

## *Alice's Wonderland Juxtaposed on Neverland Ranch*

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For I think it is Love,  
For I feel it is Love,  
For I'm sure it is nothing but Love!

- Lewis Carroll, from *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889)

Victorian England was a society in transition and of contradiction. Victorians romanticized work, domesticity and spirituality as well as idealized female beauty and virginity (Calhoun, 2007). Meanwhile, England was becoming increasingly urban and capitalistic. There was great denial of the social realities and many unpleasanties were left unspoken. Victorian sensibilities believed in upholding honor and propriety at all costs. Today, modern sensibilities hold no such pretense and scandals are popular entertainment. The peculiar type of sex scandals that this paper shall examine is that of unabated pedophilic lures of minor children and how the status of celebrity would appear to allow these types of alleged deviants a special dispensation. It would appear that there are some celebrity perpetrators who engage their pedophilic lures, such that these actions have become so ingrained into their lifestyle it is as if these acts themselves have evolved into a secondary art. Specifically, this paper refers to two of our greatest known artistic heroes: Lewis Carroll and Michael Jackson.

***Disclaimer & Intent:*** The purpose of this paper is not to prove or disprove whether or not a.) the man known as Lewis Carroll, and b.) Michael Jackson have had sexual relations with minor children. The intent of this paper is to explore the many parallels between these two men, who shared a strong affinity for child friends, lures to attract them, and how this may be classified as an obsession that has adversely affected their lives, leading those with modern sensibilities to question if pedophilia was at play.

“Why can't you share your bed? That's the most loving thing to do, to share your bed with someone.”

- Michael Jackson (BBC Interview, February 4, 2003)

***Pedophilia Examined:*** Categorized as a mental disorder, pedophilia is a type of sexual addiction. Few pedophiles are able to resist their powerful urges to initiate contact with children and will go to great lengths to do so. They have desires to bring children into their lives (Wooden, 2007). Carroll's greatest hobby was entertaining little girls. He would mark good days in his personal calendar with the symbol of a white stone. A good day was a day in which he could entertain a child friend or make a new one (Gardner, 2000).

The character of a pedophile is that they are notoriously friendly, nice, kind, engaging and likeable, often infiltrating themselves into that child's life – their family, school, house of worship, sports, and hobbies. Most agree that many pedophiles sincerely do not believe that there is anything improper about their relationships. For that matter, they lead others to believe they are completely trustworthy. Unlike an arsonist, who must first set a fire; a murderer, who must first intentionally kill another human being; or a thief, who must willfully steal from another, the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic criteria do not require actual sexual activity with a child in order to be a pedophile. The diagnosis can therefore be made based on the presence of fantasies or sexual urges alone, provided the subject meets the remaining criteria.

- Over a period of at least 6 months, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children (generally age 13 years or younger).
- The person has acted on these urges, or the sexual urges or fantasies cause marked distress or interpersonal difficulty.
- The person is at least age 16 years and at least 5 years older than the child or children in the first criteria.

The realm of pedophilia contains the following relevant sub classifications: ephebophilia and chronophilia. The nature of ephebophilia is unresolved. Some regard ephebophilia as resulting from chronophilia, wherein the chronophile's sexual/erotic age is discordant with his or her actual chronological age but concordant with the age of the partner (characteristic of Carroll). Yet another theory characterizes it by a refusal to age psychologically and a desire to reconnect with one's youth, (characteristic of Jackson). Attraction to adolescents is not generally regarded by psychologists as pathological except when it interferes with other relationships, becomes an obsession which adversely affects other areas of life, or causes distress to the subject (Wikipedia, 2007).

In the early 1860s, Carroll was deeply troubled by an unexplained sense of sin and guilt. Frequently he expressed in his diaries that he was a “vile and worthless” sinner (Wikipedia, 2007), unworthy of the priesthood. The exact nature of the issue(s) behind these sentiments remains unclear. In either case, there is evidence that both men's lives have been adversely affected with their preoccupation and has caused some distress, specifically Jackson's legal troubles and Carroll's apparent sexual repression.

***Groomed Fame & Career Success:*** Lewis Carroll, nee Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was born in 1832. He was groomed to follow in his father's footsteps (Gardner, 2000). Like his father, Dodgson became a mathematician at Oxford University. Although it is clear that Dodgson had some aptitude in the field, specifically in the area of metalogic, but his real passions were in the religious and literary realm. Ordained a deacon in the Church of England, he was actually Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson. But, we know of him due to his literary talent and by his nom-de-plume Lewis Carroll, author of many children's stories of fantasy. His most famous works are *Through the Looking Glass* and *Alice in Wonderland*, the later of which is the subject of endless screen, television, and radio productions around the world. “My life is so strangely free from all trial and trouble,” Carroll once wrote, “that I cannot doubt my own happiness is one of the talents entrusted to me to ‘occupy’ with, till the Master shall return, by doing something to make other lives happy” (Gardner, 2000, p. xvii). Carroll's charming

sentiment could just have easily been uttered by Michael Jackson, a musical child prodigy of the twentieth century.

Born in 1958, Michael Joseph Jackson has received virtually ever honor and accolade that could be bestowed on an artist of the modern era. Due to his father's managerial skills, Jackson was a nationally touring performer, while his peers were still learning their multiplication tables. Jackson's musical accomplishments are too numerous to delve into for the purposes of this article, but just as Carroll was dedicated to his Christian ideals, it should be noted the extent to which Michael Jackson has dedicated so much of his life and resources toward children's charities. He was listed in the 2000 edition of the Guinness Book of World Records for breaking the world record for the "Most Charities Supported By a Pop Star," supporting 39 charity organizations, including: Big Brothers of Los Angeles, Camp Ronald McDonald, Community Youth Sports and Arts Foundation, Dreamstreet Kids, Juvenile Diabetes, and YMCA – Crenshaw (Campbell, 2007).

***Child Friends:*** One of the main points of issue for this article is the affinity for "child friends" that both men shared. Many of Carroll's child friends were the inspiration for the young heroines in his stories. Children, he once shared with Isabella Bowman, were "three-fourths of my life" (Thomas, 1996, p. 339). He repeatedly stated that he "did not care for boys," it was little girls who made his life worth living. It was said that he ceased to have an interest in them when the girls reached the 'awkward age' of puberty (Thomas, 1996, p. 339). The most famous girl was Miss Alice Liddell, an 11 year old child with reported exceptional beauty. "I have had scores of child-friends since your time," he wrote to her after her marriage, "but they have been quite a different thing" (Gardner, 2000, p. xviii).

Carroll liked meeting girls at railway carriages and on public beaches. He had a habit of carrying a black bag on such trips, containing puzzles, safety pins for pinning up the skirts of little girls when they wished to wade on the surf, and other "unusual gifts" to pique their interest. He also taught them sleight of hand tricks (Gardner, 2000).

Michael Jackson is known world-wide for his musical talent and dedication to world charities. Only a handful of world figures could claim similar heights of international fame and hero worship as Jackson. Having been a famous child star, Jackson gravitated toward other child stars with whom he felt a sense of common history. The string of child friends who have entered Jackson's life ranged from famous child stars to ill and/or disadvantaged youths, who benefited from Jackson's charitable work. The common element of Jackson's child friends is that they were all, suspiciously, preteen males. What is not made explicit in the public domain is who initiated these relationships: Jackson, the children, or a combination of both.

"My greatest inspiration comes from kids... it's all inspired from that level of innocence. I just love being around that all the time," Jackson said (BBC Interview, February 4, 2003). Jackson's residence is named Neverland, having a deliberate reference to the fictitious home of Peter Pan. The estate even features a statue of Peter Pan. Many children have been able to enjoy Neverland, Jackson's Californian ranch that is home to an amusement park. It includes a zoo and the main house is decorated with life-sized action figures and games galore, all in which to delight in the fancy of childhood (Wikipedia, 2007).

***A Little Too Child Friendly Perhaps?*** Truly believed to be heterosexual, Carroll must have felt sexually safe with his young friends. He delighted in kissing them and closed his letters

to them with “10 million kisses”, “4 \_” or “2-millionth part of a kiss” (Gardner, 2000, p. xix). There was one instance in which he kissed Henrietta Owens, believing her to be under 14, only to discover later that she was 17; the implication being that she was older than she looked. He then wrote a “mock apology” to her mother, assuring her that it wouldn’t happen again. Rumors about Carroll followed him after this incident, but perhaps because he was a gentleman or a man of the cloth, many of his contemporaries in polite society wanted to believe the best of Carroll’s intentions. He was trusted enough to even be allowed to vacation with girls, such as 15 year old Isabella Bowman. At the end of her visit he wrote a story for her, *Isa’s Visit to Oxford*, written as a diary of her adventures. He would close his letters to her as “Your ever loving uncle C.L.D.” (Thomas, 1996, p. 322)

In the case of Alice Liddell, Carroll was by all accounts in love with her. Publicly he protested to any suggestion that his love for her or any child was anything other than that of pure innocence (Gardner, 2000). It hurt him to the quick. Yet, some incident had clearly occurred, resulting in a break from the Liddell family in June 1863. Mrs. Liddell sensed something unusual about Carroll’s fascination with her daughter Alice and took steps to discourage Carroll’s attraction. Mrs. Liddell even burned many of his early letters to Alice. Carroll’s family also destroyed some embarrassing correspondence after his death (Wikipedia, 2007). However, many years later, Alice’s son Caryl Hargreaves went on record to say he thought Carroll was romantically in love with his mother – even suggesting that an overture of marriage was made. At the height of their relationship, Alice was under the age of 14.

Further evidence of Carroll’s pedophilic tendencies was his hobby of sketching and photographing nude and seminude girls – with the mother’s permission. He thought the naked bodies of little girls were extremely beautiful and depicted them in an asexual manner (Gardner, 2000). This type of artistic genre is called nympholepsy, a genre derived from classical Greek expressionism. When Carroll wanted to photograph a girl in the nude, he would make prudish statements such as “‘in her favourite dress of nothing to wear’, or the direct French ‘*sans habiliment.*’ By this evasion of plain speech, he at once made the proposal sound more furtive or shifty than it was. He [Carroll] who would never have harmed a child for the world, anticipated in his prudishness something of the prose style of Humbert Humbert.” (Thomas, 1996, p. 8)

Morton Cohen, a preeminent Carroll scholar, felt that Carroll acknowledged his fierce admiration of young girls. In interviews that Cohen conducted in the 1960s with six to eight of the elderly ladies who were once Carroll’s child-friends, none of them ever said anything (even when pressed for the gory details) but that he was the nicest, the most gentle, charming, delightful, etc., etc., man they had ever known. Though Cohen believes that Carroll may indeed have wanted to marry one or more of the girls at various times, once they came of age, the matter was dropped (Wikipedia, 2007). In addition, many believed that Carroll was the irresistible inspiration for the 1955, Vladimir Nabokov novel *Lolita*<sup>1</sup> (Gardner, 2000). Yet by all polite accounts, Carroll died sexually repressed and celibate (Calhoun, 2007).

During the 1980s, Michael Jackson was at the height of his fame and musical influence. At the time he was considered shrewd for his manipulation of the media to create and heighten his fame. Yet, but the mid-to-late 1990s, he de-evolved into the presses’ “Wacko Jacko.” Such terms blur the line between eccentricity and emotional instability. Could Jackson have taken his Peter Pan fascination too far? Some of Jackson’s critics have argued that he overly identified himself with Peter Pan and has avoided growing up thereby creating a fantasy world in which he never has to take on adult characteristics. For example, Jackson’s Neverland home is more an amusement park/child palace than the conventional residence for a 48 year old man.

The lines between fact, rumor, and innuendo have been very blurred in this case. They are only aided by the fact that specific details of the criminal molestation cases against Michael

Jackson have been shrouded through judicial gag orders, sealed court proceedings, and other measures of secrecy. What is known of Jackson's behavior does appear to reveal some questionable elements, leading some to espouse the old adage "where there is smoke, there must be fire."

Publicly Jackson has often befriended boys of 11-13 years of age. He even had the likes of Macaulay Culkin, Emmanuel Lewis, and Ryan White as escorts to press events. Jackson had long hosted children on his Neverland ranch for overnight visits. Many of these visits were reported to have occurred without parental supervision, which set the stage for Jackson's very public child molestation allegations starting in 1993:

Michael Jackson cried when he spoke about the allegations years later. Jackson reached at least two out-of-court settlements to bring the public ordeals to an end. He said, "evil people think I could do this thing to children. I'd slit my wrists rather than hurt a child. I could never do that. No-one will ever know how much these wicked rumors have hurt me. If it wasn't for the children... I'd throw in the towel and I'd kill myself. I wouldn't care to live without children and without the inspiration they give me. They inspire me in all I do, every song I write, every dance I perform. People try and use that against me and it's just so unfair. I get very upset by it, it breaks my heart" (The Daily Mirror interview, April 13 1999).

In the infamous Martin Bashir interview for the BBC, *Living with Michael Jackson*, Jackson said he sometimes slept on the floor while giving the children his bed, which he said was a "beautiful thing" and "sweet." He insisted "It's not sexual, we're going to sleep - I tuck them in and I put a little music on and when it's story time I read a book." Following this interview, a child-friend that was featured in the piece accused Jackson of sexual misconduct. The famous trial that resulted in the summer of 2005, revealed highly salacious reports of Jackson's questionable activities with young boys. Yet, many of his former child friends rallied to Jackson's defense. Even under pressure (as in the case of Carroll's child friends), these boys refused to admit that anything remotely improper occurred over the course of their relationships.

It is important to note that some speculate the motives behind the scandalous allegations against Jackson have been financial. Nevertheless, due to lack of evidence, Jackson was ultimately acquitted of all 13 charges against him. Jury foreman Paul Rodriguez later said he and other jurors frequently discussed the testimony about past allegations that Jackson had molested or behaved inappropriately with five other boys, including the two youngsters who reached multimillion-dollar settlements with the singer in the 1990s. But, Rodriguez said, the jurors knew they could not convict solely on the basis of past allegations (Robinson, 2005).

The danger that lies in a fondness for child friends is that society may question if the adult's motives are sexual, particularly when examined with modern sensibilities. Such topics were taboo in Victorian England and were certainly not the actions of gentlemen. Carroll's contemporaries preferred to believe that he lived and died celibate instead of ever having given into temptation. If anyone knew or had evidence to the contrary, it was certainly more important to protect the dignity of the people involved than to ever let it be known. However, there is evidence that there were some diligent mothers who put an end to Carroll's relationships with their daughters. It is unknown if those mothers who did not protest were drawn to Carroll's celebrity or believed that he was of a higher spiritual and social caliber. Despite the greater knowledge that exists in modern society about the cross sectional nature of sexual deviance, attitudes about who should be exempt from such conventionalities are not so far removed from Victorian thinking. Considering the number of parents who have continued to allow their

children to socialize with Michael Jackson unsupervised, since the 1993 allegations, it begs one to wonder where their sensibilities are.

**Conclusion:** Some profess that the common attitude toward children during the Victorian age was that they were merely little adults. Ideas of immaturity, susceptibility, corruption, and salaciousness were non-considerations. Today, we recognize that there are differences between children and adults that directly affect the amount of responsibility and decision-making that society awards minors. We also recognize that abuse exists in many forms and does have life-long repercussions.

Pedophilic inclinations are not passing fancies, but are a part of the person's psyche and do not discriminate by race, gender, class, or age. Even though no evidence exists today to suggest that a sexual turn was ever taken by either Jackson or Carroll, one can not escape the fact that many details have been purposely kept from the public. Because pedophilia does not require actual sexual activity for inclusion, Carroll and Jackson's inclinations were demonstrated over the span of many years.

Certainly it is no crime for Carroll to have never married, but to spend his adult life having seemingly platonic relationships with underage girls is oddly suspicious behavior. Modern sensibilities would most likely have Carroll facing charges for his nympholeptic drawings and photographs. On the other hand, Jackson has married and divorced at will. Furthermore, Jackson's devotion to charity is certainly laudable and not criminal behavior, but the extent to which he stands behind his propensity for child friends as a charitable mission and expressions of camaraderie is arguably suspicious. It is by definition pathological, for he could not resist the desire to go so far as to his share his bed with boys with whom he was not related, despite the resulting legal and financial troubles of his past.

Reverend Charles Dodgson died in 1898, but Michael Jackson's eccentricities continue to plague him. Following his 2005 trial, Jackson relocated outside of the United States to avoid further media scrutiny. One can only hope that his child lures, characteristically pedophilic, can be stifled or that the public can be more diligent about applying their modern sensibilities to screen potential celebrity pedophiles as they would the common man.

Have you seen my Childhood?  
I'm searching for the world that I Come from  
'Cause I've been looking around  
In the lost and found of my heart...  
No one understands me  
They view it as such strange eccentricities...  
'Cause I keep kidding around  
Like a child, but pardon me...  
People say I'm not okay  
'Cause I love such elementary things...  
It's been my fate to compensate, for the Childhood  
I've never known...

- Michael Jackson, lyrics from *Childhood of HIStory - Past, Present And Future* (1995)



## ***Footnotes***

1. In the novel, the narrator and protagonist Humbert Humbert becomes sexually obsessed with a pre-pubescent twelve-year-old girl named Dolores Haze

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