” in a way that “recovered the human agency that new biological theories were threatening to take away.” 38

Alice in Wonderland does not suggest an upheaval of the social order and though it parodies some Darwinian ideas, it does not overtly reject them. Animals, adult-humans, human children and inanimate objects retain their respective roles by the end of Alice in Wonderland. The opening and closing framing narratives in the ‘real’ world give Alice in Wonderland stability that it would lack if this frame was removed. Thus, Alice does not outwardly dismantle or challenge the social hierarchy. Instead, it provides a space in which disorder is rampant only to reject it in the closing scene in which Alice docilely obeys her older sister allowing the “logic of Wonderland, in which stronger players alter situations to their own advantage, [to continue] in the closing scene as the adult narrator replaces chaotic nonsense with an idyllic tableau.” 39 The manner in which Alice exits Wonderland is also worth a note:

“Stuff and nonsense!” said Alice loudly. “The idea of having the sentence first!”
“Hold your tongue!” said the Queen, turning purple.
“I won’t!” said Alice.
“Off with her head!” the Queen shouted at the top of her voice.

Nobody moved.

“Who cares for you?” said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). “You’re nothing but a pack of cards!” 40

Alice exits Wonderland by taking several key steps. First, she acknowledges the nonsense of the authority figure (the Queen). Second, she refuses to abide by her nonsense and expresses her displeasure by defying the Queen. Third, she grows to her full-size. Finally, she recognizes her own superior position over the “pack of cards.” Taken together, these steps utterly dismantle Wonderland’s credibility causing Alice’s dream to disintegrate. Thus, by creating a world that takes Darwinian ideas to ridiculous conclusions, Carroll re-centers human agency, intelligence and order by reaffirming a world where the animal and human are not only wholly distinct, but where the human holds the key to order, logic and authority. 41

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38 Straley, Evolution and Imagination, 88.
39 Geer, All Sorts of Pitfalls and Surprises, 10
40 Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, 95.
41 Straley, Evolution and Imagination, 107. U.C. Knoepflmacher similarly argues that “Adult transmission is equally prominent in both Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, where the opening
A disorderly world does not necessarily denote a world devoid of order. Wonderland is a wild, disorderly place where animals not only talk, but also contradict, get angry, are frequently frustrating and, more often than not, entirely nonsensical. However, even though, Wonderland is wild, the reader knows it is not Alice’s home. Indeed, at the end of her adventure, Alice returns to the security of her elder sister’s assurance that it “was a curious dream, certainly” but now it was time to return to “reality” and “run in to [her] tea”42. In this closing frame, Carroll differentiates between “reality” and “dreams” and places Wonderland firmly within the realm of the imagination. Wonderland, with its talking animals, strange creatures and rampant nonsense is the exception that proves the rule. It appears disorderly to Alice precisely because it reverses much of what she knows about her own natural world where cats chase mice, where the tales of mice remain untold, where one remains the same size, and where little girls are never confused with snakes. What did Lewis Carroll intend when he created this world for Alice? Was he offering a criticism of Darwinism or of theories of Natural sciences generally? Was he trying to explain Darwin’s complex scientific ideas to children by using humour to make them more accessible? Or was he simply parodying the amusing theories of a scientist who’d opened up a new way of viewing the natural world and the human’s position in the animal kingdom? This essay has only captured one facet of Darwinian themes in the Alice books. Further research of Darwinian themes in Through the Looking Glass, analysis of John Tenniel’s illustrations and a closer examination of Carroll’s diary and letters would offer interesting directions for further research into this deeply fascinating topic.

[42] Carroll, Alice in Wonderland, 96.
Bibliography


