

in *The Lion and the Unicorn*
January 1999

Ronald Reichertz. *The Making of the Alice Books: Lewis Carroll's Uses of Earlier Children's Literature*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1997.

August A. Imholtz, Jr. and Charlie Lovett, eds. *In Memoriam: Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, 1832–1898: Obituaries of Lewis Carroll and Related Pieces*. New York: Lewis Carroll Society of North America, 1998.

As 1998 is the one-hundredth anniversary of Lewis Carroll's death on January 14, 1898, the year has been marked by a number of conferences and publications dealing with Carroll and his work. These two volumes make interesting companion pieces in that they are both primarily anthologies; one reprints selections from children's books that influenced Carroll's writing for children and the other reprints obituaries and articles written shortly after Carroll's death. Read together they offer a fascinating cultural snapshot of children's literature prior to Carroll's publications and then how the mainstream press viewed children's literature and Carroll shortly after his death.

Frequently Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865) has been seen by historians of children's literature as such a remarkable or ground-breaking book that it has been taken out of its literary or cultural context. Harvey Darton in *Children's Books in England* (1932) has compared its 1865 publication to "a spiritual volcano" in children's literature (153). Percy Muir neatly divides English children's books into the two categories—"From Harris to *Alice*" and "After Carroll" (10)—and argues that there was "no comparable giant before or after it" (148). It has become a standard assumption that Carroll single-handedly changed children's literature with the publication of the *Alice* books.

Literary history is never quite so simple, or as clear-cut, as it appears in textbooks or in survey courses. Writers didn't go to bed as Romantics and wake up Victorians. Like most things, literary history is messy. Books influence books. Unlike Athena, *Alice in Wonderland* did not emerge fully-formed from Carroll's head. However, to acknowledge that the *Alice* books were strongly influenced by earlier children's literature doesn't reduce Carroll's genius, a point that Reichertz's study makes clear.

Reichertz argues that too often Carroll's use of earlier children's literature in developing the thematic and formal features of the *Alice* books has been overlooked, although he acknowledges that Carroll's parodies of earlier works by authors such as Isaac Watts, Ann and Jane Taylor, and Robert Southey have been well researched. Reichertz admits that he is following the lead of Roger Lancelyn Green's introduction to the Oxford World Classics edition of the *Alice* books (1962) in seeking the sources that may have influenced Carroll. However, Reichertz seems to

undervalue Steven Pickett's *Victorian Fantasy* (1979) and Marguerite Mesypoulet's *The Creators of Wonderland* (1934), although both texts are given slight mention. Reichertz seems unaware of the significant work found in Roger Lancelyn Green's *Tellers of Tales* (1946), Michael C. Kotzin's *Dickens and the Fairy Tale* (1972), John Goldthwaite's *The Natural History of Make-Believe* (1996), or Gillian Avery's *Nineteenth-Century Children* (1965) in providing a literary context for Carroll's work in earlier children's literature.

This is a surprisingly thin book on such a rich subject. The book is divided into two major sections: Reichertz's 75 pages of analysis and subsequent 148 pages of appendices that reprint examples of children's texts that are sources or analogues for the *Alice* books. As a result, the most useful aspect of the text is the reprinting of the original children's texts, making the study more of an anthology than a work of criticism.

Reichertz uses the concept of "litterature" which Carroll coined when discussing the genesis of *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) to show how Carroll's theory of composition was a collection of bits and pieces of litter, or those "random flashes of thought" traceable "to the books one was reading" or to "a friend's chance remark" (7). Reichertz focuses on three genres of children's literature that Carroll uses: the world turned upside down, the looking-glass book, and the dream vision. He also shows how Carroll frequently reacts against the prevailing didactic literature of information, hardly an original point.

While Reichertz is careful to argue that Carroll was responding to genres rather than specific texts, in the lengthy appendices he provides examples of the type of books to which Carroll alluded. William Pinnock's *A Catechism of Geography* (1822) is given as a possible source that may have inspired Alice's distorted geography lesson in *Wonderland*, and indeed Pinnock's text does include a chapter titled "Of Latitude and Longitude." Ann and Jane Taylor's *Signor Topsy-Turvy's Wonderful Magic Lantern* (1810) is posited as a source of Carroll's reversals. Abraham Chear's *A Looking-Glass for Children* (1673) is seen as the possible source of the looking-glass book that is structurally important to *Through the Looking-Glass*. Reichertz's chapter on the tradition of the looking-glass book is the most convincing in this brief study. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* and Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess* are suggested as influential in Carroll's use of the dream vision, as well as the anonymous *The Child's Dream* (1820).

Reichertz's most original claim is his suggestion that the concluding poem of *Looking-Glass* with the final line, "Life, what is it but a dream?" becomes, if one removes *what* and *it*, "Life is but a dream"—the refrain of Philiphalet Lyte's popular "Row, Row, Row Your Boat" (1852). If Reichertz

is correct, Carroll's poem cleverly refers to the origins of the creation of *Wonderland* during the 1862 boat trip with the Liddell sisters, and the round of song also underscores the melancholy assertion that life is little more than a repeating dream. This ingenious explanation does not take into account that "Life, what is it but a dream?" could also echo Novalis's epigram, "Our life is no dream; but it ought to become one, and perhaps will," which George MacDonald, Carroll's good friend, used as the concluding chapter of *Phantastes* (1858) and which MacDonald frequently cited. John Docherty's *The Literary Products of the Lewis Carroll-George MacDonald Friendship* (1995) forcefully argues that most of Carroll's books were directly influenced by the writing of MacDonald.

While Reichertz makes a strong connection of Carroll's *Alice* books to the earlier traditions of the upside-down world, the looking-glass book, and the dream vision, what is noticeably lacking in this study is Carroll's use of the literary fairy tale. Reichertz does not take into account the significant influence of children's books such as Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* (1863), George MacDonald's numerous literary fairy tales many of which first appeared in *Adela Cathcart* (1863), or Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday House* (1839) with its well-known interpolated fairy tale, "Uncle David's Nonsensical Story about Giants and Fairies," as well as the lively antics of Laura and Harry, all of which seem to be prototypes for Alice. It is worth noting that Carroll gave an inscribed copy of *Holiday House* to the Liddell children. Given that Carroll considered *Wonderland* a literary fairy tale, it seems odd not to deal with the influence of previous literary fairy tales for children. Reichertz has in some ways missed the boat since they are as influential to the making of the *Alice* books as the three genres he emphasizes. Despite its limitations, Reichertz has managed to gather in one volume many difficult-to-obtain children's texts that were influential in the composition of the *Alice* books, and for that reason this collection will be a useful resource for anyone interested in researching the *Alice* books.

In Memoriam collects the notices from hundreds of newspapers and journals published on Carroll's death, although Imholtz and Lovett limit the items to those published within six weeks of the event. These articles provide a sense of Carroll's reputation within Victorian culture. Most were written under short deadlines by anonymous writers, although several were composed by individuals, such as Gertrude Thomson or Henry Lewis Thompson, who knew Carroll personally. Consequently this volume overlaps slightly with Morton Cohen's *Lewis Carroll: Interviews and Recollections* (1989). The editors of this book, however, are able to

locate one reminiscence, overlooked by Cohen, by John Hollingshead that deals with Carroll's early publications of humorous verse to Edmund Yates's *The Train*. Imholtz and Lovett suggest that these obituaries are a source for many of the misconceptions concerning Carroll's life, including the belief that he had few adult friends and that he ended all friendships with children when they reached puberty. Many notices attempt to contrast Carroll, the writer of children's books, with Dodgson the mathematician. On the other hand, the scientific weekly journal, *Nature*, reviews Dodgson's accomplishments solely in light of his work in mathematics and logic: "A formidable champion of Euclidean methods in the elementary teaching of geometry has just passed away" (94). The only children's texts that *Nature* mentions are *The Game of Logic* (1886) and *Pillow Problems* (1893). One of the most frequently-reprinted errors is the clever story about how, after Queen Victoria had read *Alice in Wonderland*, she requested that the author send her a copy of his next book and was surprised, but less than amused, with the arrival of *An Elementary Treatise on Determinants* (1867). Carroll refuted the widely-circulated tale in the second edition of *Symbolic Logic, Part I* (1896), but it continued to be accepted as fact long after his death.

Perhaps the most curious event concerning Carroll's death is that four days later, Henry George Liddell, the Dean of Christ Church and the father of Alice Liddell, the girl who inspired Carroll to write *Alice in Wonderland*, died. Linked in life, the two men, who disagreed on many things, were once again linked in death. Several obituaries connected the two men's passing, and the Rev. Francis Paget presented the sermon "The Virtue of Simplicity" on 23 January 1898 at the Cathedral of Christ Church, Oxford, which touches on the lives on both men and is reprinted in *In Memoriam*.

Despite Carroll's attempt to keep his scholarly work, written under the name Charles Dodgson, and his more imaginative work, published as Lewis Carroll, separate, the obituaries, many written just days after his death, suggest this was one of the most poorly kept secrets of the Victorian period. Most of the writers used the notices to praise the *Alice* books and celebrate their superiority to other children's books that came before and after. While the *Yorkshire Post* wisely suggests, "To define the humor of Lewis Carroll would be extremely difficult" (174), it is perhaps the comment in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a journal in which Carroll had published several items, that best summarizes Carroll's achievements: "If your parents are wise, you first read her [*Alice*] when you are five, six, or seven, and if you are wise yourself, you are still reading of her at fifty, sixty, or seventy, for the fortieth or fiftieth time" (123).

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