

“Your name’s Alice? Is that what you said?”:
The Rescue of Wonderland’s *Alice* in Batman Comics

The figure of Alice, of Wonderland fame, has been referenced and replicated countless times in popular culture. Whether featured in stage productions, a high-fantasy Tim Burton film, or a Taylor Swift song, Alice is something of an ever-changing constant, a trans-cultural landmark onto which ideals of girlhood are projected. The character’s origins are far darker than the popular notion of a pinafore’d little blonde girl wandering through a bizarre fairyland would indicate, shrouded in rumors and speculations and too-quick defenses of Carroll’s honor and serial relationships with little girls. Read through this light, as Georgina Kleege does, something terrible emerges from the *Alice* books, a sense of loss, of advantage taken or suggested: Alice becomes Carroll’s pawn, to be posed, adjusted and photographed at will, frozen in text and image forever. The end result is manipulation, corruption of the “divine, pure, good” little girl (Mavor 9), raising the question of what then becomes of Alice in Wonderland?

The answer is attempted through any number of pop culture reinterpretations, a particularly significant one being the 2009 comic *Batwoman: Elegy*,¹ by Greg Rucka and J.H. Williams III as writer and artist respectively, with Dave Stewart coloring Williams’ art and Todd Klein lettering Rucka’s words. The central character, Kate Kane — a Jewish lesbian superhero dedicated to public service after the horrifying loss of her mother and twin sister — confronts the “High Madame” of a villainous cult, who goes by the name of Alice and speaks exclusively in lines lifted directly from the Carroll books. *Batwoman: Elegy* thus functions directly as a commentary on Alice as a character and her place within comics, and specifically Batman comics, in which she

¹ As with most comics, *Batwoman: Elegy* is not paginated. Citations will be made referencing issue titles instead.

serves a much darker purpose than one might expect of a beloved character of classic children's literature. It also serves as an effort to rescue the figure of Alice from both Carroll's framing and critical suspicion of him, and comics' tradition of writing her a victim, lost to the lechery of older men, as it contextualizes Alice within the Kane family and provides for her a moving, if tragically fractured, life beyond her role as *Alice*.

I. "The ideal of all his child friends": Lewis Carroll and the Idealization of Girlhood

No one denies that Lewis Carroll, otherwise known as Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, had a peculiar interest in little girls. Even those scholars who insist on the innocence of this interest recognize it, and the potentiality to read misdeed into it. "Dodgson," writes Sarah Bayliss, "knew that he was close to impropriety on some occasions" (38), but she dodges the question of whether or not he ever crossed into it outright, concluding that even if he did, the outcome has been more than worth it:

Today [Dodgson's] adoration of little girls would probably land him in a courtroom rather than in the company of aristocratic children. But then we would never have had *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and he never would have experienced the imaginative flights of fancy that inspired his pictures. (Bayliss 38)

Will Brooker, a cultural scholar writing on Carroll's place in popular culture, takes a more measured approach, arguing that Carroll's "behaviour and attitudes towards young girls should be judged within his own context rather than ours" (x); Victorianists Catherine Robson and U.C. Knoepfelmacher, in their respective monographs, emphasize the ubiquity of adult male fascination with the little girl in the nineteenth century. Writes Nina Auerbach: "Even Victorians who did not share Lewis Carroll's phobia about the ugliness and uncleanness of little boys saw little girls as

the purest members of a species of questionable origin” (32). The annals of Carroll scholarship are filled with those excusing or justifying or normalizing his obsessive interest in little girls, but none can deny it.

And this interest was obsessive: “photographs of girls...embodied for [Carroll] a ‘compulsion’ in the sense of a persistent urge both to take and to acquire them,” remarks historian Lindsay Smith (37), noting that “at the time of his death in 1898 [Carroll’s] records indicate around 3,000 negatives” assembled in more than thirty albums (12), some of which included pictures he himself did not take. His most famous subject is Alice Pleasance Liddell, the namesake of the children’s books he would later write down for her. The real girl and the fictional one overlap significantly for Carroll: “...at the end of ‘Alice’s Adventures Underground’ (the manuscript version of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*) Carroll pasted a photograph of the face of a young Alice Liddell” (Smith 29), over a drawing of the fictional Alice. Auerbach goes further, arguing that “Carroll’s own illustrations for *Alice’s Adventures under Ground* reproduce” not the blonde, girlish Tenniel model but a figure “indisputably brunette like Alice Liddell,” “sensuous and otherworldly,” “haunting and haunted” (34-5). This sensual, haunting girl-child, so like Alice Liddell at seven, represents Carroll’s ideal conception of girlhood.

It is important to note that this ideal of girlhood was not universal; *Wonderland’s* Alice is unrestrainedly childish, petty and ruthless and insensitive. However, she retains, even through Carroll’s suspect perspective, a kind of incorruptible purity of the self, and Carroll’s most ardent defenders see Alice as transcending Victorian girlhood: “...[in *Wonderland*] the dainty child carries the threatening kingdom of Wonderland within her,” allowed to grow beyond the confines of the literature of her epoch (Auerbach 32, 46-7). Youth was what Carroll preferred: specifically,

girls between the ages of six and nine (Kleege 171). The individual girl did not seem to matter very much. Carroll's roster of girls he wished to photograph listed them by their names, as Smith and Carol Mavor note: "all the Alices together, all the Agneses together, and all the Beatrices together, all in alphabetical order[;] he also notes many of their dates of birth (that telltale sign of a girl's true girliness)" (Mavor 7). Smith continues: "the child's name is of vital importance to Carroll's wish to photograph and retrospectively to the memory of taking a likeness" (37). The revelation disturbs. How can it not? Carroll set down a list of girls grouped by their first names, as if one name were more girlish than another, as if by calculating their birthdays and their given names he could stumble upon the elusive ideal girl-child: another seven-year-old Alice Liddell, remade into a wild Wonderland girl, "to be the ideal of all his child friends" (Kleege 171).

Georgina Kleege, writing speculatively on the relationship between Alice Liddell and Carroll, notes that she is not "the first to have [...] suspicions" about Carroll's relationships with little girls in general and Alice Liddell in particular; "even during [Carroll's] life there were rumors, gossip, talk" about this man who fit "textbook profiles of pedophilia" (171). However, Kleege's essay, speculative as it may be, is valuable for the way it frames Alice Liddell beyond her relationship with Carroll, and that it articulates the response to assertions that "no harm was ever done," since there is no evidence anything questionable actually happened between Carroll or any of his interchangeable little girls. "[It] all depends," Kleege argues, "on how we define harm" (172). Kleege's essay reorients our understanding of the *Alice* books through myriad possible/probable lenses of interaction and feeling between Liddell and Carroll, and is much more interested in Liddell's response to *Alice* than it is in Carroll's creation of it. From Kleege's perspective, Alice Pleasance Liddell was haunted by her made-up namesake, unable to escape down

rabbit holes or through looking glasses, even if she had wanted to. And why would she want to? Carroll's worlds seem built expressly, photographically, to freeze time, to trap her, to organize her qualities and movements and memories in the way that suits him best; to "[transform] them into another little girl, his ideal child friend, an ideal so perfect he now finds it easy to dismiss her, to brush her out of his awareness as one would whisk a crumb off the tablecloth" (181).

Alice Liddell taken into consideration, Carroll's *Alice* books become suddenly, terribly uncomfortable, less a whimsical collection of picaresques than a girl's appropriated memories, refashioned into an elaborate dream maze in which nothing she knows or understands is true. Carroll manipulates time and space and logic — in a word, memory — to preserve his version of Alice, eternally seven years old, like a taxidermist rebuilding death to mimic life. As Lionel Mor-ton suggests,

Carroll [makes] fun of the sense of a coherent past and future, based on memory, which is the foundation of a mature identity [...] When [characters] ask [Alice] to "remember" and "consider," they are asking her to see time in the adult way, and so to be adult... Thus in Wonderland Alice's memory is confused because her identity with her past — and so with her future — has been suspended or postponed. (294-295)

Time stops in Wonderland, a dream-world wrought by words and memory, and accordingly, Alice is excised from her own time, unable to clearly remember her past or understand the future that may lie beyond petty nonsense, bizarre creatures, and homicidal queens. She is lost to Wonderland as she dreams it, and one remembers the grave first title, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, dreaming a kind of death and arrested time — paralleling Carroll's photographic efforts

to preclude Alice Liddell's growing-up.² "This," Morton writes, "is part of the secret of memory within the Alice books: the fictional Alice is cut off from her memory because Carroll wants Alice Liddell to be cut off from hers and brought into a world he controls" (299). The association with death becomes even stronger in *Through the Looking Glass*, where "the desire to arrest children's growth is liberalized as a desire to kill them" (Geer 18): "One can't [help growing older], perhaps," Humpty Dumpty says scornfully, "...but *two* can" (Carroll 211), a statement that threatens the more one thinks on it. What role exactly does the second play? A photographer, a writer, a murderer? A taxidermist trying to preserve that which is already gone, or a man pressing flowers, desperate to prevent "the contamination of adolescence" (Mavor 14) before it could corrupt the girls, his Alices and Agneses and Beatrices, frozen in his darkroom?

Suspicion lingers, as it has since Carroll's own lifetime (Kleege 171); his Alice, "beloved Victorian child" as she may be, is both a "projection of idealized childhood" (Nicholson 362) and indisputably erotic (Kincaid), an "object of desire" (Nicholson 362). In order for the two to coexist, Carroll isolates Alice, sends her into another world of his own making, cuts her precisely from her past and future to perpetuate a moment in which she is exactly what he prizes: curious, precocious, kind and malicious both; childishly pure and given no time to grow up.

II. "Curiouser and Curiouser": *Alice in Gotham*

Given the constructs of time and memory in the *Alice* books, it seems only natural that the mythos should find a home in comics, where time is frozen in the panel one reads, and the

² See Carol Mavor's "Dream Rushes: Lewis Carroll's Photographs of Little Girls," the first chapter in *Pleasures Taken*; and Lindsay Smith's "'The [Glass] House': Christ Church, Oxford," the first chapter in *Lewis Carroll: Photography on the Move*, for more discussion of Carroll's photography and the Victorian association of photography with death

moment lasts as long as the reader should wish; and which, especially those chronicling superheroes, have a notoriously bad memory for anything that has come before. Alice and other Wonderland figures have maintained a presence in Batman comics since 1949 and the introduction of the Mad Hatter character — who, as Will Brooker argues, embodies the worst suspicions about Lewis Carroll himself (Brooker 152-153).

“The overlap of the Lewis Carroll ‘mythos,’ as comics fans would call it, with Batman titles alone would be worth a chapter to itself,” Brooker declares (152), and he is not wrong. *Alice* has been rehashed, remade, and re-argued into new roles in Batman comics since 1949, though I will limit my analysis to three specific titles: *Arkham Asylum: A Serious House on Serious Earth* (1989), *Haunted Knight* (1996), and, of course, *Batwoman: Elegy* (2009). Only the last articulates Alice as an individual; the others are haunted by her voiceless ghost or girls made to stand in for Alice to placate the insane Mad Hatter.

Grant Morrison’s and Dave McKean’s *Arkham Asylum* is perhaps the most subtle in its use of *Alice* — which, given the fact that there is a scene in which the Mad Hatter is depicted in the position of the Hookah-Smoking Caterpillar, is an incredible achievement. What *Arkham Asylum* borrows from *Alice* is its fundamental instability and its articulations of madness: the comic is prefaced with Alice’s exchange with the Cheshire Cat (“But how do you know I’m mad?” “You must be, or you wouldn’t have come here.” [Carroll 66]), as well as its terror of time and adulthood. The Mad Hatter, a.k.a. Jervis Tetch, ruminating on his preference for “little blonde girls... little shameless bitches!” (Morrison et al. n.p.) calls disturbingly to mind the “‘dark’ discourse” Brooker identifies reading Carroll as “a dubious individual with suspect motives” (152). The Hatter also serves the useful purpose of “obligingly [explaining] the book for

anyone who hasn't figured it out yet," Morrison notes in the included script (42), referencing both Carroll's Red King sequence and the construct of mirroring: "Sometimes...sometimes I think the Asylum is a *head*," the Hatter says (n.p.). "We're inside a huge head that dreams us all into being. Perhaps it's *your* head, Batman. Arkham is a *looking glass*. And *we* are *you*."

The comic's intent is, of course, to explore Batman's own potential madness, and considering his role as something of an Alice figure within *Arkham Asylum* (in that he ventures alone into a Wonderland-esque maze built of dreams and insanity) the association of Alice herself as *mad* is, to my knowledge, established for the first time in Batman comics. The other direct allusion to Alice herself is veiled through Amadeus Arkham's daughter, who has been "[insisting] on reading and rereading the [*Lewis Carroll*] books" (n.p.) despite her terrible nightmares. Arkham reminds himself that the nightmares are not necessarily a bad thing: "all intelligent children suffer bad dreams," he muses. "And she is so very intelligent. And perfectly beautiful. I almost wish she need never grow up" (n.p.). One cannot help growing up, but two can: Harriet Arkham is brutally murdered before she can glimpse adolescence (n.p.).

Morrison's interpretation unquestionably favors the dark readings of Carroll and the *Alice* books, but such a reading is not necessarily a constant in the Batman mythos. Jeph Loeb's and Tim Sale's *Haunted Knight* enacts a literal battle of interpretations, as Batman, for whom "*Alice* is clearly positioned [...] as an artifact associated with his beloved mother [...] and fiercely protected" (Brooker 152) fights the Mad Hatter, drawn in John Tenniel's style (Fig. 1), to assert his own reading of the *Alice* books:

It is Tetch's appropriation of Carroll as props for his criminality — with overtones of child molestation — that outrages Batman, although it seems clear that Tetch is on one level only reading into Carroll what some critics have been identifying for

decades, and seeing Alice as inherently disturbing. The clash between superhero and villain in this story, then [...], could be seen as a clash of interpretations. [...] Batman, however, is also acting out his own reading of Carroll...[His and Tetch's] face-to-face confrontation, then, is partly a battle to decide who will be master of what *Alice* means. (152-153)

Fig. 1

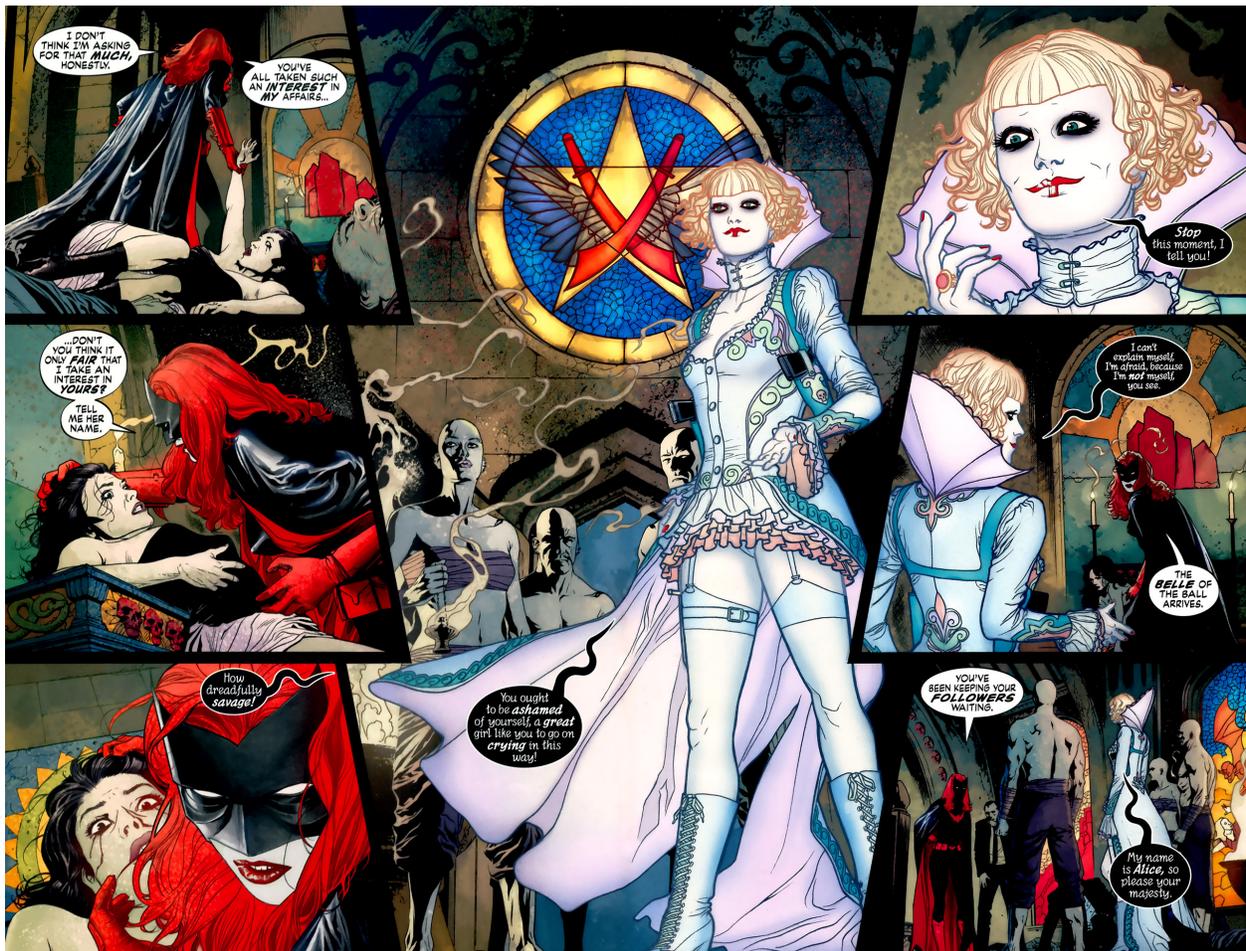


Batman wins, as Batman tends to do, thus reasserting *Alice* as an innocent text emblematic of childhood over the perversions threatened by the Hatter's interpretation. However, it has nothing to say for Alice herself, except that the specific identity of the girl is irrelevant: all that matters is that she can be put into a frock and seated at the tea-table, costumed, posed, defined as the Hatter — like Carroll with his photography — sees fit.

III. “If I *like* being that person, then I’ll come up...”: The Rescue of Alice

Into this tradition — one which displaces Alice entirely from her own story — enters *Batwoman: Elegy*, and with it, an Alice figure whose identity is essential to the story, whose life has been abruptly, violently remade until her past and future are alien to her and her maturation has been arrested. Alice, in Carroll’s words, Rucka’s script and under Williams’ pen, is a figure unstably trapped between girlhood and womanhood, childishly pouting, viciously dangerous, seductively dressed in a Victorian-inspired costume that bares a scandalous amount of skin, even as its pastel coloring and her girlish curls, cut in her mother’s style (one thinks Carroll would have approved that detail), seem to preclude even the thought of sex. She is, even in her

Fig. 2



introduction (Fig. 2), “dreadfully savage” (Rucka et al. n.p.), Carroll’s photographed “woman and not woman[, playing] safely *and* dangerously” (Mavor 21), exposed like Xie Kitchin, Evelyn Hatch, Alice Liddell, and any number of Carroll’s replicable little girls, as “sexual, sexualized, innocent, childlike, and womanly” (14). Having become familiar with the speculation surrounding Carroll’s photographic practices, it is impossible to look at Williams’/Stewart’s Alice and not see in her the realization of every terrible fear and suspicion emanating from Carroll like so much hookah-smoke. She is trapped by him and his writing, practically unable to utter a word that he has not fed her from a hundred and fifty years away.

In spite of this, *Batwoman*’s Alice is a figure who rescues herself, Carroll’s Alice, and perhaps Alice Pleasance Liddell, from both the comics tradition and from *Wonderland* itself. For one, *Batwoman* explicitly recognizes Wonderland’s anxieties in the visual depiction of Alice; for another, it wholly prevents us forgetting the original Alice. Finally alone with and able to interrogate the murderous Alice, Batwoman demands to know why she “matter[s] to you people”:

ALICE: I think you *might* do something *better* with the time, than wasting it asking *riddles* that have no *answers*.

BATWOMAN: ... Wait, that’s... that’s from Lewis Carroll — your name’s *Alice*? Is *that* what you *said*?

ALICE: Very much indeed.

BATWOMAN: The new High Madame — the new *leader* — of the Religion of Crime... is a *lunatic* who thinks she’s Alice Pleasance Liddell? (Rucka et al. n.p.)

Halfway through “Elegy, Part 2: Misterioso,” shortly after Alice has been introduced to Gotham, Batwoman remembers Alice Pleasance Liddell, and demands of the Alice in front of her if Liddell is who she thinks she is. Alice’s response is not particularly helpful to Batwoman: she glances over her shoulder, watchful, wary, her expression somber for once rather than gleefully

delusional or pouty or shy. “How do you know I’m mad?” she asks (n.p.), an echo of Carroll’s Alice to the Cheshire Cat, of *Arkham Asylum*’s entire thesis. “Maybe,” Batwoman says cuttingly, “because you speak *fluent crazy*” (n.p.), thus returning us to the instability of Carroll’s text.

Curiously, the speech itself is crazy. A glance at the page will reveal that Alice’s words (via Carroll) are lettered in white on black ‘air,’ the tails winding whimsically back to her. Her letters also preserve standard capitalization — or at least, capitalization standard to *prose*, such as the *Alice* books. By contrast, Batwoman’s lines, and those of the rest of the cast, are lettered typically: black letters in white air, all capitalized, tails pointed directly at the speaker. Two other qualities distinguish Alice’s dialogue from anyone else’s in the comic: the font and the visual reference. The font itself functions as a kind of visual reference, more similar to the Mad Hatter’s lettering in *Haunted Knight* or *Arkham Asylum* than it is to *Batwoman*’s standard font, but the letters’ coloring is particularly interesting. In *Arkham Asylum*, letterer Gaspar Saladino individualizes characters’ lettering to an unprecedented degree: while the normative and background cast are given standard lettering, much as Batwoman is in *Elegy*, the Asylum’s inmates, and *Batman*, are made distinct through their speech. The Joker’s letters spray like arterial blood across the page, unbounded by speech bubbles; Clayface’s words ooze like pus; and Batman’s are the negative of the normal: black air, white bubble outline, capitalized white letters. In *Arkham Asylum*, at least, he is thus situated as being as abnormal, as crazy, as those he seeks to imprison. *Batwoman*’s Alice is thus verbally placed somewhere between Batman and the Mad Hatter on the spectrum of sanity, and the connection to Batman himself is tragic for the implication it provides. Batman, of course, famously fights crime in the guise of a bat because of his childhood trauma: the death of his parents, which may or may not have (depending on who you ask) triggered some

kind of mental breakdown. The natural question that arises is thus: what happened to Alice? As it happens, the exact same thing that happened to Batwoman: the violent loss of her mother and twin sister. Alice, née Beth Kane, is Batwoman's twin.

The lives of Beth and Kate, who would grow into the mantle of Batwoman, are heart-breakingly related in the "Go" arc. In contrast to the highly stylized pages of "Elegy," Williams uses for the Kane twins' youth more traditional layouts, un-bordered panels, and a simpler style; Dave Stewart, *Batwoman's* colorist, uses a flatter, more muted palette. The effect is something like watching an old home video: the images are faded with age, softened with nostalgia, bitter-

Fig. 3



sweet for their temporality. It is difficult not to wonder if this is what Carroll felt when looking back on his photographs of little girls. “I don’t want to leave,” Kate says to Beth, referring to their family’s impending move to Brussels, but the line hurts, Todd Klein’s letters sized smaller to reflect Kate’s disappointment, the reader’s trepidation (Fig. 3). As Carroll wrote, “Memory works both ways” (196), and this is what it is like: “It is knowing in advance that something will happen because it has happened before” (Kleege 177). Beth tries to comfort her sister, and by extension, I think, us: “We’ve got each *other*, Kate. We’ll still be together. We’ll *always* be *together*” (Rucka et al. “Go 1”). Like the Queen’s, our memory works both ways; we remember Alice in her collar and frock, reciting Carroll in order to speak, and we remember Kate, years later, telling her commanding officer at West Point that “all I’ve *ever wanted* since my mother and sister were murdered is to *serve*” (“Go 2”). Williams’ and Stewart’s design and coloring only reinforce the ache of the scene: Kate wears red and black, her scarf broken by zig-zags of black, much the way Batwoman’s panels are organized in “Elegy,” while Beth wears pastels, pink pants, a white jacket, a scarf with palely colorful hallucinogenic swirls echoing the poisoned sequence in “Elegy, Part 2.” We know everything will fall apart; that is the peril of memory working both ways. The crime will always be committed. The only unknown is how it sundered Beth from Kate.

It happens when they are twelve — on their birthday, in fact. Kate, Beth, and their mother are kidnapped on the way to the Grande-Place for “chocolate and gauffres” (“Go 1”) in a sequence that quite literally smashes its way through the page. Screams — punctuated in sharp-angled speech bubbles, often without tails — fill the page: Kate crying for her sister, Beth screaming in fear, their mother limp, being dragged away as a bag is shoved over Kate’s, and our, eyes

excised from her own history (Rucka et al. “Go 2”). “You don’t want to see,” Jake Kane tells Kate as he rescues her from the warehouse where her mother is tied to a chair, the canvas over her head burst bright with blood, but Kate does see, and she remembers. She just isn’t shown what happened to her sister, and assumes her dead; and years later, Beth Kane resurfaces as Alice, with her now-blonde hair cut like her mother’s, and her red-lipped smile and green, green eyes mirroring Kate’s.

In fact, Alice is drawn to mirror Batwoman throughout “Elegy, Part 4: Rubato”: the second page, a two-page spread positions them almost exactly reflected; their expressions, and the color work by Stewart, are perhaps the only things that distinguish them from each other. As the borders collapse between Alice and Batwoman — as Alice’s swirling curlicues become stained with Batwoman’s signature red, and Batwoman’s harsh lightning-bolt panels are softened by twisting vines — the barriers separating Beth Kane from everything similarly fall. Faced with her father’s attempts to interfere with her villainous plot, the veil falls altogether. “It’s enough to *drive one crazy*,” she snarls, holding a gun to his head: dreadfully savage and childishly dreadful, she pouts at him as a child might when about to throw a tantrum. Her words seem frustrated, desperate, and not just because of his opposition to her plan to “kill *millions of people!*” (n.p.); Alice is desperate for recognition as *Beth Kane*. Who knows how long it has been since anyone reminded her she used to have a family, a twin sister, parents; since she remembered there was a time before she was lost in a mad, murderous Wonderland? Beth is fighting her way free, and her father recognizes her: “My god...Beth...?” he whispers, but the veil immediately springs back into place, Alice hiking her shawl up to cover her face. “There’s no such thing,” she says — at least until Batwoman shows up.

Batwoman, under Williams' pen, becomes an explicit mirror for Alice, a reflection from mid-thigh and reflected in turn. They are both each other: potentialities of trauma and its manifestations. Kate took her loss and committed herself to service; Beth was subsumed into another identity, but is still able to say, even as she slides to the wing of the plane, "The *face* is what one goes by, generally. Who am *I*, then? Tell me that *first*, and then, if I *like* being that person, I'll come up...if *not*, then I'll *stay* down here till I'm somebody *else*." Carroll's petulant Alice is thus remade into a traumatized woman struggling to reassert her identity, rejecting the semblance of pastel-colored girlhood she has been forced for too long to wear. The tragic thing is, she succeeds in what can only be described as a Pyrrhic victory: "You have our *father's* eyes," she tells Batwoman, Kate, and it is *Beth* who says it (Fig. 5): Klein's lettering has restored her speech to the



Fig. 5

normalizing white air, black capitalized letters, direct tail. Alice's winding black is nowhere to be seen; the curlicues that build her panel are framed with Batwoman's red, even as they consign themselves to the painfully sharp angles present throughout "Elegy." It is Beth, who was made to bear the entire cruel weight of Alice's legacy, who finally defeats her; and it is Beth who lets herself drop into the impenetrable depths of the Gotham River.

Batwoman is Alice's mirror image: she is what grew when she wasn't trapped in a nightmarish Wonderland hell and whatever torment turned Beth to Alice; Batwoman is a skilled fighter, a rational woman drawn to public service; a lesbian, completely inaccessible to male desires of any kind. Alice, by turn, is trapped in a prison built by men: her kidnappers, Carroll, the long history of comics writers who have relegated her to a victim when they bother to remember her at all. Even the all-male creative team behind *Batwoman: Elegy*, working to rescue her from Carroll's legacy, consigns her to probable death in the Gotham River (though "Go's" conclusion suggests she's not nearly so dead as we may have thought, even if her reflection is now a skull).

However, I introduced *Batwoman* as a text that rescues Alice from these traditions, and I maintain that position. In my opinion, *Batwoman: Elegy* functions as a scathing critique of Carroll and the legacy he bestowed upon Alice, and does succeed in rescuing Alice from this legacy. Firstly, it demands that the legacy be recognized: Alice Pleasance Liddell is explicitly named, reminding the reader that Alice was at one point a real little girl, with a family and a future; that she existed beyond Carroll's dreamlands and fantasies. Second, it projects the sexualized ideals of girlhood onto the Alice figure in *Batwoman*, arresting the reader and articulating the dangerous, contradictory fantasies suspected in Wonderland and Carroll both. It is impossible to move through "Elegy" without considering Alice's costume and why those specific sartorial decisions

were made. Thirdly, it establishes context for Alice: it gives her a past, a family from which she was brutally torn and a future she cannot have, and examines the question of maturation and development in a woman who seems like a girl. Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly, it reorients the role of the sister. Carroll closes *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by reestablishing domestic order through the figure of the sister, who peacefully contemplates the potentiality of motherhood awaiting Alice. Kate does no such thing: rather, she investigates her sister's past and unveils to the reader the trauma that created them both. Nothing is glossed over in *Batwoman*; we may not know exactly how Beth Kane fell down the rabbit hole, but we know that, much as we suspect Carroll's relationship with the original Alice Liddell, something terrible led her there.

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