

Vaibhav Iype Parel

Delhi University, India
viparel@gmail.com

The White Knight’s “Inventions”: Creativity and “Invention” in *Through the Looking-Glass*

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The figure of the White Knight in Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass* has often been read as part of a tradition of “nonsense literature”. While this is true, I wish to extend that argument and locate the figure of the White Knight in the context of the debates around the Patent Law of 1852. While defining and recognising the role of mechanical labour, the role and function of artistic labour also featured in these debates. The White Knight’s “inventions” are deeply resonant with these debates and prompt us to ask: what is the role of the artist in an industrial society? How can art retain its autonomy and justify itself when confronted with the pervasive discourse of utilitarianism? This paper argues that the anxiety around the role of the artist is palpable in the figure of the White Knight, and through him Carroll enunciates what may be read as his intervention in this debate.

Keywords: artist, invention, mechanics, nonsense, science, White Knight

To attempt to add to the vast literature on the Alice books (1865, 1871) by Lewis Carroll (1832–1898) is probably an undertaking that is fantastical by itself. My interest lies particularly in examining the figure of the White Knight in *Through the Looking-Glass* (Carroll 1871), and to read the question of invention – that he so specifically concerns himself with, and which was a contemporary concern for the nineteenth century – through this fictional figure. Not only is invention – as a category of thought and practice – invoked by the White Knight, but it is systematically deconstructed by him to reveal the fissures behind the construction of the figure of “inventor” and in the debates around the Patent Law of 1852. If in the nineteenth century the role of “inventor” often overlapped with the role of “author”, as Claire Pettitt has convincingly argued, then, at least in the *Looking-Glass* world, Carroll is marking a territory for the “author” which is and should be radically different from that of the “inventor”, and at the

same time redefines the traditional meaning of "author". It is a territory which gestures towards the autonomy of the author's creations which cannot – and should not – be treated in terms of an invention.

Logic, inventions and the scientific discourse

Lewis Carroll's Alice books have been known to delight not only children, but mathematicians and logicians as well. It is well known by now that Carroll's important work on logic – under the name of Charles Dodgson – was published much after the publication of the Alice books. They included two textbooks: *The Game of Logic* (1886) and *Symbolic Logic* (1896). As Amirouche Moktefi has argued, "[a]lthough all Carroll's published works in logic appeared after 1885, his interest in the subject was much older" (Moktefi 2008: 459). The period of the composition of the Alice books (1862–1871) was also the time when non-Euclidean geometries and algebras were being vigorously explored, since the authority and centrality of Euclid had been coming under pressure since the 1860s. Gillian Beer has recently reiterated that (2016: 63):

Carroll valued Euclid above all for his logical procedures but the Alice books act out the attrition of conditions fundamental to logic: that terms retain their meaning and relations their stability. The demise of this stability in both language and mathematics is figured in his fictions.

Helena Pycior – much before Beer – had even gone so far as to say (1984: 166):

[...] it is possible that symbolical algebra inspired, or at least fostered, Carroll's nonsense style. The parallels between Carroll's nonsense writings and symbolical algebra are striking: both stressed form or structure over meaning, using words (or other symbols) with multiple possible interpretations.

For Tina Bilban, Alice's flourishing afterlife in what she calls "Scienceland" (2015: 314):

[...] can perhaps be interpreted as a continuation of her life in Wonderland, which Carroll, or better to say Dodgson, a mathematician, logician and Oxford scholar, already designed to contain elements inspired by his expertise in logic and mathematics.

Carroll, thus, allowed logic and its various complications, inversions, and entanglements to play out in the Alice books. As various critics have pointed out, he took delight in making this play with logic – rather than presenting morals – as the mainstay of his fiction for children (Beer 2016; Douglas-Fairhurst 2015).

John Pudney notes that Carroll himself took "much pleasure in innovation, improvement of systems and the more trivial machinery of living" (Pudney 1976: 42). Carroll visited the 1851 Crystal Palace Exhibition. His reaction was one of bewilderment. For him, "It looked like a sort of fairyland" (Pudney 1976: 60). In 1890 he visited Edison's phonograph exhibition for two days running. His love for photography was well known and has been well documented. "For twenty-four years many of his day light hours were taken up with photography, not only camera work but the processing, and with the search for sitters and subjects" (ibid.). His desire for knowledge was not

limited to mathematics and puzzles, but “[a]natomy, physiology and pathology were all subjects that fed Charles Dodgson’s appetite for knowledge” (1976: 56). Carroll invented the “dustjacket” as we know it today. The illustrator’s design for the book cover of *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876) was rejected by Carroll. “He gave instructions for the title and the author’s name to appear on the spine and in front of the wrapper. ‘The advantage will be that it can stand in bookstalls without being taken out of paper, and so can be kept in cleaner and more saleable condition’” (Pudney 1976: 90; see Susina 2010: 64–65).

The nineteenth century was an age of inventions. “Progress was most evident and undeniable in technology and in its obvious consequence, the growth in material production and communication” (Hobsbawm 1987: 26). Advances in technology were marked by the appearance of the battery (1800), the electric light (1809), the dynamo (1831), the telegraph (1844), the stethoscope (1852), the typewriter (1874), and Edison’s phonograph (1877) to mention only some prominent inventions through the century. Railways “were part of the most dramatic innovation of the century [...] they reached into the centres of the great cities [...] and into the remotest stretches of the countryside, where no other trace of nineteenth-century civilization penetrated” (Hobsbawm 1987: 27). Carroll was fascinated by the railway which as a system of transportation was only two years old in 1832 (the year of his birth) and railways figure prominently in his works.

The periodical journals of the nineteenth century give us a glimpse into the varied ways that the discourse on science was circulated, and the reactions to various scientific discoveries that were elicited by the common public. Geoffrey Cantor and Sally Shuttleworth have shown that both a specialist scientific press and a general periodical press spread views and information about science. In their words (2004: 8):

“[i]n the nineteenth century, much of the criticism that provided the engine for progressive scientific change occurred in the periodical press... general periodicals established both the platforms and necessary conditions for debate.”

Scientists, too, played an important role in the production of these journals, and contributed to them to aid the spread of information about their work. Interestingly enough, scientists also wrote about matters that were purely non-scientific, and the language of non-scientific writers was permeated by the language of science. “Dailies, weeklies, and monthlies, whether targeted at women, at religious audiences, or at liberal male readers, all assumed an appetite for science and an eager interest in its implications” (Cantor and Shuttleworth 2004: 13). What I wish to establish is that there was both an increasing interest in and a widespread discourse on science, its vocabulary and its mechanics, especially as the nineteenth century progressed.

Inventiveness and textuality

Inventions and inventiveness are often used subversively and perform multiple functions in Carroll’s fiction. Inventiveness is not restricted to the tangible and material everyday world of objects, nor do inventions refer only to the creation of new and unexpected material objects. In a Carrollian universe, the ordinary and commonplace

world of objects and ideas is relocated in a parallel – though often angular – frame of reference. When confronted with this similar dissimilarity we – as readers – are forced to question our settled attitudes, ways of thinking and perspectives of sight. This inventive spirit embraces contemporary technology (like railways, photography, glass) and at the same time includes language, authorship and reading practices.

Carroll manages to displace many commonly held assumptions about the nature of the English language through his playful inventiveness with his use of “nonsense”. Nonsense has been understood as “not frightening but deeply reassuring, since it only appears to be disorderly and actually establishes so many structures and limits that it functions to keep disorder in check” (Kincaid 1973: 92). In a similar vein, referring to Carroll’s play with language, Nivedita Sen, among others, has recently argued (2015: 242; also see Rackin 1966: 316–317):

The novel [*Through the Looking-Glass*] is an exposé of the slack syntactical parameters and semantic discrepancies within which the language functions. Simultaneously, however, it interrogates the incommensurate standards of stringency in the workaday world that surrounds it.

This play with semantic logic has been seen by Roger W Holmes through an evocative phrase: “the Logician in Carroll was fascinated by words” (Holmes 1959: 136).

Recent research on Carroll’s ideas behind reading and children’s literature shows how Carroll was deeply interested in the mechanics of reading and the process of perfecting forms of retrieval and storage, and that he made efforts to perfect his own literary machinery. Katherine Wakely-Mulroney suggests that for Carroll, “[t]he future of children’s publishing lay [...] not in derivative works (such as those patterned on the *Alice* books), but in a form of literary recycling in which extant texts are refined to their highest point” (Wakely-Mulroney 2018: 207). She argues that the two volumes of the *Sylvie and Bruno* books (1889, 1893) perform an important function which has gone unnoticed in literary criticism. The unorthodox structure of these books suggests (193–194):

[...] the author’s willingness to recycle material published earlier in his career [...]. By presenting himself as a compiler or editor rather than an author in the traditional sense, Carroll reevaluates the concept of originality in an age of information overload, when books are many and time is short.

In an intervention which gains in importance for the argument that this paper is developing, she goes on to say that Carroll (Wakely-Mulroney 2018: 194):

[...] uses *Sylvie and Bruno* itself to test the conceptual ambiguity between redundancy and renewal—whether by repurposing material from *Aunt Judy’s Magazine*, transcribing anecdotes and political speeches, or imitating *Alice*. Clearly, Carroll sought to revise children’s literature not by “throwing away the book” but by reconfiguring its parameters.

Through the Looking-Glass concerns itself in various ways with logic, science, invention, inventiveness and the technologies that were emerging in the period. In the first chapter, we find mention of Alice’s sister “who liked being very exact”

(Carroll 1871: 7) who refused to play the game of “Let’s pretend” a day earlier. Alice is happy to stay in a make-believe world where the cat is her interlocutor, and proceeds to play with the kitten. The game of “Let’s pretend” is premised on inventing ideas and situations which do not exist in reality. It also presupposes a clear division between what is real and what is illusory. A necessary return to the world of reality once the ‘game’ is over is implicit. Carroll does not respect this boundary, and we find that Alice’s threat of putting the kitten through the Looking-Glass house (by holding it up to the mirror) turns real when the mirror ‘melts’ to allow Alice to jump into the Looking-Glass world. Alice says, “Let’s pretend that the glass has got soft like gauze, so that we can get through. Why it’s turning into a sort of mist now I declare! [...] and certainly, the glass was beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist” (Carroll 1871: 9). Referring to the process of how “Crown” glass is made, Isobel Armstrong says (2008: 40):

[a]s the substance of the glass becomes hotter and softer, it yields more readily to the centrifugal force engendered by the rotation: it becomes every moment broader and flatter, deviating more and more from the shape of a globe.

This description of glass melting is an exact reversal of how glass was made in dark and grimy Victorian factories. This is glass *un-glassing* itself to allow Alice to jump through into the Looking-Glass house. Carroll’s awareness of the malleability of glass is being made to serve the purposes of fantasy.

When in chapter three Alice finds herself in a train quite against her wishes, “[a]ll this time the Guard was looking at her, first through a telescope, then through a microscope, and then through an opera-glass” (Carroll 1871: 27), Armstrong tellingly remarks (2008: 317):

[w]hen Carroll’s Guard tries out different forms of prosthetic optical instrument, the farcical allusion is to the different types of lens available at the time, the monocular lens of the microscope, telescope, kaleidoscope, the binocular lens of the opera glass and stereoscope, all of which create different ways of seeing. (Three different Alices appear through three different ways of seeing.)

Inventiveness, then, as a measure and standard of Carroll’s work, can be seen in actual inventions like the dustjacket among others (see Douglas-Fairhurst 2015: 316–324), and in the spirit of inventiveness that he introduces into language and reading practices. This paper wishes to take this argument further and focus on the White Knight in *Through the Looking-Glass*, as he appears in chapter eight of the novel.

The White Knight has been understood as a figure of endearment who wishes Alice well before she hops into the eighth square to become queen, and even a caricature of Carroll (see Gardner 1960: 296). For Bilban, “[t]he White Knight’s conversation with Alice can be seen as a caricature of Carroll’s conversation with non-logicians which includes the use of logical differentiation between different levels of naming [and] metalanguage” (Bilban 2015: 320).

Alice’s attitude towards the White Knight, however, is marked by self-absorption, petulant impatience and a complete lack of child-like curiosity and wonder. As James Kincaid points out, “Alice turns her back on him. She is cold to him from the beginning

and responds to his notions of glorious victory with the prim 'I want to be a Queen'" (Kincaid 1973: 98). The chapter ends with the White Knight singing a melancholic tune which makes Alice very sad but she finds that she cannot cry. In Carina Garland's apt summation, "[t]here is a sense of loss in this exchange: the final reality of Alice's adulthood and the fact that Carroll's child friend is gone forever are resoundingly clear" (Garland 2008: 36). The rest of this paper would like to focus on the inventions of the White Knight which, curiously, have not received the critical attention that the White Knight himself has received.

The White Knight's inventions

Robert Douglas-Fairhurst has tellingly noted (2015: 318):

Carroll's understanding of 'invention' was two-fold: he used the same word to refer both to thinking up a new idea and to turning it into a physical object. Often there was a sizeable gap between these two meanings, and his diary is dotted with 'inventions' that had only a mayfly existence in his mind before he moved on to the next project.

The White Knight is also presented as an "inventor". With his "shaggy hair", "gentle face and large mild eyes" (Carroll 1871: 72), he has a long list of inventions which have no practical value. The first is the box which he carries upside down so that the rain cannot get in but the sandwiches have fallen out. Then there are anklets around the feet of a horse to protect it from shark bites. Next, he invents a new way of getting over a gate, and a pudding course during the meat course. Besides all this, he has reasons for carrying a beehive and a mousetrap, candlesticks, fire irons, among other things.

The reasons that he gives for the inventions show how the usefulness of an invented product has been completely decoupled from its utility. Necessity, here, is not the mother of invention. The invented product retains an inherent value for him, even if it serves no practical purpose. If the logic of invention is necessitated by the usefulness of the product and the need for it, the White Knight's inventions prompt us to ask some questions: does usefulness lie in the product itself or in the use the product is put to? Further, if the use of the product is based on an almost impossible probability – like anklets around the horse's feet to protect it from sharks – then does it have any value as an invention?

Claire Pettitt has argued that "the mental labour of mechanical inventors such as John Swan, and of literary writers such as Charles Dickens, was constructed and discussed in very similar terms throughout the first half of the nineteenth century" (Pettitt 2004: 2). How was mental labour to be conceptualised? How far should mental labour be rewarded financially? Pettitt opines, "[i]n fighting for intellectual property, both poets and inventors were fighting for the ownership of their own 'professional' future" (4). Considering this, the obvious question that resurfaces is the anxiety about the role of the artist in this society. What is his/her future? What are the ways in which "novelists use their writing to work at imagining how far it is ever possible to own a creative act"? (23)

From the 1830s onwards, two different debates were taking place. The first was towards the introduction of a patent law, and the other was towards an international copyright law. The Patent Amendment Act of 1852 was preceded by four failed attempts between 1820 and 1835 to reformulate patent legislation. Simultaneously, there were six literary copyright bills that were introduced between 1837 and 1842. By 1852, British inventions had international protection (through the Patent Amendment Act of 1852) but writing (creative expression) was not offered full legal protection in foreign markets until 1891.

Starting in the 1850s, as Pettitt has shown, “knowledge was recenter[ed] on the production process in an attempt to create new standards of authenticity and to prevent fraud” (2004: 98). The Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 showed complex and large machines fully at work, and several manufacturing processes were displayed from start to finish. “The disjunction between the ‘beautiful’ machinery and its ‘moral effects’ was masked but nevertheless discernible in the displays in the Crystal Palace” (Pettitt 2004: 96–97). At the same time, the Crystal Palace exhibition paid great importance to showcasing art as a commodity. “The paradox of the new manufacturing techniques was that they seemed to destroy aesthetic value, while creating aesthetic objects, pictures, and books, with an unprecedented fecundity” (2004: 102). By the 1850s, authors like Dickens, Thackeray and Ruskin were able to enunciate and debate this anxiety about the role of art and the function of the artist in this brave new world of mass consumerism and production.

Having fallen head downwards into a ditch, the White Knight says, “the more head downwards I am, the more I keep inventing new things” (Carroll 1871: 76). Inventing things is not primarily a physical – external – act for him, but it is projected as mental labour. Invention is a continuous cognitive event. It does not involve the tiredness and grime of physical labour, or the long and arduous process of trial and error that most inventions go through. Moreover, his claim to having invented a method or object or pudding comes before he has tested either its physical feasibility, its viability or its usefulness. The invention is completed as soon as a thought strikes him. It does not need to be physically presented, verified or to have its suitability examined. The lack of its applicability constantly threatens the usefulness of the invention. However, for an invention to receive a patent by law, it would have to be new, useful and would need to have industrial application.

The White Knight’s “inventions” almost purposefully go against the grain of this argument. While they may perhaps be innovative, they are not new; they are all practically useless; and can be read, at best, as expressions of an individual’s subjective and creative impressions, and are not a source of any financial gain or sustenance for him. Logically, these new creations cannot be termed inventions. Why then does he insist on calling these ideas inventions?

In my reading, these “inventions” first serve to highlight – and therefore ironise – the assumptions on which inventions are recognised: utility and mass applicability. The striking imperfection of these inventions militates against the perfection that machine-produced objects were aspiring to. Their primary audience, Alice, is singularly

disinterested and has in her self-absorption refused to be enchanted by these inventions, unlike the enchanted audience that flocked to the Great Exhibition of 1851. Secondly, the uselessness which characterises these inventions ironically aid in maintaining their originality since there is no danger of them being pirated – a real concern and the main idea behind the debates for both the Patent Law and the Copyright Law. These become truly “intellectual property” which is no longer affected by the threat of piracy. Thirdly, these inventions suggest radical new possibilities to reconfigure our understanding of utility, usefulness and “inventions” by making us question the frame of the assumptions that we have placidly internalised. The only frame though which these inventions can be understood is creativity. We are being prodded to ask: what is the value of creativity? Is creativity a part of the process of invention or not? Does creativity have to possess “use” value? If so, how does one quantify this use value? Can creativity be recognised in its own terms? In an industrial age where usefulness had primacy over uselessness, these questions come to have immense value for the role of the writer.

Let us take the pudding as a case in point. One of the cleverest things that the White Knight invents is “a pudding during the meat-course” (Carroll 1871: 76). Thinking logically, Alice asks if it was for the next course, to which the White Knight replies that neither was it for the next course, nor was it for the next day. In a startling revelation he announces, “I don’t believe that pudding ever *was* cooked! In fact, I don’t believe that pudding ever *will* be cooked! And yet it was a very clever pudding to invent [emphasis in the original]” (1871: 77). Before we proceed further, it may be important to clarify some ideas here. The White Knight disrupts the common proverb “the proof of the pudding is in the eating”. The proverb standing by itself militates against incomplete activity. The proverb points to a material, teleological end which is predetermined. With its focus on being eaten – on the logical completion of a given task – it urges one to believe that unless the pudding is eaten, every process that may have gone into its making is rendered useless. The meaning of the action is defined only by its usefulness. The White Knight thus challenges this commonplace reading which glorifies the end of any invention as a concrete material substance which is rendered useful by its consumption/utility. The mere fact that he thought about the pudding, even if it could never be cooked or eaten, is enough to justify the creation of the idea. The usefulness of an object as the necessary goal for the object to ontologically exist is completely inverted. There is no need for the pudding to be cooked.

The ingredients of the pudding are even more shocking: blotting paper, gunpowder and sealing wax. These inedible substances, needless to say, defy the logic of the pudding. Alice is understandably shocked because in her scheme of things the pudding should, at the very least, be edible. The White Knight’s pudding challenges the normative logic of a pudding. What the White Knight invents is not a pudding, but since he uses the literal signifier “pudding” we come to expect – with Alice – an edible dish that fits into our normative understanding of the position of the pudding in the dinner. Our disappointment unmarks our easy reliance on language to lead us through the process of signification that we come to expect from it.

The White Knight's inventions could be understood through the framework of "nonsense literature". Stephen Prickett would argue (1979: 124):

[...] Carroll's [nonsense] is one of undeviating rationality pushed to its furthest and wildest extremes. Like Lear, Carroll found his nonsense in the everyday world around him; not, however, in its emotions or bizarre coincidences, but in the received conventions of society which had become frozen and reified, acquiring the status of objective "laws" of nature. To discover nonsense, all one had to do was to step through the framework of unquestioned assumptions that form the boundaries of our normal world.

Similarly, Michael Holquist, in his argument about nonsense literature, says (1999: 106):

Nonsense is play with order only. It achieves its effects not from contrasting order and confusion, but rather by contrasting one system of order against another system of order, each of which is logical in itself, but which cannot find a place in the other.

Do puddings always have to be cooked and eaten? In our world, yes, but not necessarily in the Looking-Glass world.

Alice's reaction to the White Knight's understanding of a "pudding" helps to put into perspective the resistance that we as readers also share. But our resistance emerges from the lack of convergence between the normative idea of pudding as we understand it and the White Knight's idea of a pudding. The fissure which opens up between these two differing perceptions points us towards 'creativity' as a lens through which we can (re)view these divergent positions. This invention of the White Knight will never receive a patent. Holquist goes on to argue: "in order to see a new thing we must be able to recognize it as such, and this is done by the willed inhibition of systems we have learnt before coming upon the novel object, an act performed in the service of learning new systems" (Holquist 1999: 108).

Carroll, then, is prompting us to think about creativity as a cognitive process which needs to be recognised in its own right, irrespective of its "usefulness" to the individual or the state. Creativity cannot be applied or manufactured industrially since it is individualistic by nature. It emerges in, through, and from the individual and may serve no pre-defined purpose that has been set for it, but may be awkward and apparently illogical. To understand the pudding that the White Knight creates we must not just expand and modify our linguistic frames of reference, but be ready to jettison them entirely in favour of the unexpectedly new. Like children, we can be "the proper audience of nonsense only to the degree that [we] let strange things remain strange; to the degree [we] resist forcing old systems on new, and insist on differences rather than similarities" (Holquist 1999: 109–10).

The White Knight keeps falling off the horse, which he just cannot keep himself on, so much so that Alice remarks with irritation: "I'm afraid you've not had much practice in riding" (Carroll 1871: 74). The Knight gets offended at the remark, and goes on to ironically reply that the great art of riding is to keep your balance. He deflates this great art of riding performatively, as he falls off mid-sentence, enough to annoy Alice

into suggesting that he should really get a wooden horse. The White knight was "so *very* awkward" (1871: 73).

Helene Cixous has read *Through the Looking-Glass* as a game, and argues that "[i]t is impossible, in the space of the game, to be an autonomous individual: each one involves all the others and is simultaneously involved" (1982: 242). She suggests an easy correspondence between the text/game and the outside world, where "the individual is always determined by the structures which frame him and force him to submit to scientific law" (1982: 242). As a corollary to this understanding of the scientifically overdetermined individual, Cixous argues that this exposes the (1982: 242):

[...] ridiculousness of a belief in autonomy, or in creative strength for the exceptional individual, such as is blindingly exposed by the episode of the White Knight: "I invented it myself," he repeats, as he collapses at every step. His fall (which repeats that Humpty-Dumpty, a fall equally dictated in advance, even by a nursery rhyme) is what he accomplishes with the greatest success.

For Cixous, the White Knight's repeated falls prove that it is impossible for the creative individual to sustain himself in this game/text/world which is so bound by structures that govern the game/text/world. Cixous equates creativity with autonomy. If the individual and his actions are overdetermined, then both autonomy and creativity are compromised.

It is exactly at this point that we need to think "contrariwise". The White Knight is suggesting a way out of this conundrum, not only by challenging the binding strictures which govern the text/game/world, but by arguing that the autonomy of creativity is not always bound by the rules that seek to actively regiment it into strictly recognisable forms. Awkwardness, thus, serves to liberate the creative self into a space where the artist can be creative. In other words, awkwardness fosters limitless possibilities for creativity to flourish. Thus, it is only when we "madly squeeze a right-hand foot into a left-hand shoe" (Carroll 1871: 80) that we will set the imagination free from the binding suffocation of idioms like action, usefulness and propriety.

Carroll's inventive energies were willing to challenge and recreate all forms of conventions. The White Knight emerges as a figure who is singular and irreplaceable insofar as he refuses to be fixed into any mode that may make him reproducible for mass consumption. He positions himself outside – and above – the "market", unlike Carroll himself who was deeply aware of the possibilities and the need of the market. However, through the White Knight, Carroll is able to enunciate ideas which not just refer to the contemporary discourses of industrialisation, commercialisation and creativity, but also self-reflexively create an alternate world where these anxieties would not exert the pressures they do in reality. Oddly enough, Alice marks her worldliness – which she is unable to shed – by her inability to comprehend and participate in the pleasures of this untrammelled creativity presented by the White Knight. She looks down on the Knight's creations as irrational and illogical, and rejects them for their awkwardness. The White Knight's creations remain pure, uncontaminated and an uncompromising idyll which cannot interest us in our world.

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Vaibhav Iype Parel

Sveučilište u Delhiju, Indija

“Izumi” Bijeloga Viteza: kreativnost i “inventivnost” u romanu *Through the Looking-Glass*

Figura Bijeloga Viteza u djelu *Što je Alica otkrila iza zrcala* Lewisa Carrola često se interpretira u obzoru tradicije „nonsensne književnosti“. To je prikladno, no namjera je ovoga rada proširiti tu argumentaciju i smjestiti lik Bijeloga Viteza u kontekst rasprava o Zakonu o patentima iz 1852. godine. One određuju i prepoznaju ulogu mehaničkoga rada, ali se također dotiču uloge i funkcije umjetničkoga rada. „Izumi“ Bijeloga Viteza dubinski su povezani s tim raspravama te nas vode k pitanju: koja je uloga umjetnika u industrijskom društvu? Kako umjetnost može zadržati autonomiju i opravdati se kad se suočava sa sveprisutnim diskursom utilitarizma? Ovaj članak pokazuje da je anksioznost koja se povezuje s ulogom umjetnika upravo opipljiva u liku Bijeloga Viteza te da Carroll kroz taj lik artikulira stajalište koje se može tumačiti kao njegov prinos spomenutoj raspravi.

Ključne riječi: umjetnik, izum, mehanika, nonsense, znanost, Bijeli Vitez