CALL ME CORDELIA: NAMING AND IDENTITY FORMATION OF YOUNG GIRLS IN NINETEENTH- AND EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE

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THESIS ABSTRACT

Call Me Cordelia: Naming and Identity Formation of Young Girls in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Literature

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Several young female protagonists in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature lack agency over their own lives, being pushed in whichever direction outside sources dictate. Sometimes they lack control because they are orphans, as is the case with Jane in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Anne in L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*. Other times, the girls find themselves in more stable families, but are misplaced in strange new lands inhabited with previously unknown characters and norms. This is the case with Alice in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* series and Wendy in J.M. Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy*. In order for these young girls to gain control of their lives, I argue that they use naming and subsequent linguistic play as primary devices in taking command of their identities and their surroundings. I look to psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s theory on the mirror stage to explain why Brontë’s Jane and Montgomery’s Alice have a special need for reclaiming their spaces and identities, and how naming plays a large part in the reclamation process. For Carroll’s Alice and Barrie’s Wendy, I reference feminist critic Luce Irigaray to make the case that overarching patriarchal standards, that exist in both
the foreign lands they explore and in their home lives, drive them to take their names and identities more seriously. Ultimately, it is the girls’ dedication to their chosen names and identities that allows them to regain control of their lives from challenging situations that have previously taken away their agency.
Introduction

How is a young, often marginalized girl to gain a sense of control in a world that constantly takes it away from her? Several young female protagonists in mid-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature grapple with taking control of and making sense of their surroundings. In the literature I examine in this study, the young female protagonists lack control over their environments for various reasons. Sometimes it is because the girls are orphans, and they have dealt with feeling unwanted most of their lives. This is the case for Anne, in L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables*, and Jane, in Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*. In other cases, female characters in more secure families find themselves in male-dominated landscapes that threaten their agency, as with Alice, in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* series and Wendy, in J.M. Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy*. Anne, Jane, Alice, and Wendy all go through a stage as pawns in the respective worlds of their stories, moving about involuntarily, whichever way they are pushed. The girls’ identities are shaping and shifting throughout their journeys, mostly at the hands of persons and situations outside of their control. A primary way that the young protagonists control and shape their worlds to better suit their needs is through the tool of naming, through which they achieve identity formation and linguistic empowerment. Anne does so by christening people and objects, including herself, with new names. Through this process, she escapes the disheartening circumstances of her life before arriving at Green Gables, and also shapes Green Gables into her ideal fantasy home. She wants her new locale to feel as magical and exciting as she feels living inside of it, as it is her first time having a place to call home. Brontë’s Jane, on the other hand, uses her own name in the process of
affirming her identity and therefore proving her validity as a girl deserving of a pleasant
life, despite previous circumstances in which she was devalued by those around her. She
has been brought up to believe that she is unworthy of love, and combats this
powerlessness by taking control over her name, and therefore her identity, to prove
otherwise. For girls in difficult circumstances, language is power.

Similarly, Barrie’s Wendy and Carroll’s Alice both engage with new identities as
they explore previously unknown worlds. Wendy takes on a different identity when she
transforms from Wendy to mother, and she uses this new name and identification to live
out a life in which the expectations that she grow up quickly are mitigated. Wendy’s
reticence to mature can be traced to the fact that her parents are by no means model
guardians. Her father lacks maturity and her mother withholds the full amount of her love
from her children. As a result, Wendy finds it necessary to take on a premature motherly
role for her siblings. She leaves her home and her parents to take on the role of mother in
an attempt to showcase the pressure she feels to grow up too quickly. Alice, on her two
journeys to unknown lands, goes through several different identity changes, and even has
an identity crisis. Despite this, she wrestles with names and identity the best that she can
in order to thrive in a place where she cannot wholly be seen as herself. A mental
commonality between Wendy and Alice is that they both shape their worlds through play
with language, naming, and linguistic identifications, shaping their environments with
words and verbal interactions. Both female characters strive to accustom themselves to
the new language norms they encounter in order to make their adjustment to their foreign
worlds more comfortable, even malleable, and give them a better sense of control in a
time of uncertainty and patriarchal domination.

In this study, I discuss how young female protagonists use naming and other
forms of linguistic play to have a better sense of control over their worlds. I address the
novels by topic, starting with the trope of the disempowered orphan in *Jane Eyre* (1847)
and *Anne of Green Gables* (1908), nineteenth-century texts that highlight
disenfranchisement through lack of linguistic governance. Framing the texts through
Jacques Lacan’s concepts of psychoanalysis, specifically the symbolic order, I further
explain why the girls focus so heavily on their names, and therefore their identities. I then
discuss *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871),
and finally *Peter and Wendy* (1911) as stories of girls in new, unknown lands who
continue the legacy of nineteenth-century orphans by using language to combat
powerlessness. Using a feminist lens, I reference feminist critic Luce Irigaray to analyze
the patriarchal factors that require girls to focus on regaining control of their
environments in the first place, and the barriers they face in doing so. Not only is
linguistic mastery one of the only options for power allowed to female protagonists, it is
also a primary means for authorship into cultural legitimacy.
The Molding of a World: *Jane Eyre* and *Anne of Green Gables*

Charlotte Brontë introduces readers to an eponymous young, unwanted orphan who feels she has nowhere to belong in *Jane Eyre*. The novel, published in 1847, allows for a focus on a mid-nineteenth-century female protagonist in circumstances that require her to seek control over her life. The second example of an orphan protagonist from a similar time period is Anne Shirley from *Anne of Green Gables*, which was published in 1908. Montgomery’s novel provides another female lead from a similar time period, in terms of setting, who lacks control over her life. Jane suffers the loss of both of her parents at a young age. Jane’s father was a poor clergyman, and her mother, coming from a wealthier family, was disowned for marrying him. He caught typhus while away for work in a poor community, and he and her mother ended up dying within one month of each other due to the disease. Jane’s uncle took her in to live with his family at Gateshead, but he too died when she was very young. Jane is then left to live with her aunt, Mrs. Reed, who is not a blood relative and feels that she owes no familial duty to the young girl. Mrs. Reed is an unloving caretaker who is cruel to Jane, and her children follow in her footsteps with the treatment of their cousin. Jane escapes her unpleasant reality at Gateshead when she moves to Lowood, a school where she is more comfortable mentally, but physically suffers from lack of proper nutrition and the cold. After eight years there she ends up working as governess for a young girl at Thornfield, where she finds herself in a different type of difficult relationship with the master of the manor, Mr. Rochester. Despite every injustice Jane has to face, she manages to forge an identity for
herself based on her name, and therefore what it means to be Jane Eyre. Having
ownership over her name and her identity is something she works diligently to achieve.

In parallel, L.M. Montgomery’s *Anne of Green Gables* relays the story of
orphaned child Anne Shirley, who never has much of a say in her life’s path. A primary
way Anne takes control in the novel is through the process of name giving. Christening
objects and people, including herself, with new names is a tool she uses to make sense of
her environment. For Anne, names have a special type of power, and her imagination
knows no bounds in her application of these names and their implications for her. She
partakes in this form of linguistic play so as to find her place in a world which has since
neglected her. Anne was left an orphan when her mother died from fever a few months
after her birth and her father passed away just four days later. Since there were no other
relatives around to take Anne under their wing, the family maid, Mrs. Thomas, brought
her up, as she had no idea what else to do with Anne. One would hope that the tragedy in
Anne’s life would end there, but Mrs. Thomas’s husband passed on, and Anne had to find
a new place to live once more. Mrs. Hammond, a woman with eight children, took Anne
in as she could use her help around the house. Yet again, one hopes this will be the child’s
last destination, but Mr. Hammond died, so Mrs. Hammond split her eight children
among her relatives. Alas, nobody wanted Anne, so she went to the asylum at Hopeton.
Even the asylum was weary of keeping her because it was overcrowded. Finally, when
Anne is taken from the asylum and heads to Green Gables with Matthew Cuthbert, it
seems her luck has finally changed for the better, that is, until she discovers the
heartbreaking news that the Cuthbert family was expecting a boy and not a girl. Being
passed around like an unwanted rag doll is traumatic for Anne. She has no say in anything that is happening to her and feels she belongs to no one. Both Anne and Jane are left out of feeling wanted and include in their environments. As a result of this, they are left out of experiencing the positive power of language. The magic of language is a lesson they must learn on their own through a difficult journey, one that influences their understanding of how language can be used as a tool for taking control of their lives.

Upon Anne’s arrival in Avonlea and Jane’s growing up with the Reeds at Gateshead, both girls deal with the disrespect of not being called by their given name. Anne is frequently described by Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert as a “freckled witch” (Montgomery 11) and a “witch of a girl” (35), Matthew also describing her as a “waif of the world” (15). These are names that detract from her agency. Anne feels hurt when she is called things other than her own name, which is why she says to Marilla, “You wouldn’t like to be called nothing but a woman all the time” (25). Anne is used to being referred to as an orphan, or “desperately wicked” as Mrs. Thomas always called her (37).

Jane also deals with a similar dilemma in the Reed household. Once, when John Reed, her especially cruel cousin, cannot find her, he calls out for her not as Jane but as “Madam Mope!” When she does not respond because that is not her name, but also because she does not want to get tied up in his relentless abuse, he tells his sisters that “Joan is not here” (Brontë 7). Jane receives so little respect in the Reed home that it seems acceptable to call her any girl’s name that begins with a J and sounds somewhat like “Jane.” John frequently tortures Jane. She notes that, “every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh in my bones shrank when he came near” (8). Mrs. Reed never
punishes her son for his misconduct; rather, she thinks that Jane is the trouble maker. Jane herself begins to wonder if she truly is the naughty one, considering that, “All said I was wicked, and perhaps I might be so” (13). Just like Anne, Jane is described as being a wicked child. The two girls are not wicked, but rather they are simply preadolescent children trying to make sense of and gain some control in a world that has not been kind to them. Jane is too young and inexperienced to understand the mistreatment she receives at the hands of Mrs. Reed. When she asks her nursemaid, Bessie, what she has done wrong to deserve her poor lot at Gateshead, the only reply she gets is, “Jane, I don’t like cavillers or questioners; besides, there is something truly forbidding in a child taking up her elders in that manner” (5). Mrs. Reed does not have any better explanation than Bessie. Jane recalls Mrs. Reed saying, “until she heard from Bessie, and could discover by her own observations that I was endeavouring in good earnest to acquire a more sociable and childlike disposition, a more attractive and sprightly manner—something lighter, franker, more natural, as it were—she really must exclude me from privileges intended only for contented, happy little children” (5). Jane would never seem contented enough for Mrs. Reed, and as a result she began to view herself poorly: “I know that had I been a sanguine, brilliant, careless, exacting, handsome, romping child—though equally dependent and friendless—Mrs. Reed would have endured my presence more complacently” (13). In addition to what she views as her personality flaws, John is there to remind her: “you are a dependent, mama says; you have no money; your father left you none; you ought to beg, and not to live here with gentlemen’s children like us, and eat the same meals we do, and wear clothes at our mama’s expense” (8). It is not until Jane is
much older, when she visits Mrs. Reed on her deathbed, that she realizes why the woman was so uncaring towards her. Mrs. Reed was jealous of how much her husband loved his sister, Jane’s mother, and Jane herself. He seemed to love Jane more than his own children. Mrs. Reed, in her sickly state, rants about how she had such trouble with Jane when she was growing up, to the point that she wished she would have died when a fever broke out at Lowood. Despite this, Jane is still kind to the woman, even calling her “Aunt Reed,” which she had vowed as a child never to call her again. She discovers that Mrs. Reed “was resolved to consider me bad to the last; because to believe me good would give her no generous pleasure: only a sense of mortification” (214). The mistreatment both girls experienced, though traumatizing, teaches them the real power of language. Since words are used as weapons against them, the female orphans are inspired to use language as a tool for their own benefit, seeing how potent it can be in making change and influencing others.

Both Jane and Anne experience similar feelings of being a debased member of society, which fuels their desire to take control through language. For Anne, being passed among the hands of so many caretakers makes her feel that nobody could ever truly want her. Who she is, Anne Shirley, is not good enough, and that is why one of her first requests of Marilla is to be called by another name. She asks, “Will you please call me Cordelia?” because, “It’s such a perfectly elegant name” (Montgomery 17). She continues: “When I was young I used to imagine it was Geraldine, but I like Cordelia better now. But if you call me Anne please call me Anne spelled with an E” as “A-n-n looks dreadful, but A-n-n-e looks so much more distinguished. If only you’ll call me
Anne spelled with an E I shall try to reconcile myself to not being called Cordelia” (18). She insists that if she cannot be her imagined version of herself, Cordelia, she wants to have the autonomy to decide how her name is spelled. Upon meeting her friend Diana’s mother for the first time, Anne makes a point to tell the woman that her name is spelled with an E; “she was determined there should be no misunderstanding on that important point” (58). Her reasoning for wanting a new name is that “Anne is such an unromantic name” (18), but the truth is that the name harbors a lifetime of heartache. Changing it to something else would give her a fresh start. Situating Anne’s resistance in theory on lagnuage and identity, Katharine Slater states, “Her unwillingness to accept the signifier ‘Anne’ suggests a stark reluctance to capitulate to what Jacques Lacan calls the law of social relations, the structures and principles that constitute the Symbolic order” (172). The Symbolic is one of three registers which make up fundamental dimensions of psychical subjectivity in human beings. The other two registers are the Imaginary and the Real. The Symbolic refers to the customs, norms, practices, and traditions of a society, with a focus on how these components are intertwined with language (Jonhston). Anne, being new in town, is not yet familiar with the social rules and language of Avonlea. She has never lived in a place where she was important enough to be required to follow social rules for her identity, or lack thereof. She does not yet comprehend that she cannot be called Cordelia because the Symbolic structure of Avonlea is much more rigid than her imagination (Slater 172). But she simply does not like her name because she has been carrying the weight of being Anne the orphan for too long and is ready to be relieved of
the duty by having a new name. She believes that a new identity may give her a different life.

However, this obsession with the self’s name embodies the terrain on which Anne is trapped in the Imaginary register, which Lacan associates with a limited consciousness and self-awareness, a theoretical perspective we can map onto the orphan Anne as she endeavors to use language in identity-formation. The Imaginary is further explained by Johnston as, “Who and what one ‘imagines’ other persons to be, what one thereby ‘imagines’ they mean when communicatively interacting, [and] who and what one ‘imagines’ oneself to be, including from the imagined perspectives of others.” Upon entering Avonlea, and all of her life before then, Anne lives primarily in the Imaginary, continually revising her desire for a name that would mark her as special and identified. Not only does Anne endeavor to name herself, but she also engineers names for her environment and landscape, demonstrating her struggle with the preliminary structures of the Lacanian mirrored order.

Trapped at the advent of the Imaginary order even as a pre-teen, one of the first things Anne does on the way to Green Gables with Matthew is to rename the locales they pass to sound more fantastic. As they go down the Avenue, she states, “There is no meaning in a name like that,” and insists that “They should call it. . .the White Way of Delight” which is “a nice imaginative name,” as opposed to just “the Avenue” (Montgomery 13-14). Anne is fully embracing her optimistic feelings about finally having a home and a family to claim as her own and wants her environment to be as fanciful and full of joy as she herself feels. When Anne and Matthew pass Barry’s Pond,
she decides that the name should be changed to the “Lake of Shining Waters” (14). The “nice imaginative name[s]” match Anne’s hopes for a fairy tale-like existence in comparison to her previously depressing life circumstances. The new names are part of her staking claim on the town and asserting control over her new life, with hopes that she can manifest a real-life fantasy. Anne figures that if she imagines this new life being perfectly magical, it will in turn be just that.

The ride to Green Gables also gives readers a glimpse inside Anne’s psyche, revealing her desperate need for control through naming, given self-esteem issues. She asks Matthew if he would rather be divinely beautiful, dazzlingly clever, or angelically good, to which he responds that he does not know. Anne asserts that it does not matter for her in the end, because it is not likely she will ever be any of those things anyway. Despite the pleasures of a new home and family, Anne has it ingrained in her brain that she will never possess such good qualities, because if she had, she would not have been rejected so much. Jane, too, views herself as “a defective being, with many faults and few redeeming points” (Brontë 73). Bessie has some sympathy for Jane, but she is the only individual at Gateshead who does. The other servant, Abbot, would tend to disagree that Jane had any redemptive qualities: “if she were a nice, pretty child” then, “one might compassionate her forlornness; but one really cannot care for such a little toad as that” (23). Like Anne, her identity is in a desperate state, and she must find a way to become comfortable with herself.

While Anne has been using language to her advantage by giving people and places new names, Jane is frequently a victim of language before she learns to wield it
herself. When the apothecary, Mr. Lloyd, comes to visit Jane after she becomes sick from fear after being locked up in the abandoned red room at Gateshead, he suggests sending her to a nearby school, Lowood. To this suggestion, Mrs. Reed is “glad enough to get rid of such a tiresome, ill-conditioned child, who always looked as if she were watching everybody, and scheming plots underhand” (22). Jane is not a bad child, but because of Mrs. Reed’s debasing statements about her, her chances for success at Lowood are practically eliminated before she even steps foot outside of Gateshead. Mrs. Reed also tells Mr. Brocklehurst, the superintendent of Lowood, that she “should be glad if the superintendent and teachers were requested to keep a strict eye [on Jane]. . . and, above all, to guard against her worst fault, a tendency to deceit” (30). With Mrs. Reed’s cruel words, Jane feels “that she was sowing aversion and unkindness along [her] future path” (30). At this young age, Jane does not know how to make her situation any better except to do her best at what will become her new normal, life at Lowood, and a new chance to embrace her identity in a location where she is unknown and can start fresh.

A theoretical account explains linguistic affinities resultant from deprivation. Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s symbolic order theory provides a framework for understanding why both Jane and Anne behave the way that they do in regard to their identities. While Jane is still trying to find comfort in hers, Anne imagines new identities for herself, and befriends them. At Mrs. Thomas’s house, she would gaze into the glass door of the bookcase and pretend her reflection was someone else, Katie Maurice, “the comfort and consolation of [her] life” (Montgomery 40). The “two” girls used to pretend that the bookcase was enchanted, and that Anne could enter into Katie’s world, “a
wonderful place, all flowers and sunshine and fairies, and [they] would have lived there happy for ever after” (40). Slater states that, “Out of trauma—that of her parents’ absence and her guardian’s violence—is born Katie Maurice, this other who looks like Anne but is decidedly not Anne,” (171) and in Katie her first bosom friend is created. When Anne had to go live with Mrs. Hammond, she also made a new “friend” in the valley, named Violetta. Violetta was the voice that echoed back to her when she spoke. Anne’s closest friends were all made up at that point in her life. They were a part of herself, yet still had a slight divergence to compensate for her not feeling comfortable in her own skin. As Slater notes, the friends are “Anne purposefully misrecognized” (172). To further this claim, “it is Anne’s relationship with her own image—or, more precisely, her disconnect from it—that constitutes the most telling consequences of her early childhood mistreatment” (168).

Anne’s imaginary friends buttress Lacan’s mirror stage theory, which is foundational to the Imaginary order. In the concept of the mirror stage, a child between six and eighteen months quickly learns to identify his own image in a mirror with the help of an adult. At this young age, the infant is lacking in the physical and mental capabilities possessed by older adults, and thus feels a sense of helplessness. This helplessness brings about uncomfortable feelings, like anxiety and frustration, and part of the lure of the infant seeing his image with the adult figure in the mirror is the promise that the helplessness can be overcome and the child can become a “pulled-together whole” like the bigger, more mature others that surround them. This idea of wholeness lays down the foundation for the ego “as a series of self-objectifications in images and,
soon after with the event of language acquisition” (Johnston). The infant’s recognition of himself ultimately amounts to what Lacan calls méconnaissance, or misrecognition, because, “[t]he ego is not only a congealed, heteronomous object rather than fluid, autonomous subject, but also, in its very origins, a repository for the projected desires and fantasies of larger others” (Johnston). An infant who does not have the chance to participate in the mirror stage misses out on feeling like a “pulled-together whole” later in their life, thereby missing the crucial formation of their ego.

Anne never had the opportunity to experience the mirror stage because her parents passed away before she was born, removing the basis for the Ego ideal. Slater argues that because Anne’s parents died before she was able to begin her transition into image awareness, infant Anne was unable to identify the difference between herself and her mother, and therefore she suffers “an utter loss of self” (168-9). Long before she is to enter the natural stage of méconnaissance, she is forced into separation. Before she even looks in the mirror, she is incomplete because her mother is gone. Regarding Katie Maurice, Slater posits that “This compromised mirror relationship...suggests that the young Anne has been extensively wounded by her severed parental connection” (169). By looking in the mirror and seeing Katie Maurice instead of herself, Anne lacks the mirror image or ideal: “To acknowledge the disconnect inherent in the duality of her body and her reflected self, to submit herself again to the painful process of fragmentation she suffered too early in her development, is intolerable to an older Anne, who refuses to recognize the image in the mirror as a reflection of self” (Slater 171). Anne’s relationship to Violetta is in the same vein. Although Violetta is not part of Anne’s physical image,
she is still an important part of her being, her voice, and stems from her failed entry into the mirror stage.

Jane also has her own moment of a reflection, that is not her own, in the mirror stage. When she is locked inside the red room at Gateshead, she looks in the glass at herself, thinking, “the strange little figure there gazing at me, with a white face and arms specking the gloom, and glittering eyes of fear moving where all else was still, had the effect of a real spirit: I thought it like one of the tiny phantoms, half fairy, half imp, Bessie’s evening stories represented as coming out of lone, ferny dells in moors...” (Brontë 12). She does not see herself, but rather a half fairy, half imp figure. Like Anne’s parents, Jane’s parent’s died not long after she was born, and if we examine this situation through a Lacanian lens, she, too, has a severed relationship with her own identity because she is incomplete without them. In addition, the mistreatment she faces at the hands of Mrs. Reed makes her feel undesirable, and that loathsome figure is what she sees in the mirror. The distressing time she faces while being locked in the red room exacerbates her previous loss. She is terrified, but also very angry, wondering, “Why was I always suffering, always browbeaten, always accused, for ever condemned? Why could I never please? Why was it useless to try to win anyone’s favour?” (12). Her identity is shaped around being an unlovable creature, not even worthy of looking like a human girl.

In her discussion of the mirror stage, Vanessa D. Dickerson references Jenijoy La Belle, who notes that for someone like feminist critic Luce Irigaray, the mirror is a realm of possibility. La Belle therefore “concedes that the mirror can be ‘useful,’ that it can be, in the hands of women, ‘a more flexible tool’” (Dickerson 59). With this argument, the
red room scene offers more for Jane than agony, rendering also “a scene of exploration and discovery” (59). It was Jane’s confrontation with the mirror in the red room, the image of the “strange little spirit” she encountered, that subconsciously pushed her to escape the life she had been living thus far. Auerbach comments, “It is the nature of the girl to fall through her looking glass into selfhood” (qtd. in Dickerson 60). Like Anne, it is the escape within the mirror which saves her Jane her time of need, pushing her to make the necessary moves to grow into her own selfhood.

Anne’s task of coming into selfhood through naming applies not only to people and places, but also to inanimate objects, a compensation for self-loss. She names the cherry tree that grows outside of her window the Snow Queen, and Marilla’s apple-scented geranium becomes christened Bonny, because “How do you know but that it hurts a geranium’s feelings just to be called a geranium and nothing else?” (Montgomery 25). Anne says, “I like things to have handles even if they are only geraniums. It makes them seem more like people” (25). For so long she does not feel like a person, but rather an object that has been continuously passed unwanted among other people. From experience, she does not want anyone or even anything to feel undesired in the way that she has and makes a point to assure that all people and objects have permanence with a name. Anne seeks to give affection in all the places that she has not been given it herself. Marilla often rebuffs Anne’s imagination and her naming process, but that is because Marilla is in control of her habitat and does not need to use the tactics that Anne has grown so accustomed to using for her survival. When Anne and Marilla are heading to Mrs. Spencer’s house, Anne asks Marilla if they would be going over the Lake of Shining
Waters, to which Marilla replies, “We’re not going over Barry’s pond, if that’s what you mean by your Lake of Shining Waters” (26). Since she is unaware of Anne’s coping mechanism, she thinks that it is all unnecessary fantasy play, and should not be indulged. Rather, Marilla tries to inculcate Anne with morals whenever she has the chance to do so. She tells Anne, “Well I guess it doesn’t matter what a person’s name is as long as he behaves himself” (26). Marilla was “as fond of morals as the Duchess in Wonderland” (40). She prefers no fantasy involved in her world, not realizing that like the Duchess in Wonderland, she too, is part of a mystical creation outside of her understanding, manufactured by the imagination of someone else. Ultimately these moral lessons are taking away Anne’s sense of control over her surroundings. Anne’s rebuttal for Marilla’s point goes as follows: “I read in a book once that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet, but I’ve never been able to believe it. I don’t believe a rose WOULD be as nice if it was called a thistle or a skunk cabbage” (27). This quotation from Anne shows just how much power a name holds in her mind, as if it is the name of the flower which contributes to it smelling good, as opposed to the flower itself.

These imaginary mechanisms supplement Anne until she is able to find a loving, assured community within Avonlea. For a good while, Anne “remains trapped within the ricochet of the mirror” and that is because she did not have a normative entrance into the Symbolic as a result of her first eleven years not providing her with the emotional care and support that she needed for that to happen (Slater 171). Once Marilla agrees to keep Anne at Green Gables, Anne asks her if she can call her Aunt Marilla. She says doing this “would make me feel as if I really belonged to you” (Montgomery 38). Marilla asserts
her control yet again, saying, “I’m not your aunt and I don’t believe in calling people names that don’t belong to them” (38). Even if she cannot give Marilla a more familial name, she can at least accept herself more once her stay at Green Gables is assured and she knows that she is not going back to the asylum. With this acceptance of herself, Anne begins to realize that there are now limits to what she can imagine and what her reality consists of. She knows that she is not Lady Cordelia Fitzgerald, “tall and regal, clad in a gown of trailing white lace, with a pearl cross on [her] breast and pearls in [her] hair,” but is rather “only Anne of Green Gables,” which she realizes is better than being “Anne of nowhere in particular” (41). Slater argues that, “It is only after Anne leaves her abusive environments and enters into the greater social environment of Avonlea that she is truly able to begin the process of leaving behind the distortions of the Imaginary for a new Symbolic order” (172). While living in the Imaginary during her time spent with all of her foster parents and in the asylum, Anne is desirous of being anyone but herself. She is capable of moving on and fulfilling her role as Anne of Green Gables, and thus by accepting the norms of Avonlea, she enters a new Symbolic order. She realizes that to be able to enter Avonlea fully, “Obeying the Law (here, the social Law of Avonlea, as dictated by Marilla, Mrs. Lynde, and others) will… result in her inclusion within the socio-symbolic structure of the community. This provides her with the incentive to brave the traumatic gap between self and reflection” (174). Social laws are complicated to discern, underscoring Anne’s struggles to enter this Symbolic order.

Anne’s newfound identity does not exist without challenges. It becomes threatened by Anne’s teacher, Mr. Phillips. When Mr. Phillips punishes Anne at school,
he has her stand at the front of the room and writes her misdemeanor on the chalk board above her head, stating: “Ann Shirley has a very bad temper. Ann Shirley must learn to control her temper” (Montgomery 74). As if the punishment of standing in front of the room with all eyes on her is not bad enough, Mr. Phillips adds insult to injury by spelling her name without an “E,” a core component of her being. Anne tells Diana that because of this threat to her character, “The iron had entered into my soul” (74). The punishment came to be because Gilbert Blythe teased Anne by calling her “Carrots,” and as a result of that she hit him over the head with her slate. Anne is very sensitive about her red hair, and to be called by the name Carrots hurt her pride. Her confidence regarding her identity is doubly injured in one quick spurt, by both Gilbert and Mr. Phillips. Even long after the disgrace, and despite her overall newfound core identity, Anne still notes that, “There’s such a lot of different Annes in me. I sometimes think that is why I’m such a troublesome person. If I was just the one Anne it would be ever so much more comfortable, but then it wouldn’t be half so interesting” (105). She is Anne with an E, but some of her core components may always be Cordelia, Katie Maurice, and Violetta.

Like Anne, Jane could have entered the Symbolic sooner had she received the necessary love from her parental figure, Mrs. Reed, who “denies love to the child from whom she demands love” (Reisner 158). Rather, Jane’s coming to terms with her own identity and her entrance into the Symbolic are bound up in Rochester, but before he aids her admission into the Symbolic, she faces more verbal degradation. Rochester brings a group of elite friends back to Thornfield, and Jane overhears the ladies talking badly about governesses. Blanche Ingram, whom Rochester is supposed to be marrying soon,
calls them “a nuisance” and her mother says that in Jane’s physiognomy she can “see all the faults of her class” (Brontë 165). Despite what the ladies think of her, Jane is in love with Rochester, and she believes that “though rank and wealth sever us widely, I have something in my brain and heart, in my blood and nerves, that assimilates me mentally to him” (163-64). They spend many evenings chatting together, Jane feeling that the master of the house adds new interest to her life: her “thin-crescent destiny seemed to enlarge; the blanks of existence were filled up; [her] bodily health improved; [she] gathered health and strength” (137). Not only does this conversation increase in strength and health mirror Anne’s, but it also echoes her standing in the mirror stage, dependent on relationships for social acceptance.

Jane stands firm in her beliefs that the two belong together, and because of this dedication to her feelings she enters into the Symbolic. In his eventual marriage proposal Jane comes to terms with being Jane Eyre, forging a new, positive identity based on her own name. In the red room mirror, Jane recognizes herself as “a hostile outcast, perceived by others as inimical to the social context” and therefore “longs...for deliverance from exile” (Reisner 163). This mirror reflection can be compared to the one Jane witnesses on her wedding day, which marked her entry into the Symbolic. Slater attests that “Jane's glance at the mirror in the morning of her attempted marriage to Rochester implies that this shift has occurred” (179). The mirror presents itself again, but this time she recognizes a semblance of Jane Eyre, as opposed to a “strange little figure” (Brontë 12). In her wedding garb, she “saw a robed and veiled figure, so unlike [her] usual self that it seemed almost the image of a stranger” (266). Slater focuses specifically on the word
“almost” for this second mirror scene, noting that “Jane no longer sees an alien ‘spirit,’
but a figure ‘unlike’ her ‘usual self,’ signaling a clear transition into the Symbolic” (179),
a long-awaited departure from the Imaginary stage.

Rochester, although the instigator of Jane’s Symbolic entry, does not notice her
transition. When Rochester proposes to Jane, he says, “You—you strange, you almost
 unearthly thing! . . . You—poor and obscure, and small and plain as you are—I entreat you
to accept me as a husband” (Brontë 236). The proposal was the beginning of Jane’s entry
into the Symbolic, but Rochester is still viewing her as she has always viewed herself,
strange and obscure. After his proposal, he asks Jane to say, “Edward—give me my
name—Edward—I will marry you” (237). She agrees to marry him, but it is not until she
says “Dear Edward!” that Rochester accepts the affirmative answer. Rochester’s demand
is a bit overbearing, and despite the necessity for him to hear his first name, Jane is not
eager to take his last name.

Jane stands strong in her conviction to keep her own name. Four weeks before
their wedding day, Rochester asks Jane, “Is this my pale little elf? Is this my mustard-
seed? This little sunny-faced girl with the dimpled cheek and rosy lips; the satin-smooth
hazel hair, and the radiant hazel eyes?” For all of the terms of endearment, Jane answers
simply, “It is Jane Eyre, sir.” As an extra aside, she states, “(I had green eyes, reader; but
you must excuse the mistake: for him they were new-dyed, I suppose)” (240). With Jane
about to take on a new last name through marriage, Rochester reads her eyes as “new-
dyed” to accompany her newly acquired name. But Jane is not ready to have a new name.
When Rochester tells her that she is soon to be Jane Rochester, she blushes before losing
all color in her face. Rochester asks, “what is that for?” to which Jane replies, “Because
you gave me a new name—Jane Rochester; and it seems so strange” (240). Earnshaw
explains, “Wedded to her ‘self’ under the name ‘Jane Eyre’, she is thus estranged from
herself by the new name of ‘Jane Rochester’ that he attempts to give her” (179). After all
she has been through, she has earned this new “fairy tale” (Brontë 240) life on her own
terms, and desires to keep her own identity with her own last name.

In discussing Jane’s identity, Earnshaw contends that “Jane thus manages her
identity through her name, not through the grammatical ‘I’ which would be more
appropriate to a fully phenomenal self” (179). Due to her missing her the mirror stage,
she is not the fully formed self that she may have been otherwise, but she is making sense
of her identity in the best way that she knows how. Once when Rochester becomes
agitated with Jane, he refers to her as “thing,” to which Jane replies, “I like rudeness
better than flattery. I had rather be a thing than an angel” (Brontë 243). Rochester’s pet
names do not work for Jane in the way that he thought they might. Although she has
become more comfortable with her identity, this does not mean that she imagines herself
now more worthy of prestige. She still views herself as a “plain, Quakerish governess,”
which is why she does not want Rochester to bedeck her in jewels. Jane tells Rochester,
“Jewels for Jane Eyre sounds unnatural and strange,” and that she would no longer be
herself covered in jewelry but rather “an ape in a harlequin’s jacket—a jay in borrowed
plumes” (240-1). As Earnshaw points out, “‘jewels’ are not part of a descriptive cluster
that could ‘mean’ ‘Jane Eyre’” (179).
Once the wedding day arrives, Jane refuses to put the luggage tags that say “Mrs. Rochester” on her belongings until she “was assured [Mrs. Rochester] had come into the world alive” (Brontë 255). Jane has her doubts about becoming this woman even before the nuptials are interrupted by the revelation of the real Mrs. Rochester, locked up in the third floor of Thornfield. Even though she has not legally become Mrs. Rochester, this discovery makes her feel that she has lost herself, lost Jane Eyre as she knew her. She thinks, “where was the Jane Eyre of yesterday?—where was her life?—where were her prospects?” (274). Finally making the commitment to change her name and risk her identity (hence in the hopes that Mrs. Rochester came out alive, that Jane Eyre would survive the change), but having that prospect fall apart so quickly, Jane feels she is neither Jane Eyre nor Mrs. Rochester. She has lost herself entirely, and runs away to the moors with hopes of rediscovery.

When Jane escapes Thornfield and runs away to the moors, she finds camaraderie with the Rivers family, who help her get back on her feet. St. John Rivers discovers a sheet of paper in her home with her name on it, Jane Eyre, which she has been keeping a secret so as not to be discovered. This is when he makes the connection that the young woman he has accepted and provided for is actually his cousin, and the heir to their deceased uncle John Eyre’s fortune. Jane thus inherits both a fortune and a family, neither of which would have been possible if she were not adamant about recuperating her own identity after her failed wedding. Despite telling the Rivers that she is Jane Elliott, when present in the comfort and security of her own home she keeps the true spirit of her identity alive. With the new inheritance, she can now live as an independent woman, and
with this independence comes the ability to marry Rochester entirely out of her own volition. Ultimately, Jane’s commitment to remain true to her own identity allows her these pleasures.

Jane Eyre becomes Jane Rochester once the former is capable of being completely comfortable with who she is, and what it means to be herself. Her dedication to remaining Jane Eyre for so long is her salvation, bringing her happiness in the form of independence, a husband, and a family. Anne Shirley has the opposite experience. She refuses to acknowledge her own identity until she is assured of a loving community within Avonlea. What both girls have in common is that they rely heavily on their identities, in all of their different forms, to ultimately achieve happiness. Despite failed entries into the mirror stage, they both manage to leave the Imaginary and enter into the Symbolic with reliance on their names and therefore their identities.
Creating Space in a World: Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, Through the Looking-Glass, and Peter and Wendy

Lewis Carroll and J.M. Barrie present two young female protagonists who must come to terms with their identities in new, foreign worlds, and as an extra challenge must adapt to linguistic abnormalities. Carroll’s Alice and Barrie’s Wendy do not face difficult familial issues like the orphan girls, but instead must contend with other people, and at times creatures, who challenge how the girls know themselves. The girls’ identities shape and shift as they explore previously unknown lands. Carroll’s Alice series, which includes Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, with their 1865 and 1871 publication dates, respectively, adhere to the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century time period window. In addition, the novels provide a young girl who faces issues with both her name and identity. Barrie’s Peter and Wendy, which was published in 1911, also features a young girl who must learn a new identity as the result of a new name. All three novels take the concepts of naming and identity, and look at how they are influenced by unfamiliar circumstances.

Alice, the protagonist from Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass, seems to have an easier life than the orphan girls Anne and Jane. She loves to partake in fairy tales and whimsy as an escape from the monotony of everyday life. Readers frequently see Alice in the beginning of her stories conversing with and playing make-believe with her cats. Alice’s favorite phrase is “Let’s pretend” (Carroll, Looking-Glass 5), but she has a hard time finding someone to partake in her pretend ideas. Escaping into imaginary worlds in her dreams, Alice, like Jane, questions
what it means to be Alice. She goes through several trials in making sense of her identity, and along the way the concept of names and language in general get turned upside down.

Wendy Darling, the protagonist of J.M. Barrie’s *Peter and Wendy*, is a young girl forced to grow up too early due to irresponsible parents. When Wendy is first born, her parents are unsure as to if they will be able to keep her: “as she was another mouth to feed,” but her father, having done some calculations, saves her (Barrie 2). She was being calculated into their lives as if she were a luxury item they may need to deduct in order to pay their other bills. Despite this, the Darlings have two more children, and although expenses are an issue, the family stays together. The narrator of the story states, “There never was a simpler happier family until the coming of Peter Pan” (4), but the Darling family was not as happy as they might seem on the surface, even before the arrival of Peter. Mrs. Darling keeps a part of herself locked off from her family: “her sweet mocking mouth had one kiss on it that Wendy could never get, though there it was, perfectly conspicuous in the right-hand corner” (1). She is loving towards her children, but not fully. Even Mr. Darling can not access the innermost part of his wife’s mind, or grab that stealthy kiss, although sometimes he acts as if he were one of the children, too. At one point Wendy has to act as mediator for a standoff between her brother, Michael, and her father, about who will take unpleasant medicine first. Her father acts just as childishly as his counterpart, each calling the other “a cowardly custard” (14). For the most part, Mr. and Mrs. Darling leave their child-rearing to Nana, a dog. Wendy already holds some responsibility in the Darling household for herself and her younger brothers, John and Michael, as she is the oldest child but once Peter arrives that responsibility
becomes multiplied. To prove her ability to be a grown up, she follows him away to
Neverland, where she takes on a new persona and must adjust to entirely new linguistic
rules that affect her identity.

Not only is Mr. Darling’s childish nature the reason why Wendy must grow up too
quickly, it is also the ultimate reason that the children become swept away to Neverland
with Peter. On the night of the medicine fiasco with Michael, Mr. Darling dumps his
portion of the medicine in Nana’s bowl. When everyone finds out what he did, they
comfort Nana, feeling sorry for her that she drank the potent liquid. Mr. Darling becomes
jealous that she is receiving all of the attention and comfort, so he therefore places her out
in the yard for the evening, and this provides Peter with ease of entry. Before he arrives,
Mrs. Darling is stumped to find the word “Peter” in her children’s minds, and she is
especially stumped by Wendy’s mind, which “began to be scrawled all over with him”
(6). Although he is already etched in Wendy’s brain, upon first seeing him in person the
two exchange names after she finds him crying on the nursery floor. She introduces
herself as “Wendy Moira Angela Darling,” (18) feeling satisfaction in having stated her
full name, answering as an adult may when asked the same question. In responding as she
imagines a grown up would, she is already positioning herself to fill her new role as
mother. When it is Peter’s turn, he introduces himself as Peter Pan, to which Wendy “was
already sure that he must be Peter, but it did seem a comparatively short name” (18). She
asks if that is his full name, which makes Peter feel he does have a shortish name, and
Wendy, slipping into caretaker mode, apologizes for seemingly insulting and upsetting
him. To further this point, when she says that she is sorry, the omniscient narrator refers
to her this one time and one time only as Wendy Moira Angela, the transformed version of the little girl Wendy, who is consoling a sad little boy over a trivial matter the way that a mother would, using language to slip into character. Her mothering goes in to full effect when she finds out that Peter does not have a mother of his own, as she “felt at once that she was in the presence of a tragedy” (19). When Peter cries because his shadow has become unattached, Wendy takes advantage of his ignorance about simple tasks, such as sewing (he thought he could stick his shadow back on with soap), and calls Peter “my little man” as she offers to sew his shadow back on (19). She has already made the switch into her new identity before even leaving her home, treating Peter as if he were her young child with the way she speaks to him. The identity switch from Wendy to mother will become even more solidified once they arrive in Neverland.

It is Wendy who first tempts Peter with the idea of her going with him to Neverland, on the premise that she could tell many stories to him and the lost boys he lives with. Wendy wants to impress Peter, but also feel useful to him. She wants to take the responsibility she feels at home to a higher level, becoming a true mother figure. He knows this and “[becomes] frightfully cunning” saying, “Wendy, how we should all respect you” (25). As she wavers on her decision to leave her parents, Peter convinces her by further exciting her motherly instinct, telling her that she could sew their clothes and bestow them with pockets, as well as tuck them all in at night, as “None of [them] had ever been tucked in at night” (25). Wendy, in her desire to transform the responsibility she feels at home and prove her worth to Peter, embarks on a new journey to Neverland, which will fully bestow her with a new name and identity: mother.
In Carroll’s *Alice* series, the eponymous protagonist struggles with her identity before she ever leaves home. We are told, “this curious child was very fond of pretending to be two people.” At one point, “she remembered trying to box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 21). Alice, a very imaginative child, can not find the stimulation she needs, and requires an escape from the monotony of everyday life. She does not find this escape in her sister, with whom she argues because she wants to play pretend that they are kings and queens, but her sister, “who liked being very exact, had argued that they couldn't, because there were only two of them” (Carroll, *Looking-Glass* 5). Through a mad journey in two foreign lands, she finds the adventure that she seeks, but also more importantly discovers what it means to be Alice and of what that girl is capable.

Along the trek through Wonderland and the looking-glass world, many questions about Alice’s identity, especially in regards to her name, present themselves. As she crosses the looking-glass world chess board, she meets a gnat who finds it useless for people to have names if they do not always respond to them. To this idea, Alice replies, “No use to THEM, but it's useful to the people who name them, I suppose. If not, why do things have names at all?” (30). The gnat continues, asking Alice, “I suppose you don't want to lose your name?” (33), to which she responds that no, she would not, and the gnat rebuts with a speech about the convenience of losing one’s name. For instance, Alice would not have to go to her lessons, as the governess would not be able to call her by name. Despite this, Alice still wants to keep her name, “because they'd have to give me another, and it would be almost certain to be an ugly one” (34). Just as in Anne’s world,
even if the trees and ponds and plants she names will never know the difference, it is still meaningful to her, and therefore to them, and Alice feels a similar way. This interaction with the gnat, a strange creature who challenges her ways of thinking, displays finding comfort in her identity, even if it is just in the beauty of her name. Upon leaving the gnat, Alice then ventures into the woods, where things have no names. While inside, she cannot remember her own name, or names for simple objects, such as trees and shade. When a fawn asks her what she calls herself, she thinks, “I wish I knew!” and sadly responds, “Nothing, just now” (36). The loss of her name perturbs her because it ultimately means a loss of her identity. She likes her name, and who is she without her moniker?

A more serious identity dilemma occurs when Alice shifts from tiny to huge and back to tiny again after falling down a rabbit hole into Wonderland. As all of this is happening, she wonders who she could possibly be. Things are too unusual for her to be the same girl that she was the day before. Thinking over the girls she knows who are the same age as her, she deduces she is not Ada, because they have different hair (Alice is lacking ringlets), and she knows that she is not Mabel, because Mabel is not very smart (Alice knows much more than she does). “Besides,” Alice says to herself, “she’s she and I’m I” (Carroll, Wonderland 25). If someone were to poke their head down the hole and ask her to come back up, she thinks that she will make them tell her who she is first, and if she does not like being that person, she will stay down there. The girl she is used to being would not likely be in the circumstance she currently finds herself. Despite changes in her height, Alice still looks the same physically and acts the same mentally, yet she
believes that she must be someone else due to the puzzling situation that she is in. About Alice’s confusion, Nina Auerbach notes, “Other little girls [in literature] traveling through fantastic countries. . . ask repeatedly ‘where am I?’ rather than ‘who am I?’ Only Alice turns her eyes inward from the beginning, sensing that the mystery of her surroundings is the mystery of her identity” (33). *Who* matters more than *where*.

Contrary to the gnat and his disregard for names, Alice also meets Humpty Dumpty on her journey across the chess board, who has a much different opinion about the importance of names and identity. Before Alice officially meets him, she decides from a distance that it cannot be anybody besides him that she sees, because it is “as if his name were written all over his face” (Caroll, *Looking-Glass* 66). Like Anne, he has strong feelings about calling people by their given name, whether they are human or not. He says to Alice, “It's VERY provoking to be called an egg—VERY!” (66). When Humpty Dumpty asks Alice what her name and business are, she begins “My NAME is Alice but—” and is quickly interrupted with him telling her, “It’s a stupid enough name! What does it mean?” (67). Alice wonders if names need deeper meanings, and Humpty Dumpty replies that of course they do, and says, “with a name like [Alice], you might be any shape, almost” (67). Alice’s identity is again called into question, but she begins to trust that Humpty Dumpty is an authority. Their exchange of language continues, with Alice asking him to explain the nonsense poem “Jabberwocky” to her, since it does not follow any of the linguistic rules she knows to be true. The made-up words and Humpty Dumpty’s explanations of them baffle Alice, and, “[w]hile this exchange is terribly puzzling… she does not seem to question in any way Humpty Dumpty's right or ability to
bend language to his will; in fact, she accepts him as a sort of semantic guide” (Turner 246). As a male figure, he holds the power. Turner elaborates further, “To wield language in these texts, be it intelligible, ‘normal,’ or otherwise, is to have the power to define, to create, and to destroy. When language ceases, so does existence” (244). Alice must learn to wield the language of Wonderland and the looking-glass world. “Knowledge of the game's rules is a signifier of power, and Alice, ignorant of how this logic works, is powerless” (Turner 249) until she does so.

Alice’s interactions with the gnat and Humpty Dumpty are reflective of her struggles with men in the fantasy sphere. She inherently contradicts both of their opposing views on identity which they assert so confidently, wavering at times in her beliefs, but ultimately staying true to her identity. Beatrice Turner explains that “Alice's exchange with Humpty Dumpty, and in fact most of her exchanges with the inhabitants of Wonderland and the looking-glass world, are marked by this power imbalance, an imbalance that is worked out at the level of language” (246). This power imbalance is enacted through male characters who attempt to make Alice question her identity. When she meets Tweedledee and Tweedledum, they even try to get Alice to question her existence, telling her that she is a figment of the Red King’s dream, and possesses no real power. In retaliation Alice cries, “I AM real!” and convinces herself that “I know they’re talking nonsense. . . and it’s foolish to cry about it” (Carroll, Looking-Glass 49). Through every new encounter in Wonderland and the looking-glass world, Alice acquires more certainty in who she is and, in turn, learns the rules of the fantasy space she exists within.
It is pertinent that Alice learns the rules because women see the world from a
different perspective than men, a different side of the looking-glass per se, and these
differing experiences cannot be expressed, but are rather silenced, in a male-dominated
world (Parkin-Gounela 138). Alice must understand that her experience as a female in the
new places she explores is not a universal experience, but rather a very limited one. To
make sense of her surroundings and maintain control of her identity she must act as the
males do. This idea that men and women see the world from different perspectives stems
from Irigaray’s argument that there is only one side to the looking-glass for women, that
which is reflected within patriarchal discourse. In “The Looking Glass, from the Other
Side,” Irigaray rewrites Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass* from a feminist perspective.
A grown version of Alice lives in a world of “unalterable facts,” which are written down
in black and white only. The color changes are “saved for the times when Alice is alone.
Behind the screen of representation. In the house or garden” (Irigaray, “Looking Glass”
9). The world women live in is black and white, until they are acting in a way that is in
the realm of men’s understanding, taking care of the home or gardening. Distinctions
among characters in Irigaray’s “Looking Glass” become blurred between one
pronoun/name/identity and another as the story progresses, with Alice becoming
“another” woman named Ann, who becomes a “he” who becomes someone else and so
on (Parkin-Gounela 139). The point of the shifting characters is to prove that a woman
cannot truly be defined when she “is kept behind the plane of projections” (Irigaray,
“Looking Glass” 18). Alice, in Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass* and *Alice in
Wonderland, is in a space which cannot properly reflect her, and in order to have a presence she needs to adjust to the linguistic rules.

Irigaray’s theory on mimesis helps to demonstrate Alice’s adjustment to the linguistic rules, or lack thereof, in Wonderland and the looking-glass world. Virpi Lehtinen explains Irigaray’s theory: “[she] argues that for a woman only imitation, mimesis, provides an access to masculine discourse: a woman, exemplified by Irigaray herself, can enter the discursive field only if she assumes the speaking position of a woman defined by and in relation to man” (21). The process of mimesis involves women imperfectly repeating stereotypical views of themselves as an act of resistance to those stereotypes. For example, if women are viewed as illogical, they should speak logically about this view, creating a juxtaposition that undermines the claim that women are illogical (Donovan). Alice learns to mime the language of the creatures that she meets, but in such a way that asserts her identity rather than undermines it. She partakes in the linguistic play but proves that she is assured of herself. As an example, she helps Tweedledee and Tweedledum prepare for a silly battle between themselves, doing her best not to laugh at their ridiculous antics. All the while she knows that it is entirely zany, but she must play by the rules.

Along with identity being a key component for Alice in her adventures, the intricacies of the English language are also present to further complicate Alice’s relationship with herself and those around her. A mouse who helps her escape a flood of her own tears begins to relay his history to Alice, telling her that his life history is “a long and sad tale!” Alice, looking at the mouse’s tail, replies, “It is a long tail, certainly, but
why do you call it sad?” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 34). The mouse continues relaying the story, and while Alice is caught in thought about his tail being the tale, he questions what she is thinking about. “You had got to the fifth bend, I think?” Alice asks (36). To show how much Alice is caught up in her thinking about what should be simple to comprehend, Carroll has the mouse’s story physically presented in the shape of a winding mouse’s tail on the page. Alice is referring to the literal fifth bend of the tail in her imagination, to which the mouse takes offense, as he thought Alice was calling him crazy, as in being “around the bend.” “I had not!” the mouse replies angrily. “A knot!” Alice exclaims, “Oh, do let me help to undo it!” (36) The homophones create a lot of confusion for Alice and a lot of frustration for the mouse. The incident with the mouse happens in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, so it makes sense that in the sequel, when she is in the looking-glass world, Alice has a better grasp on language. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, the Red Queen and the White Queen frequently challenge Alice with spewing nonsense. The queens tell her that she cannot deny what they are saying, “even if you tried with both hands” (109). When Alice understandably becomes frustrated, the Red Queen remarks that Alice has, “a nasty, vicious temper” (109). Alice, stuck in a male-dominated space, is not only isolated from other male characters because of language, but also other females. The way that the linguistic rules are established in the male-dominated space is meant to bolster only those who created them.

Wendy, when talking with Peter in the nursery, also finds herself subject to linguistic misunderstandings. She tells Peter she will give him a kiss, but he does not know what a kiss is. He holds his hand out expecting Wendy to give him a physical
object, and so as not to hurt his feelings she hands him a thimble. He offers a “kiss” in return, and drops an acorn button into her hand. Wendy later asks for a kiss again, forgetting that Peter does not know what it is, and he gets upset that she wants her “kiss” (thimble) back. To try and make the situation sense to Peter, she tells him, “Oh dear, I don’t mean a kiss, I mean a thimble” (Barrie 23). She thimbles him (kisses him), and Peter thimbles her back in return. Thus language and its meanings have already changed for Wendy, before she has even left for Neverland. She is already altering her life by amending her language in order to appease Peter and take on her soon-to-be role as mother. If she is being forced to grow up so soon as the only daughter of the Darling household, in which her father acts as a child and her mother does not fully give of herself to her children, she may as well take advantage of the situation by becoming a true mother figure.

When Wendy and her brothers finally arrive at Neverland, Peter cries out to the lost boys, “Great news boys! I have brought at last a mother for you all” (49). Unfortunately, Tinker Bell is jealous of the new girl with whom Peter is preoccupied, and she tells the lost boys that Peter has ordered Wendy to be shot. One of the boys, Tootles, shoots an arrow right through Wendy’s breast. While Wendy is lying on the ground, the boys become sad because they lost the “lady” Peter brought them to “take care of us at last” (48). Although Wendy is not that much older than the boys, as they are all still children, she is a “lady” to them because a mother must be a lady, not a girl. Wendy begins to waver in feeling assured of being a mother to the boys though. When they all ask her in unison to be their mother, she responds, “Of course it’s frightfully fascinating,
but you see I am only a little girl. I have no real experience” (55). Peter assures her that all they need “is just a nice motherly person” and she feels that is exactly what she is (55). She ends up embracing her new identity so well that eventually Captain Hook wants to make Wendy the mother of himself and his crew, as well. He says, “We will seize the children and carry them to the boat: the boys we will make walk the plank, and Wendy shall be our mother” (68). Even her own brother, Michael, “was quite willing to believe that she was really his mother” (59). Irigaray would argue that “[i]n [this] social order, women are ‘products’ used and exchanged by men. Their status is that of merchandise, ‘commodities’ (“Power” 84). Wendy, in fighting the status of commodity, utilizes mimesis. She takes the idea that females in her position, as surrogate mothers, exist for the sole purpose of being useful to men in child rearing, and mimes it in such a way that she proves women can actually obtain their own pleasure from the job. It is a useful job, but it is also one which can be chosen for reasons beyond solely pleasing males, and that is what Wendy is demonstrating.

Before Alice can fully embrace her identity, more changes occur throughout the narratives that make her question who she is. At one point when Alice undergoes another bodily change, her neck growing extremely long, a pigeon among the trees asks her what she is, if not a serpent trying to get to her eggs. “I—I’m a little girl,” Alice says doubtfully, “as she remembered the number of changes she had gone through, that day” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 56). Alice is unsure of everything she has gone through during her time she has spent in Wonderland, which could have rendered her someone, or something, else. The pigeon, rightfully frightened, asks Alice, “What does it matter to me
whether you’re a little girl or a serpent?” To this Alice replies, “It matters a good deal to me” (56). Alice needs reassurance that she is indeed still Alice after experiencing so many bizarre situations, but cannot seem to find any within herself or from others. When she meets a caterpillar and he asks her who she is, she replies, “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” (48). The changes need not have negative results for Alice though. The end of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland finds her being the victim of the Queen’s favorite threat: “Off with her head!” (117). Alice is not intimidated, though, as she is secure enough in her own identity to fire back “Who cares for you? You’re nothing but a pack of cards!” (117). Naming them demonstrates her linguistic empowerment. At the end of Through the Looking-Glass, when she wakes up from her dream, she admits to her cat that she was a part of the Red King’s dream, but more importantly that he was a part of hers. She is no longer insecure about being Alice, but realizes just how capable she truly is thanks to those who attempted to make her doubt herself.

Wendy also questions the life she has been living in Neverland, noticing the limitations of her situation. When Captain Hook puts his plan into action to kidnap the boys and make Wendy his own mother, she becomes so fascinated by the pirate that she is unable to defend the children. This is because, in reality, “She was only a little girl” (97). Wendy’s last words to the boys before they are made to walk the plank of Captain Hook’s ship are, “I feel that I have a message to you from your real mothers, and it is this: ‘We hope our sons will die like English gentlemen’” (109). In a time of distress, although
Wendy has wholeheartedly taken on the role of mother, she is still a young girl at heart. She needs to channel the boys’ real mothers for this final message to them because she needs to speak to them in a way that they will take earnestly. Irigaray explains this phenomenon as such: “Women’s social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to ‘masculine’ systems of representation which disappropriate her from her relation to herself and other women” (“Power” 85). As a female, Wendy’s femininity “is never to be identified except for and by the masculine” (“Power” 85). She lives in Neverland to serve as the boys mother, which she wholeheartedly enjoys and embraces, but when it comes down to imparting the boys with one final important message, Wendy realizes that she needs to look towards a more experienced source than herself, their real mothers. Although these women are missing from the boys’ lives, they fit the masculine systems of representation of what a mother should be better than Wendy does. Wendy has learned to play the linguistic game in Neverland much the same way as Alice has.

Wendy further questions her own identity because of her relationship with Peter. Instead of only being her son, he also becomes her husband. Ultimately, he wants Wendy to be his mother, not his wife, and she is upset by this request. He just wants to be her “devoted son” (Barrie 82), which makes Wendy despondent, questioning if this is the life she should continue living. Oftentimes, a bedtime story she tells to the boys is about her own life before Neverland, starting with her parents and the birth of her and her siblings, and ending with the three children heading back to London through the nursery window Mrs. Darling left open for them. Peter hates this story, for the idea of losing Wendy
makes him agitated. This bedtime story came to be reality though. As much as Wendy felt like a grown woman, she was still a child, and needed that special attention she could only get from the comfort of her own home, with her parents and Nana. In returning home, Wendy is still fully in control of her identity, but in a different way than when she was in Neverland. She is reclaiming her identity as Wendy, instead of as mother, and this assertion “signifies her readiness to put into practice the new insights she has gained” (Rakover).

Alice and Wendy become transformed through their adventures in unfamiliar lands. Alice goes through various changes, both physically and mentally, which make her question her identity. In the face of all her adventures, she learns to communicate in the same ways that the residents of Wonderland and the looking-glass world do, and in turn finds wholeness in being Alice. Wendy goes full steam ahead with adopting a new identity and embraces it until she realizes that her old identity suits her better. Despite this realization, she takes what she has learned in Neverland and applies it to her life in London, showing that her experience with Peter and the lost boys was not all for naught. Both girls, in these foreign spaces, are under the pressure of male expectations which try to suppress them, but in the end they outsmart the patriarchy.
Conclusion

All four young female protagonists from the mid-nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts that I have chosen exist within a space where they lack control. In order to attain authority over their own lives, they engage with names and naming, and as a result, their identities are affected. For orphan girls Jane and Anne, their names are a paramount component of their desire to achieve control. Jane holds steadfast to her given moniker, Jane Eyre, in order to regain confidence in who she is. After situations in which she has been made to feel cheated by life, as with her cruel aunt Mrs. Reed’s treatment and her discovery of the existence of Mrs. Rochester, she must turn within and realize it is by no fault of her own that these things have happened. Her steadfastness to her real name gives her complete autonomy in the end. Anne does the opposite of Jane, desiring to be called by any name but her own, and this fantasy play helps her survive unpredictable circumstances in her life, from being in the asylum at Hopeton to wondering if she will find a comfortable home at Green Gables. Both girls have failed entries into the mirror stage, which influences their misconceptions of their identities in the beginning, causing them to believe they are inherently bad. Relying on Lacanian terms, the failed entries keep them living in the Imaginary, but they ultimately reach the Symbolic with the help of those around them. The entry into the Symbolic leads to their acceptance of their true identities as Jane Eyre and Anne Shirley.

Alice and Wendy, who must find their way among fantastic, foreign worlds, go through name and identity changes at different rates, but nonetheless both still grapple with their identity as they navigate new lands. Alice goes through several bodily switches
and has interactions with creatures who cause her to question herself. She thinks that she
cannot possibly be Alice anymore, because situations like these would not happen to a
girl like herself. Wendy, on the other hand, fully embraces a new identity when she is
whisked away to a new world, taking the responsibility she feels in the Darling household
and applying it more literally to act as a mother figure. Whereas Alice questions her many
identities, Wendy decides to embody hers. Both girls, in their bizarre experiences, are
victims of patriarchal standards, but they learn to employ Irigaray’s theory of mimesis in
order to thrive despite circumstances being aligned against them. It is Alice’s use of
mimesis which puts her back in control of her identity, knowing that she is real and whole
despite any outside affairs which may try to influence her.

All of the girls begin as pawns, being pushed whichever way outside
circumstances dictate, but they eventually become individuals in control of their
identities. This switch is thanks to the care they have taken in naming others, but more
importantly, naming themselves. In confirming their names, they also confirm their
identities and take control of their worlds. To better understand the connection between
the girls and the formation of their identities, I call for further research into the point of
view of the their stories. Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is the only novel of the five I have chosen
which is narrated in the first person point of view. How would the storytelling differ for
the girls and their identities if they all had the opportunity to relay their own tales?
Further investigation into the point of view of the storytelling could offer even more
explanation for the girls’ significant reliance on name and identity to control and shape
their worlds.
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