

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's Infatuation with the Weaker and More Aesthetic Sex Reexamined

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Again and again, the Reverend C. L. Dodgson, better known under his pen name of Lewis Carroll, is described in the media as a more or less active child-lover, whose single lifelong source of pleasure would have been the company of prepubescent girls. If his most famous extant photographs indeed depict little girls in various attires, an objective examination of his unabridged diaries and published letters demonstrates that, far from deliberately dropping his young friends when they reached puberty, he was very intent on stretching his acquaintance with them as long and as far as they were willing, and as Mrs. Grundy would allow him. The actual ages of the recipients of his so-called letters to child-friends, and his repeated marks of satisfaction at being able to go around with older girls and women as he himself grew older, as well as massive evidence for his fascination with the adult naked female body, have all been overlooked by most of his biographers so far. In this day and age when pedophilia is widely condemned as an abominable crime, it is important the image of one of the greatest Victorian writers be cleared of such outrageous and ungrounded suspicions.

The still more or less universally accepted view of the extremely limited range of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's interest in the opposite sex has been

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wonderfully encapsulated by Karoline Leach as an endless repetition of short-lived "friendships with prepubescent female children" in which he "invariably lost interest when they reached puberty." There is no denying that, not only in the media but in his most authorized biographies, his emotional life is presented, to quote Leach a little further, "as an ultimately sterile and lonely series of repeated rejections as the little ones grew up and inevitably left him behind." This purported obsession is regarded as "evidence of a repressed deviant sexuality," and "Lewis Carroll" described as "a man who struggled to master his differing sexual appetites" in academic papers, and as "a paedophile" in the popular press (Leach 11).

This quasi-unanimous tenet turns out to be grounded in just half-a-dozen ever-recurring quotations, taken at face value, often out of context, if not grossly misinterpreted, and belied by a far more considerable body of evidence, which has been there for everyone to see for at least thirty years, in the original, unedited, text of his manuscript diaries, and the various collections of letters edited and annotated by Morton N. Cohen.

One such old favorite is the disparaging judgment Lewis Carroll passed on thirteen-year-old Alice Pleasance Liddell on the eleventh of May 1865: "Alice seems changed a good deal, and hardly for the better, probably going through the usual awkward stage of transition." In his 1999 edition of the fifth extant volume of Dodgson's diaries, Edward Wakeling ascribes that harsh remark to the fact that strong-willed Alice (the only child who ever dared pester Dodgson until he wrote down the story whose heroine bore her name) "was becoming more independent in mind and manner" (*Diaries 5*: (74). Until then, most commentators had interpreted this as proof of Dodgson's disgust for the changes induced in her physical appearance by her dawning puberty. But Dodgson did not seem to mind the growing body of the much sweeter-tempered Lorina. He repeatedly gave vent in his diaries to his fear that she would be banned by her mother from their unchaperoned excursions at about the same age, thus demonstrating that he did enjoy Lorina's company though she was by then "so tall as to look odd without an escort" (Wakeling, *Diaries 5*: (192)).¹ "Tall" could be a Victorian understatement for a process that might have involved more than vertical growth in the fourteen-year-old dark-haired daughter of a woman admired for her Spanish beauty.

Another quotation endlessly rehearsed in support of this view of Lewis Carroll's social life is Ellen Terry's famous remark that he was "as fond of [her] as he could be of any one over the age of ten" (qtd. in Cohen, *Interviews* 240). Leaving aside the fact that this could be interpreted as a mark of disappointment, if not frustration, from a very sensual and physical actress, Terry's judgment is not supported by the facts. She actually met Dodgson on numerous occasions when he was accompanied by teenage girls and young

women in their twenties whom he proudly introduced to her. Her comment may say as much about her as about him.

The two youngest girls he introduced to Ellen Terry, for example, were both fourteen: Agnes Hull in 1881 and Dolly Rivington in 1897 (Green, *Diaries* 2: 393, 537–38). In between, Ellen had also enjoyed opportunities to see him accompanied by seventeen-year-old Ethel Arnold (to whom she was introduced three times in a single day) (*Letters* 1: 479), then, two months later, by Ethel's twenty-five-year-old sister Julia (Green, *Diaries* 2: 415), as well as to send autographs at his request to eighteen- and nineteen-year-old Charlotte and Edith Rix, whom she oddly described as fulfilling the "little desires of little children," so that Dodgson felt compelled to reassure them he "DIDN'T tell Miss Terry that [they] were 'little children' " and that "that [was] entirely her own idea" (*Letters* 1: 604–05). This systematic misconception on Terry's part did not prevent her from introducing him to an actress-friend of hers, Violet Barnes, who was twenty by then, and the misconception was apparently not dispelled when he wrote to her afterwards that "it ha[d] been a great pleasure to make friends with Violet" (*Letters* 2: 681), nor when he turned up at the Lyceum with the by then twenty-three- and twenty-two-year-old flesh and blood Edith and Charlotte Rix (*Letters* 2: 726–27, 737).

Meanwhile, Dodgson had taken fifteen-year-old Muriel Taylor to *The Merchant of Venice* (Green, *Diaries* 2: 451) and same-aged Isa Bowman to *Macbeth* (Green, *Diaries* 2: 469–70), the latter a prelude to many more meetings with the teenage actress whom Terry generously accepted to coach one year later. Though Dodgson expressed his gratitude for her willingness to teach his "dear little friend" and vouched that Terry had won herself the "rapturous love of one enthusiastic child" (*Letters* 2: 812–13) (after all, at fifty-eight, he might have been Isa's grandfather), Ellen had to see his protégée was well over ten. In a letter of December 1892 to Charlotte Rix (his "dear Lottie," now twenty-five), he quoted Ellen's suggestion that "perhaps little Lottie would like to come and see *King Lear*" and her offer to make available her box, so that "she might bring some young friends, and then [Ellen] would see them all in [her] room after the play was over" (*Letters* 2: 940). Dodgson was a most diligent go-between, and Charlotte and her twenty-six-year-old sister Edith did take advantage of Ellen's offer: Ellen was so pleased with what she saw of these two rather mature "childfriends" that she asked their "old friend" to provide her with likenesses of various members of the Rix family (*Letters* 2: 943).

In 1894, he introduced to Ellen his twenty-six-year-old cousin Minna Quin, whose career on the stage he wanted to promote, and whom Ellen agreed to hire for a month as a "super" in *Faust* (Green, *Diaries* 2: 510). He also introduced her to nineteen-year-old Dolly Baird, to whom Ellen "stood talking for five or ten minutes, behind the curtain, while the 'Brocken' scenery

was being put up" (Green, *Diaries* 2: 511), in probably too poor a light for Ellen to realize Dolly was twice the age she supposedly would have expected her to be. The following year, Dodgson took Agnes Wilson, nineteen, and Ethel Rowell, eighteen, to *The Merchant of Venice*. Nothing in the corresponding diary entry proves that they met Ellen in person, though it had become quite a ritual on such occasions.

Whatever one may think of how far Leach has stretched her reassessment of Dodgson's potentially active sexuality, it cannot be denied that she has most convincingly evidenced many of Dodgson's female friends common tendency to underestimate their age at their first meeting when they wrote, many years later, of their recollections of their friendship with him.

One example is provided by Isa Bowman. She asserts in *The Story of Lewis Carroll* that she was "only some ten or eleven years of age" when Dodgson, after having violently torn from her a small drawing of him she had been making on the back of an envelope and then thrown the pieces into the fire, "caught [her] up in his arms and kissed [her] passionately" (19). The snag is Isa was thirteen when they first met, in 1887 (Green, *Diaries* 2: 455). If this scene took place in his rooms at Christ Church, as she seems to imply, she must have been at least fourteen, as on the day when they were walking hand in hand in Christ Church meadows and he got quite "disturbed" when a male acquaintance suddenly "came round the corner." (Bowman 13).² To a Victorian mind, it was indeed a much more embarrassing situation if the girl was fourteen or over than if she had been under ten. Four years later, Dodgson confided uneasily to Mrs. Mallalieu that his "little friend Isa Bowman [wa]s rather apt to dress in GAUDY colours, which [he] d[id]n't much like, as it [made them] too conspicuous" (*Letters* 2: 913). Indeed, whereas Mrs. Mallalieu's daughter Polly was twelve when she came to stay with him at Eastbourne, Isa was eighteen by then, though she would still cling to his arm as innocently as five years earlier. The previous autumn, he had nonetheless proudly written to a woman friend: "Isa has been my guest here for four summers now (now that I am nearly sixty I venture to do VERY unconventional things) and on Monday I come to town to fetch her down for her fifth visit" (*Letters* 2: 862-63). The seventeen-year-old actress was joined for two days by twenty-four-year-old Violet Barnes, for whom an extra bed was put up in Isa's room.³ This visit was deleted from the version of Dodgson's manuscript diaries that his nieces allowed to be published.

Isa's inclusion among Dodgson's "childfriends" is perhaps reflective of a time that had not yet invented adolescence as a bridge between childhood and adulthood. But it can be misleading to readers who would hardly imagine that the "millions of hugs and kisses" about which "Lewis Carroll" joked with relish for a whole page of a letter to "[his] darling Isa" had been sent to him by a sixteen-year-old actress and not by someone under ten (*Letters* .

2: 785–86). Green's severely censored edition of Dodgson's diaries has many suggestions of Dodgson's distinctions between girls of 10 (or younger) and others. One is an excerpt from a letter to Mrs. Aubrey-Moore in which Dodgson asked whether her daughters were "invitable to tea, or dinner, SINGLY," as he didn't think "anyone knows what girl-nature is; who has only seen them in the presence of their mothers or sisters," and whether they were "kissable," as "nearly all his girl-friends (of all ages, and even married ones) [were] now on such terms with [him], who [was] now sixty-four." "With girls under fourteen," he went on, "I don't think it necessary to ask the question: but I guess Margery to be OVER fourteen, and, in such cases, with new friends, I usually ask the mother's leave" (Green, *Diaries* 2: 527). In fact, one of the very few occasions on which Dodgson got into major trouble with a mother was not when he photographed the Hatch or the Henderson sisters in the nude—a point to which I will come back later on—but when he kissed a girl of seventeen, Atty Owen, in front of her father, expecting her to be right below the above-mentioned age limit (Green, *Diaries* 2: 385). Mr. Owen did not mind much, but his wife did—and yet Dodgson was bold enough to write them a letter four months later, suggesting they might send him Atty to photograph (Cohen, *Kitchins* 40).

Similarly, it is not his playfulness with underage girls which brought him the often-quoted single letter of remonstrance he received from his sister Mary, in 1893, but yet another unchaperoned four-day visit from an unmarried woman, the twenty-seven-year-old Gertrude Chataway. He had in fact first met her at Sandown when she was nine, and much enjoyed being allowed to draw and photograph her in her unconventional "wading attire"—a fisherman's jersey and shorts that left her legs, knees, and even most of her thighs bare—but she had outgrown this costume without losing his affection. In his diaries, he described the four days they had spent together as "a really delightful visit" (Green, *Diaries* 2: 501), and, in his answer to his sister, he brushed aside other people's opinions of his actions as "worthless as a test of right and wrong," before perversely passing on to her the additional information that he was presently enjoying the company of twenty-three-year-old Edith Miller. In conjunction with his own conviction "to be entirely innocent and right, in the eye of God" in acting thus, he always secured "FULL approval" of his plans from the parents of his "girl-friends" (*Letters* 2: 977–78). Dodgson did not have ten- or twelve-year-olds in mind when he wrote that sentence, but young ladies twice that age. Some readers perhaps forget that Victorian middle- and upper-class women were to obey their parents to the very eve of their wedding, even when they were well into their twenties.

This confusion seems to have been mischievously fed with relish by Dodgson himself, who described another of his protégées, a painter for a change,

Theodosia Laura Heaphy, as “a mere child of four or five and twenty” in a letter to Maud Standen—who was twenty-seven herself at the time (*Letters* 1: 536). Another time he called his “dearest” Edith Rix “a wicked girl” for not returning to him one of Isa Bowman’s letters and “a good girl” to have sent him Tolstoy’s *What Men Live By* in a letter he sent her when she was twenty-three (*Letters* 2: 773–74). A young lady didn’t need to have been noticed by Lewis Carroll as a fascinating prepubescent little girl and to be loved by him for what she had been and not for what she actually was to be granted such odd marks of tender intimacy. Edith was not a former childfriend, but a nineteen-year-old reader of *The Monthly Packet* who had sent him a solution to Knot X when they started corresponding. Even Morton Cohen, when he reported these circumstances in a note to his 1979 edition of the *Letters*, felt compelled to present them as unusual, writing that “although Edith was nineteen . . . she and Dodgson became fast friends” (*Letters* 1: 557).

The recollections Cohen collected for his later biography counter this implied position. Laurence Irving typically described Dodgson’s friendship with Edith Lucy as having “begun, as was usual with him, when she was a child” but he added that “less usually it had survived her transition to adolescence” (Cohen, *Interviews* 151). But some confusion in twentieth-century readers is inevitable when Cohen adds in a note that the girl was sixteen when they first met. Edith was a pupil of the class in logic Dodgson taught at Oxford High School for Girls in 1887, then again in 1894: though he usually alluded to her and her fellows as “children,” and though the only one of them mentioned by name in Cohen’s biography, Dorothy Poole, was only fourteen,⁴ most of them were anywhere from fifteen to nineteen, including Dorothy’s best friend, Margery Aubrey Moore, who was sixteen. Three months later, Dodgson, who had taken Edith to Eastbourne with him, deplored that, after a single night there, “Edith was in such tribulation at being away from her mother that [he] took her back to town by the twelve o’clock train, her visit having lasted exactly seventeen hours” (Green, *Diaries* 2: 454). Who would expect such a crisis from a sixteen-year-old today, and not jump to the conclusion the young guest must have been half that age?

Though Dodgson shared part of the anxiety of his times about the possible damage overtaking might cause to women’s “frailer” brains, he was not afraid of female university students either: Edith Olivier was the Susan Esther Wordsworth Scholar at St. Hugh’s, as well as twenty-four, when he struck up a friendship with her through his old childfriend Evelyn Hatch, twenty-five by then, and “enjoyed the evening [he] had with [that] very nice girl,” to the point of regretting that, unlike Evelyn, she was not “on ‘Kiss’ terms” (*Letters* 2: 1110–11). Though it is a different point, I cannot resist mentioning in passing that Evelyn was so unconcerned by her intimate relationship with

Dodgson as a child nude sitter seventeen years before that she had shown the resulting prints to her cousins, who had been very "envious"—of her appearance as an eight-year-old odalisque or of the fascinating adventure Evelyn and her elder sisters had been lucky enough to live?

When Dodgson bitterly reproached Julia Arnold with kissing Ellen Terry and her sister Ethel goodbye in his rooms, while depriving him of the same pleasure, and likened the frustration it raised in him to watching someone drink "a large foaming tumbler of delicious cool lemonade" when you are yourself "half fainting with thirst" (*Letters* 1: 559–60), he was writing to a twenty-three-year-old. Edith Miller was twenty-four when he felt he had to give her "an EXTRA hug and kiss to make all right again between [them]" (*Letters* 2: 1030), twenty-five when he signed "yours lovingly" a flirtatious letter in which he complained that her mother would not let her dine in his room unchaperoned, and teased her that, if he went to try his luck at the door of her college, St. Kentigern's, and was not allowed to have her, he "would have to pick out some very nice girl to take instead, and how awfully jealous [she] would be" (*Letters* 2: 1056–57), and twenty-seven when he again harped on the same subject, professing his inability to understand how her mother could let her "go up to town, for a day, with [him] as her sole escort" but would not allow her to "come to [his] rooms for an evening," and concluded: "I HOPE it won't occur to her to forbid KISSING! That will be the next privilege cut off, I fear" (*Letters* 2: 1148). That bitter postscript, coming from a man who had flirtatiously signed himself her "sexagenarian lover" (*Letters* 2: 1035) three years earlier, convincingly demonstrates that whatever part physical contact played in his relationships with his female friends, these women at least were not children.

Among the letters "from childfriends" quoted by Stuart Dodgson Collingwood in his *Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll*, almost half were received when the girls were over fourteen, and more than a fourth when they were over eighteen. Though Cohen, in his 1995 biography of Dodgson, makes too much of the "man-with-different-sexual-attractions" aspect of his personality, especially under the unfortunate chapter heading, "The Pursuit of Innocents," he does occasionally attempt to bring to the reader's notice that, over the last ten years of Dodgson's life, "Charles cultivated the companionship of mature women more than before" (*Biography* 461). As Alice would have remarked during the Mad Tea-Party, how can you get more of something when you haven't had any so far? Cohen supports this assertion with a series of pertinent quotations from letters addressed to mothers of girl friends, pressing them to follow their daughter's example, and, "encouraged by the circumstance that [the latter] ha[d] returned alive, brave the ogre's den, and come and dine with [him]" (*Letters* 2: 1103–04). The recipient of this unconventional invitation, Mrs. R. L. Poole, did walk in the steps of her fourteen-year-old daughter, Dorothy. Three years earlier, Mrs. G. J. Burch had done

something even bolder for a married woman, staying overnight at Guildford with him (and his sisters) after a very busy day in London (*Letters 2*: 955–56) What better conclusion to this long list of adult friends than to quote Dodgson's letter of invitation to Mrs. Poole: "Child-society is very delightful to me: but I confess that grown-up society is much more interesting! In fact, MOST of my 'child'-friends (specially those who come to stay with me at Eastbourne) are now about twenty-five" (*Letters 2*: 1104).

Apart from the harsh judgment passed on Alice's evolution at thirteen, which I quoted in my introduction, the case for the prosecution is essentially grounded in his profession to Arthur Burdett Frost that "a girl of about twelve [was his] ideal of beauty of form" (*Letters 1*: n. 307–08) and his plea to Emily Gertrude Thomson to get him a child-model to copy, but never to get a grown-up model any time she was expecting him, as he "like[d] drawing a CHILD best" (*Letters 2*: 805–06). It may not be a coincidence that, each time, this assertion was formulated to an illustrator of his works, in whose eyes the celebrated "author-for-children" in him had to look immaculately prim and proper, so that his rejection of any connection, however distant, with an adult professional model sitting in the nude—the kind of lower-class women deemed by his peers hardly any better than street-walkers—mattered much more to him than any hypothetical suspicion of exaggerated fascination with the prepubescent female body.

The Victorians, of course, were generally fascinated with the female child as an embodiment of purity and innocence.⁵ John Everett Millais, for example, expressed in a letter to his fellow painter Charles Collins, that "the ONLY head you could paint to be considered beautiful by EVERYBODY would be the face of a little girl about eight years old, before humanity is subject to such change" (qtd. in Warner 137–38). The photographer Henry Peach Robinson asserted in his personal reminiscences that "the most delightful sitters are children." "A glow of happiness runs through me," he continued, "when I think of some of my little friends. I do not know a more charming occupation than photographing little girls, from the age of four to eight or nine. After that they lose their beauty for a time. . . . The result, when you get one, is so exquisitely beautiful that it repays you for all your labour" (qtd. in Harker 57). Even more to the point, as it straightforwardly refers to their bodies and not just to their faces, George Du Maurier's narrator professed that "all beauty is sexless in the eyes of the artist at his work—the beauty of man, the beauty of woman, the heavenly beauty of the child, which is the sweetest and best of all" (61).

What is far more ambiguous is where Dodgson drew the line between a child's body and a budding or grown woman's. The third most frequently cited piece of evidence for his dislike of the woman's body is not a direct quotation from his diaries or correspondence, but Mrs. Edith Shute's recollection of a letter in which he "confessed to having no interest in . . . grown-up

female models, having the 'bad taste' to find more beauty in the undeveloped than the mature form" (Cohen, *Interviews* 57). But he was far from consistent in such matters. For instance, his assertion, in the above-quoted letter to A. B. Frost, that "[he] had rather not have an adult figure (which always look[ed] to [him] in need of drapery)" (*Letters* 1: 307–08), is not only contradicted by his favorable reception of nude paintings by Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Frederic Leighton that will be established later, but also by his readiness to "try an adult rather than lose the chance of such splendid practice" (*Letters* 1: 592) when he got an opportunity to sketch in Henry Paget's studio in London. Granted, he did state beforehand that he "HOPE[D] it would be a child," but this might again be interpreted as a shrinking from the prospect of a confrontation with an unknown adult professional model.

It would be not just dishonest but preposterous to pretend that Dodgson did not enjoy watching, photographing, and drawing little girls in various states of dress and undress, and to deny that he eagerly collected as many photographs and sketches of naked female children as he could get. But it is nearly as dishonest to claim that this was the alpha and omega of his fascination for the nude. In her above-quoted recollections, Edith Shute adds that he described twelve as his ideal age because "children are so thin from seven to ten" (Cohen, *Interviews* 57), which can legitimately make us wonder exactly what kind of thinness he had in mind, especially if we notice the relatively large number of fourteen-year-olds he came to draw in the 1880s and '90s. Oddly enough, most of them seem to have been provided by Mrs. Shute, who regularly stretched the upper age-limit they were supposed to have agreed on, to his apparently great pleasure. Such was the case with Ada Frost, a professional model aged 14, whom he sketched in Mrs. Shute's studio in 1888, an opportunity he described as "quite a new experience [as] the only studies of naked children [he had] ever had opportunities for making were of . . . about five years old." He felt compelled to add that "a spectator would have to be really in SEARCH of evil thought to have any other feeling about her than simply a sense of beauty, as in looking at a statue," a remark of self-justification, but one that shows he did not resent her age at all, describing her figure as "quite lovely," and concluding that "it was a real enjoyment to have so beautiful an object to copy" (*Letters* 2: 692–93).

Another instance of acute self-contradiction is the case of Maud Howard, another fourteen-year-old model he had met at Mrs. Shute's, whom he described in his diaries as "not very pretty in face, but certainly beautiful in figure" (*Letters* 2: 805), and in a letter to Emily Gertrude Thomson as having "a beautiful figure," and looking "nice and modest." But he seems to give way to some sort of panic, maybe inspired by the reputation of young female models to have an early entry into sexual practice, and added: "But she is turned fourteen, and I like drawing a child BEST. However, if you . . . CAN-NOT find a child, Maud would be well worth having for an hour" (*Letters*

2: 805–06). Three years later, when he discussed with Miss Thomson the elder child in her “bower picture,” he claimed that the child must be female, and hence was to be provided with longer hair and thinner wrists and ankles to “make a beautiful girl.” He put forth as his main argument supporting this that the artist had “given her breasts just the curvature which [he] noticed in the last child-model (Maud Howard, aged fourteen) whom [he] had the privilege of trying to copy in Mrs. Shute’s studio.” The memory of this great occasion, or maybe the visual evidence he had sought out and consulted before writing that letter, evoked from him the quite lyrical profession that “one hardly sees why the lovely forms of girls should EVER be covered up!” (*Letters 2*: 947). This must of course be read in the light of his incredibly elastic use of the word “girl” demonstrated above, which can be further demonstrated by his wish to commission Miss Thomson to do a pastel of the head of “a lovely girl friend” (*Letters 2*: 981) staying with him at Eastbourne: twenty-seven-year-old May Miller.

Rather than losing interest in girls over the age of ten or twelve, Dodgson seems indeed to have been quite anxious to be able to photograph or sketch them as long as he could do so decently. When he insisted on Miss Thomson’s photographing for him ten-year-old Iris Bell in the nude, in spite of an unsightly “scar” whose exact position we shall never know, he asked for the photograph not because as she got older, she would be less pleasant for him to look at, but because it was now “possible to get it: in two or three years, it will be impossible” (*Letters 2*: 981–82), which sounds more like regret than disgust. In his conclusion to his evocation of Maud Howard’s sitting, after asking Emily Gertrude Thomson whether she had ever got “[his] little friend Maud Howard,” he added: “(I’m afraid she is SIXTEEN by this time.)” (*Letters 2*: 948). This “afraid” can be interpreted in different ways: “What a pity she has now grown too old to be of any interest to me,” “What a pity she is now too old for a mere amateur to sketch her for his private pleasure without breaking the current code of propriety,” or “What a pity she is now too old for me to be able to pretend in the eye of God and of my own conscience that the pleasure I am taking in looking at her is wholly innocent,” or else “What has become of her? What if she has a sexual life and is liable to behave in a provocative way?”

There is indeed ample proof of Dodgson’s attraction to, rather than disgust with, budding womanhood. Some of the drawings by William Stephen Coleman that Dodgson was able to borrow from the artist and to send to be photographed for him by Henry Peach Robinson in 1882, now in the collection of British artist Graham Ovenden, are especially telling. Dodgson’s visits to Coleman are recounted in his diary. But four out of the five diary entries mentioning Coleman’s name have—not surprisingly—been edited out of Green’s edition: in the earliest one, Dodgson reported having met “two of

his models, girls of about sixteen and fourteen, the younger rather pretty."⁶ The second described his second visit to Coleman's place, where he stayed "from eight till about eleven, and had a very enjoyable evening, looking through the drawings." He selected twenty-two of them, among them two which were drawn from his child-friend Connie Gilchrist, a pantomime actress and notorious skipping-rope dancer, who also modeled for the painter and President of the Royal Academy, Frederic Leighton. Green's edition leaves out a parenthesis in which Dodgson describes them as "one dancing, and one with tambourine," as well as the whole of the following sentence: "Two (one crouching on pillow, and one with hands behind) from Frances Mace, and one (picking flower) from Ellen Feldon, who is painted by Dobson in the R. A. this year." (Green, *Diaries 2*: 406).⁷

Though the only girl picking a flower to be found in the "Coleman" section of Graham Ovenden's *Nymphets and Fairies* looks quite young, it is definitely a teen-ager's body that Connie's see-through dress allows the viewer to perceive on the two Christmas cards mentioned—and treasured—by Dodgson (20, 27). This is even more blatantly the case with Frances Mace, if it is she who appears on two other drawings not included in *Nymphets and Fairies* but of which Graham Ovenden has sent me photographic reproductions, and which he assures me were part of Dodgson's collection. The age of the girl is referred to in a letter written by Dodgson to Emily Gertrude Thomson fourteen years later and less than two months before his death. In it, he asked her whether she would agree to hire a camera and pose a thirteen-year-old professional model named Isy Watson " (hands behind her back," which he thought "a very pretty arrangement," in imitation of "a lovely photo of a girl (of about fifteen)" he sent her a tracing of, adding that, contrary to the original, "the picture need not include the knees" (*Letters 2*: 1147), a requirement probably inspired by his belief, expressed in an undated letter to Emily Gertrude Thomson, that "plebeian models" all had unsightly "thick ankles" (*Letters 2*: 980–81).

Dodgson implied that such pictures were perfectly proper in his eyes by sending prints of those photos as gifts to fifteen- and eleven-year-old Agnes and Jessie Hull, through his artist friend Theo Heaphy, twenty-three, a present that was, according to his diary entry, gratefully accepted.⁸ Mr. Coleman's name last occurs in Dodgson's diary in reference to one of his models, Nellie May, whom he met and befriended in March 1883, but unexpectedly found too young to be photographed yet: "She is pretty, and no doubt artists can make very pretty pictures of her, but I doubt her being a good photographic subject for a 'nude' study, and should guess her to be too fat, at present, though she is eleven and a half: in another year or two she might be more graceful."⁹ Who said puberty was Dodgson's nightmare?

Another even clearer piece of evidence of his fascination for the adolescent body and wish to portray teenage girls in minimal attire is to be found in a

series of letters he exchanged with Xie Kitchin's very understanding mother just before he suddenly gave up photography. Xie was one of his favorite models, and he went on photographing her until she was fifteen. In a letter dated February 27th, 1880, he asked Mrs. Kitchin whether she would agree to sell him the bathing dress Xie had been wearing the previous summer rather than have a similar one made on purpose for him, as "new dresses never photo as well as those that have been worn some time," and he went on thus: "OF COURSE I shall not suggest anything so heartrending to your feelings as a mother, as that XIE herself should come and be done in it: but I shall use it for other young ladies, whose theories of life (crossed) dress are more (crossed) less Conservative" (Cohen, *Kitchins* 33).

These few lines reveal his emotional involvement in the daring open request he is making, as well as the indirect plea that lies behind it: crossed words are quite infrequent in this highly meticulous man's correspondence, and were very likely left deliberately in this case: Dodgson might obviously have started copying such a short letter again if he had not wanted Mrs. Kitchin to feel how hurt he was that Xie should deprive him of the pleasure of keeping forever such a delightful vision of her. He might also have wanted her to guess the reproof implied by the original wording, which would have been something like "whose theories of life are more open-minded." Also the emphasis laid on "OF COURSE" makes it even more obvious that he was dying to get the permission he pretended to rule out yet could not resist mentioning just in case Mrs. Kitchin might once more side with him and convince her now less pliable daughter to please her dear old friend once more. And finally, we can notice that, for once, Dodgson did not resort to his sempiternal and quite vague "girls," but used the much more direct "young ladies."

A month later, Mrs. Kitchin tried to assuage his disappointment by offering him a print of "a photo of three young ladies, friends of theirs, dressed as boys in a sort of acrobat dress, the eldest being about sixteen!" The exclamation point is once more quite telling as is the fact that when he sent his love to Xie in his next letter, he stipulated that it would have to be "not quite the BEST kind—but a sort of second-best—a good sound Civil Service sort of article." He wondered whether she would not be by now "too proud to write" and concluded that if she did, and was "in any doubt as to how to sign herself, 'yours faithfully' [would] do very well" (Cohen, *Kitchins* 34–35)—a rather bitter way to show the by now sixteen-year-old "young lady" that he still resented her refusal to pose for him in the sort of costume he would have loved to see her in rather than in the long black or white dresses in which she preferred by then to be portrayed, playing the violin.

Mrs. Kitchin was obviously far more compliant than her daughter, and Dodgson sent her on multiple errands on his account, as he did not dare

purchase in person “young ladies’ bathing-dresses” or “pairs of stockings” to match his “acrobatic” dresses, “in four sizes, for about the ages six, nine, twelve and fifteen” (Cohen, *Kitchins* 37). A few weeks later, he “mourn[ed] over the non-arrival” of the outfit, adding: “For though I have accepted with all resignation the fact that Xie won’t be taken in one, yet there ARE other damsels in the world, and it is quite possible that I might find one not averse to figure as an acrobat. I must however admit that it is less likely I shall find one as beautiful” (Cohen, *Kitchins* 38). If that Machiavellian attempt to arouse Xie’s jealousy and win her back through base flattery is not a typical case of desperate sentimental blackmail, then what is? Two days later, he could not resist pricking her again by parading that he had already “found ONE young lady of fifteen who [was to] come and be done in” the fateful dress (Cohen, *Kitchins* 40). It is no wonder that, after so much harassment, he was enjoined to drop the matter altogether, or forget about the *Kitchins*. He had no choice but to surrender, and send the line: “Don’t stay away for clouds. Let there be no further allusion to Xie and the gymnasium dress.” But he could not resist adding it merely “diminished [his] happiness by .0001—not more” (Cohen, *Kitchins* 42).

A month later, he sent Mrs. Kitchin what was to be the final letter of that series, apparently followed by a ten-year gap. In a postscript to it, he could not refrain from boasting that he had been able to use “one of the ‘swimming-dresses’ the other day for Gerida Drage, and got a very picturesque result [as] she is rather handsome” (Cohen, *Kitchins* 43). In a letter to Julia Arnold, at whose parents’ home Gerida was a boarder, he had already stated his intention to “do Gerida in the Gymnasium-Dress” and to “have a vague hope Miss Dr- ‘her sister’ [Gertrud] may think herself not too old for the other Gymnasium-dress” (*Letters* 1: 382–83). Leach gives Gerida’s age as sixteen—which means Gertrud was even older, hence Dodgson’s doubts. His misgivings must have proved unfounded, as both sisters came to his studio unchaperoned, at three o’clock in the afternoon, on the fifteenth of July 1880, and he spent two hours photographing them (Green, *Diaries* 2: 388). But we shall never know whether both of them did pose in the controversial “swimming” or “acrobat” dresses, as the pictures taken on that day are most likely to have vanished forever.

What we do know is that they were the very last ever taken by Dodgson. There has been much debate about the reasons why he suddenly stopped photographing after that day. His above-mentioned letter to Mrs. Kitchin contains a clue in its last paragraphs in which he tells her of his recent meeting with Mr. Owen, the father of “unkissable” Atty. “He looked like a thundercloud. I fear I am permanently in their black books now: not only by having given fresh offence—apparently—by asking leave to photo Atty (WAS that such an offensive thing to do ?) but also by the photos I have done of OTHER

people's children'' (Cohen, *Kitchins* 43). Misled by Dodgson's idiosyncratic use of the word "children," all commentators so far but Leach have taken for granted that the offensive pictures both parties had in mind were the nude photographs of nine- and eight-year-old Annie and Frances Henderson he had taken over the previous month. Yet the context points more convincingly in a different direction. Photographing "young little Misses Robinson Crusoe" was perfectly innocent in the eyes of those late Victorians who bought Christmas, New Year's, and birthday cards depicting naked children by the dozen, and found it perfectly proper to display them on the sitting-room mantelpiece or on the piano. The fuss was all about kissing a seventeen-year-old girl, and compulsively harassing sixteen- (and possibly eighteen-) year-old "young ladies" until they yielded to pose in "acrobatic" dresses and dark stockings that clung to their ankles, calves, knees, and thighs, and made them look like those vulgar circus artists whose shows Dodgson was so fond of watching.

Coincidentally—or perhaps quite logically—from the mid-1880s on, he became a regular and enthusiastic spectator of the various aquatic or underwater shows performed by winsome young ladies on Brighton's pier or at Eastbourne's Devonshire Baths. Even more than his description of "Miss Saigeman's Swimming Entertainment" as "a very pretty performance," it is the fond satisfaction with which he noted it was "the first year gentlemen ha[d] been admitted"¹⁰ that testifies to the eagerness with which he had taken advantage of this new opportunity to quench his thirst for contemplating as much as he could of the adult female body without compromising himself too much. Such shows were to hold a considerable place among his seaside entertainments. He attended on four occasions Miss Louey Webb's during the summer of 1887, because "she [was] 18, and as she [was] beautifully formed, the exhibition [was] worth seeing, if only as a picture" (Green, *Diaries* 2: 452).¹¹ A few months before his death, he was still a devoted patron of "Miss Saigeman's Swimming Entertainment" and ready to go to the trouble of sailing from Eastbourne to Hastings just to applaud the feats of the Beckwith family, which featured a girl he had admired for the first time when she was nine in 1888, but who had by then reached the mature age of eighteen, and must have granted him the same visual pleasure as Louey ten years earlier (Green, *Diaries* 2: 493, 455–56).¹²

Because of the severe editing by Violet and Frances Menella Dodgson of the contents of the nine remaining volumes of their uncle's diaries when they prepared the typescript they allowed Roger Lancelyn Green to publish, Green was unable to indicate all the omissions. Half a century went by before we could see that what the Victorian old ladies were intent on hiding from the general public was not their uncle's interest in little girls, but his enjoyment of what they regarded as coarse performances starring pert young actresses,

and the favorable impression various adult female nudes produced on him. Evidence of such vulgar tastes looked to them far more scandalous, and they suppressed it in a much more consistent and systematic way, than his attention to "girls."¹³

The scope of this paper does not allow me to list all the enthusiastic judgments he passed on the grace, agility, charm, or figures of young adult singers, dancers, and actresses in these deleted passages, nor all the depictions of women's faces and figures on portraits and genre paintings that he admired on his numerous visits to public exhibitions and artists' studios. I shall concentrate only on those adult female nudes that fell victim to his nieces' censoring of his diaries.

Some of the references to painters that remain in the edited texts are as suggestive as those censored. Nothing but the failure to actually view some of the pictures to which Dodgson paid a brief tribute, as well as an ignorance of the pictures' exact context, can account for the presence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Venus Verticordia*, Edwin Long's *The Search for Beauty* and *The Chosen Five*, or Frederic Leighton's *Psamathe* and *Crenaia* in the nieces' typescript. If the ladies had known the pictures to which Dodgson was referring, they never would have allowed his favorable comments on them to be printed.¹⁴

Long's diptych, depicting two successive steps in the Greek sculptor Zeuxis's quest for five models worthy of lending some of their beauty to his ideal Venus, ranked second to his *Anno Domini* among Dodgson's favorite pictures at the 1893 Edwin Long Gallery, and had its pagan theme redeemed perhaps by the proximity of the famous holy "flight into Egypt." Violet and Francis Menella were possibly unaware that the two Zeuxis paintings came from the brush of the master of the picturesque exoticism that had perpetrated the scandalous *Babylonian Slave Market* (Green, *Diaries 2*: 497).¹⁵

Leighton's works, hardly better known half a century ago than Long's, appeared within narratives of Dodgson's flattering private receptions at the President of the Royal Academy's prestigious house. Moreover, Leighton's uncompleted *Crenaia* was mentioned as a curiosity, "a female figure which look[ed] very queer . . . as the (unfinished) drapery only reach[ed] to the waist," and the quasi-telegraphic style used by Dodgson to describe his "Psamathe," "a sort of 'Hero' on the shore (nude figure, seated, back view)" (Green, *Diaries 2*: 381) in no way pointed to the fullness of her generous curves, worthy of a Rubens, which F. G. Stephens described in the *Athenaeum* as "exuberant, and therefore not severe in their character, . . . studied from the life, and . . . less classical than those usually affected by Sir F. Leighton" (No. 2740), a sight that should have been repulsive if Dodgson had been exclusively addicted to the slender outlines of pre-pubescent girls.

Just as unexpected is his enthusiasm over Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Venus Verticordia*, an interest that was reasserted on his two successive visits to the

ill-reputed painter's studio. In June 1864, the picture was still unfinished when Dodgson judged that it would certainly be "very beautiful" (Green, *Diaries* 1: 217). One year later, the completed work again met with his approval when, in Swinburne's presence, the artist showed him "many beautiful pictures, two quite new: the bride going to meet the bridegroom (from Solomon's Song) and Venus with a background of roses" (Green, *Diaries* 1: 230). Once again, the biblical reference appended to *The Beloved* came just where needed to temper the alluring sensuousness of the pagan goddess, Rossetti's single bare-breasted "stunner," whose gaze looks straight into the viewer's eyes in a provocative way. Even if Dodgson had only been confronted, on that second visit, with a watercolor version R. L. Megroz deemed "rather sentimental [and] quite inoffensive, which is more than one can say about the oil" (197-98), that "tall, massively-built [Venus], no spiritual goddess of beauty" (Marillier 100), of whom F. G. Stephens wrote in October 1865 that "she reck[ed] not of the soul" and that "there [was] more of evil than of good in her" (No. 1982) should have aroused Lewis Carroll's reprobation and disgust, had his repulsion for "fully developed" bodies been so complete as usually alleged.

Perhaps such disconcerting infatuations, in full contradiction with the generally accepted view of his tastes and interests, have been overlooked by many scholars for half a century because most of the other expressions of Dodgson's admiration for adult female nudes had been eradicated out of the only printed version of the diaries then available. For example, John Collier's *Pharaoh's Handmaidens* was one of his five favorite paintings at the 1883 Grosvenor Gallery, none of which depicted little girls (Green, *Diaries* 2: 417).¹⁶ F. G. Stephens saw in the painting only "three saucy ladies of the modern ballet who ha[d] been dyed brown," whose only assets were their "plump contours" (No. 2898), and Cosmo Monkhouse, who condemned their "wholly unredeemed" nudity, liked much better a "pretty naked little girl playing with her father's palette" by a P. R. Morris, which does not seem to have caught Lewis Carroll's eye (316-17).

The "unmentionable" works also included Jean Alexandre Joseph Falguière's *Madeleine*, which Dodgson praised as a "wonderfully life-like picture" (Green, *Diaries* 2: 455),¹⁷ and which appeared to have disturbed him enough to make him misattribute it to Emmanuel Benner, another French artist whose sylvan nymphs adorned the walls of the 1887 Bond Street exhibition of Salon pictures; Thomas Riley's *After the Chase*, shown at Burlington House in 1888, which Dodgson remembered with pleasure as "a beautiful 'nude' study,"¹⁸ an impression shared by F. G. Stephens, who described it as "an elegant group of nude girls, deftly designed and painted" (No. 3163); and, finally, most embarrassing of all, Marcelli Suchorowski's *Nana*.

That Dodgson should have noticed Anna Lea Merritt's *Eve*, "seated, with hands clasped round her knees, bowed head and face hidden in her hair" was

not that objectionable.¹⁹ The female hand that had produced it absolved it of any suspicion of lewdness, as did the biblical theme and the repentant and decent attitude of the first sinner. Dodgson's introductory sentence, in describing the painting, pointed out the "unusual number of pictures of the nude" (Green, *Diaries* 2: 435) at the 1885 Royal Academy without necessarily deploring this fact.

But while everything concurred in ascribing to *Eve* a respectability, Dodgson's acknowledged viewing of a lurid depiction of Zola's infamous heroine was different. Not only had the painting itself, by a Russian emigrant living in Paris named Marcelli Suchorowski, been described by *The Magazine of Art* (in an anonymous entry within the regular feature entitled "The Chronicles of Art") as "a cheap, clever and singularly impudent Salon picture of the vulgarest type" (xxxviii) and by *The Art-Journal* as "a revoltingly sensual picture" (92), but it was exhibited at the Egyptian Hall in a sensational setting aiming at increasing its success of scandal. Standing by itself on an easel raised on a platform, in the center of a room dark enough to protect its viewers' anonymity, but also to bring out the brilliantly lit canvas, the painting with its outrageous subject was further enhanced by two mirrors placed on either side of it, reflecting endlessly, as in a brothel room, the voluptuous curves of its protagonist's body. No wonder *The Magazine of Art's* critic concluded his review with a paraphrase from the Gospel, stating that "no great work of art shuns the light of the day; and 'Nana' appeals not so much to lovers of art as to lovers of M. Zola's work, two very distinct divisions of mankind" (xxxviii).

For Dodgson to have seemingly included himself among the latter, even on the ill-advised commendation of a friend of his, the actor Lionel Brough, who must have been aware of his interest in adult nudes, was for his nieces an unforgivable faux pas that had to be concealed from posterity. The moderation of the judgment Dodgson passed on it sharply contrasted with the indignant curse called down on the painting by the author of an untitled review in the March 1885 issue of *The Art-Journal*, who wished "the authorities who look[ed] after [the country's] morals [would at last] be roused to action" against such an ignominious show (92). Dodgson, on the other hand, wrote that he "did not like the feeling of [this] very life-like picture of a reclining woman, nude, except for a little drapery covering one leg from knee to foot," and, true to his conviction that only complete nudity could look natural, healthy and innocent, added that "it would have been better entirely nude, but even so rather 'French' in feeling."²⁰ Such a degree of tolerance, highly typical of a man who was anything but the "prudish and pernicky" average Victorian that Virginia Woolf claimed him to be (47–48), is yet further proof that, contrary to John Ruskin, Dodgson did not find adult nudes shocking as such, but only when they seemed to make dangerously attractive the barely enviable position of the prostitute.

If I have so far supported my thesis that Dodgson found the whole of the female sex, not just underage little girls, more aesthetic than his own, I have not yet justified my use of the adjective "weaker" in my title.

In November 1881, Dodgson wrote in his diaries that he "wear[ied] more and more of dinner-parties, and rejoice[d] that people ha[d] almost ceased to invite [him]" (Green, *Diaries* 2: 401). In a letter he sent to Mrs. Walford, in 1892, he informed her that she was to "excuse [him] from accepting any DEFINITE invitation, even to tea [as he] decline[d] ALL invitations without exception" (*Letters* 2: 924–25). Unlike Phyllis Greenacre, who interpreted this as proof that Dodgson "had become solitary [and] given up much of his always moderate social life" (316–19), James Playsted Wood seems closer to the truth when he writes that "Dodgson was never shy, and he was seldom a recluse. He was aloof only when, for reasons of his own, he wished to be" (172–73).

This emphasis on his unshakeable independence might well be the major key to Dodgson's so often misunderstood relationships with members of the opposite sex. He was neither selfish nor self-centered. He was far too generous for these responses. He spent his time putting into practice his fervent advocacy that "one of the deep secrets of Life [is] that all, that is really WORTH the doing, is what we do for OTHERS" (*Letters* 2: 813). But his altruism also sprang from the fact that he belonged to a category of people who derive much more pleasure from giving than from receiving, so long as they get plenty of love and gratitude in return. He never wanted anything to be imposed on him, not even a prearranged meeting with someone whose company he sought, hence his wanderings in London, from locked door to carriage on the leave, especially on his unlucky Fridays. These disappointments were far outbalanced in his eyes by the utter freedom he enjoyed. And perhaps, because, like the cat in Kipling's *Just So Stories*, he hated nothing more viscerally than the slightest risk of being led where he did not want to go, he renounced any deep and lasting emotional involvement that would have made him passive—as the word passion etymologically implies—when he always wanted to be in control of the situations in which he lived. Who is more controllable indeed than a fascinated little girl, and less liable to demand anything from you that you are not willing to do?

There is a mathematical proportionality to his own age in Dodgson's professed favorite age in a girl. Cohen briefly hints at this by referring to two of Dodgson's letters: one to Macmillan in 1877 in which Lewis Carroll claimed that his "views about children [were] changing, [as he] NOW put the nicest age at about seventeen" (Cohen and Gandolfo 462) and another, sent in 1894 to a Mrs. Egerton, whose two daughters, aged eighteen and sixteen, he was keen on adding to the list of his childfriends, provided that she would let them come to his lodgings for dinner unchaperoned and but

one at a time, in which he argued: "Much of the brightness of my life, and it has been a wonderfully happy one, has come from the friendship of girl-friends. Twenty or thirty years ago, 'ten' was about my ideal age for such friends: now 'twenty' or 'twenty-five' is nearer the mark. Some of my dearest child-friends are thirty and more: and I think an old man of sixty-two has the right to regard them as being 'child-friends' still" (*Letters 2*: 1008–09).

As he was also very considerate, showing much concern for other people's happiness, he considered that a wide age gap between himself and the members of the opposite sex he spent time with—and put under heavy emotional demand—was safer both for him and for them. As long as he deemed himself of marriageable age, he kept aloof from "young ladies," as his presence at their side might have dissuaded any potential lovers with more serious intentions from courting them, or threatened their reputation and decreased their value in the marriage market. As soon as he thought he could no longer be mistaken for a possible suitor, he was but too pleased to be able to raise his age-limit, and parade on much older girls' arms. He very clearly described this process in at least two letters he sent to young lady friends, in which we find naïve echoes of his wonderment and delight in seeing new doors open wide in front of him.

When he invited twenty-four-year-old Gertrude Chataway to stay with him at Eastbourne, he considered what he could "say in defence of asking a young lady of [her] age to be the guest of a single gentleman." "First, then, if I live to next January, I shall be fifty-nine years old. So it's not like a man of thirty, or even a man of forty, proposing such a thing. I should hold it quite out of the question in either case. I never thought of such a thing, myself, until five years ago. Then, feeling I really had accumulated a good lot of years, I ventured to invite a little girl of ten, who was lent without the least demur. The next year I had one of twelve staying here for a week. The next year I invited one of fourteen, quite expecting a refusal, THAT time, on the ground of her being too old. To my surprise, AND delight, her mother [agreed]. After taking her back, I boldly invited an elder sister of hers, aged eighteen. SHE came quite readily. I've had another eighteen year old since, and feel quite reckless, now, as to ages" (*Letters 2*: 807).

It would certainly be going too far to derive from that statement that, so far, little girls had been, to the younger "Lewis Carroll," but a stop-gap. But the excitement perceptible in the enumeration of these regularly increasing ages echoes the triumphant "it is the first year gentlemen have been admitted" quoted above, regarding "Miss Saigeman's Swimming Entertainment." Renewing his acquaintance with Mrs. Liddell, a year later, Dodgson relied on the same arguments to convince her to let Rhoda and Violet—then thirty-three and twenty-seven—enter his rooms for the very first time: "If I were twenty years younger, I should not, I think, be bold enough to give such

invitations: but, but, I am close on sixty years old now: and all romantic sentiment has quite died out of my life: so I have become quite hardened as to having lady-visitors of ANY age!" (*Letters 2*: 873). I personally think that Dodgson's idiosyncratic form of "romantic sentiment" never died out of his heart, as his not that infrequent impulsive marks of jealousy when he heard of his young friends' engagements showed. To the very eve of his death, he was as susceptible as ever to the charms of either innocent, spontaneous underage girls, always willing to be held by the hand, kissed, and hugged, or "stars of perfect womanhood" from whom he dreamed of—and often succeeded in—being granted the same privileges—so long as it did not involve any official engagement that would have threatened his fiercely cherished liberty.

Have I written here "a portrait of Lewis Carroll as a Don Giovanni"? The "catalogues" of names of child-friends that occur several times in his diaries would, by themselves, justify the simile to a certain extent. Contrary to Leach, I would say it is a portrait of "a Platonic Don Giovanni" in spite of his frequent attempts to take advantage of his dominant position in front of the younger and more vulnerable females he so easily hypnotized to get more privacies from them than Mrs. Grundy would have thought proper. But my conviction that Dodgson was never sexually active with them does not preclude a notion that his constantly reasserted thirst for kisses, and his obsessive collecting of partly or wholly nude depictions of the female body in its youth and early maturity make his constant quest for actual or pictorial intimacy quite physical and sensual, if not sexual.

What may have launched Charles Lutwidge Dodgson on that obsessional, unquenchable quest for highly controlled yet as intimate and frequent as possible contact with what I have called "the weaker and more aesthetic sex," as well as for visions and depictions of the young—but by no means exclusively pre-pubescent—female body in the nude? Two rarely mentioned quotations might point in an interesting direction. In a letter to Mrs. Henderson, written in 1880, he described Annie and Frances's innocent habit of running naked around the house as "very beautiful, [filling the viewer with] a feeling of reverence, as at the presence of something sacred." But he immediately felt compelled to add that "for the sake of their little brother," he found it "desirable to bring such habits to an end after this summer" as "a boy's head soon imbibes precocious ideas, which might be a cause of unhappiness in future years, and it is hard to say how soon the danger may not arise" (*Photographs 21–22*). This is a warning he reiterated thirteen years later to Emily Gertrude Thomson: "I hope I made it quite clear that it is my distinct wish that, so far as any picture done for ME is concerned, neither Iris nor Cynthia is ever to be drawn again, at their house, in anything but FULL-DRESS. The RISK, for that poor little boy, is too great to be run

again" (*Letters* 2: 987). Was he afraid eight-year-old Clive Bell and the little Henderson boy might grow into the man he had become? It seems unbelievable that the daughters of the archdeacon might have been allowed to run around the rectory stark naked, or that Mrs. Dodgson would have entrusted to her son the sort of cares that would have led him to behold the nudity of some of his many younger sisters, and yet these very solemn warnings do sound as if they had sprung from some very personal experience.

NOTES

1. Nearly a year earlier, he already dreaded a trip to Godstow might be "the last to which Ina is likely to be allowed to come" (Wakeling, *Diaries* 5: 114).
2. According to *Isa's Visit to Oxford*, the incident might have occurred on Saturday, 14 July 1888 (Green, *Diaries* 2: 559–60).
3. Unpublished entry from the manuscript diaries, Thursday, 8 October 1891.
4. According to the birth date Morton N. Cohen quotes in note 1 in *Letters* (2: 1094). In *Lewis Carroll: A Biography*, he writes that she was "aged thirteen" (462). An instance of unconscious underestimation of Dodgson's childfriend's age, or a matter of a few months? (The birth months never being quoted in Cohen's notes, all the ages I mention are necessarily approximate, and minor discrepancies can thus be explained when girls were born late in a year.)
5. For a fuller discussion of this attitude, see Lebailly, "C. L. Dodgson and the Victorian Cult of the Child."
6. Unpublished diary entry, Tuesday, 3 January 1882.
7. Partially unpublished entry, Thursday, 25 May 1882. For reproductions of some of these photographs of Coleman's sketches, see Ovenden 15 [girl picking a flower], 20 [Connie Gilchrist with tambourine], and 27 [Connie Gilchrist dancing].
8. Unpublished diary entry, Monday, 30 October 1882.
9. Unpublished diary entry, Friday, 16 March 1883.
10. Unpublished diary entry, Wednesday, 2 September 1885.
11. Cf. too Friday 15th July 1887 (Green, *Diaries* 2: 482) and unpublished entries for Wednesday, 14 and Saturday, 17 September 1887.
12. "The Beckwith's Swimming Entertainment": Saturday, 15 September 1888, Monday, 29 August and Monday, 12 September 1892, Monday, 23 August 1897 (all unpublished but the second); "Miss Saigeman's Swimming Entertainment": Tuesday, 24 August 1886, Friday, 7 October 1887, Tuesday, 20 August 1889, Tuesday, 18 August 1896, Tuesday, 17 August 1897 (all unpublished but the second again).
13. Discussed in a still unpublished paper given at the 1998 International Lewis Carroll Conference at Cardiff University, "Through a Distorting Looking-Glass: Charles Lutwidge Dodgson's Artistic Interests as Mirrored In His Nieces' Typescript of His Diaries."

14. For a reproduction of Rossetti's *Venus Verticordia*, see Smith plate n 7 (color); for Long's *The Search for Beauty*, see Smith 202, plate 67 (black and white); for Long's *The Chosen Five*, see Postle and Vaughan 95 (color); for Leighton's *Psamathe* and *Crenaia*, see, respectively, in Jones and others 189 (no. 83 [color]) and 192 (no. 85 [color]).
15. Saturday, 18 March 1893 : "Then to see Edwin Long's pictures: the best, I think, are 'The Flight into Egypt', and a pair about Zeuxis painting a picture of Venus from six selected maidens." Dodgson seems to have been so thrilled at their view that he who had been able to count exactly 165 fairies on Joseph Noel Paton's *Quarrel of Oberon and Titania* at the National Gallery of Scotland in 1857 fancied he had seen a sixth Greek beauty where only five were depicted by Long (Green, *Diaries* 2:497).
16. Partially unpublished entry, Tuesday, 29 May 1883 (Green, *Diaries* 2: 417), only mentions two paintings, one of which, J. R. Weguelin's *The Maidens' Race* depicted female athletes who were only partly clothed; this painting obviously was not known to the diaries' censor.
17. Partially unpublished entry, Tuesday, 27 September 1887.
18. Unpublished entry, Monday, 16 July 1888.
19. For a reproduction of this painting, see Smith 195, plate 63 (black and white).
20. Unpublished entry, Monday, 26 May 1884.

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