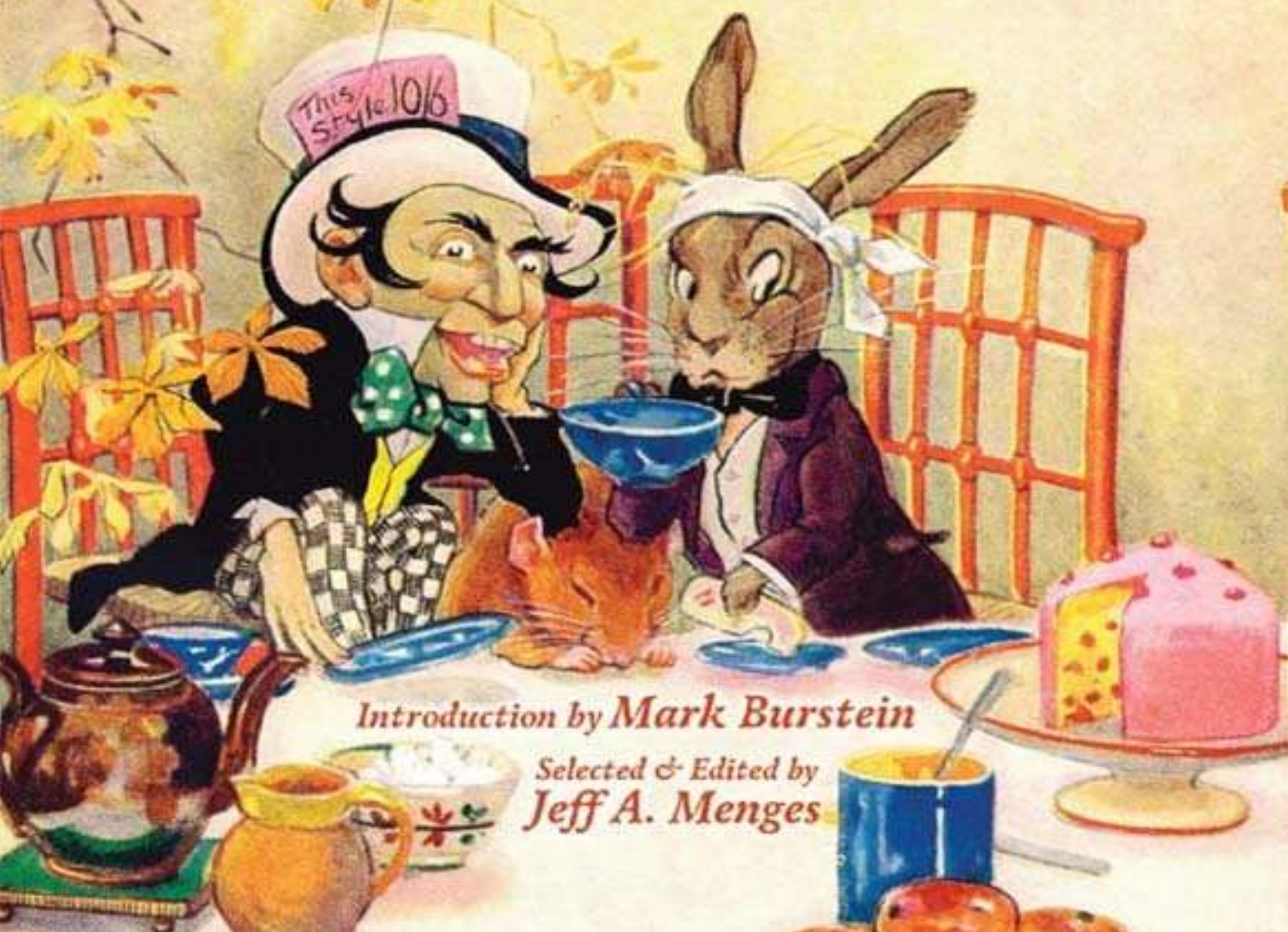


Alice

ILLUSTRATED

120 Images from the Classic Tales of Lewis Carroll



Introduction by Mark Burstein

*Selected & Edited by
Jeff A. Menges*



“There’s no sort of use in knocking,” said the footman

A. E. Jackson

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Jeff A. Menges

With an Introduction by
Mark Burstein



Dover Publications, Inc.
Mineola, New York

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Bibliographical Note

Alice Illustrated: 120 Images from the Classic Tales of Lewis Carroll, first published by Dover Publications, Inc., in 2012, is an original compilation of images from the following sources: John Tenniel, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Macmillan and Co. London, 1865) and *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* (Macmillan and Co., London, 1872); Peter Newell, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1901); Arthur Rackham, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (William Heinemann, London, 1907); Charles Robinson, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Cassell & Co., Ltd., London, 1907); Millicent Sowerby, *Alice in Wonderland* (Chatto & Windus, London, 1907); W. H. Walker, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (John Lane, The Bodley Head, Ltd., London, 1907); Harry Rountree, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Collins' Clear Type Press, London, 1908); Mabel Lucie Attwell, *Alice in Wonderland* (Raphael Tuck & Sons, Ltd., London, 1910); George Soper, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., London, 1910); A. E. Jackson, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Herron & Frowde: Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1914); Margaret Tarrant, *Alice in Wonderland* (Ward, Lock & Co., Limited, London and Melbourne, 1916); Milo Winter, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (Rand McNally & Company, Chicago and New York, 1916); Charles Folkard, *Songs from Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass* (A. & C. Black, Ltd., London, 1921); Gwynedd Hudson, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Hodder & Stoughton, Ltd., London, 1922); Willem van de Poll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, 1929); Barry Moser, *Through the Looking-Glass* (University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1983). An Introduction has been written by Mark Burstein special for this edition.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Alice illustrated: 120 images from the classic tales of Lewis Carroll / selected and edited by Jeff A. Menges ; with an introduction by Mark Burstein.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-486-48204-0 (pbk.)

ISBN 0-486-48204-9

1. Carroll, Lewis, 1832–1898. *Through the looking-glass*—Illustrations. 2. Carroll, Lewis, 1832–1898. *Alice's adventures in Wonderland*—Illustrations. I. Menges, Jeff A., editor of compilation. II. Burstein, Mark, 1950—writer of added commentary.

PR4611.A73A45 2012

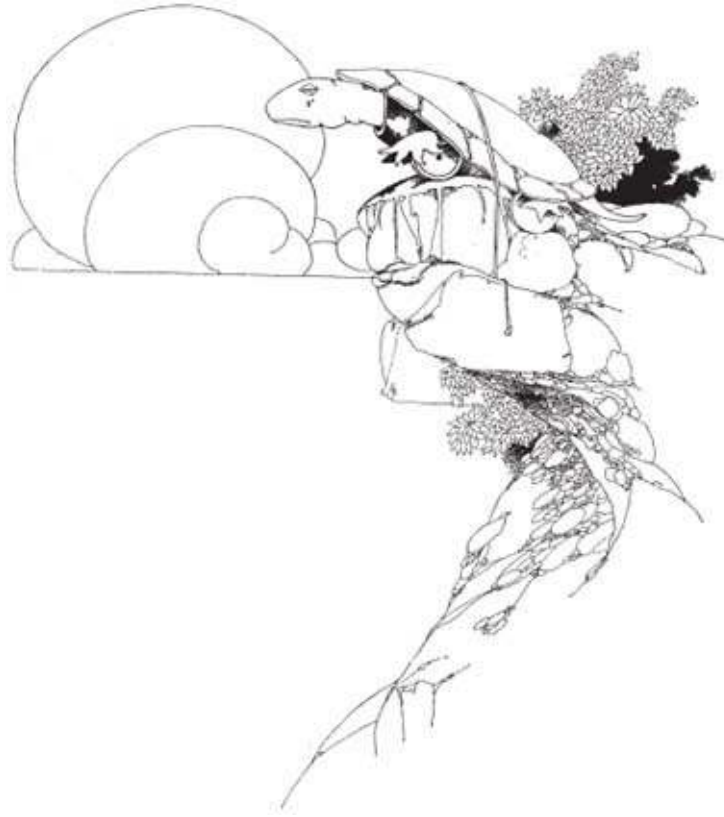
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2011047022

Manufactured in the United States by Courier Corporation
48204901

www.doverpublications.com

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Introduction



It is one of literature's greatest paradoxes that a book whose author and original illustrator complemented each other with such divine perfection, and whose inextricably intertwined words and images are among the most revered and iconic of Western civilization, has since become the most widely illustrated novel in existence. Several factors are involved: the work's lack of textual descriptions, which engenders a wide artistic license; how deeply and radically it delves into the human psyche, granting artists permission to explore their own versions of the exotic, paradoxical spaces inside Alice's dream worlds; its ubiquity in our culture, calling forth an identification with its heroine or other characters and sparking childhood memories; and, it must be admitted, commercial reasons. These factors will be discussed in depth later. But let us begin—as the King of Hearts instructs us—at the beginning.

The exterior life of the Rev. Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was so monumentally dull that it can satisfactorily be given in its entirety in a few phrases: he was born in 1832 and matriculated at Christ Church, Oxford, in 1851, where he remained as a bachelor and mathematical lecturer until his death in 1898, traveling only once outside of England (to Russia) in 1867. And yet, Dodgson's interior life, usually revealed under the nom de plume Lewis Carroll, was of such a magnitude and magnificence that today, nearly 150 years after a certain boat trip up the Isis (Thames) during which he told an amusing, nonsensical tale to the Dean's three daughters (one of them named Alice), fuels a vast industry of books, movies and television productions, theater, music, merchandise, scholarship, discussion, and websites.

Shortly after the now-famous boat ride on July 4, 1862, Alice Pleasance Liddell, the ten-year-old daughter of Dean Henry George Liddell, asked her friend Mr. Dodgson to write down for her the tale he spontaneously had spun. His handwritten and self-illustrated manuscript, which he called *Alice's*

Adventures under Ground, was presented to her in November 1864. He was encouraged by many to expand the volume for publication and did so, nearly doubling its length and adding many scenes and characters, including the Cheshire Cat, the March Hare, the mad Hatter, and the Duchess.

Realizing that his own illustrations, charming as they were (he later published them in a facsimile edition with Macmillan in 1886), would not be well received by a public that had high standards in draughtsmanship, Dodgson sought out John Tenniel, the premier cartoonist for the humorous weekly magazine *Punch*, for the job. Tenniel agreed in April 1864, and the collaboration, while occasionally stormy, resulted in the indelible images we know today.

The work's publication in 1865 (by Macmillan in England) and 1866 (Appleton, in the United States) was immediately—and irrevocably—an unprecedented success with critics and the public, both children and adults, including HRH Queen Victoria herself. This did not go unnoticed by other publishers. Thomas Crowell brought out a fine American edition in 1893 with one color frontispiece, and others, such as M. A. Donohue in 1901, put out unauthorized editions with the Tenniel illustrations. But the proverbial dam burst in 1907, when the British copyright expired.

The Edwardian era in the United Kingdom was a Golden Age for illustrated children's books, including classics such as *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902), *Peter and Wendy* (1911), and, in America, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900). The combination of artistic excellence and commercial prowess unsurprisingly, gave rise to some of the finest illustrated versions of Wonderland we are ever likely to see, in a variety of approaches ranging from the Art Nouveau stylings of Charles Robinson to the fanciful illuminations of Arthur Rackham. Although the volume you hold in your hands highlights the magnificent illustrators of the Golden Age of the Victorian and, particularly, the Edwardian eras, it also includes those of Barry Moser, whose Pennyroyal Alice came out in a fine press edition in 1983, as representative of all that has come after that initial outpouring. Indeed, in the post-Tenniel years, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (and its 1872 successor, *Through the Looking-Glass*) have attracted literally hundreds of the finest illustrators from all over the world. Among the most famous are Harry Furniss, Beatrix Potter (yet unpublished), Willy Pogány, Marie Laurencin, Max Ernst, Mervyn Peake, Salvador Dalí, Peter Blake, Ralph Steadman, and Helen Oxenbury, and there are scores of lesser-known lights. Add to these the countless illustrators of non-English editions whose names will not be familiar to us: some, of course, are Tenniel knock-offs, but many, particularly the Russians and Eastern Europeans, possess unique and sometimes disturbing visions, coupled with sensational renderings. In addition, there exist the visual concepts of theatrical productions, musicals, and operas and of filmmakers from Thomas Edison in 1910 through Tim Burton a century later—not to mention comic and manga artists, or the thousands of artists who have not published their work in book form, whose work speaks through original drawings, paintings, prints, T-shirts and other merchandise, and online digital renderings. Every art movement of the last and present centuries has been embraced: Art Nouveau, Art Deco, Surrealism, Pop Art, Photorealism, Minimalism, and fantasy, to name a few.

But now we must further address the question: what makes these particular books so irresistible to artists?

First, the book itself carries few descriptions of the setting or the physical appearance of the characters; Carroll's collaboration with Tenniel—one might more accurately call it art direction—was both a substitute and an enhancement. In the original, handwritten manuscript in which Carroll wrote the tale for the Misses Liddell, he himself provided the pictures, which are somewhat primitive but

quite amiable and served as sketches for Tenniel to work with. But in “the after-time,” this lack of narrative depiction has added richness to the license of subsequent illustrators to depict Alice herself and the eccentric individuals she meets, not to mention the background, settings, and overall style, and to explore their own visions of the text.

Tenniel himself occasionally was at variance with the manuscript: for instance, Alice’s revelation in Chapter Two—“‘I’m sure I’m not Ada,’ she said, ‘for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn’t go in ringlets at all’”—is contradicted in Tenniel’s pictures. We do know that her hair was long and possibly untidy, however, thanks to the Hatter’s remark, “Her hair wants cutting.” There was no particular child model for Tenniel’s Alice. As Carroll said in a letter (March 31, 1892) to fellow illustrator E. Gertrude Thomson, “Mr. Tenniel is the only artist, who has drawn for me, who resolutely refused to use a model, and declared he no more needed one than I should need a multiplication-table to work a mathematical problem!” A ridiculous canard involving a photograph of one Mary Hilton Badcock keeps making the rounds, but has been thoroughly discredited (Tenniel’s Alice was fully formed and in Carroll’s hands six months before he even saw Mary’s picture).



The second reason for the work’s appeal to such a wide variety of artists is how radical a literary departure it was, how deeply it dives into the unconscious, and how accurately it portrays the topsy-turvy, ironic, paradoxical, incomprehensible, unexpected, and truly funny world in which we live. It simply encouraged a different type of imagination than had ever appeared before, stretching the movement and range of illustrative art.

The two books constitute an artifact of the shared mind, perhaps the first secular infusion into the world of literature of a certain type: the literature of the “collective unconscious,” to use Carl Jung’s phrase. Freud’s discovery of the extent to which our “conscious” life is controlled by the unconscious hints at the ineluctable importance of the role of language in this process. We enter, by rabbit hole or looking-glass, into the realm of magic—metaphor, inspiration, genius, imagination, humor. The tradition was brought to the daylight world for the first time by Lewis Carroll, who invoked, by innovative linguistics, this dark realm of Chaos and Old Night, and of splendors undreamed, in an attempt to portray the dream state by the drifting and merging of identities and personalities, and the multilayered use of language to reach the unconscious: not only to describe it, but to actively stimulate its use.

In a letter to Tom Taylor (later the editor of *Punch*) dated June 10, 1864, Carroll discussed what title to give the work, saying “Of these [titles] I at present prefer ‘Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland’

In spite of your ‘morality,’ I want something sensational.” The word is appropriate. As Professor James Kincaid stated in his introduction to the Pennyroyal *Alice*, “In any event, the work clearly takes sensational risks, issuing attacks and invitations in all directions.... How is it that this apparently innocent children’s story is so hospitable, seeming to welcome a nearly unlimited number of approaches and explanations? ... Carroll applies continuous pressure to the forms and models we use to think about such things as space, time, logic, language, meaning, authority, and death.”

It is rare to read these days an “artist’s statement” by an illustrator of Carroll’s works that does not in some way allude to his or her childhood memories of the books. Even the “Golden Age” illustrators featured in this volume were old enough to have read *Alice* when they were young.

One reason that Alice herself has been depicted over the decades in such different ways is that she presents an identity in constant flux. In Wonderland, she doesn’t know who she is, has no cultural conventions to fall back upon, and is experiencing an altogether subjective reality, morphing in size and avoiding a fixed essence. As Adriana Peliano, founder of the Lewis Carroll Society of Brazil, has put it, Alice “has become a mirror to collective transformations. We re-create images of ourselves. In the present day, even the concept of identity has changed; to ask ‘Who are you?’ has a different meaning. We now know that identity is always changing, and can be multiplied within a single being. Alice’s mirror has become a kaleidoscope.”

In a six-part series of articles in the *Knight Letter*, the journal of the Lewis Carroll Society of North America (Nos. 76–80), “Evolution of a Dream-Child: Images of Alice and Changing Conceptions of Childhood,” Victoria Sears Goldman discussed this topic as well:

What is it about Carroll’s vision that has such allure? Perhaps it has something to do with our culture’s practice of defining itself by redefining itself over time based on cultural icons—including fictional characters such as Alice. After the publication of Carroll’s book, Alice immediately became the iconic child. There is something about the emblematic figure of Alice and her associations to which we are continuously attracted. Just as childhood is central to Western culture, so Alice is to childhood. Why has Alice become especially privileged and powerful among fictional characters? I suggest that the character of Alice is re-imagined generation after generation so as to ensure that our culture always has a fictional character around which to define itself; a child through whom we can live vicariously, into whom we can channel our fears, dreams, and desires.

Each significant era in the history of childhood has produced its own new version of Alice, and as each is rendered obsolete, the subsequent generation of artists is challenged to replace her with one that is more relevant.... Is “childhood” a universal, timeless phase of life that is characterized by certain constant truths? Or is it a highly malleable social construct? To what extent are artistic representations of children shaped by contemporaneous conceptions of childhood?

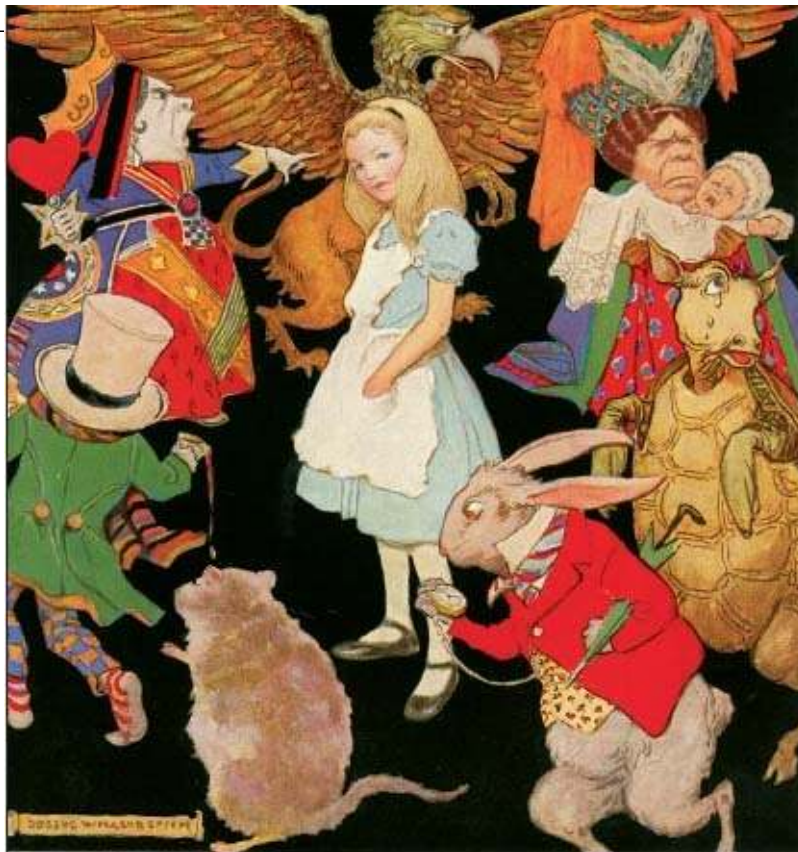


Lastly, *Alice's* pervasiveness in our culture today is unarguable; it is the most widely quoted novel ever written, whose characters and catchphrases find a way into our everyday lives via political cartoons and speeches, amusement park rides, toys, movies, paraphernalia, websites, and much more. Dozens of editions of the books appear every year, not to mention biographies, bibliographies, academic treatises, collections of essays, satires and pastiches, and the like. There are very active Lewis Carroll Societies in North America, the United Kingdom, Japan, and Brazil. The search term “Wonderland” may get 44 million or more “hits” on Google. Tim Burton’s noisome film, emphatically not a version of *Alice in Wonderland* but bearing its title, grossed a billion dollars worldwide, near the top of the all-time list. The works have been translated into (depending on definition) at least a hundred languages. A copy of the 1865 edition of *Wonderland* sold in 1998 for more than \$1.5 million. Alice is as recognizable an icon in this global culture as Mickey Mouse or Snoopy.

The text has been in the public domain for over a century, and a market is more or less guaranteed. What publisher would not want to enter into the fray, with an unheralded—or greatly heralded—new illustrator? Or offer something elegant, or affordable, or what-have-you, retaining Tenniel’s work?

As Alice said at the Tea Party, “There’s plenty of room!”

MARK BURSTEIN
President
The Lewis Carroll Society of North America



Alice in Wonderland

JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH, 1923



A Knave painting the roses red

HARRY ROUNTREE, 1908

Notes on the Illustrations

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a landmark piece of writing on many fronts. Written nearly one hundred and fifty years ago, this story created to entertain children has never lost its appeal—but the interest adults have in reading the story to children and in exploring it themselves is something special. Most children's stories tend to simplify and brighten reality, while *Alice*, from the start, was complex, unpredictable, and somewhat twisted. Against all conventions, it succeeded in finding an audience and maintaining it, as very few tales do.

A key to the attraction of Wonderland is the wildly imaginative creatures that populate it. With the connections that all of these creatures have to our everyday world, whether it be ordinary field animals or playing cards, they have all been transformed in Carroll's tales to become something they are not. This encourages the imagination, both in the reader, and in the artist. It pushes an illustrator to go even further with the task at hand—to provide the visual clues that define the identity of a character. Carroll has given creative minds a running jump to approach this task, and the long list of the tale's illustrators have embraced it.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and *Through the Looking Glass* have become two of the most-often illustrated books in the history of children's publishing. The list of their illuminated editions is incomparable. While it is not our intention to share the breadth of that selection in this volume, it is our hope to represent some of the best, most imaginative, and innovative depictions of the world in which Lewis Carroll placed Alice. For those reasons and others, there are works by some of the most storied artists of the last two centuries. Sir John Tenniel was Alice's first published illustrator. He set a high bar in imagination for all the artists who would follow, not only in Alice's original adventures but in *Through the Looking Glass* and *What Alice Saw There* as well. The Jabberwock he designed for that volume was intended to be the frontispiece, but in an informal poll that Carroll took, it was advised that it was too frightening an image to lead off the book ... Carroll went with the safer option. Today Tenniel's Jabberwock remains one of his best-known images.

Golden Age illustration stars such as Arthur Rackham and Charles Robinson rose to the occasion in 1907 when *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* entered the public domain.

In a scramble to provide a new look to the beloved story, as many as eight illustrated editions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* came out in that year alone. Two other contributors to the 1907 editions—W. H. Walker and Millicent Sowerby—are found within. Following that group, there would be a flurry of further activity for a decade and a little more, on both sides of the Atlantic.

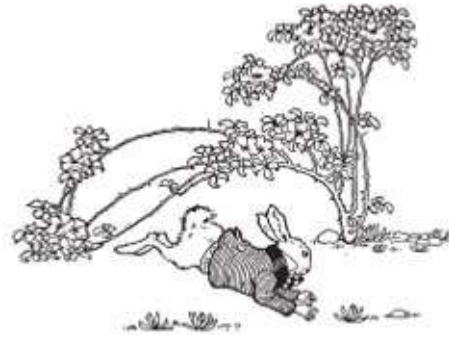
Years later, in 1929, Willy Pogány gave Alice a contemporary look, with a bobbed haircut and a plain skirt—at home in the 1920s. The look was anything but traditional, finding its place with those who loved the novelty of the tale but saw the mid-nineteenth-century styles as outdated rather than classic.

In more recent memory, a premier American artist met the challenge of *Alice* with a traditionally classic approach. Barry Moser's woodcuts for the Pennyroyal Press editions nearly bring us full circle in technique—but the work harbors a style and creates a mood that Sir John Tenniel could only dream of.

The images of Wonderland, and the artist's task of capturing them, seem to show no end of attraction to new attempts. No doubt the era of digital illustration will invite new efforts to depict Alice's topsyturvy world.

Jeff A. Menges
August 2011

The Plates



Sir John Tenniel (1820–1914)

1865 and 1872

Sir John Tenniel's importance to the visuals of Wonderland cannot be overstated. As the story's original illustrator in 1865, Tenniel created 42 line pieces that depicted all of the significant characters. The book's huge success made Tenniel's illustrations definitive for *Alice*, and it is likely that Tenniel's edition has been available in reprint form continuously since its original publication. When Carroll's "revisit" to Wonderland in *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There* came up in 1872, Tenniel initially turned down Carroll's offer to illustrate it. While both author and illustrator had benefited greatly from the success of Wonderland, they had many disagreements on its depiction, which caused Tenniel to pass up the offer. Only after Carroll's unsuccessful attempts to attract another illustrator (possibly due to his reputation for being difficult, or the looming task of following the iconic Tenniel drawings) did Tenniel agree.

Originally better known for magazine illustration—Tenniel was for some time a staff illustrator for *Punch*—he produced or contributed to several illustrated books before his fame with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, including *Undine* and *Aesop's Fables*.



The White Rabbit, and Alice

SIR JOHN TENNIEL



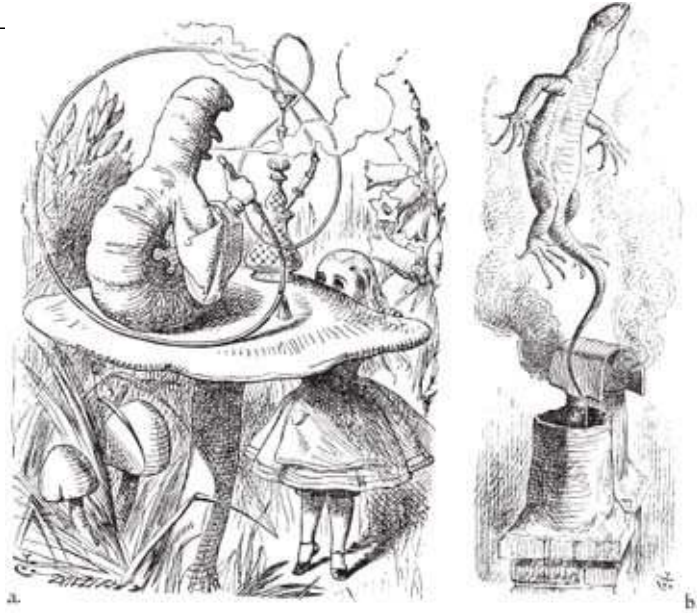
The King and Queen of Hearts were seated on their throne

SIR JOHN TENNIEL



- a. "Curiouser and curiouser!" b. Scurried away into the darkness as hard as he could go
c. "Twinkle, twinkle, little bat! How I wonder what you're at!"
d. "Hand it over here," said the Dodo

SIR JOHN TENNIEL



a. Advice from a caterpillar b. "There goes Bill!"
c. And yet you incessantly stand on your head—

SIR JOHN TENNIEL



The Jabberwock

SIR JOHN TENNIEL

Peter Newell (1862–1924)

1901

More than one American publisher produced an edition while the British copyright was still in place. The Harper and Brothers edition with illustrations by Peter Newell was published in 1901, followed by two sister volumes of *Through the Looking Glass* and *The Hunting of the Snark*. While Newell produced an elaborate and fresh edition, with halftone images and intricate repeating decorations, its reception was mixed, largely due to the complete dominance that the Tenniel drawings had stamped on the story.

Whereas Tenniel's background had largely been political satire and caricature, Newell was more of a pure cartoonist, telling a visual story for the humor it might provide. He created many children's books that used visual devices to further their uniqueness and is seen as a pioneer in children's humor publishing.



“Now I’m opening out like the largest telescope that ever was!”



On various pretexts they all moved off

PETER NEWELL



The Caterpillar and Alice looked at each other

PETER NEWELL

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