

Lindseth, Jon A., gen. ed., and Alan Tannebaum, tech. ed. *Alice in a World of Wonderlands: The Translations of Lewis Carroll's Masterpiece*. New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press in cooperation with LCSNA, 2015. 3 Volumes. Vol. 1, 837 pp.; Vol. 2, 787 pp.; Vol. 3, 1011 pp. \$295. Illus. (ISBN 978-1-58456-321-0).

Reviewed by JAN SUSINA

The three-volume *Alice in a World of Wonderlands* is an immense collaborative labor of love. This set will serve as a valuable reference tool to those interested in the thorny issues of literary translation, using the translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into 174 languages as the focus for its extensive analysis of a single English novel. It stands as a testament to the continued global readership of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Alice in a World of Wonderlands involved the contributions of 250 volunteers under the editorship of Jon A. Lindseth and Alan Tannenbaum, who also curated "The Alice in a World of Wonderlands" exhibition at the Grolier Club in New York City in 2015. This study began as the catalogue that Lindseth has proposed initially for the exhibition based on *Alice* translations from his own collection, but—like Alice after nibbling on the cake marked "EAT ME"—the project expanded enormously. The primary audience is those who have a very serious, perhaps slightly obsessive, interest in the numerous translations of Carroll's most famous children's book. *Volume Three: Checklists* includes checklists of more than 7,600 editions, issues, and reprints of *Wonderland* and some 1,500 of *Looking-Glass* in the 174 languages for which a translation could be located. These carefully researched volumes will become a welcomed addition to reference departments, rare book libraries, and private Carroll collections.

Warren Weaver's *Alice in Many Tongues: The Translations of Alice in Wonderland* (1964) was the inspiration and groundwork that the Lewis Carroll Society of North America used to revise and expand as a way to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. By itself, *Volume One: Essays* overshadows Warren's volume; at 837 pages *Volume One* is six times the length of Weaver's original study. In *Alice in Many Tongues*, Weaver located 336 editions of *Wonderland* in forty-four languages. The editors have retained Weaver's definition of translation as anything that a person

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who could only read English could not read, which allows Braille, Shorthand, and other English versions that appear in alphabets other than standard Latin letters. These more recent translations, as well as those overlooked by Weaver, are addressed by Emer O'Sullivan in "Warren Weaver's *Alice in Many Tongues: A Critical Appraisal*." The three-volume study is dedicated to Weaver and his pioneering work in translation studies and reprints "The Universal Child," the opening chapter from his study of *Alice* translations.

The three volumes function as an interlocking set, but each has a slightly different intended audience. *Volume One* is the most accessible to the general reader with interest in Carroll and the *Alice* books. This volume includes a selection of short, but informative, "Preliminary Essays," which are accompanied by additional essays that appear in the "Illustrations," "Additional Essays," and "Appendices and Back Matter" sections. These help frame the biographical and translations issues and details found in *Volume Two: Back-Translations* and *Volume Three*. The 166 essays on the various translations of *Wonderland* into different languages, dialects, alphabets, or constructed languages vary in quality and are written by contemporary translators of *Alice*, many of whom provide the back-translations that appear in *Volume Two*. Each writer is asked to evaluate the first translation of *Wonderland* in his or her language and then at least one recent translation or series of translations. There is a repetitive nature in these essays in which the writer/translator addresses the challenges faced in producing a translation that stays true to the spirit of Carroll's original book, but is also accessible and understandable in a different language and culture. The two editors wisely quote Umberto Eco from his *Experiences in Translation*, "Every sensible and rigorous theory of language shows that a perfect translation is an impossible dream" (2:15).

Given the problems that many contemporary English readers face with Carroll's playful and nonsensical language and Victorian references, the challenges a translator faces when attempting to render *Wonderland* into another language can be daunting. Carroll's use of parodies, puns, and poetry are frequently cited difficulties for translators. To overcome these problems, translators devise various clever poetic and linguistic alternatives and tricks. Characters names are changed. The poems that Carroll parodied are adapted to verses that will be recognized by readers of the translated language. Pun-parallels become elusive. Translation is shown to be as much an art as a science; a literal word-for-word translation is often confusing and devoid of the original humor. Yet despite innovative translations that attempt to account for the varying social, cultural, and emotional value of words, one wonders if something may be lost in the translation. Jean-Luc Fauconnier, who translated the text into Walloon, a Romance language used in parts of Belgium, suggests that translating a text such as *Wonderland* is "a dangerous exercise where one continually goes from a very

accurate translation to an adaptation that is sometimes a long way from the original" (1:630).

Volume Two shows the challenges that translators face in attempting to put *Wonderland* into a different linguistic landscape. The theory outlined in *Volume One* is put into practice in *Volume Two*. Contributors provide a translation into English of "A Mad Tea-Party" from chapter 7 of *Wonderland* without referring to Carroll's original text. The results confirm the editors' suggestion that, "literal translations are virtually impossible and would not be understandable to the target audience" (2:16). Translators frequently address problems with cultural issues, such as the pig that is transformed into the baby or the offer of wine during the tea party. The editors summarize that the back-translations reveal two major models of presentation, those languages that use conversational punctuation and those languages that run the speaker's name and quotation without special punctuation. While *Volume Two* is a rich source of information for linguists and those interested in the art of translation, those interested in the *Alice* books may find these entries repetitive in addressing similar problems of translating *Wonderland*.

Volume Three is a detailed compilation of the various editions of the two *Alice* books, including more than 7,600 editions of *Wonderland*, 1,500 editions of *Looking-Glass*, and 650 combined editions of the two *Alice* books. For each entry an attempt is made to provide one or more libraries where a copy can be located, be it an academic, public library, or private collection. For the checklists, compilers were asked to list the title of the book in their language and then provide a literal translation of the title in English. Scholars, translators, booksellers, rare book librarians, and bibliophiles will be grateful for the comprehensive listings of the various translations of the *Alice* books found here.

In the third volume, Alan Tannebaum and Clare Imholtz also include a shorter, but useful, list of 1,201 illustrators of the *Alice* books. *Volume One* does feature several essays on illustrations, including Nilce Pereira's discussion of illustration as a form of translation and a discussion of Carrollian comics by Byron Sewell and Mark Burstein. Just as Alice and Carroll placed great importance of illustrations, *Alice in a World of Wonderlands* is richly illustrated. *Volume One* includes fifteen full-color pages of 127 covers from around the world. Most of the entries in *Volume Two* feature a black and white image of a cover of one of the translations under discussion. The endpapers of the three volumes also features an elegant, sepia-color world map by Connie Brown so that readers can connect the 174 translations to their appropriate language locations.

In 1866, Carroll wrote to his publisher that, "Friends here seem to think the book is untranslatable" (1:80). Yet, this significant study of the many subsequent translations of *Wonderland* shows how wrong that initial observation

was. *Wonderland* has been published in 174 languages and 7,609 dialects, but its sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass*, has had, in comparison, a more modest number of translations—65 languages and 1,530 editions. Edward Wakeling's "Translations of *Alice* during the Lifetime of Lewis Carroll," examines Carroll's active participation in the translations of the German, French, and Italian editions of *Wonderland*. Wakeling notes that these translations of *Wonderland* had very modest sales. By 1876, Carroll wrote Macmillan asking that the publisher stop advertising them since their sales did not pay for the notices. Selwyn Goodacre notes in "The Real Flood of Translations" that the increased number of *Alice* translations began to emerge in the twentieth century. In the 1950s the *Alice* books were recognized around the world as children's classics, and illustrators other than Tenniel were asked to add to the texts. Goodacre also points out that the early 1870s Dutch editions were the first volumes that included colored adaptations of Tenniel's illustrations and gave Carroll the idea for using color in *The Nursery "Alice"* in 1889.

After reading *Alice in a World of Wonderlands*, one might assume that *Wonderland* is the most frequently translated novel in the world, but Jon A. Lindseth and Stephanie Lovett in "The Most Translated English Novel" explore the difficulties confirming that claim for *Wonderland* or any other title. Using data provided by Wikipedia, they argue that John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, with approximately 190 translations, has perhaps the best claim for being the most translated English novel. They are confident that *Wonderland* is the second most translated English novel at this date, and that it far surpasses the number of translations of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series and Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, which have each been proposed as the most frequently translated English book. As to the claim that Shakespeare and Carroll are the most frequently translated English authors, once again Lindseth and Lovett acknowledge the difficulties in obtaining reliable documentation to confirm this statement. Nevertheless, the detailed documentation found in these three volumes confirms a global interest in the *Alice* books.

There are a few sections of *Alice in a World of Wonderlands* that seem unnecessary. While Morton Cohen's *Lewis Carroll: A Biography* (1995) remains the standard biography of author, his brief biographies of Carroll and Alice Liddell and discussion of the classic status of the *Alice* books are better addressed in his outstanding biography. In reading the various entries by the translators in *Alice in a World of Wonderlands*, there are a number of references to forthcoming translations, and one of the appendixes to *Volume One* acknowledges that nineteen translations were at the press and other twenty-one were still works in progress. In attempting to make an accurate account of a book's translations, the study should limit itself to completed and published translations.

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In the Introduction to *Volume One*, Lindseth proposes that *Alice in a World of Wonderland* is "the most extensive analysis ever undertaken examining one English language novel in so many other languages" (1:21). Michael Suarez in "Alice and the Global Bibliography: Reading the Whole Book" hails it as a model for translation studies. New translations of the *Alice* books will continue to be published, and eventually there will be a need for a revised, updated, and even larger edition of *Alice in a World of Wonderlands*. This three-volume set is a monumental tribute to the continued global interest in the *Alice* books and confirms the observation of the Frisian translator, Tiny Mulder, that "A language is not complete if there is no translation of the Bible, Shakespeare and *Alice in Wonderland*" (1:249).