

DRESSING ALICE:  
CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH FASHION IN *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND*

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Advisor: Dr. Jonathan Rose

Alexandra Jordan Thelin Blackowski

Drew University

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## ABSTRACT

DRESSING ALICE: CULTURAL IDENTITY THROUGH FASHION IN *ALICE'S*

*ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND*

Alexandra Jordan Thelin Blackowski

As translations of a text develop over a multitude of languages and time periods, each adaptation illustrates period fashion expression and cultural identity, defined in this study as the ways dress, aesthetics, and visual culture express a society's values and social structures. This is distinctly seen in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, originally published in 1865 by Lewis Carroll. By studying various versions and their accompanying illustrations, each offers a unique lens through which to examine how clothing worn by the characters reflects the cultural values, social norms, and aesthetic preferences of the societies in which these versions were produced and read. This analysis of fashion reveals the interplay between literary adaptation and visual interpretation, shedding light on the diverse ways societies interpret and re-imagine a classic European narrative.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, whose love, patience, and encouragement sustained me throughout this journey.

To my husband, David, whose unwavering support, generosity of spirit, and confidence in me made this work possible in countless ways. Your steadiness and belief carried me through even the most challenging moments.

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## INTRODUCTION

Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*<sup>1</sup>, published in November 1865, tells the story of a young girl named Alice who falls asleep in a meadow beside a river, bored while reading her sister's book. In her sleep, she dreams that she follows a White Rabbit down a rabbit hole and, as a result, embarks upon an adventure in a magical place called Wonderland. She meets a variety of characters along the way, including the aforementioned White Rabbit, Cheshire Cat, Mad Hatter, March Hare, Dormouse, Queen of Hearts, King of Hearts, Knave of Hearts, and others. Each of these characters personifies challenges and follies, causing Alice to question logic and what is actually real.

As *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*<sup>2</sup> tells the story of a young girl who experiences bizarre and surreal events, the human and animal characters engage in wordplay and riddles, along with parodies of Victorian society. These interactions can be interpreted as the absurdities experienced as a child matures and grows up and enters the complexities associated with adulthood. In addition to the animal and human characters in the story, this narrative trajectory from childhood to maturity introduces the concept of time as an actual character.

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<sup>1</sup> Lewis Carroll is the pen name of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, an English writer, mathematician, and clergyman born in 1832. Dodgson adopted the pseudonym in 1856, combining his first and middle names in a playful way. While Dodgson was a respected academic at Oxford University, his works under the name Lewis Carroll, particularly his whimsical tales and poems, brought him lasting fame. The use of the pen name allowed Dodgson to separate his public and private personas, as he was known for being a more reserved and formal figure in his academic life. However, as Lewis Carroll, he gained recognition for his literary and creativity and inventiveness, creating some of the most enduring characters and stories in English literature. Throughout this dissertation, Dodgson will be referred to as Carroll, as the focus is specifically on his work under the name Lewis Carroll, rather than his biographical life.

<sup>2</sup> For clarity and brevity, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* will occasionally be shortened to *Alice* throughout this dissertation.

This coming-of-age tale has been translated into over 170 languages, including Spanish, French, German, Italian, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Arabic, and even a version using only emojis, as well as indigenous versions, making it one of the most widely translated works in literary history.<sup>3</sup> As each publication of the story is different, it brings distinct cultural interpretations and subtleties to the original work, empowering diverse audiences to engage with the text. Additionally, the different publications of the book have their own illustrations, each provided by a local artist. Every artist focuses their work on differing aspects, employing disparate mediums, and styles. The artists show both the human and non-human characters of the story through their own cultural observations and standards of beauty.

One way in which the various illustrated versions of the story engage their readers is through the clothing worn by the characters. Examining these garments through a fashion historical lens makes it possible to identify the cultural influences, materials, stylistic conventions, and social expectations that informed each illustrator's choices. In this study, differences in dress across editions reveal how artists drew upon the fashions of their own time, reflecting contemporary ideas about class, gender, national identity, and social behavior. Approaching the illustrations this way allows the images to be understood not simply as decoration, but as visual evidence of the cultural contexts in which each vision was produced.

Also, clothing is often a reflection on the cultural, societal, and historical context within a story. As Carroll wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in Victorian England, there are British elements that make their way into many versions of the story, along with aspects from other cultures. By analyzing the characters' attire and how it differs from

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<sup>3</sup> Jon A. Lindseth and Alan Tannenbaum, eds. *Alice in a World of Wonderlands: Translations of Lewis Carroll's Masterpiece* (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2015).

the multiple publications of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, this dissertation will detail how the illustrations reveal the societal norms, class structures, and values of each culture are revealed. Personalities of the individual characters are also signified through dress. Additionally, status and transformations develop through clothing choices, and help identify a character's aspirations, struggles, or changes in identity. Clothing carries symbolic meaning, such as representations of freedom, oppression, or rebellion. By examining these symbols, one can deeper understand the text's core message along with its symbolism and themes.

Another aspect illustrated through clothing choice is gender and identity. Clothing helps construct gender, and analyzing how a character conforms to or challenges norms provides insight related to a society's views concerning gender. The study of clothing can also enhance understanding of the historical context in which the book is set. Clothing can situate a story in a specific time and place, providing context to the characters' experiences.

Through this, the clothing worn by the characters of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* demonstrates that costume functions not merely as decoration but as a narrative device that reveals character, thematic meaning, and cultural context. Different versions and translations of *Alice in Wonderland* will be examined, analyzing the cultural reflections depicted. Fashion often mirrors societal values, and this study therefore uses clothing as a way to understand the cultural and social contexts in which different illustrated versions were produced. Although the characters in these works are fictional, the artists who depicted them were influenced by the fashions of their own time, and the clothing they chose to illustrate reflects contemporary ideas about class, gender, historical context, symbolism, and identity.

## METHODOLOGY

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* appears in academic journals as scholars discuss the issues and intricacies of the text being translated from English to many other languages. In addition to the language being studied, the illustrations featured in each translation also hold importance. The methodology for studying fashion history and its role in literature involves a multidisciplinary approach that combines historical research, material culture analysis, and contextual interpretation.

Primary sources, including the varying versions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* along with fashion publications and periodicals from their respective areas provide historical contextualization. Additionally, the study of period-specific texts such as letters, diaries, advertisements, and newspapers help to understand the societal values, norms, and events influencing fashion. Scholarly texts also act as guiding secondary sources for the analysis of trends, cultural shifts, and historical narratives.

The analysis of material culture and visual objects gives information on how clothing was constructed, along with its materials, how it was made, and valued. The examination of surviving garments, accessories, and textiles show this. Also, fashion plates, paintings, and illustrations help trace style evolution and regional differences.

Just as the different publications of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are products of their cultures, the fashion displayed within their pages reflect social hierarchies, gender roles, and identity. This study examines the influence of broader historical forces, such as colonization, trade, and globalization, on the depiction of dress. Such topics require an interdisciplinary approach, and perspectives from art history, anthropology, sociology, and economics help to create a more well-rounded understanding of fashion's social and cultural influence.

The dissertation will first examine the historiography of the academic research that already exists on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, relating to publication history, translation, and illustration. This also includes relevant background information on the text, such as the human and non-human characters studied, especially those that are depicted in clothing.

Next, organized by illustrator, the characters and their clothing appearing in English publications of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* will be discussed. Illustrators included are: Sir John Tenniel, Bessie Pease Gutmann, Arthur Rackham, A. E. Jackson, Gwynedd Hudson, Salvador Dali, and Helen Oxenbury. These artists worked in various time periods, ranging from 1865 to 1999, thus a broad range of the fashions and styles are included.

The chapter following this addresses illustrators who provided drawings in non-English versions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. These include: Uriel Birnbaum, Lola Anglada, Simone Deleuil, Tove Jansson, Nicole Claveloux, Dušan Kállay, and Yayoi Kusama.<sup>4</sup> Just like with the illustrators working in English translations of the story, a wide range of publication dates, from 1923 to 2012, creates an interesting sample.

The next section includes an indigenous version, here defined as a work created by and reflecting the cultural perspectives of First Nations communities, through an in-depth analysis of an Aboriginal Australian version of *Alice*, written by Nancy Sheppard and illustrated by Donna Leslie. This case is selected for its explicit incorporation of Aboriginal Australian visual motifs and storytelling traditions, making it a particularly clear example of how cultural identity is expressed through adaptation.

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<sup>4</sup> Although the text of this publication is in English, Yayoi Kusama is a Japanese artist whose cultural formation, artistic philosophy, and visual language are deeply rooted in Japanese aesthetic traditions and modes of visual expression. Her illustrations are therefore examined within the context of non-English publications, as they reflect a culturally specific visual perspective.

Lastly, the dissertation concludes by arguing that these illustrations reflect cultural values, contribute to character development, construct gender identity, and are shaped by their historical context. Through a comparative visual analysis attentive to dress, aesthetics, and design, this study demonstrates how illustrations function as key sites for the construction of cultural and gender identity. In doing so, it highlights how visual elements actively shape meaning across time and context.

## CHAPTER ONE

### CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH ON *ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND* AND FASHION

#### **HISTORIOGRAPHY**

As *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is such a well-known Victorian tale, scholars have researched and written about elements of the story at great length. There are many publications and research articles relating to Lewis Carroll's original work within a wide range of disciplines, from angles such as philosophy, logic, identity, and gender studies. This chapter is a historiography of books exploring the texts with a strong focus on the research on fashion, publication history and language interpretation, and illustrators surrounding *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This large body of scholarship in literary analysis, cultural history, and design history provides a vital framework for the work that follows.

Since its publication in 1865, Carroll's *Alice* inspired countless interpretations and fashion plays a central role in these readings, from the visual iconography of Alice's dress to the sartorial symbolism woven through the text. Early studies focused primarily on the Victorian context of the story, examining how Alice's iconic dress reflected both the norms and subversion of nineteenth-century fashion. Tenniel's original illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* were in black and white and did not specify the color of Alice's dress. However, *The Nursery Alice*, a version of the story for young readers published in 1890, contained twenty colored illustrations from the original 1865 publication. Alice's dress was first illustrated as yellow, with a white apron with blue trim. The iconic blue dress, as commonly recognized today, was popularized by Disney's animated *Alice in Wonderland* film from 1951, which portrayed Alice wearing a light

blue dress with a white apron, cementing this visual interpretation in popular culture. Regardless of variations in color across adaptations, the fundamental silhouette of Alice's dress and the pinafore worn over the simple, knee-length garment remains consistent across many illustrated versions and reflects the style of clothing most commonly associated with Alice, as established by Tenniel's original illustrations. In the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries, scholars broadened this focus to consider the way *Alice* influenced not only children's literature, but the fashion world, from haute couture to street style. As the historiography continues to evolve, there is an increasing interest in the ways in which *Alice's* fashion intersects with feminist theory, postmodernism, and the broader cultural landscape, reflecting the ever-changing nature of both the book's legacy and the fashion industry itself.

The following are some of the prominent publications in the field on this topic, but this is not meant to be an exhaustive list. However, these are solid starting points for research on the illustrations within Carroll's widely published story, along with the clothing depicted.

## **Fashion**

The intersection of fashion and literature is a rich area of study, and Carroll's work offers a robust entry point for exploring this connection. From its initial publication, the visual and textual aspects of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are closely tied to clothing and costume, reflecting both the Victorian era's stylistic trends and the imaginative possibilities of fashion. Alice herself becomes a fashion icon in her dress and

pinafore, thanks to Sir John Tenniel's<sup>5</sup> illustrations. The significance of clothing in the *Alice* books has often been noted, not only as a reflection of the Victorian period, but also as a means of exploring themes such as identity, transformation, and social norms. This next section will explore key contributions to this field, highlighting the diverse ways in which fashion-related books have examined the *Alice* phenomenon.

Ardern Holt suggested *Alice* costume ideas in the 1887 publication *Fancy Dresses Described; or, What to Wear to Fancy Balls*. This primary source text offers valuable insights into the early conceptualization of costuming, suggesting that visual representation of characters was not only a matter of imagination but also practical design. It reflects the emerging interest in theatricality and visual storytelling, exploring how costumes could bring Carroll's characters to life. Holt stated:

Alice in Wonderland. The characters in this popular tale are greatly in favour with children. Alice is dressed in a low bodice white muslin short frock with sash. The Lion and Unicorn as faithful copies of their pictures. The March Hare in a brown coat and waistcoat, with hare's head and feet. White Rabbit in a check suit, with rabbit's head and feet. Cheshire Cat in a coat of chinchilla. The Duchess in a pale rose-coloured over-dress with lilac front trimmed with ermine; large head-dress of ermine; pendant veil. The Rose in satin rose leaves mounted as a Mother Hubbard hat; and the bodice and skirt like rose leaves; sleeves and bodice, green satin. Lily, the flower for headdress; bodice and skirt of yellow silk, brown border to skirt. The Caterpillar is cleverly adapted from Tenniel's sketches, with green cap, and leg coverings like a caterpillar. The Chess Men are faithful copies of the pieces in chess. Cards, after those in the pack...Kings, with gold crowns, velvet robes, and the insignias of the suits.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Sir John Tenniel received knighthood in 1893 for his contributions to art and illustration, particularly for his work with Carroll on *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. These illustrations become so iconic that in some ways, they are inseparable from the texts themselves. This honor was also in recognition of his long career creating witty drawings as a political cartoonist for *Punch* magazine.

<sup>6</sup> Ardern Holt, *Fancy Dresses Described or What to Wear at Fancy Balls* (London: Debenham and Freebody, 1887), 238.

This text marks only the beginning of exploring the role of costume in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, setting the stage for more in-depth analysis on how costume could evolve to enhance the story.

*Fashioning Alice: The Career of Lewis Carroll's Icon, 1860-1901*, by Kiera Vaclavik explores the character of Alice as an emblem of style. Published in 2019, over 100 years after Carroll's initial publication, the text analyzes how Alice's clothing appeared in books, stage performances, early movies, and at home. The book examines how Alice became a significant cultural and fashion icon, along with how Alice's image contributed to evolving notions of femininity. Vaclavik concludes that Alice is more than just a character in a children's book and she takes on a life of her own within fashion history. This text is a thoroughly researched exploration of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its intersection with fashion, making it an excellent starting point for this historiography.

Vaclavik begins with background history on Carroll, including his artistic interests and aesthetic sense. Recognizing that fashion was important to Carroll, Vaclavik notes that Carroll was aware of the clothing choices worn by others in his life, and often wrote about and requested garments for his subjects to be featured in his photographic pursuits, such as shawls and dresses from non-western areas.<sup>7</sup> The clothing that appeared in his artistic works strongly mattered to him.

This attention to fashion in Carroll's works is closely linked to his relationship with young girls, as their clothing choices often served as inspiration for his creative musings. Through this, Vaclavik does not shy away from addressing the more uncomfortable aspects of Carroll's personal life, particularly his relationship with these

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<sup>7</sup> Kiera Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice: The Career of Lewis Carroll's Icon, 1860-1901* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 18-19.

young girls, which has been the subject of much scholarly debate. In *Fashioning Alice*, she acknowledges the tensions between Carroll's seemingly innocent, lighthearted writing and the darker undertones between his artistic work and his private life, stating that "today, such taste in children's clothes which reveal more flesh than ordinary dress or which are a flimsy, final layer is at best odd, and at worst, downright sinister."<sup>8</sup> While the book does not deeply explore these issues, Vaclavik's inclusion of them underscores the complex intersection of Carroll's creative expression and the societal norms of his time, urging readers to reflect critically on how these aspects may have influenced both the characters and their vestimentary representations. Vaclavik's analysis of Carroll's relationship with young girls is notably restrained, avoiding any outright accusations. However, scholar Daniel Pool is not quite as muted on the topic, referring to the blight of Evangelicalism as a source of "dreary asexuality of the Victorian era."<sup>9</sup> Additionally, he notes the role fashion played in this: "Layers upon layers of shape-concealing petticoats and crinolines had been imposed on the female body, and men adopted heavy materials and shapeless trousers in lieu of the previously form-fitting tights. An anaphrodisiac black became the basic color of all male garments, and Evangelicalism had helped to make sexual pleasure and activity seem wicked and base"<sup>10</sup> Unlike Vaclavik, Pool does not shy away from strong wording and accusations, boldly confronting the controversial aspect of Carroll's personal life. Referring to the religious influence and programming, he notes, "In some cases the emotional warping was complete. Lewis Carroll—his father a prominent clergyman—never married and acquired a passion for soliciting the friendship

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<sup>8</sup> Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice*, 25.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel Pool, *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist - the Facts of Daily Life in 19th-Century England* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), 187.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

of little girls whose nude photographs he sometimes took, generally dropping all acquaintance with them when they reached puberty.”<sup>11</sup>

Vaclavik also explores the notion that Carroll had a deep concern with the rapid passage of time and the swift maturation of children, a theme that is evident throughout *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. She argues that Carroll, in his portrayal of Alice’s constant transformations, which are both physical and emotional, was reflecting his own anxieties about the fleeting nature of childhood.<sup>12</sup> This is particularly evident in his descriptions of Alice’s changing size, which can be interpreted as a metaphor for the premature loss of innocence and the inevitability of growing up. Alice’s constant size changes can be interpreted through a Freudian lens as a representation of tumescence, reflecting the psychological tension between innocence and the onset of sexual awareness. Her fluctuating body size may symbolize the complexities of sexual maturation, mirroring the instability and uncertainty of childhood transitioning into adolescence. Carroll’s fixation on youth, coupled with his desire to preserve the purity and wonder of childhood, is further mirrored in the static, somewhat frozen image of Alice, who, despite her adventures, never truly seems to grow up. Vaclavik connects this obsession with the idea that Carroll, perhaps unconsciously, sought to keep children from maturing too quickly, and through the fantastical worlds he created, attempted to hold onto the fleeting nature of childhood innocence. This is an idea that is subtly reflected in the clothing choices of his characters. Additionally, Vaclavik categorizes this behavior as manipulative and overbearing, as he objectifies children for the purposes of making pretty pictures.<sup>13</sup> Alice’s attire, in this context, becomes a symbol not just of a particular

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11 Pool.

12 This notion takes a much darker tone when considering comments such as Pool’s.

13 Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice*, 26.

time period, but also of Carroll's desire to preserve the innocence of youth before it is overtaken by the pressure of adulthood.

This concept is also explored by English Literature expert Catherine Spooner, classifying *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as "whimsical macabre." Spooner refers to *Alice* as "an instrumental text in the development of the whimsical macabre."<sup>14</sup> Spooner adds, "Its Victorian readers considered *Alice* to be purely whimsical, a comical and playful fantasia. In the light of psycho-sexual reading from the 1930s onwards, and increasing suspicion towards Carroll's devotion to pre-adolescent girls, it has been interpreted in a darker light."<sup>15</sup> By relabeling classic stories into an entirely different category, there are other associations that shift as well. Spooner also refers to the "resistance to conventional ways of being a girl by, among other things, wearing black clothes."<sup>16</sup> Spooner continues, defining 'whimsical macabre' as being aligned with "monstrous/cute."<sup>17</sup> She adds, "the whimsical macabre deliberately fuses the cute, fanciful and quirky with the gloomy, gruesome and morbid."<sup>18</sup> By taking a children's tale that was historically seen in one manner, this shift can change additional associated elements, including fashion. When Victorian children's texts took on darker tones, Alice's clothing choices would change as well.

Returning to Vaclavik, her analysis also brings up one very important aspect of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In the text, he does not provide a detailed or overtly descriptive account of Alice's clothing, a noticeable omission given the

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14 Catherine Spooner, *Post-Millennial Gothic: Comedy, Romance and the Rise of Happy Gothic* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 104.

15 Ibid., 104.

16 Ibid., 102.

17 Ibid., 104.

18 Ibid.

prominent role clothing plays. Instead, the story mainly references a few key features, such as the pocket on Alice's dress, which is mentioned when she uses it to store a key that she finds, and the unkempt state of her hair, which highlights her disheveled appearance during the chaotic adventures. This lack of detailed garment descriptions puts a bigger focus on her personality. Carroll was also very well aware during this writing process that his words would always be accompanied by illustrations, so detailed depictions of dress were not necessary.<sup>19</sup>

*Fashioning Alice* also discusses the working relationship between Carroll and Tenniel. Vaclavik studies surviving letters between the two men<sup>20</sup> and concludes that these letters do not discuss Alice's appearance,<sup>21</sup> but it is presumed that the exchanges between the author and illustrator must have been extensive.<sup>22</sup> Vaclavik notes that the working relationships between Carroll and illustrators in his later works conveys a more confident sense of power, as his experience allowed him to be insistent and precise.<sup>23</sup> As a result, it is unclear how much of Tenniel's illustrations from the 1865 version are inspired by either Carroll or Tenniel. Vaclavik states that Carroll "might have felt less confident in insisting on his personal vision. The truth is, we don't know."<sup>24</sup>

Vaclavik expands on this collaboration between Carroll and Tenniel:

Very little is, however, known for sure about the specifics of the *Wonderland* collaboration. A list of illustrations was drawn up by Carroll but critics disagree as to whether author or illustrator chose which parts of the text would be

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<sup>19</sup> Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice*, 28.

<sup>20</sup> Vaclavik referred to the book, *Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass: A Publishing History*, edited by Jaques and Giddens from 2013. More analysis of this text will be provided later in this historiography.

<sup>21</sup> Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice*, 37.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

illustrated. Surviving preparatory materials mean that we know that the changes were made to some of the *Wonderland* illustrations - none of which involves Alice - but the reasons for those changes are lost.<sup>25</sup>

It remains unclear whether it was Carroll or Tenniel who ultimately provided visual direction for the illustrations from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

In the original *Alice's Adventures Underground*<sup>26</sup> version from 1864, written and illustrated by Carroll himself, Alice's appearance is quite different from Tenniel's later drawings. Vaclavik notes, "In the twenty-five images of this first concretized Alice, her hair is long, and at times, very dark. She wears simple dark shoes and a full-skirted, short-sleeved dress - or perhaps a full skirt and blouse."<sup>27</sup> Vaclavik also includes close up images from this earlier publication version, noting a pronounced square neckline<sup>28</sup> and vertical pleats on the bodice. She continues the comparison of Carroll's drawings of Alice herself, noting that there is a wide range of clothing depicted, and "very considerable variation...exists between illustrations."<sup>29</sup> Ultimately, Vaclavik concludes:

Yet the overall uniformity of short sleeves and full skirt suggests that Carroll was at least aiming for consistency even if he didn't achieve it. Given his general interest in dress, it seems unlikely that such variations denote disregard, especially given the amount of time he devoted to the images. That question of time may be a factor: it took two years to complete, perhaps on separate sheets of paper. It is possible that he forgot how he'd drawn the dress in other images (and as fashions changed, although this probably affected him less). The most likely explanation is that his draughtsmanship at this stage of his life, with many years of sketching practice still ahead, simply let him down. Whatever the cause, the variations set a

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25 Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice*, 37.

26 *Alice's Adventures Underground* is the original manuscript version of what would later become *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. It was a much shorter, more rudimentary draft of the story handwritten and illustrated by Carroll himself, with simple, sketchy illustrations. Only a few copies were made.

27 Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice*, 32.

28 *Ibid.*, 34.

29 *Ibid.*, 37.

trend of discontinuity which will be seen in several subsequent editions of *Wonderland* and is very much in line with the multiplicity of the oral version.<sup>30</sup>

This declaration by Vaclavik offers another valid point of research. The shifting and inconsistent nature of Alice's attire offers a compelling lens through which to examine her character. Despite these variations, however, there remains an underlying consistency in her wardrobe that functions as a recognizable essence of Alice that persists throughout the various transformations.

Vaclavik makes another very interesting conclusion. She writes, "What she does not wear is equally interesting. Despite the outdoor setting, Alice wears neither coat nor gloves, nor hat, the latter two items worn by respectable real-life girls irrespective of season."<sup>31</sup> Additionally, this falls in line with pre-Raphaelite style of dress: "Carroll's taste in 'natural' dress and hair, and the absence of outdoor accoutrements is also in line with this. Several critics have identified a strong pre-Raphaelite influence in the manuscript Alice, and the relative simplicity of dress and looseness of the sleeves does conform to a certain taste for artistic/aesthetic dress."<sup>32</sup>

Additionally, the issue of Alice's age is explored by Vaclavik. This perspective underscores how Carroll drew inspiration from his affection for a real child, Alice Pleasance Liddell, the daughter of Henry Liddell, the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, where Carroll worked as a mathematics lecturer. The story originated from a tale Carroll told Alice and her sisters during a boat trip on the Thames in 1862. Alice is believed to have asked him to write it down, resulting in the manuscript *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, which was later expanded and published as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in

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<sup>30</sup> Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice.*, 35.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

1865. Scholars debate the extent to which Liddell's personality and appearance influenced the fictional Alice, though Carroll's diary and correspondence indicate she was a significant muse for the story, crafting a story that uniquely celebrated the experience of childhood. Through this, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* can be seen as more than just an eccentric tale; it became a narrative that both cherished and questioned the complexities of youth. Yet illustrative representations leave her exact age unclear, inviting further exploration into her wardrobe as helping to define her age. Vaclavik states,

A series of sartorial cues meant that nineteenth-century readers would have had no doubt as to whether Alice was child, adult or something in between. Thanks to the exact way in which she was styled and dressed, the Victorians would have known that Alice was indeed a little girl... There is, as we have seen, the apron which positions her in the realm of early childhood. The shortness of her sleeves, length of her skirt and the style of her hair (or lack thereof) are also signs of her youth. One of the principal demarcations between children's and adult's dress, dating from the 1780-1820 period, was skirt length. As a child grew up, her skirts were let down. This was a closely controlled and precise procedure with traces apparent in surviving garments. The lines on the edge of Alice's skirt may not be purely decorative (or decorative at all) but practical allowance for future letting down.<sup>33</sup>

Distinct details in a dress can provide key clues that help define the age of the child who wears it by reflecting upon trends in fashion and societal expectations of different stages of childhood.

Vaclavik continues to explore the changes made to Alice's appearances, focusing on the illustrations within the book's sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass: And What Alice Found There*, published in 1871. This sequel includes illustrations drawn again by Tenniel. As this dissertation only deals with illustrations found within varying publications of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and not any sequels or subsequent

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<sup>33</sup> Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice*, 45.

mediums, Vaclavik's research dives deeper in a different direction than my own research. Vaclavik also includes examples of other Victorian-era illustrations featuring little girls who are clearly inspired by Tenniel's Alice, highlighting the broader cultural impact of Carroll's character and visual style during the period.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, Vaclavik makes a strong assertion, which serves as a working hypothesis for her research. She notes that over time, some elements of Alice's clothing remain the same while others have obvious changes: "The basic components of what was clearly still a popular style have evolved... Crinoline fashion had fallen from favour by 1868, with the focal point of an outfit becoming centered on the back from the waist downwards. Girls' dress of 1871 had become considerably more elaborate than before, a development easily traced by comparing a single article such as a headband: where those of 1865 were plain, their later equivalents were invariably accompanied by a bow or other form of ornamentation. By restyling Alice, Tenniel therefore succeeds in providing what we might now refer to as 'brand Alice' continuity: he forges a clear connection with the character of the earlier work, while simultaneously keeping her up to date and – as before - standard, ordinary, unremarkable. This is crucial."<sup>35</sup>

This statement moves her research forward. By retaining key elements of Alice's character, such as her hair, curious personality, and association with a dress worn with a white pinafore across various adaptations and time periods, Alice functions almost as a cultural 'brand' who is instantly recognizable yet adaptable to changing tastes and societal norms. This balance of consistency and flexibility allows her to remain familiar to audiences, while also evolving in response to contemporary concerns and aesthetic preferences. As cultural contexts shift, Alice's attire and presentation can be reinterpreted

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<sup>34</sup> Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice* 59-63.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-62.

to reflect the values, gender roles, and social dynamics of different eras, making her both a timeless and ever-changing symbol. As the author suggests, this dynamic interplay between tradition and transformation helps keep Alice's character relevant, allowing her to resonate with new generations while still maintaining a connection to her Victorian origins.

Vaclavik's final two chapters in *Fashioning Alice* include an analysis of drawings of Alice done by other artists, and dressing as Alice, respectively. Chapter 3 provides commentary on Alice's image when used as branding for items such as sheet music, biscuit advertisements, spices and coffee cards, additions to poems, and other artwork. Chapter 4 analyzes costuming for children along with theatrical productions of the story. While these chapters offer valuable insights on how Alice's character has been visually represented in various cultural contexts, it is not entirely relevant to the central focus of my dissertation. In contrast, Vaclavik's first two chapters provided important pertinent material, offering a closer examination of the character's literary representation and an exploration of her dress and identity.

Overall, Vaclavik's work is pivotal for understanding the evolving portrayals of *Alice* across different adaptations and cultural contexts. She provides a framework for interpreting the varying versions of *Alice*, underscoring how costume design reflects shifts in social norms, artistic vision, and the broader cultural landscape across decades.

Additionally, while Vaclavik's *Fashioning Alice* offers a crucial and insightful analysis of the cultural and symbolic meanings of clothing in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* up until 1901, its scope remains limited by its historical endpoint. The research primarily focuses on early Victorian-era representations and the ways in which fashion in the late nineteenth century guided the depiction of Alice and the other

characters. This makes Vaclavik's work an essential starting point for understanding how dress shapes the narrative in the context of the period in which Carroll's work was originally published. However, as the book stops at the turn of the twentieth century, it does not address the significant developments in the portrayal of Alice's wardrobe in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Contemporary interpretations of Alice's character have introduced new layers of meaning and increasingly diverse depictions of clothing that reflect modern concerns with gender and cultural hybridity. As such, while Vaclavik's analysis lays an important foundation, further research is necessary to explore how these evolving clothing choices continue to shape and be shaped by the *Alice* narrative in more recent times.

Other texts that focus on clothing are also crucial to understand the broader cultural and historical context of the story. The Fashion Institute of Technology hosted the exhibit *Fairy Tale Fashion* in 2016, curated by Colleen Hill, focusing on the gritty fantasy tales by Perrault, Anderson, and the Brothers Grimm, rather than the brightly colored confections produced by Disney. In conjunction with this exhibit, the publication *Fairy Tale Fashion*, with essays from contributing fashion historians, explores how fairy tales have influenced fashion design throughout history, from the eighteenth century to present times, by showcasing iconic garments inspired by fairy tale characters. *Fairy Tale Fashion* connects literary themes and visual storytelling, revealing how designers have used fairy tales to evoke themes of innocence, magic, romance, and mystery.

Again, Vaclavik is an important contributor to this topic, by writing an essay in *Fairy Tale Fashion*, once more studying Alice. Vaclavik describes the character as a "firm fashion favorite...[who]...graces the windows of high-end fashion stores, serves as an organizing principle in clothing roundups and fashion shoots, adorns anything from

sweatshirts to stilettos, and inspires entire collections by companies such as Liberty, Furla, and Marc Jacobs.”<sup>36</sup> Notably, Vaclavik focuses first on the portrayal of Alice’s hair rather than her clothing. Vaclavik argues that Alice’s hair holds a symbolic role in both fairy tales and Victorian culture.

Vaclavik first explores Carroll’s own hair style, noting that surviving photographs of the author show his hair was smooth and shiny, with a razor-edge side parting.<sup>37</sup> She adds, “the nature of his own hair, as well as his general interest in all things aesthetic, meant that Carroll was attentive to the ways in which other people’s hair was dressed.”<sup>38</sup> The characters within the story, Vaclavik points out, have various interactions with Alice’s hair, including “being held onto by the White Knight to prevent his falling off his horse, seized in both hands by the White Queen, and blown about by the leaf fanning of the two queens.”<sup>39</sup> The Mad Hatter also notes that her “hair wants cutting.”<sup>40</sup> The unkempt, flowing hair reflects the disconnect between childhood idealism and the disorienting adult world she encounters, and the untidiness of her hair was a style preferred by Carroll<sup>41</sup>.

Vaclavik explores again how Carroll’s text actually does not give a description about Alice’s hair or her appearance, as it was presumed that Carroll knew that story would be illustrated, and he did not need to include such details in his writing.<sup>42</sup> She

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36 Kiera Vaclavik, “Of Bands, Bows, and Brows: Hair, the Alice books, and the Emergence of a Style Icon,” in *Fairy Tale Fashion*, ed. Colleen Hill (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 253.

37 *Ibid.*, 254.

38 *Ibid.*, 255.

39 *Ibid.*, 256.

40 *Ibid.*

41 Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice*, 28.

42 Vaclavik, “Of Bands, Bows, and Brows: Hair, the Alice books, and the Emergence of a Style Icon,” 257.

refers to illustrations drawn by Carroll from the 1864 *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* manuscript, this time focusing on her hair, and noting how Alice has “long dark waves falling below the shoulder, with a very definite center parting from which the hair frames the face on both sides.”<sup>43</sup> Tenniel’s illustrations in the 1865 publication show Alice with hair swept back, and it is not until *Through the Looking Glass*, published on December 27, 1871, where a dark headband with a small bow adorned Alice’s head.<sup>44</sup> It is this version, the Alice with blonde hair pushed back and held in place by the headband, that becomes the signature version of Alice, which was fully confirmed in the 1890 *Nursery Alice* publication, being the first edition to feature the heroine with distinct blonde-colored hair.<sup>45</sup> Vaclavik notes that the real Alice Liddell had dark hair, styled in a bob with fringe, and was not necessarily neatly styled.<sup>46</sup> A colored version of Alice with long blonde hair, no fringe, and styled to be pushed back off of the face differs vastly from the physical appearance of Alice Liddell, the original inspiration and recipient of the Carroll’s manuscript. Vaclavik argues that Carroll’s limited treatment of hair and its characteristics are enough to distinguish Alice the fictional character from Alice Liddell, the actual child.<sup>47</sup> Vaclavik continues to compare illustrations of Alice and her hair color and styles from additional publications, such as Dutch editions from 1875 with a redhead Alice, and an 1890 version with a brunette.<sup>48</sup>

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43 Vaclavik, “Of Bands, Bows, and Brows: Hair, the Alice books, and the Emergence of a Style Icon,” 257.

44 Ibid., 258.

45 Ibid., 257.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid., 259.

Additionally, Vaclavik includes a concluding observation after studying subsequent versions of *Alice*. Once again, she summarizes as the girl's appearance in dress and hairstyle changed over time and strayed from Tenniel's original illustrations, it became apparent that "Alice was free to follow the fashions of the day."<sup>49</sup> This is a key interpretation, as it notes that varying elements of each culture are seen in the many variations of Alice's appearance. Although the book primarily focuses on fairy tale fashion in general, the discussion of Alice's hair highlights an important aspect of her identity and personal transformation.

In *Picturing the Woman-Child: Fashion, Feminism and the Female Gaze*, published in 2021, fashion historian Morna Laing studies the persistent portrayal of women as childlike figures in Western fashion media, despite the advancements of multiple waves of feminism. Focusing on the period from 1990 to 2015, Laing analyzes British fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, *i-D*, and *Lula, Girl of my Dreams*, tracing the evolution of childlike femininity and its cultural implications.

A significant portion of Laing's study examines the influence of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* on fashion imagery. She explores how the character of Alice, with her blend of innocence and curiosity, has been appropriated in fashion photography to evoke a sense of the 'woman-child.' The 'woman-child' term is a cultural and aesthetic archetype portraying women as blending childlike innocence and vulnerability with adult femininity and allure.<sup>50</sup> This appropriation often involves models styled to mirror Alice's iconic look, thereby invoking themes of nostalgia and fantasy. Laing discusses how such

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49 Vaclavik, , "Of Bands, Bows, and Brows: Hair, the Alice books, and the Emergence of a Style Icon," 260.

50 Morna Laing, *Picturing the Woman-Child: Fashion, Feminism and the Female Gaze* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021), 123.

representations can simultaneously challenge and reinforce traditional notions of femininity, depending on the context and execution of the imagery.

Laing also addresses the concept of the 'female gaze' in relation to these portrayals. The concept of the 'female-gaze' generally refers to a perspective in art, media, or storytelling that centers women's experiences, desires, and viewpoints, often challenging traditional representations shaped by the 'male gaze.' It emphasizes agency, subjectivity, and authenticity in portraying women, moving beyond objectification to explore their inner lives and complexities. By inviting contemporary women to comment on images of the 'woman-child,' she provides insights into how female viewers interpret and internalize these representations. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of whether such imagery empowers or objectifies, and how it resonates with women's personal experiences and perceptions of femininity.

Through her comprehensive analysis, Laing sheds light on the complex dynamics between fashion, feminism, and visual culture. She encourages readers to critically assess the imagery they consume and to consider the underlying messages about gender and identity. By focusing on the enduring motif of the 'woman-child', particularly through the lens of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Laing's work contributes to broader discussions about the representation of women in media and the ongoing negotiation of feminist ideals in contemporary society.

Authors such as Vaclavik and Laing focusing on fashion within *Alice* can see how Carroll's work influenced and was influenced by fashion over time. These explorations range from examining Victorian children's clothing to the reinterpretations of Alice's attire in later adaptations and cultural representations. They also explore how fashion plays a role in character development. While studying these works, scholars better

understand how fashion is both a reflection of the text's historical origins and a canvas for creative interpretation.

### Language Interpretation

In addition to the research on fashion, the publication history, and subsequent translation history, of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* emerged as a crucial area of scholarly interest in the late twentieth century. Since its first publication, the novel has been translated into over 170 languages, a phenomenon that sparked significant academic attention. Carroll's playful and nonsensical style of writing proved to be quite the challenge as it made its way into different languages and cultures. Scholars have explored how the story's puns, wordplay, and surreal humor posed particular challenges for translators, and how various translation strategies impacted the book's global reception. These resulting works show how the cultural perceptions of *Alice* have been shaped by these different cultural lenses.

In many instances, as the text was translated, it required creative solutions to keep the humor and wit of the original text while also making it relatable and meaningful in the new translation. Through this, it became apparent that some translations were more focused on the linguistic playfulness, while others wanted to keep thematic elements as a priority. The study of *Alice's* translations often brought about larger discussions of globalization, colonialism, and postcolonialism. Introducing Carroll's book to a variety of global audiences, particularly in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, raised questions on how *Alice* became localized. In some translations, aspects of British society such as class, gender roles, and colonial attitudes, may be adapted or reinterpreted to align with contemporary values or to resonate with local historical experiences. As such, academic texts frequently explored how these adaptations affect the political and cultural readings

of the text in different regions, contributing to a rich and ongoing conversation about *Alice's* global significance.

Warren Weaver, an American scientist, mathematician, and pioneer in the field of machine translation wrote *Alice in Many Tongues: The Translations of Alice in Wonderland*, published in 1964. Weaver begins his essay focusing on children, noting that despite differences between aspects such as culture, language, and skin color,<sup>51</sup> there is a universal childhood filled with elements of wonder, play, and humor. He then builds the rest of his essay on this, highlighting the universal appeal of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

Weaver includes anecdotes about the book's original translations into both French and German, including numerous passages from Carroll's personal correspondence on the matter. After discussing these initial translations, Weaver offers his own working definition of the term 'translation,' describing it as “anything you can't read if you can read only English,”<sup>52</sup> which includes “translations of abbreviated versions, editions in shorthand, and editions printed in Braille for the blind.”<sup>53</sup> The early instances of translations include the publications in French and German, along with Swedish, Italian, Dutch, Danish, and Russian, and Weaver refers to these as “the pioneering elite.”<sup>54</sup> While this designation emphasizes the role of these early European-language translations, it also reflects a Eurocentric framing of *Alice's* translation history. Weaver focuses mainly on publications of only *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and not the book's sequel, and

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51 Warren Weaver, *Alice in Many Tongues: The Translations of Alice in Wonderland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), 3.

52 *Ibid.*, 53.

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*, 54.

gives details and information regarding the timelines and circumstances of additional translations and publications.

Weaver's final chapter in his text deals with how *Alice* can be translated, noting how there are two separate types of translators. The first refers to a translator who works with the "contrasting and cultural"<sup>55</sup> beliefs, where "one should not necessarily expect to find any word-for-word substitution."<sup>56</sup> By contrast, the definition of the other category of translator according to Weaver is one who takes a scientific approach, where "questions of elegance are now quite irrelevant. Smoothness and even detailed grammatical accuracy are not very important."<sup>57</sup> Weaver considers these types of stylistic approaches to translating text, and decides:

In translating *Alice*, it is ideally desirable that there be preserved all the wonder and excitement and childish humor of the child's book—including, of course, the actual narrative of the adventures, which I suspect constitutes the main appeal to children—and equally desirable that there be preserved all the delicious charm, the unexpected twisted meaning, the bits of paradoxical wisdom, the logical sense and nonsense, of the adult book.<sup>58</sup>

Weaver's essay offers compelling insight into the history of translation for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, while considering the importance of finding the proper balance of culture and tone when translating such a text.

*Language and Lewis Carroll* by Robert D. Sutherland, published in 1970, studies the linguistics aspects of Carroll's works, especially the author's use of language, wordplay, and puns. This text highlights Carroll's mastery of language and how it is a critical component of his storytelling. Sutherland compares Carroll to other authors noted

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55 Weaver, 75.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid., 76.

for their linguistic play, notably William Shakespeare (1564-1616), Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), Thomas Hood (1799-1845), William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863), and Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), and notes, “Two separate aspects of Carroll’s play must be distinguished: first, his use of linguistic symbols are mere counters to be conjured with, or manipulated, without particular regard for their potential or established conventional significance; second, his exploitation of linguistic phenomena (and of the underlying theoretical principles) to create situational humor in his fiction and to provide commentary on the nature of language itself.”<sup>59</sup> Sutherland also introduces the concept of ‘word magic,’ as words “have the power to influence men’s minds by evoking emotional responses which often have no relation either to the thing which the word symbolizes, or to the informative connotations about the thing which the word conveys.”<sup>60</sup> He continues, explaining in detail:

In Carroll’s writing, word magic occurs frequently and seems to stem from two closely related yet distinctive causes. The first of these is the affective connotations which words may possess, the swarm of personal associations surrounding most words which may determine a given interpreter’s response both to the word and to the thing signified by it. Thus, word magic may arise because of the meanings which individual words hold for given interpreters. The second cause is men’s tendency to invest words with an autonomous existence and power of their own, to regard the word itself as some sort of magical token having supernatural powers over natural phenomena. Sometimes the effective force of such words lies in the meanings they embody, but not always. Words can have affective force by virtue of their sound alone. Carroll’s characters often delight in uttering words which are unusual or exceptionally long; and much of their fascination which such words hold for them lies in their sound, and not in their sense.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Robert D. Sutherland, *Language and Lewis Carroll* (The Hague: Mouton, 1970), 21.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

Carroll also employs additional aspects of wordplay in his work, and Sutherland mentions his recurring usage of linguistic play such as anagrams, cryptograms, acrostic verses,<sup>62</sup> and other word games.<sup>63</sup>

Sutherland explores Carroll's ability to manipulate language, and concludes that by bending language to his will, Carroll transforms ordinary words into something unexpected. As Sutherland studied Carroll's work through its innovative use of the English language, this also reveals the unique challenges when translating the text into other languages where such nuances may not have direct equivalents.

*Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass: A Publishing History* by Zoe Jaques and Eugene Giddens from 2013, explores the many different iterations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* published over time. This book offers an exhaustive analysis and stands as a foundational work on the topic. Jaques and Giddens expertly examine these numerous publications, and note how they evolved. The editors focus on the circumstances and challenges faced by Carroll that appeared with the initial reception of the work, and include published feedback in the press regarding Carroll's work. For example, they note how the *Reader* refers to the story as "a glorious artistic treasure...sure to be run after as one of the most popular works of its class"<sup>64</sup> on November 18, 1865, while the *Guardian* on December 13, 1865 noted, "the

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62 Sutherland notes how Carroll's acrostic verses prefaced his books as dedications (page 23). This is also mentioned by David Crystal in the book, *Language Play*, published by Penguin Books Ltd. in 1998. Crystal notes, "Carroll wrote many acrostic puzzles and several times introduced them into his poetry. At the end of *Through the Looking-Glass*, he uses an acrostic to dedicate a poem to Alice Pleasance Liddell...telling of the day it all started" (page 58). The poem begins: "A boat, beneath a sunny sky," referring to stories told during boat trips along the Thames River, where the story of a girl falling down a rabbit hole into a strange world originated. This interestingly ties together Carroll's passion for inventive wordplay with his deep admiration for Alice Liddell, illustrating how both his literary creativity and personal affection inspired his work on many levels.

63 Sutherland, 23.

64 Zoe Jaques and Eugene Giddens, *Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and Through the Looking-Glass: A Publishing History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 34.

illustrations, by Tenniel, are, if anything, still better than the story.”<sup>65</sup> There were other publications that also favored the drawings, such as the *Illustrated London News* of December 16, 1865: “the pleasant volume contains forty-two illustrations due to the practiced pencil of John Tenniel, and that fact should of itself be a strong recommendation,”<sup>66</sup> as cited by Jaques and Giddens. They further conclude that: “Carroll clearly made a very canny move in securing Tenniel to illustrate this book, not least because none of the reviewers, with the possible exception of *Aunt Judy’s Magazine*,<sup>67</sup> have any idea who Lewis Carroll might be, whereas Tenniel could be received as an established name.”<sup>68</sup> As a result, it is shown through examples how the illustrations that appeared alongside Carroll’s words held great importance to the overall success of the book. This helps set that tone that studying illustrations even today unveils deeper layers of meaning, symbolism, and artistic evolution that continue to enhance our understanding of the story.

Jaques and Giddens also touch upon the beginnings of *Alice* as a merchandised brand, as “Charles Manners of Messrs Barringer, Wallis, and Manners, Tin Plate Decorators and Manufacturers of Decorated Enamelled Tin Boxes,”<sup>69</sup> wanted to make a tin biscuit box for children depicting scenes from the story around 1891. Although these tins ultimately appeared on grocers' shelves, Jaques and Giddens provide a detailed account of Carroll's reaction to the project, noting he was perplexed by the undertaking

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65 Jaques and Giddens, 35.

66 Ibid.

67 The editors note that the editor of *Aunt Judy’s Magazine* was Margaret Gatty, a friend of Carroll’s, on page 34.

68 Jaques and Giddens, 35.

69 Ibid., 83.

and distressed by the use of his name and the associated *Alice* imagery.<sup>70</sup> Yet, the biscuit tins began the merchandising practice of *Alice*. Jaques and Giddens include:

The 1880s and 1890s saw the production of several other *Alice* products, although none seem to have vexed or preoccupied Carroll as much as the...tins. In January of 1892, Carroll wrote to the original Alice Liddell (now married and taking the name Hargreaves) regarding a friend in the ivory-carving business who had carved a selection of umbrella and parasol handles to represent characters from *Wonderland* and *Looking-Glass*. Carroll is fairly critical of the product range in general.<sup>71</sup>

Here is an interesting association with both *Alice* and the world of fashionable accessories, linking the story's cultural impact within both literature and popular culture. This connection shows how these elements are all intertwined.

Jaques and Giddens also explore the shift from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* from an English publication to a global text. They note, "It would be difficult to determine when the idea of expanding into foreign markets by translating *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* first struck Carroll; perhaps it was always a part of his grand plan to spread the book across various imprints, just as he transformed an initial boating story into a published volume, or maybe such multiple versions emerged only at the suggestion of friends and advisers and through the random epiphanies of their author."<sup>72</sup> Carroll then took on the project with absolute sincerity, as "his determination to see the work properly done was absolute."<sup>73</sup> One of the first languages considered for translation was French, and the editors here referred to the confusing emotions surrounding Carroll and the biscuit tins, as two days after deciding French children needed this sort of book

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70 .Jaques and Giddens, 83-89.

71 Ibid., 89.

72 Ibid., 107.

73 Ibid.

over other countries, he decided his text also needed to be translated into German.<sup>74</sup>

Immediately, Carroll understood the scope of translating, as he wanted experienced translators for fear “the parodies would be unintelligible”<sup>75</sup> if produced by novices.

Jaques and Giddens continue to retell how Carroll’s book made its way to other countries in other languages, including Carroll’s thoughts along the way. They note, “Carroll was keen to see *Alice* assert her place in foreign markets. Whilst he might initially have suggested that the purpose was to bring a ‘well illustrated book’ to a needy French populace, he equally found his translated editions to have a value for English children, and he frequently sent copies of the French and German texts to his child friends to assist them with their language learning.”<sup>76</sup> This examination by Jaques and Giddens is essential to understanding its historical significance, marking the beginning of a global phenomenon that would eventually see the book translated into many more languages, further cementing its universal appeal and enduring legacy.

Another topic that receives much attention from Jaques and Giddens is viewing illustrations produced by the many artists for the different versions of the book, while applying analysis and comparison to the original drawings created by Tenniel for the original 1865 publication. These observations explain how the other artists’ differing interpretations of the characters influenced how readers perceived the story. This exploration of similar, yet different illustrations reveal the cultural impact of each publication, and show their lasting significance. Overall, this text serves as a comprehensive resource for understanding the unique and lengthy publishing history of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, along with its significance in literary history.

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74 Jaques and Giddens, 107.

75 Ibid.

76 Ibid., 111.

*Alice in a World of Wonderlands: Translations of Lewis Carroll's Masterpiece*, edited by Jon A. Lindseth and Alan Tannenbaum<sup>77</sup> and published in 2015, is a multi-volume publication investigating the book's translations, examining the global impact and cultural significance of Carroll's classic story. The first volume features general essays and language-specific analyses. The second volume includes comparative studies where a portion of Chapter VII, "A Mad Tea-Party," is translated back into English from various languages. This study was done as side-by-side comparisons of translations, highlighting the variations in interpretation, and how Carroll's apparent original intent was either preserved or lost in translation. This second volume is truly fascinating, as examining the same through multiple translations unveils unique insights into each culture, making the study of all of these versions collectively an enlightening experience. The third and last volume offers an extensive checklist of over 9,000 editions across 174 languages, documenting the publication history of both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and its sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass*.

One noteworthy essay within the collection by Lindseth is "Alice and Global Bibliography: Reading the Whole Book," by Michael F. Suarez. This piece offers an exploration of the interconnectedness of literature and global bibliographic traditions. Suarez refers to the global publication of *Alice* in multiple languages, and how it offers valuable lessons in the cross-cultural exchange of literature. He notes, "the multiple instances of Alice across the globe—from China to Peru—can provide lessons, unprecedented in their comprehensiveness, about the ways that material forms produce culturally instantiated meanings."<sup>78</sup> He then compares Alice's success to that of *Don Quixote*, which similarly achieved widespread acclaim through its global reach, 250 years

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<sup>77</sup> *Alice in a World of Wonderlands: Translations of Lewis Carroll's Masterpiece*, eds. Jon A. Lindseth and Alan Tannenbaum (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2015).

prior to the publication of Carroll's story. This widespread publication of *Alice* across diverse languages not only broadens its audience, but also enriches the work with a beautiful array of diverse elements, reflecting the unique interpretations and cultural nuances brought forth in each translation. Suarez observes that *Don Quixote* was once described as a work that "there will be no nation or language that will not have its own,"<sup>79</sup> yet in reality, other than the *Bible*, that distinction more aptly applies to *Alice*.

Suarez closes with the following:

Over and above the virtues of haptic knowledge and closely reading the whole book, we must also work to develop more thoroughgoing understandings of bibliographic systems—with consumption, and reception of texts. Translation studies now recognize that the act of translation is not merely a straightforward transaction between two languages, the source and the target. Similarly, global bibliography seeks to deliver us from a narrow understanding of the work and its cross-cultural significance that is heedless of the ways in which the material forms of the book are inescapable aspects of the production and transmission of culturally situated meanings.<sup>80</sup>

This encapsulates Suarez's work on translation and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, highlighting how the varied translations of a text offer a great revelation about their cultures that shape them.

Overall, these three volumes show how *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is an adaptable text that has the ability to resonate with readers with vastly different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

English language and literature scholar Sandra Ivanovska published the 2015 article, "Puns in *Alice in Wonderland* and their Equivalents in Macedonian" in the

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78 Michael F. Suarez, "Alice and Global Bibliography: Reading the Whole Book," in *Alice in a World of Wonderlands: Translations of Lewis Carroll's Masterpiece*, eds. Jon A. Lindseth and Alan Tannenbaum (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2015), 42.

79 Ibid., 42-43.

80 Ibid., 45.

*Journal of Contemporary Philosophy*.<sup>81</sup> Ivanovska examined how Macedonian translators approached the text, focusing on how the puns were translated, or not, and whether the included puns reflected the original text, were substituted with new puns, or were omitted in the translation process. Ivanovska reveals the delicate balance between preserving the humor and maintaining the original meaning, which often leads to adaptation or the replacement of puns with culturally relevant alternatives in the Macedonian version. She noted the challenges translators face in conveying Carroll's wordplay while ensuring the text remains engaging for the target audience.

In his 2017 article, "Alice in Wonderland: Translating to Read Across Africa," Russell H. Kaschula examines the translation of *Alice* into nine African languages. He analyzes the strategies employed by translators, focusing on linguistic and cultural adaptations. Kaschula also discusses how deviations from the original text create an African voice, noting the tensions between fidelity to the source text and the need to accommodate the target audience. One example of note utilized by Kaschula is the type of headwear worn by the Mad Hatter, who is categorized as rude, in the isiNdebele version, where a cap is chosen instead of a hat. Kaschula notes, "The cap is a more casual version of a hat which is regarded as somewhat disrespectful and can even be worn indoors... The use of a cap also reflects a younger, a more care-free voice."<sup>82</sup> Also, here is another example where a fashion accessory helps define a character.

In 2018, Mee Ryong Park wrote the article, "A Case Study of Russification in Two Translations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Vladimir Nabokov and Boris

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81 Sandra Ivanovska, "Puns in Alice in Wonderland and their Equivalentents in Macedonian," *Journal of Contemporary Philology* 3, no. 2 (2020), 99-119.

82 Russell H. Kaschula, "Alice in Wonderland: Translating to Read Across Africa," *Journal of African Cultural Studies* 29, no. 3 (September 2017): 285.

Zakhoder.”<sup>83</sup> The author examines how the two Russian translators adapted Carroll’s work for Russian audiences, by analyzing their translation strategies and focusing on the domestication of the text to align with Russian cultural norms and expectations. Park’s study highlights the translators’ techniques in making the English original more accessible and relatable to Russian readers, while reflecting broader trends in the translation of children’s literature. Park concludes Nabokov strives to thoroughly translate the meanings in wordplay and humor, while Zakhoder is interested in completing a direct translation while adding new elements to make it more relatable. This correlates with Weaver’s categorization of translators from 1964, stating how different approaches to translation result in varying translation results.

“Translating with the Child Image in Flux: The 1981 Chinese Translation of *Alice in Wonderland*,” by Xueyi Li from 2022 examines the evolution of the portrayal of children in Chinese translations of *Alice*. Li focuses on the 1981 Chinese translation, analyzing how the image of the child transformed over time and how this transformation ultimately influences the translation process. For instance, between the 1950s to 1970s, due to “political upheavals and the devastating Cultural Revolution,”<sup>84</sup> children were generally treated as adults without their own identities.<sup>85</sup> By the late 1970s, “social order to China gradually returned,”<sup>86</sup> and “in response, the belief that children were fundamentally different from adults began to circulate, to advocate a unique course of growth for children instead of a mere duplication of adult paths. As soon as this

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83 Mee Ryoung Park, “A Case Study of Russification in Two Translations of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by Vladimir Nabokov and Boris Zakhoder,” *Children’s Literature in Education* 49 (2018), 140-160.

84 Xueyi Li, “Translating with a Child Image in Flux: The 1981 Chinese Translation of *Alice in Wonderland*,” *Transition Quarterly*, 106 (December 2022): 5.

85 *Ibid.*

86 *Ibid.*

distinction between adults and children was acknowledged, the collective social imagination around children began to find expression in literature.”<sup>87</sup> This makes the 1981 Chinese version of *Alice* particularly relevant to Li's study as it was produced at such a critical moment in China's history. Li's research highlights the dynamic nature of the child image in Chinese literature and its impact on the interpretation and adaptation of Western literary works for Chinese audiences.

*Alice in Japanese Wonderlands* by Amanda Kennell and Allison Alexy<sup>88</sup> explores how Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass*, were reinterpreted and adapted in Japan from the Meiji era to the present day. The Meiji era refers to a period of dramatic transformation from 1868-1912, marking the end of Japan's feudal system and the beginning of its modernization and industrialization. This research studies how *Alice* has been interpreted, translated, and adapted within Japanese culture for over more than a century. The book, published in 2023, examines the cultural interplay that transformed *Alice* into a figure resonating with Japanese aesthetics, societal norms, and artistic traditions. Kennell and Alexy consider diverse adaptations across literature, art, anime, manga, fashion, film, and other media, highlighting how Japanese creators have infused the story with local elements while maintaining its universal appeal, while also reflecting evolving notions of identity, gender, and societal norms in Japan. Through this lens, the book offers insights into globalization, cultural exchange, and the enduring legacy of Carroll's work in shaping Japanese interpretations of fantasy and identity. Kennell and Alexy's research becomes a broader commentary on how stories cross cultural and linguistic boundaries, evolving in the process.

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<sup>87</sup> Li, 6.

<sup>88</sup> Amanda Kennell and Allison Alexy, *Alice in Japanese Wonderlands: Translation, Adaptation, Mediation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2023.

The extensive study of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* across many publications and various languages reveals the profound impact of translation on how the text is understood and appreciated worldwide. Each translation offers a unique interpretation, shaped by the cultural and linguistic nuances of its context, which in turn influences the way readers connect with the story. While much of this scholarship has focused on the translation of language, less attention has been given to the ways visual elements, particularly the depiction of clothing in illustrated editions, also participate in this process of cultural interpretation. However, these translations serve as windows into the values, humor, and imagination of different cultures, further enriching the legacy of Carroll's distinguished work.

### Illustrators

Beyond the playful narrative and unconventional characters of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the visual representation plays an equally significant role in shaping the story's legacy. Since its publication, numerous illustrators brought their own interpretations to the text, each contributing to the ways in which the story is understood, experienced, and appreciated. Salvatore Ciancitto, a researcher of English language, translation, and linguistics notes, "when a story for children is re-illustrated, the illustrators can decide to add or omit material, render certain themes more or less explicit, or condense sections into a single image in order to adapt the text to contemporary tastes and ideology."<sup>89</sup> The history of these illustrations sparked a wide range of academic discussions, focusing on how art reflects and interacts with literary themes, cultural contexts, and evolving societal values. Scholars explore not only the evolution of *Alice*

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89 Salvatore Ciancitto, "Illustrating Alice in Wonderland in the New Millennium: New Meanings for an Evergreen Children's Classic," *Translation Matters* 5, no 1. (Spring 2023), 70.

illustrations, but also the methods and influences behind the artistic choices made by illustrators across different periods and versions of the book.

In the historiography of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, academic texts have frequently considered the relationship between narrative and illustration, investigating how the visual elements of the text shape and often challenge the reader's engagement with Carroll's work. Early interpretations of *Alice* were heavily influenced by the original illustrations of Tenniel, whose images became synonymous with the book itself. However, as various artists took on the challenge of reimagining the world of Wonderland, their works sparked a variety of critical conversations. These conversations often explore the issues of cultural adaptations, postmodern reinterpretations, and even the ways in which different illustrators negotiate the boundaries between fantasy and reality. This portion of the historiography reveals how the dynamic interaction between text and illustration remains a vital aspect of *Alice's* enduring relevance and its ability to be continually reinterpreted across generations.

*The Illustrators of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass*, edited by Graham Ovenden and published in 1972,<sup>90</sup> offers a detailed exploration of the various artists who contributed illustrations to both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. The book examines the history of the artistic interpretations, starting with Tenniel and moving to more modern illustrators. Ovenden studies the artists' artistic styles, techniques, and cultural influences that shaped the different versions of *Alice*. The book includes reproductions of images from the different publications, showing how each illustrator brought their unique vision to the story. Ovenden also shows the evolution of the *Alice* books as visual experiences, showcasing

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90 Graham Ovenden, ed. *The Illustrators of Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1972).

how different time periods and societal contexts influenced the artistic depictions. While this straightforward method of comparing artwork is a useful method for analysis, there is a noticeable lack of academic discourse, leaving limitations regarding meanings and contextual significance in the images themselves. However, viewing the work from a fashion historical lens allows a clear comparison of the different garments worn by Alice and other characters. When comparing illustrations of the same scenes, changes in fashion trends, such as sleeve shape and length, location of the waist, skirt length, neckline style, fabric choices, and overall fit, become readily apparent. These differences reveal how illustrators adapt Alice's appearance to reflect the cultural and historical context in which each edition was produced.

The book is arranged by the chapters within the *Alice* books, and then includes illustrations from varying publications that appear within those specific chapters. Through this organization, it is easy to visually compare the stylistic choices of different artists showing the same scenes. The reader can then quickly analyze differences between drawings, such as line quality, shading and value, composition, bodily proportion, texture, and the overall emotional impact of the works. Overall, it is an early example of scholarly analysis studying the illustrative contributions to the legacy of *Alice*.

*Lewis Carroll and His World* by John Pudney,<sup>91</sup> a British author and poet, from 1976, is a pictorial biography offering an in-depth exploration of the life and works of Carroll, a visual journey through his life. Pudney's book gives some information on the relationship between Carroll and Tenniel, and even provides anecdotal stories regarding their working relationship. Such information is shown regarding the young model used for drawing Alice, and other inspirations for Tenniel's drawings of the *Alice* characters.

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<sup>91</sup> John Pudney, *Lewis Carroll and His World* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976).

For example, Pudney notes, “The little girl Mary Badcock was Carroll’s choice of model, accepted by Tenniel, but the features of the White Knight bear a remarkable resemblance to the illustrator’s own.”<sup>92</sup> With photographs of Badcock and Tenniel next to Tenniel’s illustrated versions of the White Knight and Alice, the resemblance is evident.

Once again, the appropriateness of Carroll’s relationships with young girls surfaced. Pudney states,

His first meeting with Alice Liddell, hit home in some way...He was in love. Alice was the first and greatest of these love affairs with maidens, unformed women, little girls of nursery age, creatures in whose presence he lost his stammer, smelled the breeze across the cornfields of Daresbury and found the reality of Wonderland. His love life was as simple as that. He adored the image substantiated first in Alice Liddell, then in a succession, sometimes a plurality, of other child friends.<sup>93</sup>

Pudney referred to Carroll's notable stammer, which affected him throughout his life. His speech impediment was something he struggled with from a young age, and it became a significant source of personal frustration. He did not enjoy social interactions, especially with people he did not know well. Despite impressive academic and literary achievements, he often found social interactions difficult due to his stammer. Perhaps his own speech patterns influenced the creation of some of his characters, such as the stuttering White Rabbit in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. Additionally, it is entirely possible for a person with a stammer to feel more comfortable talking with children rather than adults. Adults, especially in professional or social settings, may unconsciously make the stammerer feel more self-aware, making speech more challenging. In contrast, children are more accepting. This dynamic may have been why Carroll often found comfort in his interactions with children.

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92 Pudney, 77.

93 Ibid., 67-68.

Despite Pudney's concerning descriptive language regarding Carroll's behavior, Pudney continues: "Suggestions that he was a pervert or a 'dirty old man' using child photography to further his carnal desires are as absurd as the fashionable theories that he was an acid head who climbed into Wonderland by way of the Caterpillar's mushroom."<sup>94</sup> There is no definitive evidence to suggest that Carroll used drugs in the modern sense of recreational or illicit substances. However, Alice is often associated with the themes of altered states of consciousness, which led to speculation about his possible use of drugs, such as opium-based laudanum, a narcotic painkiller. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* displays many "drug induced transformations of mind and matter often associated with Carroll, his characters and our own experience as readers of Alice - and laudanum was also a tincture of opium supposedly used by Carroll to ease his painful arthritis."<sup>95</sup> As many others were turning to these medications to ease pain, it follows that Carroll could as well to alleviate his symptoms, given their ease of accessibility. In *Alice*, the caterpillar and Alice have a tense conversation with an exchange that consists of more unanswered questions rather than answers. As the two conversed, Carroll wrote, "At last the caterpillar took the hookah out of its mouth, and addressed her in a languid, sleepy voice."<sup>96</sup> His state and the obtuse conversation was convoluted due to his opium high. The caterpillar also offers Alice some mushrooms to change her size, but lets her figure out the effect of each mouthful on her own.

Pudney includes other elements of the working relationship between Carroll and Tenniel, such as the legacy created within Tenniel's drawings: "His greatest gift to

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94 Pudney, 69.

95 Penny Smith, "Alice at the Allport: Curious Arts and Magical Practices," *Ceramics: Art and Perception* no 69 (2007): 23.

96 Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (London, England: Macmillan Publishing, 1865 version), 37.

posterity was the illustrations immortalized in the two *Alice* books. The world has never seen a matching of word with drawing to equal the Carroll/Tenniel collaboration. For Tenniel it was the least agreeable task in his long life. He took on the first *Alice* book mainly because there were plenty of animals in it and he liked doing animals.”<sup>97</sup> Although the two men’s professional relationship ultimately proved to be highly successful, it was not without its challenges, as there were periods of discord and moments when they did not see eye to eye. Pudney recalls, “Carroll confided to another illustrator Harry Furniss, that out of the ninety-two drawings in *Wonderland* he had liked only one.”<sup>98</sup> Interestingly, elements of fashion and personal appearance began to surface in Carroll’s critiques of Tenniel’s illustrations. Pudney includes some of these notes in his text: “Examples of Carroll’s notes to Tenniel: ‘Don’t give Alice so much crinoline’, and ‘The White Knight must not have whiskers: he must not be made to look old.’”<sup>99</sup> Despite this, Pudney continues to study working relationships between Carroll and illustrators, noting: “Carroll’s ability to pick his illustrators was almost an extension of his own talent.”<sup>100</sup>

In 1993, Betty Cleaver and Barbara Erdman wrote “The Changing Images of Alice,” which investigates how Alice’s character shifted over time through different portrayals by illustrators. The authors studied eighteen different illustrators’ versions of *Alice*, published between 1865 and 1993.<sup>101</sup> They analyzed illustrations by artists such as Arthur Rackham, Bessie Gutmann, A.E. Jackson, Gwynned Hudson, and Ralph Steadman. Cleaver and Erdman also included the Pitjantjatjara version from southwestern

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97 Pudney, 74-76.

98 Ibid., 76.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid., 84.

101 Betty P. Cleaver and Barbara Erdman, “Changing Images of Alice,” *Visual Literacy in the Digital Age* (1993), 4.

Australia, titled *Alitji in Dreamland*, and illustrated by Donna Leslie in 1992. Here, they note Alitji is portrayed “as a naked Aboriginal girl who worries that being caught in Dreamland will prevent her from growing up and becoming a woman.”<sup>102</sup> They conclude “although the character of Alice has been presented differently, ranging from a Victorian good girl image to the contemporary heroine...much in fact has not changed from the first version of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*,”<sup>103</sup> with the exception of multicultural versions of *Alice*. They even include her clothing as part of that conclusion, stating that Alice “wears a short dress with a pinafore or wide sash,”<sup>104</sup> with the exception of two multicultural versions that were studied. They continue, “even very contemporary illustrators who show her as a complex and active girl dress her in an outfit which is more appropriate for a party than an outdoor adventure.”<sup>105</sup> Additionally, their judgment on other characters is worthy of note: “While the character of Alice has been interpreted differently, much of the setting of Tenniel’s illustrations remains, even with very contemporary artists.”<sup>106</sup> They refer to British historian F. J. Harvey Darton, who states, “no new illustrators have ‘invented a new Gryphon, or a new Mock Turtle, White Rabbit, March Hare, Hatter, Caterpillar, Cheshire Cat, Red queen, White Knight. These are essentially, and must always remain so, the creation of the first artist and of the author whose fantasy provided the vivid details.’”<sup>107</sup> While their study identifies a basic

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102 Cleaver and Erdman, 8.

103 *Ibid.*, 10.

104 *Ibid.*

105 *Ibid.*

106 *Ibid.*

107 F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children’s Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life*, 3rd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 258-59.

evolution of Alice's visual representation, the present dissertation examines a more expansive area, including additional characters and a larger span of publication history.

The text *Lewis Carroll & His Illustrators*, edited by Morton N. Cohen and Edward Wakeling and published in 2003,<sup>108</sup> is a scholarly exploration of the relationships between Carroll and the artists who provided illustrations for his books. Organized by illustrator, *Lewis Carroll & His Illustrators* includes a chapter on each of the following artists: John Tenniel, Henry Holiday, Arthur Burdett Frost, Harry Furniss, and Emily Gertrude Thomson, and includes illustrations for Carroll's works beyond *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Although multiple artists are included, the research primarily focuses on Tenniel. Carroll and Tenniel frequently corresponded with one another, and these letters display the suggested changes by Carroll to ensure Tenniel's artwork properly aligned with his overall vision. Each chapter contains the messages between artist and author, in chronological order, showing the changes that occurred over time. Some of these relationships were collaborative and helpful while others were strained, depending on the expectations and interpretations. All located letters on the subject are included in this publication; there are more than two hundred, and prior to this collective, only forty had previously been printed.<sup>109</sup> The letters also show how Carroll's interest in photography influenced his visual storytelling, along with his expectations of his artists. Together, the letters provide a rich context on Victorian Art, publishing practices, and the challenges faced in the era. Additionally, the resulting story and finalized images helped elevate the role of illustrations in children's literature.

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108 Morton Cohen and Edward Wakeling, eds. *Lewis Carroll & His Illustrators: Collaborations & Correspondence, 1865-1898* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

109 Ibid., xxxi.

As the text opens with Tenniel, editors Cohen and Wakeling tell a background story on how the two men came to work together. Both were described as “proper Victorian gentlemen of the old school—formal, obsessively private, conservative, uncompromising, correct in their behavior and in their dealings with others, restrained in manner—and both refrained from personal intimacies.”<sup>110</sup> On January 25, 1864, Carroll<sup>111</sup> called on Tenniel in London and asked him if he would be interested in drawing illustrations for a children’s book he was soon to publish. Carroll was unknown at the time, yet Tenniel reached fame for his work with *Punch*. His exaggerated political cartoons with a distinctive style and his “humorous flair attracted wide interest and gained him popularity.”<sup>112</sup>

Tenniel agreed to the project, and Carroll noted that Tenniel “seemed to think favourably of undertaking the pictures.”<sup>113</sup> Cohen and Wakeling add, “a good many letters must have passed between [Carroll] and Tenniel from then onward, but only few survive. Tenniel probably destroyed letters once he had dealt with their contents. Nonetheless, we have a record of how the collaboration progressed from [Carroll’s] diaries and from his correspondence with his publisher, Alexander Macmillan.”<sup>114</sup>

The editors then explore more drama that ensues between Carroll and Tenniel, including dates not met for the completion of project elements, along with a delay in Tenniel’s production of images. They also included Carroll’s unhappiness with the quality of images printed in the first edition of *Alice*, and more issues that arose during

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110 Cohen and Wakeling, 1.

111 Although editors Cohen and Wakeling referred to the author as “Dodgson,” for the sake of flow and continuity in this dissertation, the name “Carroll” will be used.

112 Cohen and Wakeling, 2.

113 Ibid., 3.

114 Ibid.

the creation process of the second reprint. Cohen and Wakeling offer thorough background and research on the relationship between Carroll and Tenniel, providing a well-rounded understanding of their professional relationship and personal dynamics.

The surviving letters also discuss completed illustrations, such as a letter dated March 8, 1865, from Tenniel, explaining how the illustration of ‘The Two Footmen,’ depicted as frogs in formal wear from the nineteenth-century, is a large illustration and would not be suitably placed at the beginning of the chapter.<sup>115</sup> Tenniel also refers to an illustration of the Mad Hatter asking the riddle, noting that it could be included within any textual mention of him asking a question and not limited to just the riddle.

There is one surviving letter from Carroll to Tenniel, which is interesting to note, and the editors state that “perhaps Tenniel discarded his incoming letters.”<sup>116</sup> Carroll was quite protective of his privacy and dual identity, as he was cautious about publicly connecting the two personas. The letter, dated April 18, 1872, states: “My dear Tenniel, Please get the writer of ‘*Punch*’s Essence of Parliament’ to make no further allusions to the name of the writer of *Alice*.”<sup>117</sup> A month earlier, a parody of “Jabberwocky” (with credit correctly given to Carroll) named “The Waggawock” appeared in *Punch*. It is after this instance that Carroll requests his name be kept out of the publication with association to *Alice*. All seems fine with the matter. Then, just to get a rise out of him, a *Punch* story, dated April 20, 1872, connects ‘Mr. Dodson’ with *Alice* and the previous mention of “Jabberwocky.” The similarity between the names ‘Dodgson’ and ‘Dodson’ is not a coincidence. The editors note how Carroll wrote to *Punch* requesting this error not be

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115 Cohen and Wakeling, 12.

116 Ibid., 17.

117 Ibid.

corrected. Carroll went to lengths to keep his authorship of the *Alice* books somewhat ambiguous, and Cohen and Wakeling reveal an amusing example of this in action.

In their work, editors Cohen and Wakeling display letters between Carroll and Tenniel, enriching the correspondence with anecdotal stories and insightful background that illuminate the context and significance of the events discussed. This all-inclusive text is a nice resource for understanding the artist and publication processes, but is not a study focusing on the fashion depicted in the illustrations.

Building on the comprehensive analysis presented by Cohen and Wakeling, *Alice's Wonderland: A Visual Journey Through Lewis Carroll's Mad, Mad World* by Catherine Nichols provides a similarly thorough exploration. Nichols' work examines the cultural, artistic, and literary legacy of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. Published in 2014, it serves as both a tribute to Carroll's timeless tales and a deep dive into the creative worlds they have inspired since their publication. Nichols explores the origins of Carroll's work, offering readers insights into his relationship with Alice Liddell, as well as the Victorian era's social and artistic context that shaped the books' creation.

The book is richly illustrated with a variety of visual materials, including classic illustrations by Tenniel and reinterpretations by artists such as Arthur Rackham and Salvador Dalí. Nichols also highlights modern adaptations in film, fashion, and graphic art, showcasing the enduring relevance of *Alice* in contemporary culture. From Walt Disney's (1901-1966) celebrated 1951 animated film to avant-garde fashion collections inspired by Wonderland's fanciful imagery, the book provides a sweeping view of how Carroll's stories have been re-imagined for different mediums and audiences.

Accompanying commentary contextualizes each adaptation within its historical and cultural moment.

In addition to its focus on visual art, Nichols' work touches upon the thematic elements that make Carroll's work so resonant, by examining the elements of logic, playful language, and the subversion of Victorian norms within *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. By contrast, this present study examines how clothing in illustrated editions visually communicates cultural context and interpretive shifts across different publications of the text.

Jessica W.H. Lim's article, "And What is the Use of a Book...Without Pictures or Conversations? The Text-Illustration Dynamic in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*," published by the *Children's Literature Review* in January 2021,<sup>118</sup> explores the interplay between text and illustration in Carroll's work. Overall, she argues that due to the world overrun by consumption, it is impossible for *Alice* to maintain innocence within the state of childhood. Lim investigates the symbiotic relationship between Carroll's narrative and Tenniel's original drawings, arguing that the two components are inseparable; together they create the full imaginative experience of Wonderland. She states that this happens as Tenniel's artwork enhances the text, shaping readers' perceptions in the process.

The article also highlights the significance of Tenniel's illustrations in grounding the fantastical elements of the story. Lim contends that while Carroll's prose invites readers into a nonsensical and fluid world, Tenniel's precise and detailed images provide a visual anchor. She notes how his application of characters such as the Cheshire Cat and the Queen of Hearts add layers of complexity, making their absurdity and menace more palpable.

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118 Jessica W. H. Lim, "And What Is the Use of a Book...Without Pictures or Conversations?: The Text-Illustration Dynamic in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*," *Children Literature Review* (January 1, 2021), 385-405.

Lim further discusses the broader implications of the text-illustration dynamic, particularly in the context of children's literature. She suggests that the interplay between text and image in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* set a precedent for the way stories are presented to young readers, emphasizing the importance of visual storytelling in engaging their imaginations. Additionally, Lim addresses how subsequent illustrators have navigated this dynamic, either building upon or challenging Tenniel's visual interpretations. For example, exploration of the White Rabbit occurs. Lim notes:

Tenniel and Carroll's illustrations of [the] opening scene highlight aspects of social expectations challenged by the narrative text, but Tenniel and Carroll emphasise different aspects of these challenges. Tenniel's half-clothed humanoid rabbit precedes the text, provoking questions about the boundaries between human and animal before the reader encounters the first sentence. Illustrated in the French tradition, Tenniel's rabbit is drawn with realistic shading and proportions. Although Gwen Vredevoogd states that Tenniel's illustrations emphasise whimsical qualities in Carroll's text...the use of the French tradition of half-clothed animals connotes satires...suggesting that there is a cultural, and not merely an aesthetic, statement in Tenniel's rabbit.<sup>119</sup>

Through her analysis, Lim underscores the enduring power of Carroll and Tenniel's collaboration, demonstrating how the fusion of text and illustration in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has contributed to its status as a timeless classic.

Lindsay Persohn's article, "The Metafictional Evolution of Wonderland Illustration," published in *Children's Literature in Education* in November 2021, examines how illustrations in various editions of Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* evolved to incorporate metafictional elements. Metafiction is defined as a style of storytelling that draws attention to itself as a story, making the reader aware that they are engaging with a work of fiction. It often breaks the fourth wall or includes characters and events that reflect on the act of writing or reading. Persohn, an expert in

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119 Lim, 388-389.

literary studies, explores how these visual interpretations not only complement the narrative but also add layers of meaning, encouraging readers to reflect on the nature of storytelling itself.

The article searches the progression of Wonderland illustrations, starting with Tenniel's depictions, which set a foundational visual language for the text. Persohn then analyzes subsequent illustrators who introduced metafictional techniques, thereby inviting readers to question the boundaries between fiction and reality.

In "A History of Literary and Graphic Adaptations and Appropriations of Alice," featured in *Alice in Wonderland in Film and Popular Culture* from 2022,<sup>120</sup> Victorian literature expert Antonio Sanna provides an examination of the myriad ways Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has been reinterpreted across literary and graphic mediums. Sanna's analysis suggests that Carroll's work continues to resonate across cultural and artistic boundaries.

The work examines the evolution of illustrations accompanying the *Alice* narrative, beginning with Tenniel's original engravings. He explores how subsequent illustrators have either adhered to or deviated from Tenniel's interpretations, each bringing a unique visual language that mirrors contemporary artistic trends and societal attitudes. This progression not only showcases the flexibility of Carroll's characters and settings but also reflects border shifts in visual storytelling techniques.

The work further examines how graphic adaptations, such as comic books and graphic novels, have re-imagined *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for new audiences. Sanna discusses the interplay between text and image in these formats. By analyzing

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120 Antonio Sanna, "A History of the Literary and Graphic Adaptations and Appropriations of Alice," *Alice in Wonderland in Film and Popular Culture* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 19-33.

specific examples, he illustrates how artists employed various styles, ranging from surrealism to modernism to capture Wonderland.

Sanna's exploration extends to the cultural appropriations of *Alice*, noting its adaptation within diverse themes and issues. He highlights instances where illustrators have infused the narrative with contemporary social commentary, ensuring its relevance, and speaking to the universal appeal of Carroll's creation. Through this thorough historiographical analysis, Sanna demonstrates that the illustrative history of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a testament to the story's dynamic legacy. Each visual reinterpretation not only pays homage to Carroll's original work but also contributes to an ongoing dialogue between the text and its readers, showing how it continually evolves. While Sanna considers these reinterpretations more broadly, the present study concentrates on the depiction of clothing in illustrated editions and how dress functions as a cultural marker within these reinterpretations.

The visual representations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* offer an essential layer of meaning that complements and enriches the narrative. Each new set of illustrations is more than just an artistic interpretation; it reflects changing tastes, cultural ideologies, and societal values. The study of academic texts on this subject matter highlights the dynamic relationship between text and image, illustrating how illustrators not only interpret but also actively influence the legacy of Carroll's work.

### Historiography Conclusion

In conclusion, the academic scholarship surrounding *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* expanded far beyond its original narrative, encompassing various critical approaches that examine its cultural, artistic, and linguistic transformations. The studies of illustrations deepened our understanding of how artists interpret and re-imagine

Wonderland, while the exploration of language translations illuminated the complexities of rendering Carroll's wordplay and wit into diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. Together, these areas of scholarship reveal the ongoing relevance of *Alice* and the ways in which it continues to evolve, inviting new generations of readers and scholars to engage with the text in fresh and innovative ways. However, these discussions, while rich and varied, left out one crucial aspect that could offer even deeper insights into the book's visual and cultural legacy: fashion history. Rather than focusing solely on garments themselves, fashion history examines how clothing communicates identity, status, and cultural values while using designers, silhouettes, and dress practices as evidence of broader social and historical dynamics.

The relationship between *Alice* and fashion history can be expanded upon. While much has been written about the early depictions of Alice's iconic dress<sup>121</sup> as illustrated by Tenniel and later artists, there is a noticeable gap in the scholarship when it comes to the evolving significance of clothing in subsequent interpretations of the book. Fashion, as both a historical and cultural marker, has the potential to reveal much more about the way *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* interacts with themes of identity, childhood, gender, and social class. The clothing worn by Alice and other characters, including but not limited to the Queen of Hearts, the Mad Hatter, or the White Rabbit, can reflect shifting societal attitudes, aesthetic movements, and even the commercialization of *Alice* in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Yet, most of the existing scholarship stops short of an in-depth analysis of how these fashion choices changed over time, leaving a rich vein of inquiry largely unexplored.

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121 Jaques and Giddens refer to the girl as "Alice in a blue dress is as ubiquitous a cultural landmark as Hamlet holding a skull," on page 214.

What is missing, then, is a more robust fashion historical study of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, one that moves beyond the book's initial illustrations and considers how the depiction of characters' clothing evolved in response to changing tastes, technologies, and cultural contexts. Such an inquiry offers new perspectives on how *Alice* has been reinterpreted through the lens of material culture. Additionally, it contributes to the broader scholarly conversation about how visual and textual elements interact within the framework of literary studies, offering a fuller, more integrated understanding of how *Alice* functions as both literary and cultural icon. This unexplored dimension of *Alice* scholarship invites future scholars to turn their attention to the fascinating intersection of fashion and the fantastical world of Wonderland, and in doing so, to deepen our appreciation of how this beloved tale continues to inspire and captivate across ages.

## CHARACTERS EXPLORED

Now that the historiography of fashion, publication and translation history, and illustrators of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has been thoroughly examined, the next phase of this dissertation will focus on the clothing worn by the characters within the story. Given the numerous figures featured in the illustrations and the wide variety of versions of the text that exist, it is not feasible to analyze the attire of every character across all publications. Therefore, this section will concentrate on a select group of characters whose costumes will be studied in detail. While not all of these characters will be explored in every publication, the following outlines the individuals whose clothing will be examined in the forthcoming analyses.

The characters associated with illustrative garments and stylistic representations worthy of note within various publications of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* include Alice, the White Rabbit, the Duchess, the King and Queen of Hearts, the Mock Turtle, the Gryphon, Cheshire Cat, Mad Hatter, and the Caterpillar. As such, the parameters for this dissertation are concerned with these clothed characters, rather than including all figures. Each of these characters will be described below in an introductory manner, highlighting their key characteristics and identifiable traits.

### Alice

Alice, the protagonist of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, is a young, curious girl who embarks on a journey in Wonderland after falling down a rabbit hole. There, she encounters eccentric characters, while she is shown as thoughtful, yet sometimes frustrated, as she becomes surrounded by so many unreasonable and incoherent occurrences.

It is important to note that there are practically no descriptions written by Carroll regarding the clothing of his characters, so associations between figures and garments stem from illustrations. In terms of attire, Alice is typically depicted wearing a simple dress with a pinafore over it, along with stockings and shoes. This instantly recognizable outfit has become synonymous with her character in various adaptations of the book, despite the lack of clothing detail in Carroll's novel.

Interestingly, Carroll mentions Alice carrying a thimble. This is an item associated with sewing, the fundamental process through which fabric is stitched together to create garments, and that item is a thimble. After the Caucus-race, Alice finds a box of comfits, a container filled with small, sweet confections such as candy or sugar-coated

nuts in her pocket, and distributes them as prizes. The Mouse then comments that she needs a prize for herself. The text continues: “‘Of course,’ the Dodo replied very gravely. ‘What else have you got in your pocket?’ he went on, turning to Alice. ‘Only a thimble,’ said Alice sadly.”<sup>122</sup>

In the Victorian era, sewing was an essential skill for girls, reflecting the broader social and domestic expectations placed upon women. Within many households, girls were introduced to needlework at a very young age as part of their early training in domestic responsibility. Judith Flanders notes that Victorian children could begin learning to sew as early as three years old, citing a surviving letter describing a child who “‘makes pretty good progress...I am glad of something that will occupy her,”<sup>123</sup> while also observing that such early instruction was not unusual during the period.<sup>124</sup> The expectation that girls would develop these skills from an early age reflected the importance placed on domestic labor and household management. Within this context, the inclusion of the thimble in Alice’s pocket subtly ties the story to these expectations surrounding sewing and women's domestic skills. At the same time, Alice's dissatisfaction with the thimble suggests a subtle resistance to these expectations, hinting at a moment where the character pushes against the traditional domestic roles prescribed for girls in Victorian society.

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122 Carroll, 25.

123 Judith Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 84.

124 Ibid.

## White Rabbit

The White Rabbit is one of the most memorable and important characters in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. He plays a key role in the entire plot, although he is not a main character in terms of dialogue but acts as the crucial guide and catalyst for Alice's journey down into the rabbit hole and subsequently Wonderland. As his hurried actions interest Alice, she falls while following him. He is both nervous and anxious, portraying a constant sense of urgency and worry. This is especially noted as he constantly looks at his pocket-watch and mutters statements about being late. Catherine Nichols remarks on an influential source for the rabbit and his behavior: "Notoriously late for his appointments, Dean Henry Liddell, the father of Alice and her siblings, is thought to be the inspiration for the ever-tardy White Rabbit."<sup>125</sup> His association with time connects him to one of the overall themes of the story, where time is fluid and unreliable. The White Rabbit's frantic behavior reiterates this.

Unlike Alice, the White Rabbit's garments are mentioned, and he is described as wearing a waistcoat: "but when the Rabbit actually took a watch out of its waistcoat-pocket, and looked at it, and then hurried on, Alice started to her feet, for it flashed across her mind that she had never before seen a rabbit with either a waistcoat-pocket, or a watch to take out of it, and burning with curiosity, she ran across the field after it, and fortunately was just in time to see it pop down a large rabbit-hole under the hedge."<sup>126</sup> The inclusion of his little waistcoat gives him a formal and dignified appearance. One can argue that the inclusion of clothing is what started Alice's entire journey, as this strange rabbit in a waistcoat begins the action, and simultaneously his garment becomes a key

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125 Catherine Nichols, *Alice's Wonderland: A Visual Journey through Lewis Carroll's Mad, Mad World* (New York: Race Point Publishing, 2014), 13.

126 Carroll, 12.

part of his character. This waistcoat is also a visible focal point in the various illustrations of him.

Throughout the rest of the story, the White Rabbit pops up in various places. For example, at the start of Chapter 4, he is frantically searching for his fan and gloves.<sup>127</sup> It is interesting that he is searching for these fashion accessories, as appearance and social conventions apparently take precedence in Wonderland. This is another representation of him as a flustered petite rabbit who is trying to maintain appearances, a subtle nod to the Victorian preoccupation with time, order, and efficiency. Alice's journey into Wonderland marks a departure from the structured Victorian world she knows, yet the fashionable clothing and accessories anchor the story to the time period in which it was written.

### Duchess

The Duchess is an odd and unpredictable character, first appearing in Chapter 6, titled "Pig and Pepper." Her role is relatively small yet memorable. The reader is already aware that the White Rabbit is fearful of her judgment upon the realization of the lost gloves and fan, and this fear is appropriate. She is both bad-tempered and irritable, depicted actively scolding or shouting at people, including the cook who throws items around the kitchen. There is another strange incident surrounding her baby, who she hands over to Alice. Upon this transfer, Alice comes to the realization that she is holding a pig, and not a human infant. The Duchess spits out absurd and comical statements, such

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<sup>127</sup> Carroll wrote: "The Duchess! The Duchess! Oh my dear paws! Oh my fur and whiskers! She'll get me executed, as sure as ferrets are ferrets! Where can I have dropped them, I wonder?" Alice guessed in a moment that it was looking for the fan and the pair of white kid gloves, and she very good-naturedly began hunting about for them," on page 29.

as “take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves,”<sup>128</sup> confusing Alice, and is far from motherly affection typically seen. She has a somewhat disconnected and farcical air to her, as though her status does not actually grant her any real wisdom or competence.

The Duchess’ clothing is often extravagant and imposing in style due to her title, but like other characters, the actual garments are never explicitly described by Carroll. Her clothing is likely designed to reflect her social standing as a figure of aristocracy or nobility.

### Cheshire Cat

The Cheshire Cat is mysterious and playfully cryptic, leaving a lasting impression upon readers, despite the fact that he is not a key player in terms of plot. Known for his mischievous nature, he provides Alice with perplexing guidance and absurd comments. He enjoys playing games with the young girl, and gives her answers that are more confusing than they are helpful, and his speech seems like he is making jokes at Alice’s expense. For example, Alice asks him which path to take, and then adds that she does not care where she goes. The Cheshire Cat responds with, “Then it doesn’t matter which way you go.”<sup>129</sup> This is not necessarily helpful to Alice who was looking for real directional advice. Author Stephanie Lovett Stoffel addresses this interaction, noting: “Lewis Carroll and the Cheshire Cat did not mean to reassure Alice that her amusing wanderings would result in her achieving something greater, but they do. Alice says that she doesn’t much care which way she walks. Therein lies the truth of her journey. The road goes ever on, in

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128 Carroll, 72.

129 Ibid., 52.

Tolkien's immortal words, and we all have faith deep in our bones that it will take us where we need to go, if only we keep walking long enough."<sup>130</sup>

One key element to the Cheshire Cat is that he has the ability to disappear and reappear. He fades out of sight, while his smile remains. He first appears as the Duchess' cat, as Alice asks, "Please would you tell me...why your cat grins like that?"<sup>131</sup> The Duchess replies that he is a Cheshire cat, and Alice then remarks, "I didn't know that Cheshire cats always grinned; in fact, I didn't know that cats could grin."<sup>132</sup> To this, the Duchess tells Alice, "You don't know much...and that's a fact."<sup>133</sup>

Although the Cheshire Cat does not often wear actual clothing, his presence in various publications of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* can give insight to the culture from which it was produced.

### Mad Hatter

The Mad Hatter is one of Wonderland's most famous and colorful characters, appearing in Chapter 7, titled "A Mad Tea-Party." Like many of the other characters, he operates on strange, nonsensical rules, and is completely out of touch with reality. Like the White Rabbit, he has an unnatural association with time, noting that while reciting a song to the Queen of Hearts, she cut him off by saying, "He's murdering the time! Off

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130 Stephanie Lovett Stoffel, *The Art of Alice in Wonderland* (New York: Smithmark Publishers, 1998), 33.

131 Carroll, 49.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid., 50.

with his head!”<sup>134</sup> and it then stopped for him. The Mad Hatter continues, “And ever since that...he won’t do a thing I ask! It’s always six o’clock now.”<sup>135</sup>

One defining clothing element associated with the Mad Hatter is his top hat. In Tenniel’s original illustrations, the hat features a price tag that states, “In this style 10/6,” referring to ten shillings and sixpence, which would have been very expensive for the average person in England in 1865.<sup>136</sup> Here, a relatively expensive fashionable accessory is used to add an element of satire to the story, poking fun at Victorian absurdities of class and status.

Yet, the inclusion of the hat is not just a fashion item for the Mad Hatter. In Victorian times, ‘mad hatter’ was a term associated with mercury poisoning, a common issue seen in hatmakers of the time during the mercury used in the hat-making process. In *Fashion Victims: The Pleasures and Perils of Dress in the 19th Century*, published in 2017, Alison Matthews David explores the complexities of fashion in the nineteenth century, highlighting the intersection of aesthetics, health, and social issues. One key theme includes health risks, delving into the dangers associated with fashion, such as the use of toxic dyes, constricting garments, and other materials that pose health risks to wearers.

David discusses mercurial hats. Originally, men’s top hats were made from beaver fur, which naturally felted easily. Over time, it was easier and cheaper to acquire other animal furs, yet mercury was necessary to achieve the proper conditions for shaping. The workers’ mercury exposure led to paranoia, suicidal thoughts, worrying and

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134 Carroll, 58.

135 Ibid., 59.

136 If the average worker made approximately £1-£2 per week, a hat of this cost would be equivalent to a few days’ worth of work. Salary information from “Average Earnings and Retail Prices, UK, 1209-1869,” *Measuring Worth*.

trembling.<sup>137</sup> Additionally, the idea of a rabbit being pulled out of a hat is explored; the rabbit's pelt is used as inexpensive fur for hats and pulling a live rabbit out of a hat metaphorically brings the rabbit back to life.

The phrase 'mad as a hatter' is clearly defined through Carroll's character. This wording may have been a new interpretation of the earlier phrase, 'mad as an adder.' *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* defines 'Mad as a hatter,' declaring "the probable origin of this phrase is 'Mad as an adder,'"<sup>138</sup> "Mad as an adder" is an old expression that means extremely angry, and compares someone's anger to an adder, which is a type of venomous snake, and Brewer also notes this as "poison."<sup>139</sup> Adders are known for being unpredictable and dangerous when provoked, and the saying uses this idea to emphasize how intense or irrational someone's anger might be. By changing the phrase to include hatters, it opens up an entirely new understanding of this specific job within the fashion industry. Additionally, this association with the Mad Hatter adds a layer of dark humor to his character and underlines his eccentric nature.

The Mad Hatter is also often adorned with bright and outlandish clothing that could even be mismatched. The addition of a cravat, or necktie, adds a formal yet comical look. His other accessories can include a bow tie or waistcoat.

## Caterpillar

The Caterpillar is a distinctive and intriguing character, appearing at the end of Chapter 4, titled "The Rabbit Sends in a Little Bill." He plays a significant role in Alice's

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137 Alison Matthews David, *Fashion Victims: Dangers of Dress Past and Present* (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2017), 139.

138 Ebenezer Cobham Brewer, *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* (New York: Harper and Brothers, reprint of 1870 edition), 578.

139 Ibid., 578.

journey of self-discovery, as the inclusion of a caterpillar represents transformation, growth, and struggling with self-perception.

The Caterpillar is portrayed as a calm, philosophical, and aloof character, and one of the few within the story who takes on a somewhat wise and detached attitude, offering blunt advice to Alice. His questions to Alice refer to her questioning her own identity, throwing Alice into moments of self-doubt and confusion, as her own body has undergone several physical changes, and it is not so easy for her to clearly define who she actually is. The Caterpillar is unruffled and disinterested in the world around him, but is more concerned with his own interests, such as smoking the hookah. This creates an air of mystery and unapproachability that makes the Caterpillar both intriguing and somewhat intimidating.

The Caterpillar's smoking of a hookah is a subtle nod to drug use, symbolizing an altered state of consciousness and a detachment from within Wonderland. Pure opium and other opiates were fairly common in the Victorian era, and their notoriety could have influenced the tale of Alice and other writing and artistic creations from this time. Many strong drugs were very accessible, as Victorians could visit their local chemist and buy drugs such as laudanum, cocaine, and arsenic, without a prescription.<sup>140</sup> Laudanum was an alcoholic herbal mixture, composed of 10% opium, and used as a common painkiller. It was an affordable relaxant, and recommended for minor ailments such as coughs, rheumatism, menstruation, and a soporific for babies and children.<sup>141</sup>

Another opiate-containing mixture created for small children, Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup, was an over the counter drug that helped ease teething pain and other

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140 Ellen Castelow, "Opium in Victorian Britain," *Historic UK*, 26 March 2015, <http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Opium-in-Victorian-Britain/>.

141 *Ibid.*

troubles in infants. The two primary ingredients were morphine and alcohol, relieving pain and diarrhea, as a common side effect of all opioids is constipation.<sup>142</sup> However, people of this era were not aware of the implications of using such medications, and did not necessarily understand the side effects and dependency that it could cause. Additionally, “throughout the 1800s ingredients did not have to be listed on labels, and consumers were often unaware of the contents of the remedies they purchased.”<sup>143</sup>

Due to their acceptance and wide usage, it is understandable that the works of the time would also allude to drug usage. Laudanum was a narcotic painkiller, and *Alice in Wonderland* displays many “drug induced transformations of mind and matter often associated with Carroll, his characters and our own experience as readers of Alice - and laudanum was also a tincture of opium supposedly used by Carroll to ease his painful arthritis.”<sup>144</sup> As many others were turning to these medications to ease pain, it follows that Carroll could as well to alleviate his symptoms, given their ease of accessibility. In *Alice in Wonderland*, the caterpillar and Alice have a tense conversation with an exchange that consists of more unanswered questions rather than answers.

The Caterpillar does not frequently wear any clothing, but his appearance is primarily defined by his shape and size, and he is often illustrated as a large, segmented insect sitting on top of a mushroom while smoking the hookah. This makes his appearance symbolic in other ways, despite the lack of actual clothing. His smoking of the hookah and elevated posture convey a sense of mysticism and distance, making him seem almost otherworldly. He does not need to wear clothing to convey his philosophical

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142 “Mrs. Winslow’s Soothing Syrup,” *The Wood Library Museum*, 18 March 2016.  
<http://www.woodlibrarymuseum.org/museum/item/529/mrs.-winslow's-soothing-syrup>.

143 Ibid.

144 Penny Smith, “Alice at the Allport: Curious Arts and Magical Practices,” *Ceramics: Art and Perception* no 69 (2007): 23.

role in the narrative, as his very form and demeanor contribute to the atmosphere of contemplation and change in Wonderland. With this, his visual presence and his role as a mentor in Alice's self-discovery are crucial. The Caterpillar's interactions with Alice invite reflection on the nature of change, and his symbolism as a creature in the process of becoming a butterfly ties into the broader narrative of metamorphosis.

### Mock Turtle

The Mock Turtle is a peculiar character, featured in Chapter 9, "The Mock Turtle's Story" and Chapter 10, "The Lobster Quadrille." He is an odd creation, as a turtle with the head, torso, and arms of a calf, becoming a blend of the real and the imaginary. He has a sad and wistful demeanor, and laments about his lost youth. He sings a song called "Turtle Soup,"<sup>145</sup> and frequently talks about his past, saying he was once a real turtle but was later made into a Mock Turtle. He describes his past schooling as a young turtle, and these passages are a parody of the Victorian education system, as he described the classes as "Reeling and Writhing,"<sup>146</sup> and "Drawling, Stretching, and Fainting in Coils."<sup>147</sup> His personality is sensitive in nature, and Alice's innocent comments seem to upset him.

The Mock Turtle is not depicted wearing any clothing, yet his unique appearance, the combination of the body of a turtle with the head of a calf, serves as his visual identity.

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145 Carroll, 84-85.

146 Ibid., 76.

147 Ibid., 77.

## Gryphon

The Gryphon is introduced to Alice alongside the Mock Turtle. Like the Mock Turtle, his body is a hybrid, and he is a combination of the body of a lion with the wings and head of an eagle. Although the Gryphon is not a main character in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, some editions of the book feature notable and imaginative illustrations of him, making his appearance interesting to study.

## King and Queen of Hearts

The King and Queen of Hearts are two central characters, representing arbitrary authority, presiding over a chaotic court. The Queen is the more dominant and volatile of the two, and is quick to anger and prone to shout, "Off with their heads!"<sup>148</sup> Despite her quickness to utter this phrase, she rarely follows through on her threats. Additionally, her image appears more frequently than the King's.

Their clothing can be composed of colors such as red, gold, or white, with heart decorative elements to reflect the theme of their characters. The Queen of Hearts is often exaggerated and oversized, playing into her temperamental and domineering nature. In contrast, the King of Hearts is often less extravagant and in more modest attire than the Queen, suggesting his subservient role.

The Queen of Hearts is also closely associated with a deck of playing cards, and she is shown as their ruler, with her court consisting of various card soldiers. She is the Queen of the suit of hearts, seen within a standard deck of cards. Hearts, in particular, symbolize emotion, love, in addition to emotions such as danger or passion, which are all sentiments central to the Queen's personality.

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148 Carroll, 65.

Elements of Queen Victoria's rule make their way into *Alice's Adventures in*

*Wonderland*. Art critic Jackie Wullschläger notes:

How close parts of Carroll's fantasy came to Victorian reality is suggested in Stanley Weintraub's biography of Queen Victoria, which takes as an epigraph the Queen of Heart's statement, 'I don't know what you mean by your way. All the ways around here belong to *me*' as personifying Queen Victoria's autocratic and fanciful behavior. Some scenes from Victoria's life read as though they come from the *Alice* books. Ceremonial dinners, for example, were cleared away while guests were still eating, the instant the Queen, who was served first and ate fast, had finished her portion, leaving visiting aristocrats hungry and humiliated. When arguments were not going her way, Victoria flirted with madness, clutching her head and crying, 'My reason! My reason!' The Queen was haughtily remote from her subjects, never read a newspaper, opposed reform, and rigorously supported social hierarchies. She was so pompous that her son, Edward VII, joked that she was reluctant to go to heaven because 'there the angels would precede her.'<sup>149</sup>

Playing cards were highly popular in Victorian England, and their use was widespread among various social classes, with games such as whist, bridge, and poker widely played. A standard deck of playing cards consists of 52 cards, divided into four suits: hearts, diamonds, spades, and clubs. Victorian playing cards often featured intricate designs, with detailed illustrations and ornamental borders. However, decorative elements like this were not always used: "Until Victorian times in England the backs of playing cards were plain, but eventually designs had to be printed on the reverse to avoid sharps with a keen eye from recognising a card from the soiling or dirt marks on the back. Wear and tear during play resulted in the square corners becoming scuffed and rounded, and so round corners became standard."<sup>150</sup> In 1831, "De La Rue introduced letter-press printing into playing card production,"<sup>151</sup> resulting in the first set of playing cards produced in

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149 Jackie Wullschläger, *Inventing Wonderland: The Lives and Fantasies of Lewis Carroll, Edward Lear, J. M. Barrie, Kenneth Grahame, and A. A. Milne* (London: Methuen London, 1995).

150 Simon Wintle, "History of English Playing Cards & Games," *The World of Playing Cards*, July 3, 1996, <https://www.wopc.co.uk/uk/history-of-english-playing-cards-and-games>.

151 *Ibid.*

1832.<sup>152</sup> This resulted in a mass of intricately drawn decorative backs, featuring botanical elements including acanthus leaves, holly and berries, branches, and an abundance of florals. Many of these are Art Nouveau in style, displaying organic, flowing forms with intricate decorative details. Additionally, the backs of these cards utilize purple, red, pink, green, yellow, and brown creating a vibrant and rich color palette, drawing from nature and incorporating both muted and bold tones. Playing card historian Ken Lodge notes: “Whoever decided it would be a good idea to prettify the backs was onto a winner.”<sup>153</sup> The intricate, nature-inspired patterns found on the backs of playing cards resonate with detailed illustrations within *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, as both reflect the period’s fascination with organic forms, intricate linework and the blending of the natural world with fantasy and imagination.

### Character Summary

The clothing and visual depictions of specific characters hold significance within the illustrations of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. By selecting figures such as Alice, the White Rabbit, the Duchess, and others, this dissertation aims to explore how their attire influences their characterization and how the visual representations contribute to the overall narrative. The analysis will proceed by examining these characters in detail throughout multiple publications, highlighting their key features and the role their clothing plays in shaping their identities.<sup>154</sup>

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152 Wintle.

153 Ken Lodge, “Back Designs,” *The World of Playing Cards*, 10 September 2012, <https://www.wopc.co.uk/members/ken-lodge/back-designs>. Accessed 25 February 2025.

154 While this study primarily focuses on the central characters from *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, it also considers additional figures and visual elements as they pertain to the central argument.

## ***PUBLICATIONS/VERSIONS EXPLORED***

*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has been reimagined countless times since its publication in 1865, with each new edition offering a unique interpretation of Lewis Carroll's classic tale. Across languages and cultures, the book has been illustrated by a wide array of artists, each bringing their own artistic vision and cultural background to the text. These illustrations, often integral to the storytelling, provide a lens through which the shifting values, aesthetics, and societal norms of different eras and regions can be understood. From the intricate black and white line drawings of Sir John Tenniel's original illustrations to the more contemporary and diverse visual representations in modern adaptations, the artwork surrounding *Alice* plays a key role in both shaping and reflecting the character's enduring popularity. This variation in artistic interpretation highlights the flexibility of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a global text, able to resonate with audiences from a variety of cultural and historical contexts while retaining its core elements of wonder, curiosity, and transformation.

This dissertation will examine a selection of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* editions, focusing on their illustrations and cultural details. The books chosen for this study were selected on a variety of factors designed to offer a comprehensive analysis of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* across different time periods and countries. The broad range in time ensures a thorough study of how *Alice's* visual representation changes. Additionally, the popularity of the artists involved was a key consideration, as works by renowned illustrators such as Salvador Dalí and Yayoi Kusama have significantly influenced how *Alice* is perceived in both literary and visual culture. The study also includes editions in several languages, including English, French, German, Swedish, and Spanish, to examine how the character's portrayal varies not just across time, but also

across different linguistic and cultural traditions. These factors together provide a rich foundation for understanding the dynamic ways in which Alice's story has been adapted and reinterpreted globally.

The first category of books selected for this study consists of editions published in English. These versions reflect both the Victorian context of the original publication and the later shifts in English-speaking cultures through various artistic movements and literary trends. Here, some of the most notable illustrated editions will be explored, highlighting the work of artists whose distinct styles have left an indelible mark on how readers envision Alice's journey. Beginning with Tenniel's art, the Victorian essence of the story is captured, while Arthur Rackham's detailed ethereal 1907 illustrations bring a darker, fairy-tale quality to the tale. Bessie Pease Gutmann's soft and delicate style, also from 1907, provides a charming and nostalgic perspective, and A.E. Jackson also captures the charm and whimsy of Wonderland with delicate and detailed artwork from 1915. Gwynedd Hudson's vibrant, Art Deco-inspired illustrations of 1922 inject a lively and colorful energy, contrasting with Salvador Dalí's surrealist illustrations of 1969 that push the boundaries of imagination, reinterpreting the story through his dreamlike and abstract vision. Finally, Helen Oxenbury's contemporary, child-friendly illustrations from 1999 add warmth and accessibility, appealing to a new generation of readers. These diverse visual representations demonstrate the enduring appeal and adaptability of Carroll's beloved classic.

The next section explores the various translations and adaptations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* published in languages other than English. This analysis highlights how cultural contexts shape the visual interpretation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* across publications in different languages. Rather than focusing on textual

translation, it considers how illustrators adapt the clothing and appearance of characters to reflect local aesthetic traditions, social norms, and historical references. By comparing character attire across multiple international editions, this study highlights the ways costume and visual design function as interpretive tools, revealing how the story is visually reassessed for diverse audiences. Finally, this approach demonstrates how Carroll's story has been visually adapted to resonate within varied cultural frameworks, contributing to its enduring global appeal.

The imaginative worlds of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* inspired a wealth of non-English publications, each brought to life by talented illustrators who rethought Carroll's classic through diverse cultural and artistic lenses. Uriel Birnbaum's expressionist illustrations in a 1923 German edition offer a bold and distinctive perspective, while Lola Anglada's Spanish-language edition of 1927 is filled with delicate and gentle imagery. Simone Deleuil's French 1954 version reflects mid-twentieth-century modern sensibility. Tove Jansson, celebrated for her *Moomin* series, brings her Nordic touch to the story, infusing it with whimsy and charm in 1966. Nicole Claveloux's psychedelic artwork in a French 1974 edition transforms *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into a dreamlike journey, and Dušan Kállay's Slovak interpretation from 1984 features intricate, fantastical details. Yayoi Kusama's Japanese interpretation from 2012 features her defining polka dots and avant-garde style. Each of these editions demonstrates how Carroll's beloved tale transcends linguistic boundaries, inspiring artists worldwide to craft their own versions of Wonderland.

The following section of this dissertation will consider a version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as reimagined and translated by an Indigenous group. The definition for this purpose includes a community of people who are the original

inhabitants of a particular region, maintaining distinct cultural traditions, languages, and connections to their ancestral lands, often predating colonization or modern nation-states, and the version studied is *Alitji in Dreamland*, an Aboriginal tale, published in 1992. Earlier work by Erdman and Cleaver acknowledges this adaptation; however this dissertation extends those discussions by providing a more detailed examination of *Alitji in Dreamland*, analyzing how the narrative and visual elements reinterpret Carroll's text within an Aboriginal cultural framework. This adaptation offers a fascinating lens through which to view Carroll's work, as it incorporates the linguistic, cultural, and philosophical framework. Through examination, traditional storytelling techniques, mythologies, and symbolic systems are determined and interwoven within Carroll's narrative. Through this exploration, this unique contribution is highlighted, marking the global legacy of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

## CHAPTER TWO

### DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF *ALICE* STUDIED: ENGLISH

#### **SIR JOHN TENNIEL**

Sir John Tenniel (1820-1914) illustrated the original version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865. These black and white line drawings are ultimately the most well-known of all the different illustrated versions, becoming iconic and shaping the visual representation of Carroll's story for generations, as his drawings are associated with strongly capturing the essence of the written work.

The sketches showcased his meticulous linework and attention to detail. These monochrome illustrations complemented the surreal tone of the story while also allowing readers to imagine the characters and settings in their own way. Over time, as the book gained popularity, various editions introduced colorized versions of Tenniel's drawings. These adaptations were often hand-colored or reproduced with vibrant hues, adding a new dimension to the artwork and appealing to evolving tastes in children's literature.

For example, *The Nursery Alice* is a separate adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, specifically created for younger children, and published in 1890. It featured simplified text in a larger font, making it more accessible to early readers. The book also included the first colored versions of Tenniel's illustrations, adapted under Carroll's

supervision. In this version, Alice is depicted in a yellow dress with a white pinafore, by default making it the first adaptation to portray Alice in this color scheme.<sup>155</sup>

In 1903, Macmillan published *The Little Folks' Edition of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, designed for very young readers. This version featured 32 simplified and redrawn Tenniel illustrations that were colored, with Alice notably depicted in a blue dress. It is this version that is likely the origin of her now-iconic association with that color. However, the reprint of *The Little Folks' Edition* in 1907 made a fascinating change. In this printing, Alice's dress was red, making this red-dressed Alice a curious variation in the visual history of the classic tale.

However, the uncolored originals remain famous for their classic charm and artistic precision and are what will be studied at length here, as they represent the illustrations as they first appeared in the original publication and serve as the foundational visual text from which later adaptations and reinterpretations can be compared.

Tenniel's process for creating the renowned illustrations included crafting detailed sketches of his personal interpretation of the story, using clean defined lines to generate elegant and clear images. They had to be playful while also matching the dark tone of the story. His drawings were imaginative depictions of the highlighted characters and scenes, through the use of intricate cross-hatching to create shading and depth.

Tenniel first prepared the illustrations as drawings, which were then transferred onto

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<sup>155</sup> This yellow dress reappeared at a later date as well. The first colorized version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* where Alice is depicted wearing a yellow dress was published in 1911 by Macmillan. This edition also featured the original Tenniel illustrations, but they were now vividly colorized by the artist Harry G. Theaker. In this version, Alice's yellow dress was paired with a white pinafore and white stockings as accents. This color palette marked a significant shift in how Alice was visually represented, as color choices began to shape her iconic image in popular culture. The yellow dress is notable for predating the more famous blue dress that was popularized later, commenting this edition as a key moment in the evolution of *Alice's* visual legacy.

wood blocks for engraving. The carving itself was completed by the professional firm the Dalziel Brothers,<sup>156</sup> who used specialized tools to cut away the negative space of the block, leaving the lines of the illustration raised for printing. Next, the cut wood blocks were inked and pressed onto paper. The resulting print included delicate linear details, and as these illustrations integrated into the text, Carroll's words were brought to life.

Book illustrations created through the wood carving process were widely used in the Victorian era, since they allowed the artist to produce detailed images that could be easily reproduced. This process was cost effective, ensuring the finished books were available to the public. The format also supported intricate designs, and the readers appreciated the elaborate, artistic illustrations. Additionally, wood carved illustrations could be used in various publications, such as children's books, periodicals, and newspapers, adding visual appeal and interest to printed materials.

This section will explore the clothing worn by some of Tenniel's illustrated characters and see what it reveals about Victorian England, offering valuable insight into social and cultural contexts. The detailed costumes reflect the era's strict fashion codes and class distinctions, showcasing opulent dresses, tailored menswear, and accessories of the upper class, while also hinting at the more humble attire of characters from lower social classes. Additionally, the broader social, cultural, and economic context of the Victorian era will be noted, including surface information on how people lived, their values, and the societal structures that shaped their worldview. By examining these illustrations and understanding more about the general life in the Victorian era, we gain a

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156 Bethan Stevens, "Alice in Wonderland's engravings – a forgotten story in pictures," *The Guardian*, 26 November 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/gallery/2016/nov/26/alice-in-wonderlands-engravings-a-forgotten-story-dalziel-brothers-in-pictures>.

deeper understanding of how fashion both conveyed social status and mirrored societal values of an age marked by its strict conventions and growing sense of individualism.

### Victorian Sensibilities

The Victorian Era in England is marked by the years corresponding with the reign of Queen Victoria, from 1837-1901.<sup>157</sup> Life during the Victorian era experienced significant changes in areas such as industrialization, social class structures, and changing cultural norms.

The upper class consisted of the aristocracy and wealthy industrialists, living in large estates and impressive houses, with many servants. Their children received expensive education and they attended numerous social events, including balls, dinners, and gatherings. Such an event was mentioned in the February 4, 1865 publication of *The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper*, noting “a juvenile ball took place on the 27<sup>th</sup>...between four and seven o'clock...attended by about sixty children.”<sup>158</sup> The middle class experienced a period of expansion during this era, due to professions such as banking, law, and medicine emerging. Hard work, respectability, and self-improvement ranked high on their priorities, and they aimed to emulate the lifestyle of the upper class on a more modest scale.<sup>159</sup> The working class consisted of professions such as factory workers, miners, and servants, and was the majority of the population. Living in crowded, unsanitary conditions,<sup>160</sup> they worked long hours and often relied on child labor to help

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157 The cultural influence of the Victorian era on the United States is known as American Victorianism.

158 “Foreign Courts,” *The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper*, 4 February 1865, 13-14.

159 Judith Flanders, *Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2004), 36.

160 *Ibid.*, 128.

supplement their low incomes. The prevalence of child labor and long working hours shaped how some children were viewed. Rather than embodying idealized innocence, they could be seen as victims of social neglect. As scholar John R. Reed remarked, “for those who know the abuses of the age, children might easily be viewed as pathetic.”<sup>161</sup>

This era was also a time of rapid industrialization, and it brought forth many technological advances. As factories and railways expanded, cities and the overall economy grew.<sup>162</sup> However, this was not always a positive contribution, as urban overcrowding and poor living conditions affected the lives of many people. The positive additions such as steam power, usable railways, and new machinery helped economic growth, but were compared to the cons such as harsh working conditions, long hours in dangerous workplaces, and low pay. Pollution also plagued the environment as a byproduct of the factories.

As for cultural norms, the male head of the household provided the majority of the income for the family, while the females managed the household and raised children. Marriage was the “unquestioned goal”<sup>163</sup> in life for women, and if one did not marry, they were viewed with pity by society as “any other future was bleak.”<sup>164</sup> Victorian social ideology frequently framed women's lives as centered on marriage and domesticity, and Reed notes, “a female's real existence only begins when she has a husband.”<sup>165</sup> However, the late Victorian period saw the emergence of early feminist movements, as some

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161 John R. Reed, *Victorian Conventions* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1975), 254.

162 Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 40.

163 Reed, 105.

164 Ibid.

165 Ibid.

women began to campaign for rights, such as education, property ownership, and suffrage.

The Victorian era is often associated with a sense of morality, which was heavily influenced by Christian ethics. Morality was a central theme in Victorian life, with a strong emphasis on propriety, modesty, and self-discipline. The time period is akin to having strict social codes and reserved behavior, especially in public. Society expected children to adhere to the same strict codes of behavior, including the values of obedience, discipline, respect for authority, and decorum. Children showed unquestioning obedience to their parents, teachers, and other authority figures, displaying respect for elders. They also spoke politely, using proper titles when addressing adults, and did not speak unless spoken to first. The phrase ‘Children should be seen and not heard’ was a guiding principle for many Victorian children. Poor behavior such as rudeness, talking back, or interrupting adults was not tolerated. Children did not draw attention to themselves, and boisterous and other loud behavior was discouraged.

This code of conduct for expected behavior also included the clothing worn by Victorian children. Their garments were designed to visually emphasize youth and childhood identity, and boys often wore suits or sailor-style outfits. In 1865, the year of *Alice’s* publication by Carroll, women’s fashion experienced a shift in the shaping of the crinoline worn underneath the skirt. Previously wide and full, the change now flattened the front, moving the greater fullness to the back.<sup>166</sup> This did not only affect women, as the wider skirts first supported by stiffened petticoats and later by wire crinolines also influenced younger girls’ clothes.<sup>167</sup> The Industrial Revolution, ease of making clothing,

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<sup>166</sup> Allison Shaw, “1865,” *Fashion History Timeline* (New York: Fashion Institute of Technology), 28 September 2017, <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1865-2/>.

<sup>167</sup> Clare Rose, *Children’s Clothes Since 1750* (London: B. T. Batsford Limited, 1989), 82.

social status also came together. As noted by sociologist Yuniya Kawamura, “prior to the Industrial Revolution, which began in England in the latter half of the eighteenth century...making clothes was no easy task.”<sup>168</sup> She continues, prior to these technological advances, “better-quality clothes could be produced only in limited quantities and were expensive. Possessing fashionable clothes was a symbol of status and a form of conspicuous consumption for the wealthy, while the poor owned only two or three outfits during their adult lifetimes, never being able to afford fashion. Therefore, prior to the Industrial Revolution, a person's social status could be measured by the number of outfits he or she owned.”<sup>169</sup> As industrial production expanded, however, elements of fashionable dress became accessible to a wider range of people, with one observer noting, “the age is, perhaps, forever gone by, when a privileged class could monopolize finery of garb...I have already seen a dozen at least cheap-booted apprentices wearing velvet waistcoats, which, a few years ago would have delighted [the famed French dandy] D’Orsay,”<sup>170</sup> Such comments reflected contemporary anxieties about the growing availability of fashionable clothing, even as details such as “cheap boots”<sup>171</sup> still signaled a wearer's social position.

For women, the crinoline and the resulting wide skirt became so exaggerated by the mid-1860s that it was treated as an object of humor in popular commentary. In *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* of January 1864, the garment is shown to be cumbersome and impractical, playing a role in a published fictional play, as a wealthy

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168 Yuniya Kawamura, “The Fashion Industry,” *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*, vol. 10 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 191.

169 Ibid.

170 Ford, 103.

171 Ibid.

suitor states to his intended: "My brougham waits close by; in it we'll ride (If you, your crinoline, and I can get inside)."<sup>172</sup> This reflects the growing awareness that the fashionable garment had reached an extreme, giving way to new forms that redistributed volume toward the back of the skirt.

Additionally, this fashion trend possessed dire safety concerns. The *English Woman's Journal* reported on Sunday, January 1, 1860: "While on the subject of dress we would record here the numerous cases of burning, from the present extravagant use of crinoline which have occurred within the last few weeks, several resulting in death, and others in great suffering and irreparable disfigurement. At one ball five young ladies were in flames at once, the fire having spared from one to the other as they attempted to render assistance."<sup>173</sup> Despite British attempts to mock or dissuade public usage as seen in these two examples, other countries published how the crinoline would continue to stay in fashion for some time. In the American publication *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine* of February 1865, a passage by Sara Josepha Hale notes, "We are constantly questioned on the subject of crinoline - and frequently hear of its downfall, we see no diminution of it either in our latest fashion plates, or in the promenades."<sup>174</sup> Additionally, similar descriptions appeared in the French *Le Follett* in April 1865: "The enemies of the crinoline will yet have some time to wait before their ideas triumph. Skirts are made with as much train and as full as ever, and must have well-made crinolines to give them an air of elegance."<sup>175</sup> Fashion historians Daniel James Cole and Nancy Diehl also note how smaller versions of the crinoline were worn for day-to-day life, reserving the larger, more

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172 *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*, January 1864, 249.

173 *English Woman's Journal*, 1 January 1860 (London, England), 72.

174 Shaw.

175 *Ibid.*

unwieldy ones for court appearances, balls, and other formal events.<sup>176</sup> Starting in the “mid-1860s some fashionable women gave up the crinoline, possibly because it was now mass-produced and no longer the latest word in fashion.”<sup>177</sup> But at the time of Carroll's publication, the 1865 crinoline created an exaggerated, circular silhouette that expanded outward from the waist, offering a distinct contrast to earlier modest skirt shapes, marking a peak of this particular fashion trend, setting a stark contrast to the more natural flowing lines of the earlier periods.

*How to Read a Dress* by fashion historian Lydia Edwards explores women's fashion using a chronological approach, and is a comprehensive and visually engaging guide to understanding the history of fashion through the evolution of women's dresses, beginning in the sixteenth century and continuing through the 1970s. Edwards highlights the historical context, including political, economic, and cultural factors that influenced fashion of any given period. Going into a deep analysis, subjects such as social and cultural meanings associated with each dress, including the symbolism and certain fabrics, the influence of technological advances, and how the style of a dress emulated the societal expectations and roles of women in a certain time period are explored by Edwards. Dresses are also connected to larger historical events, such as how wars influenced fashion and a shift in gender roles evolved the aesthetics of female garments. Edwards explores Victorian fashion in great detail, showing how industrialization and advances in textile production ultimately led to garments being mass produced. *How to Read a Dress* conclusively blends social history and fashion by exploring details within historical dresses.

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<sup>176</sup> Daniel James Cole and Nancy Diehl, *The History of Modern Fashion from 1850*, Kindle ed., (Laurence King Publishing, 2015), 51.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 57.

Edwards features a circa 1865 women's brown silk moire taffeta afternoon dress, which is now held by the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, Australia. She notes how despite the fullness and expanse of the skirt, the style would actually be liberating to women of the era who previously wore multiple layers of petticoats underneath their skirts to achieve fullness.<sup>178</sup> Edwards describes how the skirt originally followed the fashionable silhouette of the 1850s, which was a round dome. Two panels were added to the front of the skirts, flattening it but leaving fullness in the back.<sup>179</sup>

This is a unique dress to include in the analysis of fashionable garments from 1865 as it covers a multitude of qualities. Having originated in the 1850s, it underwent alterations to change the overall look and feel of the dress, including the shape of the skirt. Dresses from this period were costly, and it might not be possible for all women to buy new garments during every shift of the fashionable silhouette. Taking a dress from a previous time period and reworking it to fit the new, preferred aesthetic is a cost effective way to remain fashionable. As noted, wealthy families could afford luxurious purchases such as new gowns with the changing trends, but members of the middle class might not be able to do so as easily. This Victorian middle class aspired to live similarly to the upper class, but on a smaller scale. Reworking an older gown to the newest look is an illustration of this.

Understanding fashionable garments for women during this period is important as children during the Victorian era wore garments similar to what the adults were wearing, but in modified versions. Harper Franklin notes, "young girls were dressed as miniature adults, and their dress reflected the silhouette worn by their mothers, simply shortened to

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178 Lydia Edwards, *How to Read a Dress* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 89.

179 Ibid., 89.

reveal their pantalettes or drawers below.”<sup>180</sup> Girls’ dresses were designed to reflect modesty and the ideals of propriety associated with children, yet also followed societal expectations of femininity during the era. Cole and Diehl note, “as with adults, clothing for children was governed by social conventions. Particular styles were associated with specific ages and were based on changes in body shape, activity, and social roles.”<sup>181</sup> These dresses were characterized by intricate details, multiple layers, and an overall formal appearance. This type of clothing would be worn at all times, and would not only be reserved for special occasions.

The fashionable waistline for girls’ dresses in 1865 hit at about the natural waist, with a wide and full skirt. The bodice was fitted, but not overly tight. The shape of the sleeve for Victorian dresses held importance, and often had puffed sleeves, suggesting a sense of youthfulness and innocence. Additionally, light, pastel colors for dresses were common for little girls,<sup>182</sup> including pink, white, blue, and yellow, as historian Jo Barraclough Paoletti notes pastels were “favored for this age group.”<sup>183</sup> A pinafore, or apron-like garment worn over the dress, was commonly added to protect girls’ clothing while playing or working. These pinafores were often made with cotton or linen, and were fairly simple in design. Fashion historian Anne Buck notes that a dress worn without a pinafore, or an apron worn in place of a pinafore signified growing up.<sup>184</sup> White or black stockings were worn on the legs, with leather shoes. Buck also discusses

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180 Harper Franklin, “1860-1869,” *Fashion History Timeline* (New York: Fashion Institute of Technology), 27 December 2019, <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1860-1869/>.

181 Cole and Diehl, 126.

182 Joan Nunn, *Fashion in Costume: 1200-1980* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 167.

183 Jo Barraclough Paoletti, “Children and Adolescents in the United States,” *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion, vol. 3: The United States and Canada* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 208.

184 Anne Buck, *Clothes and the Child* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1996), 236.

stocking color choices through the years: “White cotton stockings, machine knitted, were the usual wear for girls until the second half of the [nineteenth] century; some might have silk for best wear, but the silk usually ended half way up the leg, and the tops were cotton...In the 1860s and 1870s there were also striped stockings, red or purple on white, and occasional red stockings for everyday wear, but from this time brown or black stockings were gradually replacing the earlier white ones.”<sup>185</sup>

Another interesting aspect featured in girls’ dresses of the Victorian era was the growing hem, which was also known as ‘growth tucks.’ In this manner, ‘letting down the hem’ allowed for adjustments in the length of the dress, without altering the rest of it or having to make an entirely new dress.<sup>186</sup> The reasoning behind this practice is that fabric was often cost prohibitive, and the making of a new dress was labor intensive, as noted in women’s fashions by Edwards. Extra fabric was folded into tucks or pleats near the hemline, and sewn in a manner that allowed them to be easily removed, adding length to the dress. These tucks were typically very small, and neatly executed. They ranged from one single tuck, to multiple rows, determined by how much lengthening room was desired. This proved to be a practical and resourceful solution to challenges faced with growing children and the high cost of fabrics in the nineteenth century.

With an understanding of the fashionable garments and basic lifestyle of the Victorian era, it becomes possible to examine Tenniel’s illustrations within *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* to uncover what they reveal about the period’s social norms and cultural context, offering insights into how Victorian ideals and aesthetics embedded within Wonderland.

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185 Buck, 238.

186 Cole V., “Hemming,” *Diary of a Mantua Maker*, 5 January 2011, <https://mantuadiary.blogspot.com/2011/01/hemming.html>.

## Analysis of the Illustrations by Tenniel

### Alice

Tenniel's illustrations of Alice capture her as a curious girl, often wide-eyed or slightly bewildered, and typically portrayed as a girl of about seven- or eight-years-old, with presumably fair-colored hair styled in loose ringlets. The clothing worn by Alice in Tenniel's illustrations is consistent with the modest, fashionable Victorian garments of the era (fig. 1). She wears a light-colored, knee-length dress with a high waist and puffed sleeves. The dress is adorned with a pinafore, which was a common addition to girls' clothing, meant to protect the dress underneath. As previously noted by Buck, older girls removed the pinafore to show their maturation, so the inclusion of a pinafore by Tenniel denotes Alice's young age. Tenniel's Alice wears white stockings, which are noted as a remnant of earlier fashionable attire from a previous period by Buck. On her feet are low, black shoes with a closed toe and a strap across the instep.

There is actually some inconclusive decision regarding the actual pieces of Alice's dress; does she wear a dress or a blouse and a skirt? Fashion historian Kiera Vaclavik notes, "Alice is simply and smartly attired: her calf-length skirt is full and decorated along the hem with simple bands; she has short puff sleeves and - something overlooked by all commentators except Elizabeth Ewing - a buttoned collar at the neck."<sup>187</sup> Viewed in isolation, it is impossible to tell whether this is a dress with a collar or a blouse and skirt which, according to Anne Buck,<sup>188</sup> were popular for children in the 1860s. Tenniel's later "colouring of the images...confirms not only that she is blonde -

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<sup>187</sup> Kiera Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice: The Career of Lewis Carroll's Icon, 1860-1901* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019), 39.

<sup>188</sup> Buck, 120.

something the black and white images cannot be said to establish unambiguously - but also that the garment she is wearing is a dress, since the same yellow<sup>189</sup> is used both above and below the waist.”<sup>190</sup>

There is also evidence that Alice’s garment is a dress. Fashion historian Harper Franklin notes, “For small girls, under the age of ten, dresses often featured off-the-shoulder short sleeves.”<sup>191</sup> This neckline is comparable to the neckline defined as boat neck, which is also known as a bateau neckline.<sup>192</sup> However, the visible neckline of Alice’s dress does not follow this style. Instead, a collar is visible peaking over the apron, and the neckline is high rather than low and wide. After reviewing images of surviving garments from museums and photographs of children from the 1860s, such as a photograph of two young girls from the mid-1800s (fig. 2), it is interesting to note that many of these primary source examples do not have a high neckline. As such, Alice’s illustrated dress does not quite fit in with the fashionable children’s dress standards regarding this detail, even though it has other hallmarks of children’s fashionable dress from the 1860s.

While investigating Tenniel’s Alice, it appears she is wearing a white blouse<sup>193</sup> underneath a dress that does indeed have the wide, bateau neckline. This is evident when viewing the illustration where her neck has grown, in Chapter 2, “The Pool of Tears.”<sup>194</sup>

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189 Remember, the first colorized version of Alice from *Nursery Alice* featured a yellow dress.

190 Vaclavik, *Fashioning Alice*, 39-40.

191 Franklin.

192 A bateau neckline is wide and runs horizontally, almost to the shoulders, across the collarbone, and originates from sailors’ uniforms worn by the French Navy in 1858.

193 This upper body undergarment might also be a chemise undergarments, but not likely as a chemise would not feature a collar, and instead often has a low, wide neckline, similar to the fashionable dresses of the time.

194 Carroll, 17.

Her white shirt expands and stretches, with visible lines from this shift (fig. 3). However, the visible wide necklines of her dress and apron do not change. This would fit with Alice wearing a fashionable, wide-neck dress, with a collar evident from an undershirt. The other illustrations throughout the book do not clearly show her neckline.

This discovery falls in line with fashionable choices from previous decades. Buck explains 1840s fashionable clothing for women and girls: “The neckline for women’s day dress was high now, with a small collar of muslin or lace, or lower with a muslin chemisette. The bodices of girls’ dresses were generally low-necked, especially those of young girls.”<sup>195</sup> It would seem that Tenniel combined elements of fashionable dress from twenty years’ prior; he included a high neckline with a collar, paired with the low neckline seen in children’s dresses. Alice’s white stockings would also fall in line with this conclusion, as darker stockings replaced the lighter colored ones around 1865, as previously noted by Buck.

It is plausible, however, that instead of a white shirt, Alice utilizes a detachable collar, as removable collars found their way into Victorian fashion. Research indicates “a woman named Hannah Montague is widely credited with having come up with the idea of detachable collars in the years 1827. As the story goes, her husband wanted a clean shirt each day, and rather than launder an entire shirt, she found that it was easier to launder just the collar, which was the part of the shirt that was presumably getting the most soiled... While the original inspiration for detachable collars might have come from trying to keep men’s shirts clean, women’s wear also soon was making use of the innovation,”<sup>196</sup> and textile historian Colleen Gau adds, “the detachable collar allowed for

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195 Buck, 231.

some relief to the laundress.”<sup>197</sup> Though originally created for men, women also used starched linen or cotton for add-on accessories such as collars and cuffs, making it easy to affix them to a dress or blouse.<sup>198</sup> This offered a unique way to personalize clothing: “Detachable collars and cuffs offered women the opportunity to inject variety into their wardrobes without investing in multiple garments. A simple change of collar or cuffs could transform the look of a dress, allowing women to adapt their attire to different occasions and seasons.”<sup>199</sup>

There are other possibilities to explore that might help determine what Alice is wearing in Tenniel’s drawings. *Godey’s Lady’s Book* in January 1865 featured an illustration of five fashionable women, with the addition of a young girl. The girl’s dress is described as the following: “Pink silk dress, trimmed with chenille fringe and a quilling of ribbon. Guimpe of white muslin, with long sleeves edged with a muslin ruff.”<sup>200</sup> A British example (fig. 4) is described in *The Queen, The Lady’s Newspaper*, a few years later on Saturday, May 30, 1868:

Costume for little girl from five to six years of age. This pretty costume consists of a petticoat or under-skirt in bright blue silk, bordered with a plaiting a la vieille of the same material. The tunic is grey poplin; the front breadth forms a round tablier, which is ornamented with blue silk braid, and is so arranged that it wraps over the sides of the tunic, the lower part being likewise ornamented with blue silk braid. The poplin bodice is square, and braid forming the same serpentine pattern simulates braces across the shoulders. The waistband and short sleeves are

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196 Jennifer Shurtleff, “The Ingenious Era of Detachable Fashion: Where Convenience and Style Meet,” *Woodstock History Center*, 10 June 2024, <https://www.woodstockhistorycenter.org/articles/2024/6/7/the-ingenious-era-of-detachable-fashion-where-convenience-and-style-meet#>.

197 Colleen Gau, “Conventional Work Dress and Casual Work Dress,” *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*, vol. 3: *The United States and Canada* (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 319.

198 Shurtleff.

199 Ibid.

200 Louis Antoine Godey, and Sarah Josepha Buell Hale, editors. *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, vol. 70, January 1865.

trimmed to correspond. The guimpe is composed of muslin, with narrow Valenciennes round the throat. Hair flowing over the shoulders in loose curls, and a blue ribbon tied round the head.<sup>201</sup>

In both of these examples, the term ‘guimpe’ is introduced regarding clothing for young girls. *The Dictionary of Fashion History* defines guimpe as, “a chemisette worn with a low-necked dress,”<sup>202</sup> and the Museum of Fine Arts Boston describes a guimpe in their collection as, “gathered and puffed white net, high round neck, open down front elbow length sleeves.”<sup>203</sup> Fashion and textile historian Leimomi Oakes explores the guimpe in greater length. Oakes concludes: “A guimpe is a short blouse worn under a pinafore/jumper dress, or a fill in for a low-cut dress. It’s very similar to a chemisette or dickey. It was a word that was particularly common in the mid-late nineteenth century, and it comes from the Old French word for wimple.”<sup>204</sup> Possibly Tenniel included this type of garment when he illustrated Alice.

As Vaclavik noted, it is not fully possible to decipher exactly what clothing is worn by Alice, but the above are all options that were fashionable during Tenniel’s time and illustrate what a young girl might wear. Although not explicitly stated, Alice is most likely from an upper-middle or upper class family, as she notes she attended day school and takes part in leisure activities. Alice has a governess, a pet cat, and an elderly nurse, which would all be resources within an upper-class family. She also has the manners and

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201 “Costume for Little Girl from five to six years of age,” *The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper*, May 30, 1868, 438.

202 Valerie Cumming, C. W. Cunnington, and P. E. Cunnington, *The Dictionary of Fashion History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

203 “A guimpe,” *Museum of Fine Arts Boston*, <https://collections.mfa.org/objects/49436>.

204 Leimomi Oakes, “What exactly is a guimpe?,” *The Dreamstress*, 29 October 2011, <https://thedreamstress.com/2011/10/what-exactly-is-a-guimpe/>.

demeanor associated with Victorian ideals of well-raised childhood. With all this in mind, her clothing also fits in with this suggestion.

As explored in the historiography chapter of this dissertation, the correspondence between Carroll and Tenniel regarding the illustrations of Alice no longer exist so it is impossible to note whether the author or artist suggested Alice's clothing choices. Carroll was familiar with photographing children in various stages of dress and undress in the 1850s, and would have seen the layers of garments worn. This timeline also coincides with Alice's clothing being from a slightly previous time, without actually being unfashionable. Of Carroll, it is noted that "he was a man of infinite patience and one who paid attention to the smallest detail. These qualities were mandatory to be a photographer in the 1850's."<sup>205</sup> He would have had knowledge of children's clothing and its many pieces. It is possible that Carroll did give Tenniel some garment details to follow when drawing Alice, but from the standpoint of a slightly earlier time frame within fashion history.

## **White Rabbit**

Tenniel's illustrations of the White Rabbit depict a rabbit with a waistcoat, plaid sack coat, and pocket watch, acting anthropomorphic as a refined gentleman with appropriate accessories (fig. 5). Historian Murat Arslan notes, "the White Rabbit behaves like a typical Victorian gentleman wearing a waistcoat and carrying a watch."<sup>206</sup> Dennis Crutch refers to the White Rabbit, March Hare, and caterpillar as gentlemen,

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205 "Lewis Carroll and Photography," *The Lewis Carroll Society of North America*, <https://www.lewiscarroll.org/carroll/study/photography/>.

206 Murat Arslan, "Wonderland," *B/Orders Unbound: Transgressing the Limits in Arts and Humanities*, 147.

within a hierarchy of animals which is very similar to the Victorian class system.<sup>207</sup> They are considered elevated above other animals depicted. Regarding this elevated status, Rose Lovell-Smith notes: “The rabbit occupies a point between animal and human, simultaneously both these things and neither of them, an implication hardly made so firmly by Carroll’s text. The rabbitness of the rabbit is emphasized by the meadow setting, the absence of trousers, and the careful attention paid to anatomy and proportion. But the rabbit is slightly distorted towards the human by his upright posture, his clothing and accessories, his pose, and his human eye and hand.”<sup>208</sup> The inclusion of the rabbit’s hands also holds considerable information.

One scholar used these qualities to relate how the character’s hands portray deeper meaning. Karlie Herndon’s 2014 article, “Hand in Hand: Interconnected Narrative and Illustration in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” explores the symbiotic relationship between Carroll’s text and Tenniel’s illustrations, especially noting how the emphasis placed on the characters’ hands is important. Herndon states, “the Rabbit’s gloves also indicate his middle-class standing, and his need for new gloves...shows not only that he is in a position requiring perfectly fresh white gloves throughout the day, but also that he can afford such accessories.”<sup>209</sup> She continues, “the focus on hands and clothing is part of both the narrative and the illustrations, cementing the connection between hands and clothes in the text and creating the foundation for the stratification within the dream world of Wonderland.”<sup>210</sup> Occupation can also be determined from

207 Dennis Crutch, “Familiar Chat with Bird and Beast,” *Jabberwocky: The Journal of the Lewish Carroll Society* 6, no 1(1977), 18.

208 Rose Lovell-Smith, “The Animals of Wonderland: Tenniel as Carroll’s Reader,” *Criticism* 45, no. 4 (Fall 2003), 382.

209 Karlie Herndon, “Hand in Hand: Interconnected Narrative and Illustration in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” *Children’s Literature* 52 (2024), 142.

210 *Ibid.*, 143.

hands and their accessories: “His delicate hands and fine clothing indicate that he does not perform physical labor, tasks that would be below his standing.”<sup>211</sup>

Herndon also refers to Cecil B. Hartley’s 1860 publication, the *Gentlemen’s Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness*. Further review of this work shows advice solely on the topic of gloves, such as: “White gloves are the only ones to be worn with full dress.”<sup>212</sup> This unique statement regarding acceptable colors and styles for fashionable dress is very telling:

All bright colors should be avoided, such as red, yellow, sky-blue, and bright green. Perhaps only a successful Australian gold digger would think of choosing such colors for his coat, waistcoat, or trousers; but there are hundreds of young men who might select them for their gloves and neck-ties. The deeper colors are, some how or other, more manly, and are certainly less striking. The same simplicity should be studied in the avoidance of ornamentation. A few years ago it was the fashion to trim the evening waistcoat with a border of gold lace. This is an example of fashions always to be rebelled against. Then, too, extravagance in the form of our dress is a sin against taste.<sup>213</sup>

The White Rabbit could be a member of the upper class with his fine dress and accessories, but it is also important to consider that this is also a period of time where ready-to-wear clothing made it possible for fashionable pieces of clothing to be readily accessible. In England, tailors such as Henry Poole<sup>214</sup> allowed all men to acquire a stylish suit,<sup>215</sup> and by 1865, stores such as this were accessible options. This was due to

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211 Herndon, 145.

212 Cecil B. Hartley, *The Gentlemen’s Book of Etiquette and Manual of Politeness: Being a Complete Guide for Gentleman’s Conduct in All His Relations Towards Society* (Boston: G.W. Cottrell, 1860).

213 *Ibid.*, 137.

214 “The Dinner Suit: Royal coat the became a blueprint for the dinner jacket,” accessed 9 March 2026, <https://henrypoole.com/heritage-savile-row/the-dinner-suit/>.

215 *Ibid.*

“improved cutting and sewing techniques and an increasingly rational division of labor.”<sup>216</sup>

Advances in manufacturing and textile production made fashionable clothing more widely available, allowing individuals outside the aristocracy to imitate elite styles of dress. Nevertheless, members of the upper classes continued to favor good taste in fashion. Fashion historian Jane Ashelford notes:

A quick glance at a group of Victorian men at a location like a race meeting or a railway station suggests that they were clad in indistinguishable and interchangeable clothes, but within this seeming uniformity there was a clear demarcation between the classes. Mass production of clothes might have brought respectability within everyone's grasp, but class divisions were still clearly expressed by the quality of clothing. A factory-made suit worn by a working-class man would have been a cheap and shoddy imitation of the latest fashion, badly cut and made from inferior materials. The middle and upper classes would have worn a version made from good quality cloth that was noticeably better cut and finished. But an upper-class gentleman would be wearing a made-to-measure suit that demonstrated his tailor's attention to immaculate cut and fit.<sup>217</sup>

Although it was increasingly possible for men of lower classes to emulate the sartorial styles of the upper classes, there were often subtle details that betrayed a person's social standing. These small differences in appearance served as markers of class distinction, despite the outward semblance of similarity. In order to truly blend with the uppermost class in regard to class took a lot of hard work: “Being well-dressed required both a lot of clothing and a lot of knowledge: one needed a different ensemble for each of a host of occasions and one needed to know which outfit went with a given

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216 Philippe Perrot, translated by Richard Bienvenu, *Fashioning the Bourgeoisie: A History of Clothing in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 53.

217 Jane Ashelford, *The Art of Dress: Clothes and Society 1500-1914* (London: National Trust Enterprises Limited, 1996), 214.

event.”<sup>218</sup> Ford states, “The right clothing worn on the correct occasion was an unambiguous badge of high social position, while even small deviations from the rules signaled that either one’s budget or one’s savoir faire was inadequate. The greater the number and magnitude of the errors, the lower one’s rank in society would appear to be.”<sup>219</sup>

In summary, the differences between men of the uppermost class and the upper-middle class in Victorian England were rooted in their social origins, sources of wealth, lifestyle, and roles in society. The aristocracy was an ancient, land-based elite that held hereditary titles and wielded significant political and cultural power, while the upper-middle class gained wealth through industrial and commercial success. They had rising influence but were still considered socially distinct from the landed gentry.

The White Rabbit can be interpreted as a representation of the upper-middle class, particularly through his outward markers of leisure and affluence. His meticulous appearance, shown through his glove, waistcoat, and watch, suggest a man accustomed to a life of refinement and leisure. However, the White Rabbit’s anxious, hurried behavior may indicate that he is, in fact, a figure striving to emulate the upper class rather than belonging to it entirely. His constant worry about being late, fear of punishment from the Queen, and his frantic movements could suggest a form of class anxiety, as if he is overcompensating for a deep-seated insecurity about his status. This nervousness, paired with his attempts to maintain a composed exterior, might imply that he is not fully accepted in the upper echelons of society and is instead grappling with the pressures of upward mobility, trying to present himself as belonging to a higher social tier.

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<sup>218</sup> Richard Thompson Ford, *Dress Codes: How the Laws of Fashion Made History* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2021), 105.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

The White Rabbit is dressed in what most closely resembles a sack coat rather than the more formal frock coat commonly associated with Victorian gentlemen. The sack coat was a looser, less structured garment characterized by a straight cut and relatively simple tailoring, lacking the fitted waist and flared skirt typical of a frock coat, as “their loose, boxy fit hides the shape of the upper body.”<sup>220</sup> By 1830, “the frock coat with stirrup trousers had given way to the more practical sack coat with hemmed trousers”<sup>221</sup> as clothing worn for everyday business and informal occasions due to its practicality and comfort. Additionally, “the sack coats worn by fashionable men were often of patterned fabrics—checks, stripes, and plaids,”<sup>222</sup> and the White Rabbit's coat is patterned like this. Tenniel's choice to depict the White Rabbit in such attire contributes to the character's visual identity as a hurried yet respectable gentlemen figure, while also reflecting the types of fashionable yet functional garments familiar to Victorian readers. Thus, while the White Rabbit's appearance marks him as a member of the upper-middle class, his anxiety reflects the internalized struggles of someone attempting to navigate and integrate into that world.

## Duchess

Tenniel's illustrations of the Duchess vividly capture her unsettling combination of harshness and absurdity, blending grotesque physicality with a paradoxical, comical demeanor. There is speculation that Tenniel's depiction of this character was inspired by the exaggerated facial expressions and imposing figure seen in Quentin Massys' painting

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220 Kelly Mohs Gage, “Nineteenth-Century Afro-Brazilian Men's Dress,” *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion, vol. 2: Latin America and the Caribbean* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2005).

221 Gau, 181.

222 Mohs Gage.

*The Ugly Duchess* from 1513.<sup>223</sup> Michael Hancher, expert on Victorian studies, notes the similarities between the two women in his book *The Tenniel Illustrations to the “Alice” Books*, published in 2019. Hancher discusses how the Massys painting sold in a 1920s auction at Christie’s of the unfortunate looking woman.

Hancher also refers to a 1921 article by W. A. Baillie-Grohman entitled “A Portrait of the Ugliest Princess in History,” published in *The Burlington Magazine*. Baillie-Grohman also recalls a separate drawing by Francisco Melzi, originally contributed to Leonardo da Vinci, that is extraordinarily similar to the Massys painting, indicating that “Tenniel ‘must...have been acquainted with one or the other’ - the painting or the drawing - ‘when he drew his famous Duchess in ‘Alice in Wonderland.’”<sup>224</sup> Hancher then explores various scenarios where Tenniel might have viewed either artwork, bringing in social relationships between Henry Danby Seymour and John Ruskin (who studied at Christ Church in Oxford together), and Carroll, who received advising from Ruskin on illustrations.<sup>225</sup> Hancher proves that these men did have contact with one another in various forms, making Tenniel’s inspiration from the sixteenth-century artwork a possibility. Hancher concludes: “The overlapping associations of Seymour, Ruskin, Carroll, and Tenniel may have resulted in Tenniel’s consulting Seymour’s painting, created by an artist who was publicized by Tenniel’s early publisher James Burns.”<sup>226</sup>

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223 The Massys painting was painted approximately 100 years after the death of its subject, making it a sixteenth-century painting of a fifteenth-century woman.

224 Michael Hancher, *The Tenniel Illustrations to the “Alice” Books* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2019), 59.

225 *Ibid.*, 63.

226 *Ibid.*, 64.

What is also worthy of note here is Tenniel's treatment of clothing for the Duchess (fig. 6). Hancher states: "In his apprenticeship years, Tenniel closely studied medieval costume, and that interest enlivened many of the minor drawings that he produced during his early years on the staff of *Punch*."<sup>227</sup> A question that arises is what type of clothing a woman in the year 1513 wore? Fashion historian Lydia Edwards notes: "It is rare to come face to face with surviving examples of sixteenth-century dress for the simple reason that so few complete garments remain. Even the wealthy often made new clothing (or parts of new garments) from the sturdy remains of the old, and we have no complete surviving physical record of working- and lower-class clothing. Our knowledge derives from the fortunate wealth of portraits and other artworks that remain—primarily European in origin."<sup>228</sup> Since no actual garments survive, historians must look to paintings for fashion history information.

The dress worn by the bride in *The Arnolfini Portrait*, painted by Jan van Eyck in 1434 (fig. 7), is a prime example of fifteenth-century fashion, reflecting wealth and social status. It is composed of rich fabrics, possibly velvet or silk, and possesses intricate details and luxurious materials. The dress has a long, flowing silhouette with a high waistline, fitted bodice, and wide sleeves that taper down at the wrists. It is decorated with fur trim along the neckline, hemline, and sleeves.

The Duchess in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* wears a similar gown, with a raised waistline and prominent belt. The bride in *The Arnolfini Portrait* has a blue underskirt visible; the Duchess wears a floral figured skirt that is visible under a solid

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227 Hancher, 64.

228 Edwards, 20.

over dress. This type of underskirt was also known as a petticoat, and it provided additional warmth. The wide sleeves trimmed with fur are visibly worn by both women.

As the Duchess is modeled after a Medieval figure, she is depicted wearing a gown. However, the most distinctive fashion element in Tenniel's illustration is her escoffion, or horned headdress. Dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in France and England, it consisted of a tightly fitted cap or coif, often made out of cloth or velvet, which was adorned with two upward-curving horns. The horns were typically formed from fabric, metal, or even wire, and could be draped with fabric or other decorative elements. This was worn primarily by noblewomen and was considered a symbol of high status.

Tenniel's Duchess wears the escoffion, and multiple fabrics and textures are included as draped elements. Edwards reminds readers that only women members of the aristocracy had the ability to wear fabrics such as fur,<sup>229</sup> and the Duchess has visible trim of ermine with its distinctive white fur with black spots adorning the structure of the horns. This places her in the aristocracy. Tenniel used the escoffion as a distinctive fashion statement that highlights both the character's social standing and exaggerated portrayal of the Duchess.

Tenniel created a formidable, yet comical, authoritative figure in the form of the Duchess. Perhaps Tenniel recalled elements from Medieval dress as inspiration for the styling of the Duchess as a form of Gothic Revival.<sup>230</sup> The Victorian period saw a fascination with the medieval past, especially through the lens of romanticism. Its

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229 Edwards, 22.

230 The term Gothic Revival refers to a mid-nineteenth century movement in mainly architecture, as the public preferred buildings inspired by medieval design. Previously, inspiration for architecture came from classical forms from ancient Greece and Rome.

aristocracy was idealized, and Victorians admired the concept of chivalry. The Gothic Revival surged in this era, drawing on medieval aesthetics and ideas, as they were thought to be symbols of grandeur, romanticism, and noble heritage. Figures such as Walter Scott, Benjamin Disraeli, John Ruskin, and William Morris idealized and reconsidered the medieval period as a time of chivalry, craftsmanship, and social harmony, often using it as a means through which to critique or envision alternatives to the modern industrial world. Despite this, such depictions often simplified or overlooked the harsher realities of feudal hierarchy and aristocratic power.<sup>231</sup> The Victorians were experiencing their own growth with the progress of the Industrial Revolution and the spread of democratic ideals, and they looked back on the Medieval period as a time of social injustice where the common person had no voice and was often exploited.

The character of the Duchess and her dress in medieval garments serves as a fitting embodiment of the medieval aristocracy's tendency to perpetuate injustice, as her treatment of Alice mirrors the harsh, unyielding power imbalance typical of feudal society. With her privileged status, the Duchess disregards Alice.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Tenniel's illustrations of characters such as Alice, the White Rabbit, and the Duchess within *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* provide valuable insights into Victorian-era life, particularly through their clothing choices, which reflect broader cultural associations and social norms of their time. These visual representations not only offer a glimpse into the fashion and societal expectations of the period but also

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231 Alice Chandler, *A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in 19th-Century English Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1970).

serve as commentary on Victorian attitudes towards class, gender, and identity.

Moreover, Tenniel's portrayal of various animals and fantastical elements within the narrative reveals the era's complex fascination with the 'exotic other,' shedding light on the tension between curiosity and colonial superiority. Through these illustrations, Tenniel captures the interplay of curiosity, cultural dominance, and the enduring intrigue with distant lands, providing a multifaceted view of Victorian values and perspectives.



Figure 1. Alice stands and holds a “Drink Me” bottle, while wearing a simple, knee-length dress with puffed sleeves and an apron. Hatch lines throughout the illustration create the surrounding environment, giving depth and texture to an otherwise minimal background.



Figure 2. The photograph depicts two young girls wearing dresses typical for mid-nineteenth-century girls. The dresses feature wide, open necklines and short sleeves, with bodices gathered into fitted waistbands. The skirts fall to approximately knee-to mid-calf length.



Figure 3. Alice's neck is depicted growing unusually long, revealing the shirt she wears beneath her dress. The background is largely empty, with lines used to indicate her shadow and provide subtle texture.



Figure 4. Fashion illustration from *The Queen, The Lady's Newspaper*, dated May 30, 1868, depicting an ensemble intended for a girl approximately five or six years old. It reflects the fashionable silhouette of the 1860s adapted for children, illustrating similarities to the dress worn by Alice in Tenniel's illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.



Figure 5. Tenniel's White Rabbit examines his pocket watch, emphasizing his characteristic urgency. He wears eighteenth-century fashionable dress.



Figure 6. Alice walks with the Duchess, who is depicted in recognizable Medieval dress with an elaborate headdress and exaggeratedly large head. The illustration emphasizes the contrast between Alice's childlike proportions and the Duchess's stylized, caricatured form.



Figure 7. Jan van Eyck, *The Arnolfini Portrait*, 1434, oil on oak panel, The National Gallery, London, accession no. NG186. This painting illustrates a wealthy couple in a domestic interior, richly adorned with detailed clothing and luxurious textiles. The work is celebrated for its meticulous realism and intricate symbolism.

## BESSIE PEASE GUTMANN

Bessie Pease Gutmann (1876-1960) illustrated a version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* published in 1907 by Dodge Publishing<sup>232</sup> in New York. Her version includes eight color full-page plates composed of shaded colors with a strong sense of affection amongst the characters paired with smaller line drawing images scattered throughout the text.<sup>233</sup>

Gutmann studied at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women (now the Moore College of Art).<sup>234</sup> After finishing her courses there in 1894, she joined the newly founded New York School of Art in 1896, where she took classes taught by William Meritt Chase (1849-1916).<sup>235</sup> Regarding Gutmann's exposure to Chase, illustration historian Karen Choppa stated, "Chase's influence no doubt aided Gutmann considerably in mastering the effects of light and shadow that highlight much of her art."<sup>236</sup> Gutmann's own distinctive artistic style combined elements of both realism and idealism, and her illustrations of children featured them in idyllic settings, highlighting their innocence and joy within soft, hazy surroundings. Her work appeared in magazines, greeting cards, and children's books, emphasizing family, love, and the beauty of childhood, gaining recognition for its combination of sweetness and technical skill. Author Victor Christie explained Gutmann's style: "Bessie Pease Gutmann was creating not just with charcoal

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232 For the 1907 edition *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* with illustrations by Bessie Pease Gutmann, see the copy available online at:  
[https://archive.org/details/alicesadventures00carr\\_14/page/n205/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater](https://archive.org/details/alicesadventures00carr_14/page/n205/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater).

233 Victor J.W. Christie, *Bessie Pease Gutmann: Her Life and Works* (Radnor: Wallace-Homestead Book Company, 1990), 52.

234 *Ibid.*, 7.

235 Karen A. Choppa, *Bessie Pease Gutmann: Over Fifty Years of Published Art* (Atglen: Schiffer Publishing, Ltd., 1998), 7.

236 *Ibid.*

stick and brush but also out of a real love for children. Her success was not the result of some public relations efforts, but came from the combination of her exceptional talent and determination to depict happy children exactly as they were - sometimes naughty, sometimes disheveled, but always pink-cheeked, plump and delightful. Her works became like a breath of fresh air to those who sought her work and who had grown accustomed to seeing children portrayed as solemn, formally dressed miniature adults.”<sup>237</sup> Gutmann deeply loved children, and was able to build a successful career as an illustrator while also being a devoted mother, a rare accomplishment in the early twentieth century when societal expectations often limited women’s professional opportunities, especially those with familial responsibilities.

Gutmann’s first major book commission was for illustrations for *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* by the Dodge editors in 1907, as mentioned.<sup>238</sup> She previously worked with Dodge in 1905 when she provided artwork for the book *A Child’s Garden of Verses*.<sup>239</sup> Surprisingly, she was not familiar with Carroll’s story before she began her work. Gutmann stated, “there are few children and fewer grown-ups who have not read *Alice* and her adventures, and so you will probably think me unique when I tell you that up to the day that I received the commission to illustrate a new edition of *Alice*, I not only had never read her experiences, but I never held a copy of the book in my hands. I felt very ashamed of myself, but at once set to work and read it over and over again until I could have recited all the adventures in chronological order.”<sup>240</sup> It is interesting to note that she enjoyed the process and story so much, she ultimately named her first daughter

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237 Christie, 18.

238 Ibid., 52.

239 Ibid.

240 Ibid.

‘Alice.’<sup>241</sup> Gutmann illustrated *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* primarily in watercolors and ink, producing a gentle, dreamy quality. The watercolor provides a subtle, translucent look, fitting with the fairy tale and fantasy elements of Carroll’s story. She used delicate shading and color graduation, paired with distinct, yet light, ink outlines. The juxtaposition of the outlines and soft colors blended realism and fantasy, which are similar characteristics of the story of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. She met Hellmuth Gutmann (1867-1948), an art editor for Gutmann & Gutmann, with whom she began a working relationship in 1903, and the two married in 1906.<sup>242</sup> “The marriage was one of mutual love and support. That Gutmann continued her art career in the face of marriage and motherhood was unusual for the day. Most women artists remained spinsters or found their careers interrupted by family life. However, marrying one of her art publishers did change a quotient in the configuration and, one would imagine, made the combination of art career and family life a little easier.”<sup>243</sup> It was extremely important to Gutmann to be both a mother and have a career in the arts. Of her marriage and life as a mother, Christie notes, “She was now a loving wife, a beautiful mother, and would soon be recognized as one of the leading portrayers of children and their activities in the United States and Europe. She could now express motherly love—the warmth, joy, richness, and fulfillment of life only a mother could see was no longer a vicarious emotion. Motherhood was a personal joy for her to share with the world through her artistry. In her was the confluence of two of the most noble strains in humanity—the

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241 Christie, 53.

242 Choppa, 10.

243 Ibid.

mother and the artist. Both qualities were creative, and both were striving to express their knowledge and outlook.”<sup>244</sup>

Her work also featured influence from the twentieth-century Art Nouveau movement. This style placed emphasis on flowing lines, stylized forms, and a harmonious relationship between nature and figures. Gutmann’s *Alice* reflects an Edwardian sensibility, with a focus on domesticity and idealized childhood. This is a stark opposition to Tenniel’s *Alice*, who is much more formal and distinctly Victorian. Although Gutmann’s illustrations did not become as renowned as those by Tenniel, they still offered a fresh and approachable interpretation of the story, appealing to younger audiences and parents who appreciated her soft, child-friendly style. Her work fits in nicely with early twentieth-century illustrations, where emphasis was placed on idealized, sentimental portrayals of childhood innocence.

Despite the prevalent significance of the simplicity associated with youth, the era was also marked by significant challenges. The early twentieth century was an unsettling and sometimes heartbreaking period of time in America in regards to children as industrial growth created job opportunities, which sometimes overshadowed the importance of children’s roles within their family and accessible education. Families often adhered to traditional gender roles, with men typically working and earning the majority of a family’s income, while women managed the household and cared for children. The United States was in the midst of the Second Industrial Revolution, with rapid industrialization leading to urbanization. Work in factories was booming, and cities grew as people migrated for jobs. With the growth of cities, education became more attainable, and attendance in public schools increased.

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244 Christie, 18.

Families enjoyed simple pastimes, such as reading and community events, as well as spending time outdoors. Additionally, the rise of the automobile allowed families to engage in additional leisure activities outside of their immediate community. Homes varied significantly by socioeconomic status. Wealthier families had access to conveniences such as electricity and indoor plumbing, while poorer families lived in crowded conditions without these modern luxuries. Additionally, illnesses were a real threat. The Summit Historical Society located in Breckenridge, Colorado, hosted an exhibition in 2002 entitled, “A Child’s Life - Turn of the Century,” displaying pastimes, furniture, games, and scenarios seen in everyday life of the past. The museum notes, “children were 17 times as likely to die before the age of 1 as they are now. Diphtheria, smallpox, whooping cough, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, measles, and meningitis”<sup>245</sup> affected many families.

While childhood in 1907 was challenging for many due to widespread poverty and the prevalence of child labor, life was not solely defined by hardship. Children from various social backgrounds still found ways to enjoy free time, taking part in traditional games, outdoor activities, and creative play. Some of these include marbles, jump rope, tag, and hoops and sticks. It is this type of outdoor play that is seen as Alice plays outdoors and tumbles down the rabbit hole.

The next section of this dissertation will focus on examining Gutmann’s illustrations and analyzing what they reveal about life of the era. Gutmann’s art, with its emphasis on sentimental and idealized depictions of childhood, offers a unique lens through which to explore early-twentieth-century American culture. Her detailed renderings of the characters, particularly her soft, nurturing portrayal of Alice, reflect the

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245 Jane Stebbins, “Museum depicts life as a child from 1890-1910,” *Summit Daily*, 16 December 2003, <https://www.summitdaily.com/news/museum-depicts-life-as-a-child-from-1890-1910/>.

cultural values of the period, such as the growing importance of childhood as a distinct and protected phase of life. By looking at her drawings and the clothing worn by the characters, this section will uncover how her artistic choices align with broader societal trends.

### [Analysis of the Illustrations by Gutmann](#)

#### **Alice**

Gutmann's *Alice* illustrations (figs. 8, 9, and 10) show a fairly young version of the character, with rosy, round cheeks and long light brown hair. Alice's hair holds a gentle curl, emphasizing a look of purity associated with children of this era. She wears a large bow on one side of her head, securing her hair out of her face, and this type of bow was often seen. Alice's drop-waist dress is white, featuring a low waistline that sits below the natural waist, closer to the hips, giving it a loose comfortable fit. The neckline is high with a lace collar, with embroidered tucks or gentle pleating throughout the bodice, as shadow elements suggest pintuck details. It is difficult to determine the exact details of the dress bodice, as the light color obscures finer design elements. There is also a dark belt worn with the dress, and visible belt loops on the sides. This style reflected the transition from the more structured Victorian era to the relaxed, flowing styles of the Edwardian period. These dresses, like Alice's, were typically made from light, airy fabrics, such as cotton, muslin, linen, or lightweight wool, or even silk or fine wool for formal occasions. This fabric was chosen for its breathability and comfort. The sleeves of the dress are long, and puffed at the shoulders and tapering down, giving a slight balloon shape, featuring a wide cuff at the wrist. The skirt of the dress is rather simple in style, falling to the knee, with soft gathers and a slightly flared effect. Alice's dress is white, but it was common for dresses of this style to be light blue, pink, white, cream, or pale

yellow. In the winter months, darker colors such as navy and brown were prevalent. The dress is paired with white stockings and black leather shoes. The shoes are a classic style, with a rounded closed toe, low heel, and single strap across the instep. The ribbon bow in her hair is a very pale shade of light blue.

Fashion historian Clare Rose discusses how women's fashion in the 1890s was either tailored, following menswear styles, and often worn for sports and working, or wide gored skirts with soft draped blouses, flounced hems, and a plethora of trim.<sup>246</sup> She continues, noting that "clothing for girls was caught between these two extremes, the mannish 'New Woman' on the one hand, and the creature of the boudoir on the other."<sup>247</sup> These styles continued for multiple decades: "Up to about 1910 girls' clothes continued along the lines set down in the 1890s, with changes mainly affecting details such as the cut of the sleeve and the choice of fabrics and trimming."<sup>248</sup>

The New York Public Library has in its collection an advertisement illustrating children's dresses from 1914.<sup>249</sup> Within this collection of line drawings of dresses, style 5962 (fig. 11) is very similar to the dress worn by Gutmann's Alice, and is described meagerly as "Children's Dress. Cut to sizes - 4, 6, and 8 years."<sup>250</sup> This is not a lot of information, yet it also confirms Alice's age in Gutmann's representation to be at most 8 years old, but possibly as young as 4, which coincides very well with the illustrations. This also coincides with fashion expectations of girls as they age. Rose notes, "young

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246 Clare Rose, *Children's Clothes Since 1750* (London: B. T. Batsford Limited, 1989), 121.

247 Ibid.

248 Ibid., 126.

249 "Good taste in children's dresses," *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*, 1914, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-3c18-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.

250 Ibid.

girls might have more freedom at the waistline, but otherwise were expected to conform to adult styles from the age of 8 upwards.”<sup>251</sup>

A surviving garment that also closely resembles the dress worn by Alice was auctioned in 2020 by Kerry Taylor Auctions, amidst a lot of children’s clothing. The auction grouping was entitled, “A group of children’s and infant wear, mainly 1900-1910,” and described as: “14 pieces including cutwork and whitework dresses, ivory silk girl’s dresses, two pairs of lace-inset combinations, a coat with Irish crochet insertions and others.”<sup>252</sup> The dress resembling Alice’s garment features small, vertical pleats throughout the bodice, interspersed with cutwork<sup>253</sup> decoration (fig. 12). The dropped waist has horizontal pleating, and the subtly flared skirt has cutwork and whitework<sup>254</sup> near the hem.

Alice ventures outside during her trip to Wonderland, and a white cotton dress worn by a small child would get dirty pretty quickly. The topic of white clothing worn outdoors and its extensive laundering process was addressed by Em Ricciardi in the article, “White Clothing and Victorian Laundry.” The timeframe predates Gutmann’s 1907 version of *Alice*, but the concept remains the same as mechanized washing machines did not become staples in households until the 1930s-1950s. The option to send dirty clothing to commercial laundries, however, was available in many areas. Ricciardi explains how washing clothes in the late 1800s was a difficult process with many steps. First, clothing was soaked overnight and would be “soaped, boiled or scalded, rinsed,

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251 Rose, 127.

252 “A group of children’s and infant wear, mainly 1900-1910,” *Kerry Taylor Auctions*, 27 October 2020, <https://www.kerrytaylorauctions.com/auction/lot/358-a-group-of-childrens-and-infant-wear-mainly-1900-1910/?lot=28214&sd=1>.

253 Cutwork involves cutting away sections of fabric within a design, leaving holes or creating a lace or open effect.

254 Whitework is the process of using white thread on white fabric to embroider decorative elements.

wrung out, mangled, dried, starched, and ironed”<sup>255</sup> the next day. She adds, “in order to keep whites white, women of the time came up with a number of stain-removal solutions. For example, multiple manuals mentioned that sour milk can remove iron rust from white clothing. Fruit or wine stains can be treated with chloride of lime, sal ammonia, or spirits of wine. And ink can be removed with just a few drops of oxalic acid or salts of sorrel.”<sup>256</sup> Additionally, boiling garments in water tinged with blue dye was an added stage to make yellow clothing appear more white, as yellow and blue are complementary colors, tricking the eye to only see white as blue is added.”<sup>257</sup> Lastly, Ricciardi refers to *The Hearthstone; or, Life at Home*, a 1887 manual which contained instructions for bleaching. Here, “cotton could be bleached by soaking in buttermilk for a few days, or adding turpentine to the first washing stage.”<sup>258</sup>

In a typical early-twentieth-century household, women were mainly responsible for laundry duties.<sup>259</sup> In middle- or upper-class households, this task might be completed by a servant or maid. Additionally, a laundress or laundry in the community could wash, press, and fold clothing that was dropped off on their premises. Given the presumed upper-middle class standing of Alice, hired help ensured that the young girl’s dress remained pristine and white during her outdoor explorations.

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255 Em Ricciardi, “White Clothing and Victorian Laundry,” *The Library Company of Philadelphia*, accessed 26 March 2025, <https://librarycompany.org/2017/08/28/white-clothing-and-victorian-laundry/>.

256 Ibid.

257 Ibid.

258 Ibid.

259 In the early 1900s, commercial laundromats prevalent in today’s society did not yet exist. Instead, laundry services could be provided by commercial laundry businesses, which operated large-scale facilities and catered to middle- and upper-class families. They offered easy, dry, and iron services and often employed women and immigrant workers. Otherwise, laundry was washed at home. For further reading on the topic, see Susan Strasser, *Never Done: A History of American Housework*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

## White Rabbit

Gutmann's depiction of the White Rabbit (fig. 13) is exhibiting fashionable dress from a previous era. By 1907, men wore a three-piece suit ensemble, consisting of a tailored jacket, a waistcoat, and trousers. Although the White Rabbit is indeed wearing a waistcoat and jacket, the coloring and overall style does not fit with typical clothing of the period. The red jacket with a presumed velvet black collar and tails paired with a green waistcoat with gold buttons is more formal and antiquated than normally seen.

Men's suits from the earlier twentieth century were worn with high, round-collared white shirts, neckties, and a derby or bowler hat. The fabric for all three suit pieces could be the same, but it was also common to see a matching waistcoat and jacket with contrasting pants, or a suit with a contrasting waistcoat.<sup>260</sup>

Perhaps Gutmann chose the bright garments for the White Rabbit as a way to incorporate some elements of historical romanticism, artistic self-expression, or theatrical flair. The art style Art Nouveau had a fleeting influence, and was defined as highly decorative and drew on natural forms and patterns from the past but expressed through new techniques and materials. Thus, it showed a blend of old and new ideas. Christie noted that Gutmann "lived and thrived through the great period of art history. The Beaux-Arts Period began in 1875 and ran parallel with the Art Nouveau movement until the Art Deco period began in 1926. It was, however, in the field of illustrative art that she achieved her greatest success and popularity."<sup>261</sup> Although her work is not specifically only Art Nouveau in style, some style elements may find their way into her work. In this way, garments such as the White Rabbit's bright red tail coat could be worn or reference

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<sup>260</sup>Sven Raphael Schneider, "What Men REALLY Wore in the 1900s (1900-1909)," *Gentleman's Gazette*, <https://www.gentlemangazette.com/what-men-wore-1900s/>.

<sup>261</sup>Christie, 2.

within Art Nouveau-influenced artistic and intellectual circles as symbolic, nostalgic, or intentionally unconventional dandy dress.

Or, perhaps Gutmann was looking for a way to add some more color to her illustration. The foreground and background are composed of pale green grass with small clumps of white and purple flowers. Alice's dress is mainly white, and her bow is pale blue. With the White Rabbit in the foreground wearing a bright red jacket, he visibly stands out. This aligns with her signature use of bright colors, as the vibrant red not only draws attention, but emphasizes the lively nature of her work. The bold, vivid shade of red reflects her energetic and playful style.

Furthermore, Gutmann's illustrations of frog footmen show reptiles dressed in distinctive clothing while working for the Queen and delivering letters. Her choice for their clothing is elaborate livery, which is the ensemble worn by workers such as servants, coachmen, and footmen while working for upper class and wealthy families. These frogs wear clothing that is similar to the fashionable dress of the eighteenth century, which includes a waistcoat, tailcoat, and a pair of breeches that end at the knee. The tailcoats feature decorative gold trim throughout, on both the front, back, and edges. They also wear white powdered wigs on their heads.

Although livery was still worn by certain employees of wealthy families in the early 1900s, the uniform did not closely resemble the clothing illustrated by Gutmann. She chose inspiration from a past era, similar to her clothing choice for the White Rabbit. Formal clothing choices can play a significant role in shaping social and professional identities. A livery uniform not only confers a sense of authority and discipline but also signifies a clean boundary between different social classes, reinforcing the idea of respectability. By adhering to a formal dress code, workers can be more likely to be

perceived as competent and reliable, garnering greater respect from employers and clients. This visual marker of professionalism serves as a powerful tool in legitimizing roles within the workforce. Additionally, although the White Rabbit is not an employee to anyone, the same notion can be true. His formal dress may cause others to take him seriously and view him as a respectable figure.

Gutmann's choice to dress the White Rabbit and frog footmen in garments fashionable from a previous era can be understood as a deliberate artistic decision aimed at elevating their status and lending them an air of distinction. While fashionable men of Gutmann's era were typically seen in the three-piece suit, which reflected the modern, progressive nature of the time, Gutmann's decision to dress her characters in attire that harks back to an earlier period suggests an intention to make them appear more elevated and dignified. Alternatively, this shift may reflect the increasing conservatism and standardization of business attire in the early-twentieth century. Tenniel's White Rabbit, outfitted as a Victorian dandy, was entirely suited to the sartorial exuberance of his era. By contrast, imagining the same character in the context of early-twentieth century fashion would be monotonous and uninspired. The waistcoat and jacket, which were emblems of previous generations, serve to imbue these anthropomorphized characters with a sense of timelessness and respectability, aligning them with the traditions of social decorum. In choosing this attire, Gutmann may have been striving to create a contrast between the whimsical nature of Carroll's characters and the societal expectations placed on figures of authority or importance. The formality of their clothing likely serves to make them appear more credible and worthy of serious consideration, reinforcing their roles in the narrative as figures of consequence in a world where the absurd and the formal coexist.

## Mad Hatter

In Gutmann's illustration, the Mad Hatter (fig. 14) is notably devoid of the eccentric or unsettling qualities typically associated with the character. Rather than appearing mad, he is rendered as a neatly dressed, mild-mannered figure with a pleasant and composed expression. Gutmann's Hatter lacks wild eyes, exaggerated gestures, or chaotic energy present in other depictions, such as Tenniel's. This aligns with Gutmann's broader aesthetic, which favored sentimental and child-friendly imagery.

Only the top half of his body is visible, and the colors are dark, making it difficult to see precise details of his clothing. Gutmann's depiction of the Mad Hatter appears to be dressed in the fashionable style,<sup>262</sup> as a dark blue blazer and bowtie with a white shirt are evident. Although not much else is seen of him, it is interesting to note that the Mad Hatter wears a boater hat, which is a flat-brimmed and flat-crowned straw hat, typically adorned with a ribbon band. This gives him a polished and leisurely appearance. The boater hat was a fashionable accessory for men in 1907,<sup>263</sup> worn in warm weather. It was often paired with blazers and striped jackets for casual or semi-formal summer occasions, such as boating, picnics, or seaside outings, denoting summertime elegance and genteel masculinity. Menswear expert Sven Raphael Schneider notes that the boater was seen as a sign of equality, as men of all classes wore the same hat.<sup>264</sup>

Ultimately, Gutmann's Mad Hatter is not positioned within a specific class hierarchy, but is instead portrayed as a calm, well-mannered gentleman, which is an

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262 If Tenniel's White Rabbit is outfitted in the manner of a Victorian dandy, then Gutmann's interpretation reflects the more refined aesthetic of the Edwardian dandy.

263 The boater hat was often worn between the 1890s through the 1920s.

264 Schneider.

interpretation that departs notably from the eccentric, socially ambiguous character presented in Carroll's original text.

### **Caterpillar**

Gutmann's Caterpillar (fig. 15) offers subtle visual cues worth brief examination, particularly in how the figure conveys character through elements such as posture, expression, and the prominent inclusion of the hookah.

Gutmann's imagery reflects early-twentieth-century sensibilities while retaining key elements of the original text. As noted, the Caterpillar is depicted smoking a hookah pipe, presumably of opium, given the cultural associations of the time. He is not wearing any specific clothing relevant to the sartorial focus of this thesis, but Gutmann's illustrations capture the dreamy, disorienting quality of the scene.

Opium and related drugs were still relatively commonplace in 1907, although attitudes towards the drug and regulations were beginning to shift. In many countries, especially in Europe and the United States, opium and its derivatives, such as morphine and laudanum, were in use from the nineteenth and into the early-twentieth century. These substances were available over the counter and included in many tonics and patent medicines. Opium was commonly used to treat pain, diarrhea, coughing, and insomnia. By the early 1900s, addiction to opiates had become a recognized public health concern, particularly amongst middle- and upper-class women who were often prescribed these drugs.

In 1907, opium was not yet universally regulated, but concern about its effects was growing. In the United States, the Pure Food and Drug Act had passed in 1906, requiring proper labeling of medicines, including those containing opiates.

Internationally, the International Opium Commission ultimately convened in 1909, signaling the start of global regulatory efforts. While opium was still commonly used, the social and legal landscape had started to shift by 1907.

## Conclusion

Gutmann, a prominent illustrator in the early 1900s, exemplified the complexities of working women during a time of significant social and industrial transformation. As both a successful artist and dedicated mother, Gutmann navigated the challenges of balancing career and family in an era when women's roles were often confined to the domestic sphere. Meanwhile, the period was also marked by rapid industrial expansion, which led to the exploitation of children through widespread labor and harsh conditions, even though child labor reforms and compulsory schooling existed. Gutmann's illustrations are known for their charm and depictions of childhood innocence, and may offer a poignant contrast to the grim realities faced by working children of the time. Through her artwork, she captures an idealized vision of childhood, which, while endearing, can also serve as a subtle reflection of the growing divide between the romanticized concept of childhood and the harsh, often overlooked conditions in which many children worked. Ultimately, Gutmann's work can be understood within the broader context of labor during this period, as it reflects both the opportunities and limitations faced by individuals, particularly women and children, in a rapidly industrializing world.

The illustrations by Gutmann in the 1907 edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* present a vibrant, cheerful, and whimsical portrayal of childhood innocence, capturing a sense of joy and fantasy through their charming and colorful imagery. These

happy, idealized depictions offer a stark contrast to the harsh realities many children faced during this period, where illness, labor, and difficult living conditions were widespread. Gutmann's art, with its bright colors and lighthearted scenes, evokes an idealized version of childhood—one that is untouched by the struggles that were a part of everyday life for many children in the early twentieth century. In this sense, her illustrations not only serve as a timeless representation of innocence and joy, but also highlight the disparity between the fantasy world within *Alice* and the often grim experiences of childhood during that era.



Figure 8. This illustration by Gutmann depicts Alice dressed in a white dress consistent with fashionable children's attire of the early twentieth century. The dress is paired with white tights and black shoes. Alice's dark hair is styled with a large white bow, a common accessory of the period. This reinforces her youthful appearance and situates the image within contemporary visual conventions.



Figure 9. Alice is shown running through a garden wearing the same white dress as previously seen, maintaining visual continuity with earlier depictions. The surrounding space is dominated by large red flowers that nearly exceed Alice in scale, visually dwarfing her figure. This exaggerated proportion disrupts realistic spatial relationships and reinforces the fantastical quality of the scene, positioning Alice as small and vulnerable within an environment that appears both vibrant and overwhelming.



Figure 10. This illustration depicts Alice in a pink-and-white interior space in which her enlarged body exceeds the physical limits of the room. Her figure dominates the composition, contrasting sharply with other images in which she appears diminished by her surroundings.



Figure 11. "Good taste in children's dresses," *The New York Public Library Digital Collections*. 1914. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e1-3c18-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.



Figure 12. Dress included in 2020 lot by Kerry Taylor Auctions. The auction grouping was entitled, “A group of children’s and infant wear, mainly 1900-1910,” and described as: “14 pieces including cutwork and whitework dresses, ivory silk girl’s dresses, two pairs of lace-inset combinations, a coat with Irish crochet insertions and others.”



Figure 13. In this illustration by Gutmann, Alice is seated in the grass, with her figure positioned in the midground. She wears a white dress with a relaxed posture in the natural setting. In the foreground, the White Rabbit is prominently depicted. He is dressed in a red tailcoat and a green waistcoat, which are garments that evoke fashions from an earlier historical period.



Figure 14. This illustration shows the tea party, and Alice is positioned on the left side of the composition. She is only shown from behind, with the back of her head visible to the viewer. The Mad Hatter appears opposite her and is depicted from the chest up. He wears a blue coat and a boater hat, presenting a restrained and composed appearance that contrasts with the more exaggerated visual interpretations of the character. The background is rendered in dark tones, filled with dense trees and greenery, creating a shadowed, enclosed setting. In the foreground, a table occupies much of the visual space and is covered with tea service items, including teacups, saucers, and a kettle.

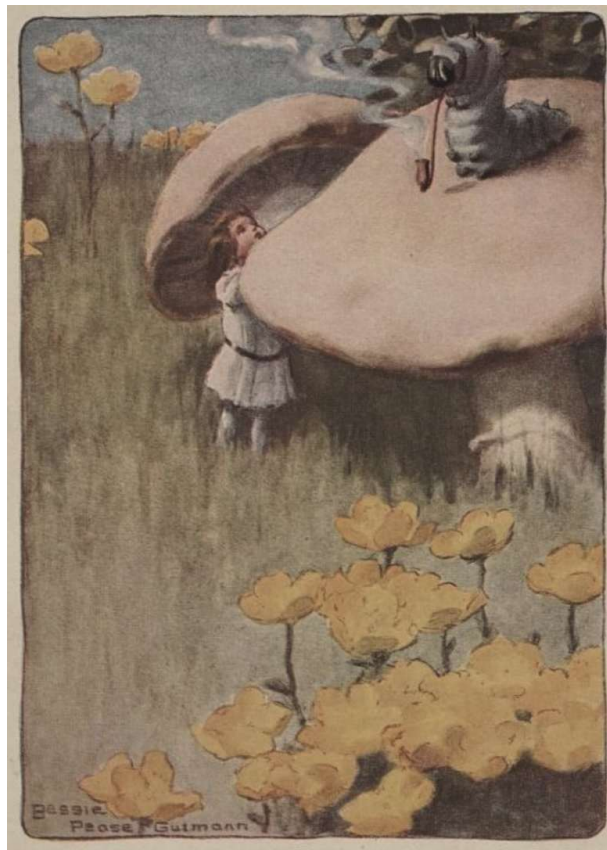


Figure 15. Alice is depicted here at a very small scale, clinging to a large white mushroom that dominates the composition. Seated atop the mushroom is the Caterpillar, shown with largely realistic features and proportions, with the notable exception of smoking a hookah. The foreground is filled primarily with pale green grass and scattered yellow flowers. Only a narrow band of blue sky is visible in the background. The overall image is created in a muted color palette, softening contrasts and contributing to a subdued visual tone.

## ARTHUR RACKHAM

Arthur Rackham (1867-1939) was a British artist who started his professional line of work at an insurance company, following his father's career path.<sup>265</sup> He later attended evening classes at the Lambeth School of Art, and began selling illustrations to publications such as *Scraps*, *Chums*, and *Pall Mall Budget*.<sup>266</sup> He ultimately quit his insurance work, and solely worked as an illustrator starting in 1896,<sup>267</sup> providing illustrations for books such as *Brothers Grimm Fairy Tales*, *Rip Van Winkle*, *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*, *The Rhinegold and the Valkyrie*, *Siegfried and the Twilight of the Gods*, *Aesop's Fables*, and *Mother Goose*. Thanks to technological advances in print reproduction at the turn of the century, Rackham was able to take full advantage of new methods that allowed his illustrations to be reproduced with greater fidelity. Author Catherine Nichols notes that these advances in printing technology allowed illustrators like Rackham to bypass the need for wood or metal engraving, as their drawings could be photographed and mechanically produced. This shift was especially advantageous for Rackham, since it preserved the precision of his distinctive line work.<sup>268</sup>

Rackham was commissioned to illustrate *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1907, an assignment that came as part of the celebrations for the 40th anniversary of the book's original publication. This edition was significant because it was the first time the copyright of *Alice* had expired in the United Kingdom, allowing publishers other than

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265 LaRue Scott, "Arthur Rackham Illustrations," *British Heritage* (July 2003), 52.

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid.

268 Catherine Nichols, *Alice's Wonderland: A Visual Journey through Lewis Carroll's Mad, Mad World* (New York: Race Point Publishing, 2014), 25.

Macmillan to produce new illustrated editions, leading to Rackham's version, published by William Heinemann in London.<sup>269</sup> Considering this shift, Nichols notes how Rackham's drawings, "with their sinuous lines and muted, somber colors, were very different from Tenniel's."<sup>270</sup> This difference was partly shaped by Rackham's artistic process. Unlike Tenniel, he worked with a live model, Doris Jane Dommett, who also posed for his illustrations in *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*. Rackham's Alice appears calm and expressionless, showing none of the fear or anger evident in Tenniel's version.<sup>271</sup>

A defining feature of Rackham's illustration style is the expressive quality of contour treatment, which conveys both fluidity and precision, lending his images their distinctive character and emotional depth. Historian LaRue Scott describes Rackham's line quality: "Bold, at times heavy, pen strokes formed the basis of his works. To these he added moody, subdued colours in light, almost transparent washes."<sup>272</sup> This combination of assertive linework and delicate color gave Rackham's illustrations their distinctive emotional and atmospheric tone. Literary scholar Michael Patrick Hearn further situates Rackham's artistic approach in relation to his predecessors, noting that "certainly Rackham's edition was designed not to knock Tenniel's off the nursery shelf but to give a new dress to an old favorite."<sup>273</sup> Rackham's style, then, was both respectful of tradition and strikingly individual. Even his personal presentation reflected this quiet individuality.

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269 Arthur Rackham, "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," *Metropolitan Museum of Art*, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/347159>.

270 Nichols, 25.

271 Ibid.

272 Scott, 53.

273 Michael Patrick Hearn, "Arthur Rackham's Adventures in Wonderland," within *Lewis Carroll Observed: A Collection of Unpublished Photographs, Drawings, Poetry, and New Essays*, edited by Edward Guiliano (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1976), 35.

Rackham's own appearance and personal style shaped his overall aesthetic, and Scott notes, "Rackham maintained a low-key lifestyle and preferred to always wear a navy-blue suit with a stiff white shirt and simple tie. When one suit wore out, his tailor crafted a new one of the same type."<sup>274</sup> His reserved appearance mirrored the controlled precision of his line, suggesting a continuity between the man and the images he created on paper. This meticulous attention to detail extended beyond his linework and personal presentation into the very objects he chose to depict, as Nichols states, "Rackham copied the exact pattern on his wife's china for the tea setting in the Hatter's party."<sup>275</sup>

Among the many critical perspectives of Rackham's work, Hearn's essay "Arthur Rackham's Adventures in Wonderland" provides a valuable contribution. Published in the 1976 collection *Lewis Carroll Observed: A Collection of Unpublished Photographs, Drawings, Poetry, and New Essays*, Hearn's article situates Rackham's *Alice* illustrations in both the broader tradition of Carroll illustration and the shifting aesthetic values of the early twentieth century. Hearn offers a view balancing appreciation with critique while noting the challenges Rackham faced in Tenniel's footsteps.

Hearn draws a distinction between Rackham's Alice amongst his figures in other works. He writes, "the grotesque people of Rackham's watercolors beautifully contrast with his depiction of Alice. She is delicately, naturalistically drawn; as in the frontispiece, she is a portrait of an actual little girl."<sup>276</sup> (fig. 16) This juxtaposition heightens the visual and emotional contrast between Alice's grounded realism and exaggerated strangeness. However, Hearn also observes that Rackham may have experienced limitations in working with Carroll's text, as his edition includes only thirteen color plates, three full-

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274 Scott, 53.

275 Nichols, 25.

276 Hearn, 39.

page black-and-white illustrations, and a few decorative elements integrated into the text.<sup>277</sup> Yet despite the small number of images, Hearn argues that Rackham's illustrations are richer in visual energy and movement than Tenniel's.<sup>278</sup> He points out that the original Alice is often static, while standing, listening, and composed, whereas Rackham's figures are dynamic and emotionally charged. As Hearn explains, "Rackham is more adventurous in his approach. Where Tenniel is theatrical, Rackham is dramatic,"<sup>279</sup> describing Rackham's illustrations as 'alive' and 'tense,' in contrast to Tenniel's 'rigid' renderings.<sup>280</sup> This difference is especially evident in both artists' interpretations of the scene in which Alice holds the baby pig. In Tenniel's version, Alice "holds the animal as if it were a prize ham,"<sup>281</sup> while "Rackham's Alice must struggle to keep a grip on the squirming creature (fig. 17)."<sup>282</sup> In Rackham's hands, the scene becomes far more expressive, emphasizing the physicality and absurdity of the moment in a way that brings new vitality to Carroll's narrative.

Rackham's work calls back to the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement, which, although waning by 1907, still held influence in both visual and material culture. Central to the movement was an emphasis on craftsmanship, artistic integrity, and the rejection of industrial standardization in favor of traditional techniques. Rackham's *Alice* illustrations reflect these values, as his drawings are intricately hand-rendered, and Alice was modeled after a real child, embodying a return to the naturalistic and the personal.

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277 Hearn, 39.

278 Ibid.

279 Ibid.

280 Ibid.

281 Ibid., 42.

282 Ibid.

This approach extended beyond illustration into broader design culture, including fashion. As fashion historian Anne Hollander notes of the early nineteenth century, “machine-made objects had very low status, and the great defenders of beautifully designed things, Ruskin and William Morris and others,<sup>283</sup> firmly opposed them to anything a soulless factory might make its hapless workers produce by a machine.”<sup>284</sup> Rackham’s artistic sensibility fits within this lineage, privileging individuality and emotional resonance over mass production.

However, not all critics place Rackham’s *Alice* on equal footings with its most popular predecessor. As Hearn asserts, “Tenniel must remain the perfect artist of *Alice in Wonderland*, because he was the first. By being the author’s choice, he received inspiration and encouragement not always evident in the actual text. No matter how fine Rackham’s art is, it cannot replace the original illustrations.”<sup>285</sup> While Tenniel’s cultural authority remains tied to authorial approval and historical precedence, Rackham’s work offers a different kind of value. It is one rooted in artistic vision and aesthetic reinterpretation in a new century. This connection to Arts and Crafts is also reflected in Rackham’s treatment of clothing in his illustrations. The garments worn by his characters are not incidental but form an integral part of the visual storytelling, drawn with care and attention to historical texture, line, and materiality.

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283 John Ruskin (1819-1900) and William Morris (1834-1896) were central figures in articulating a critique of industrial modernity that privileged beauty, moral integrity, and skilled craftsmanship over mechanical production. Both argued that the conditions under which objects were made were inseparable from their aesthetic and ethical value, advocating a return to handcraft as a means of restoring meaning, individuality, and social responsibility to art and design. These principles become foundational to the Arts and Crafts movement, which positioned handmade objects as a corrective to the perceived alienation and visual degradation produced by machine manufacture.

284 Anne Hollander, *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 143.

285 Hearn, 43.

## Analysis of the Illustrations by Rackham

### Alice

In examining the clothing worn by Alice in various editions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, it becomes clear how fashion serves not only as a marker of historical context but also as a visual cue for character interpretation. The year 1907 saw a surge of interest in the text, with eight new illustrated editions appearing on the market. Historians Betty P. Cleaver and Barbara Erdman note how the drawings by two of these illustrators, Bessie Pease Gutmann<sup>286</sup> and Rackham, depart significantly from Tenniel's celebrated Victorian rendering of Alice.<sup>287</sup> These reinterpretations, emerging at the beginning of the Edwardian period, reflect changing ideals of childhood, femininity, and visual culture.

Gutmann's Alice in particular is a striking departure from the known images of Alice. As Cleaver and Erdman describe, "Gutmann's Alice is very different from both Tenniel's and Rackham's. She is a babyish, chubby brunette about 4 or 5 years old, with a rosebud mouth and large brown eyes. She wears a white dress, long white stockings, and a blue hair ribbon and looks like a sweet, sturdy, unflappable toddler with little expression, except occasionally a look of wonder."<sup>288</sup> Gutmann's Alice aligns with the sentimentalized imagery of twentieth-century American illustration, evoking a cherubic, innocent child more suited to nursery portraits than surreal adventures. Her clothing is clean, simple, and infantile, emphasizing this characterization, positioning her as passive and ornamental.

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286 Gutmann's illustrations were discussed at length in the previous chapter of this dissertation.

287 Betty P. Cleaver and Barbara Erdman, "Changing Images of Alice," *Visual Literacy in the Digital Age* (1993), 6.

288 Ibid.

By contrast, Rackham's Alice presents a far older, more emotionally complex figure. Cleaver and Erdman describe her as "a slender, delicate featured, demure twelve year old with long dark blonde hair and a wistful, sad expression. She wears a white dress with large pink flowers and long black stockings. Rackham worked from a model for his illustrations and his Alice looks like a real girl."<sup>289</sup> This grounded, almost melancholy figure stands apart from the more generic portrayals of Alice circulating in children's media at the time. Rackham's decision to use a live model anchors his version in naturalism, lending authenticity not just to Alice's features but also to the way her clothing fits and flows.

The style of Rackham's work, as Cleaver and Erdman observe, demonstrates the "pre-Raphaelite...tradition so prevalent in the early 1900s,"<sup>290</sup> particularly in the way "the flowing lines of Alice's dress and hair become graceful graphic organic design elements."<sup>291</sup> This integration of figure and background, line and textile, elevates Alice's clothing from mere costume to an extension of the visual narrative. Her dress becomes not just something she wears, but something that visually moves through Wonderland.

At age twelve, Alice is not quite the young child as seen in Gutmann's illustrations, but not quite an adult. Her clothing reflects this in-between stage, bearing visual similarities to fashionable women and older girls during the Edwardian period. In the summer months, women commonly wore lingerie or lawn dresses, which were often unlined and made of lightweight, white fabrics.<sup>292</sup> While Rackham's Alice is not dressed in adult fashion, her dress borrows elements from the contemporary styles. Notably, the

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289 Cleaver and Erdman, 6.

290 Ibid.

291 Ibid.

292 Edwards, 127.

sleeves of her garment are a simplified version of bishop sleeves, echoing the softness and fullness typical of Edwardian silhouettes. The floral pattern on her dress also conveys an artistic sensitivity aligned with the Arts and Crafts Movement, blending fashion and illustration in a way that elevates her clothing beyond mere costume.

Her lower garments reflect more practical, age-appropriate fashion. Rackham illustrates Alice wearing black, horizontally ribbed stockings. As noted by fashion historian Karina Reddy, “girls wore black stockings and shoes,”<sup>293</sup> a standard that emphasized modesty, uniformity, and durability in children’s dress. Rackham’s attention to these small but accurate details not only grounds his Alice in the material culture of the twentieth century but also enhances the realism and depth of the character.

## **Mad Hatter**

Like many of Rackham’s illustrations, his tea party scene (fig. 18) in *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* is rendered in pale, subdued tones rather than bright, vivid colors. The composition centers on Alice, seated in a light blue, wingback tufted chair, which anchors the perspective and draws the viewer’s eye. The table stretches toward her and simultaneously extends outward, displaying an orderly row of elegant china place settings. The main participants in this scene are Alice, the Mad Hatter, and the March Hare. Rackham portrays the Mad Hatter as a caricature, with an exaggerated elongated nose and a tall top hat. His attire, limited to a grey jacket and a blue cravat with white polka dots, is intentionally understated, presenting a washed-out version of what could otherwise be vibrant clothing for a unique character. This subtle, delicate coloration and careful attention to decorative detail reflects Rackham’s characteristic style, which shares

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293 Karina Reddy, “1900-1909,” *Fashion History Timeline* (New York: The Fashion Institute of Technology, 18 August 2020), <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1900-1909/>.

affinities with the Arts and Crafts Movement's emphasis on craftsmanship, although he was not a formal member of the movement.

Male members of the Arts and Crafts Movement favored comfortable clothing, composed of fibers such as wool or linen. Simple, functional garments such as shirts, waistcoats, and jackets were tailored to fit the body well and emphasize skill. Occasionally, an artistic flourish such as a patterned tie, cravat, or hand-crafted buttons could finish off an ensemble. Overall, their style mirrored their artistic philosophy, favoring handcrafted, functional, and aesthetically simple dress, in contrast to mass-produced fashion.<sup>294</sup> Rackham's *Mad Hatter* is in alignment with this style of dress.

### **Queen of Hearts**

Rackham illustrates the Queen of Hearts amongst members of her court (fig. 19). Here, the composition places a tree with a mixture of white and red roses at the center, rather than the queen herself, emphasizing the disorderly scene of card soldiers who have been berated for painting the roses red instead of originally planting red roses. These workers, depicted sprawled on the ground, suggest punishment without explicit violence, while the Queen watches from the background, her face marked by anger, accompanied by the King walking beside her.

Rackham renders her robe with a design evocative of medieval Italian fabrics, especially those featuring stylized pomegranate motifs (fig. 20), often woven in luxurious silks, velvets, or brocades introduced to Italy through trade with the Ottoman Empire.<sup>295</sup> Historically, such patterns symbolized fertility, resurrection, and eternity, and their rich,

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294 Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion: A New History of Fashionable Dress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 179.

295 Jennifer Harris, *5,000 Years of Textiles* (New York: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 172.

tactile quality signaled wealth, power, and status. This is a fitting choice for a domineering and authoritative Queen of Hearts. Her cape and sleeves are trimmed with ermine, the soft white winter fur of the stoat, long associated in Europe with royalty and high office.

Rackham's reference to the medieval textile motifs aligns with his broader approach as an artist influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement. Like William Morris (1834-1896) and his contemporaries, Rackham drew inspiration from historical craftsmanship and ornamental design, emphasizing detailed, hand-rendered textures and patterns that reflect a reverence for traditional artistry and material richness.

### **Caterpillar**

Rackham's illustration of the Caterpillar, like many of his drawings in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, is rendered without a lot of color in the foreground, using only line and tone to define form. The scene is grounded on the forest floor of Wonderland, where a large white mushroom dominates the composition. In the background, a subtle blue-brown wash tints the base of a tree. The Caterpillar sits on top of the mushroom, smoking a hookah. At first glance, his segmented body appears to be unclothed, which is an insect-like abstraction of the human form. Upon closer inspection, however, it becomes clear that the Caterpillar is, in fact, wearing a tailored blue overcoat (fig. 21). The segmentation of his body mimics the structure of the coat, with visible long

sleeves of this coat covering his crossed arms. This further blurs the line between insect anatomy and human costume.<sup>296</sup>

This blending of creature and clothing is heightened by the Caterpillar's other accessories. He wears an eighteenth-century style periwig, cropped above the ears and curled upward at the ends. This is a distinctly anachronistic fashion that evokes images of Enlightenment philosophers or powdered court officials. His oversized, round spectacles, with gold wire frames, add to the oddness of his appearance. The wig, in particular, raises compelling questions: why would a 1907 Caterpillar wear a wig from the 1700s? The answer may lie in Rackham's characteristic use of the historical pastiche and visual satire. Much like the Arts and Crafts Movement's reverence for earlier periods of craftsmanship, Rackham often imbued his fantastical characters with echoes of the past.

As the Caterpillar closes his eyes and inhales from his hookah, seemingly indifferent to Alice's questions, his ornate costume contrasts with the solemnity of his pose. Alice, standing quietly in the lower corner of the image, looks up at him with patience and curiosity. Rackham's Caterpillar is introspective, shown through costuming and composition, becoming a symbol of authority, although antiquated and quietly ridiculous.

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296 Rackham's 1907 illustration of the Caterpillar notably anticipates later interpretations, such as A. E. Jackson's 1914 version, in which the Caterpillar also appears to wear a coat that merges organically with his segmented body. In both images, the clothing is not merely decorative but structural, as the sleeves are clearly articulated and appear to encase the Caterpillar's arms, suggesting a hybrid form of insect and gentleman. This sartorial choice distinguishes Rackham's and Jackson's illustrations from most other versions of the Caterpillar, in which he is either entirely unclothed or rendered more overtly as an animal. One striking exception is found in Milo Winter's 1916 edition of *Alice*, where the Caterpillar distinctly wears a blue smoking jacket, trimmed with padded green fabric at the collar and pocket edges (fig. 22). Winter's approach is unusually literal, since choosing the Caterpillar in a garment closely associated with upper-class leisure and the act of smoking itself. This anthropomorphic detail transforms the character into a caricature of Edwardian male domesticity and is worthy of note.

## Conclusion

Rackham's illustrations reveal a distinctive artistic sensibility that sets him apart from more conventional depictions of children's stories. His work emphasizes a return to natural elements, with twisting trees, foliage, and delicate flora, which can even overshadow human figures. Rackham favors muted, earthy tones over bright, candy-colored palettes, giving the narrative a more somber and contemplative atmosphere. His Alice is no longer an innocent, round-cheeked child, but she is older and more elongated, and at times eerily ethereal, reflecting both curiosity and unease. Overall, Rackham's combination of meticulous detail, subdued color, and nuanced characterization transforms Wonderland into a world that is enchanting and hauntingly natural.



Figure 16. Rackham's frontispiece illustration presents Alice as a slender, composed figure rendered with the specificity of a portrait, suggesting the likeness of an actual child rather than a generalized, idealized type. She appears older than in many earlier interpretations of the character, with a quiet self-possession conveyed through her posture and expression. The careful modeling of her features and the restrained handling of line and tone lend the image a sense of realism, distinguishing Rackham's Alice from more overtly playful or childlike depictions.



Figure 17. In this illustration, Alice is shown physically engaging with the pig, holding and wrestling with it as a squirming, active animal. The composition emphasizes realism in gesture and movement, giving the interaction a tangible, almost portrait-like presence. The color palette is deliberately muted, with soft browns, greens, and greys predominating and no bright or saturated hues. The background is dominated by naturalistic depictions of plants and foliage, reflecting Rackham's interest in closely observed detail. This attention to hand-rendered, natural forms and subdued tones resonates with principles of the Arts and Crafts movement, which valued craftsmanship, visual integrity, and harmony with nature over the decorative excesses of industrial production.



Figure 18. In Rackham's depiction of the tea party, Alice is drawn with the specificity of a portrait, her features and posture suggesting a real child rather than a generalized figure. By contrast, the Mad Hatter is exaggerated and caricatured, with his appearance emphasizing the humor and absurdity of the scene. The illustration pays careful attention to detail, including delicate floral patterns on the dishes, highlighting Rackham's meticulous line work and interest in texture.



Figure 19. The Queen of Hearts is depicted with an angry, commanding expression. Below her, the playing-card gardeners are shown in submissive, downtrodden poses after being berated for painting white roses red.



Figure 20. Woven Renaissance silk brocade displays repeating pomegranates nestled among scrolling vines and stylized leaves, their rounded forms often split to reveal jewel-like seeds, while also alluding to fertility, abundance, and luxury. The fruit also resembles a crown, reinforcing its association with regality. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, such costly pomegranate fabrics were used in dressmaking to signify the elevated status of noblewomen.



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"It is a very good height indeed!" said the Caterpillar angrily

Figure 21. Rackham's illustration of Alice and the Caterpillar is set against a muted, understated background, consistent with the subdued tonal palette seen throughout his illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Notably, the Caterpillar is depicted with visible sleeves, suggesting a partial garment.

Figure 22. Milo Winter's 1916 illustration of the Caterpillar and Alice.

## A. E. JACKSON

Alfred Edward Frederick Jackson (1873-1952), working under the pseudonym of A. E. Jackson, was a British artist, born in London in 1873. He trained at the Camden School of Art, and with the support of his parents in his artistic endeavors, he exhibited his first painting at the Royal Academy in 1901.<sup>297</sup> His other early career works include illustrations published by *The Sketch*, the *Daily Mail Sixpenny Novel* series, and illustrations for children's books.<sup>298</sup>

Throughout his career, his prolific artistic work as an illustrator left a lasting impression on early twentieth-century children's literature. Renowned for his delicate, detailed style and the ability to capture the whimsy and charm of fantastical stories, Jackson brought life to many classic tales, including a version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1915 published by George H. Doran Company. His illustrations for Carroll's beloved book are celebrated for their graceful lines, soft color palettes, and enchanting depictions of movement within Wonderland's defining characters and scenes. Jackson's artistic approach reflects a blend of traditional and imaginative elements. Through this style, Jackson contributed to the enduring legacy of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, by offering his version of the visually rich story.

While Jackson created the 16 full-color plate illustrations, specific information regarding the engraver responsible for this particular edition is not readily available.<sup>299</sup>

During this period, it was common for publishers to employ in-house engravers or

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297 A. E. Jackson *Biography*, accessed 16 January 2025, <https://www.pookpress.co.uk/project/a-e-jackson-biography/>.

298 Ibid.

299 Illustrators and engravers have distinct but closely related roles in the process of creating and reproducing images for print. The illustrator creates the original artwork, while the engraver translates the illustrator's work into a printable format.

collaborate with special engraving firms to reproduce artists' illustrations for print. These engravers played a crucial role in translating the artist's original works into printable formats, ensuring that the illustrations retained their intended details and character. While Jackson's contributions are well-documented and celebrated, the engravers' identities often remain uncredited, reflecting the collaborative yet sometimes overlooked nature of book production in the early twentieth century. For the purpose of this study, only the color artworks created by Jackson will be studied, even though some of the engravings feature clothed characters.

### Analysis of the Illustrations by Jackson

#### **Alice**

There are multiple instances where Alice and her garments are fully visible in the drawings by Jackson, yet the illustration that best shows Alice's dress in its entirety is the picture associated with mouse jumping out of the water, in Chapter II, "The Pool of Tears." (fig. 23) In this image, Alice is in motion, jumping back, apologizing for asking 'Where is my cat?' in French, forgetting that such a statement could panic a small mouse. As a result, her dress is caught mid-air and is visible in its entirety.<sup>300</sup>

The color palette used in Alice's dress is a unique choice, straying from some of the other colors seen in other editions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Here, Alice's dress is white with pink accents printed throughout,<sup>301</sup> featuring a high neckline and short

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300 By the early twentieth century, photography advanced enough to capture motion more clearly and quickly, thanks to faster shutter speeds and improved camera technology. By 1914, it became even more dynamic, with sporting events, movement studies, and candid shots influencing popular visual culture. This growing interest perhaps influenced illustrators such as Jackson. Jackson's illustrations show Alice in action, such as running, gesturing, or reacting mid-movement. This was a shift from more static Victorian representations of Alice, such as Tenniel's.

301 The decorative elements on the fabric are quite small and not easily distinguishable, but they appear to be floral in nature, as suggested by the presence of pink hues interspersed with small touches of green.

sleeves. The bodice is fitted, with the skirt of the dress flowing into a slightly flared skirt. The cuffs of the sleeves are trimmed with solid pink fabric, and there is also a wide pink ribbon tied at the waist as a sash. Alice's dress follows what fashion historian Viveka Berggren Torell describes for the period: "Dresses, made of thin cotton fabrics, were cut with a high waist and perhaps decorated with embroidery or insertions of lace. A plain-colored sash that was tied to form a bow at the back completed the dress."<sup>302</sup>

The fashion of 1915 reflected a shift from the elaborate Edwardian styles of the early 1900s to simpler, more practical designs. Fashion historian Hannah Wroe notes, "Women's lives on the British home front were markedly shaped by war as domestic roles and responsibilities within and beyond the home were stretched and refined."<sup>303</sup> Women's dresses featured higher hemlines, often just above the ankle, allowing for greater ease of movement. As noted by Joan Nunn, "It was not a time for fashion to flourish, but it is never static; many women were in uniform, and those who were not began to dress in tailored suits, easier-fitting dresses and shorter skirts, in the move towards greater simplicity."<sup>304</sup> Waistlines also began to rise, creating an empire silhouette, and skirts were less voluminous, favoring A-line or straight cuts. Decorative details like lace, embroidery, and ribbon trims remained popular, but overall, garments emphasized functionality and understated elegance. These trends marked the transition to modern fashion, balancing femininity with the practicality necessitated by wartime life.

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302 Viveka Berggren Torell, "Children's Clothes," *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion*, vol. 8: *West Europe* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 463.

303 Hannah Wroe, "Dress Economy for the British Home Front: Flora Klickmann's Needlework Economies (1919)," *The Journal of Dress History*, volume 3, no. 1 (Spring 2019), 154.

304 Joan Nunn, *Fashion in Costume: 1200-1980* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 172.

The dresses worn by young girls in this era were characterized by simplicity, comfort, and practicality, reflecting the broader trends of the time.<sup>305</sup> Children’s dresses were made from a variety of practical and comfortable fabrics, often chosen for their ease of laundering and care. Nunn notes, “women had to care for their children's clothes, and the consequent demand for more convenient and easily washable styles, coupled with higher standards of hygiene, resulted in children's clothes becoming steadily more sensible and comfortable.”<sup>306</sup> Common fabrics included soft fabrics,<sup>307</sup> such as cotton, wool, linen, and silk. Checks, plaids, stripes, dots, and animal motifs were all pattern options for printed fabrics, and small-scale floral prints, such as sprigs of roses, daisies, or violets gave a delicate or cheerful look. These dresses often featured high necklines, puffed or short sleeves, and A-line skirts that allowed for freedom of movement during play. Decorative details such as pleats, smocking, embroidery,<sup>308</sup> or ribbon accents were common, adding a touch of charm without being overly elaborate. Hemlines for girls’ dresses typically fell just around the knee or mid-calf, making them both practical and age-appropriate. Light colors like white<sup>309</sup> or pastels prominent,<sup>310</sup> often paired with stockings and sturdy leather shoes. Fashion historian Jane Ashelford notes, “the standard daytime costume was a pinafore dress and blouse, always worn with thick black

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305 Phyllis Tortora and Keith Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume: A History of Western Dress*, 5th edition (New York: Fairchild Books, 2010), 449.

306 Nunn, 202.

307 Ibid.

308 Ibid.

309 Jane Ashelford, *The Art of Dress: Clothes and Society 1500-1914* (London: National Trust Enterprises Limited, 1996), 285.

310 Tortora and Eubank, 449.

stockings and tightly-buttoned boots.”<sup>311</sup> These dresses reflected the era’s focus on functionality while maintaining a sense of youthful innocence and style.

In this era, many people still sewed clothing for their children, particularly in working-class and rural households where buying ready-made garments was less affordable or accessible. Home sewing was a common practice, with mothers and older daughters often taking on the task of making and repairing family clothing. Sewing patterns were widely available and economical, offering instructions for creating fashionable dresses and other garments at home.

Advancements in sewing machines, such as the Singer treadle machine, made sewing more efficient, and women’s magazines often included patterns and tips for crafting children’s clothing. For wealthier families, custom-made or store-bought clothing was more common, but even they might have relied on home sewing for everyday items. Sewing at home allowed families to save money, recycle fabric from worn garments, and ensure properly fitting clothing making it a practical and essential skill during this era.

The history of paper sewing patterns especially offers crucial insight into the evolving relationship between fashion, technology, and domestic labor. Ebenezer Butterick (1826-1903), a tailor from Sterling, Massachusetts, revolutionized home sewing in 1863 by introducing the first graded paper sewing pattern.<sup>312</sup> The concept emerged from a practical observation by his wife, Ellen Augusta Pollard Butterick, who noted that sewing for their son would be much easier if there were patterns available for child-specific sizes. At the time, existing paper patterns required individual adjustment by the

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311 Ashelford, 285.

312 *Hagley Museum*, “E. Butterick & Cos. report of ladies fashions” from 1876. <https://findingaids.hagley.org/repositories/2/resources/437>.

sewer to fit the intended wearer, making the process more labor-intensive and less precise.

Butterick's innovation allowed for multiple sizes of a single garment to be printed on the same sheet, streamlining the home sewing process and making it significantly more accessible. The success of this idea led to rapid growth in their business. Within five years, E. Butterick & Co. offered a wide variety of patterns for both adults and children, available in more than a dozen sizes. Before the availability of graded patterns, many women had to deconstruct existing garments to create templates for new ones, making the sewing process considerably more complex and less standardized.

To promote his patterns and keep customers informed about current fashion, Butterick launched the *Ladies Quarterly of Broadway Fashions* in 1867, followed by a monthly publication, *The Metropolitan*, in 1868. These periodicals not only showcased the latest styles but also featured Butterick's newest designs. The company also pioneered the use of mail-order sales, allowing customers around the globe to access their patterns.

By 1915, families in England would have access to paper sewing patterns, as transatlantic influence and the growth of British and American pattern companies would make this possible.<sup>313</sup> Additionally, British publication entities such as *Weldon's*, *Woman's World*, and *The Ladies' Home Journal* also produced and distributed sewing patterns, as well as paper patterns being sold in department stores such as Liberty, Whiteleys, or Selfridges & Company.

Given the widespread use of paper sewing patterns like those printed by Butterick from the late-nineteenth century into the early-twentieth, it is entirely plausible that a

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<sup>313</sup> Butterick also had a London-based office by the 1870s.

dress such as the one worn by Alice was sewn at home, as paper patterns made it possible for families to create fashionable garments. While ready-made clothing was increasingly accessible by 1915, home sewing remained common, particularly for children's clothing. The presence of pattern-based sewing during this period leaves open the possibility that Alice's dress was the result of domestic craftsmanship.

The decorative sash of the dress, rendered in a soft pink hue paired with the floral motif of the fabric used in the main portion of the dress adds further dimension to its interpretation. Pink, associated with youthfulness and femininity in early-twentieth century fashion, was a prevailing choice for girls' clothing, signaling innocence and charm. The subtle floral print, while small in scale, could be a reference to a rose or similar bloom. This is an aesthetic choice that aligns with broader decorative arts trends in fashion at the time.

Alice's dress has a small tie to elements seen in the work of renowned French couturier Paul Poiret (1879-1944), as her dress features small pink flowers. Poiret's designs often featured the pink rose, and floral motifs as a symbol of luxury, femininity, and artistry. Breaking away from the rigid silhouettes of the Edwardian period, flowers as inspiration from nature appeared as embroidered details, printed fabrics, or even as decorative accessories like silk flowers. As such, the design elements of Alice's outfit also speak to broader stylistic influences, such as the soft pink sash and floral detailing, quietly echoing motifs found in the work of Poiret.

Jackson's illustrated Alice embodies traditional girlhood attire that is filtered through the lens of its contemporary stylistic and cultural shifts. The alignment between fashion illustration, home sewing, and haute couture underscores the permeability

between high and domestic fashion, and the ways in which even a children's book character might reflect and refract design ideals.

### **Caterpillar**

The visual portrayal of the Caterpillar (fig. 24) in the 1915 publication of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* with illustrations by Jackson invites close examination, particularly in how it blends naturalistic and anthropomorphic elements. This figure becomes part insect and part character, and occupies a unique space within the narrative's visual world. Although biologically a larval stage of a butterfly or moth, the Caterpillar is rendered here with both anatomical ambiguity and sartorial suggestion. Most notably, his head appears distinctly white, while the body is shaded in a uniform blue, suggesting the possibility of intentional clothing rather than natural coloration. Intricate markings near the first set of appendages, where wrists would be, further imply the presence of tailored sleeves or cuffs. The legs, too, are sheathed in the same blue, reinforcing the notion of an all-in-one garment. This reading positions the Caterpillar not only as a creature of transformation in a biological sense, but also as a figure actively shaped by human conventions of dress and identity.

Additionally, the Caterpillar is depicted smoking a hookah, presumably suggestive of opium use. However, by 1915, the practice of opium smoking had significantly declined and was no longer commonplace, complicating such a reading for contemporary audiences of that period. Epidemiologist Mirjana V. Djordjevic noted that water pipes such as the hookah have "long been used for tobacco consumption in the Middle East, India, and parts of Asia, and more recently has been introduced into the

smokeless tobacco market in western nations.”<sup>314</sup> While cigarette smoking became far more dominant in places such as England and Europe by the early-twentieth century, the hookah was still recognized and occasionally used, especially in elite or artistic circles, and could symbolize leisure, mystique, or decadence.<sup>315</sup> The Caterpillar and the hookah originally appeared in Tenniel’s illustrations from 1865, and retained its cultural resonance in 1914 as a symbol of mystery, foreignness, and altered perception. The inclusion of the hookah by Jackson still evokes these layered meanings, even if its actual use in England had declined in favor of more modern forms of tobacco consumption.

The Caterpillar’s visual and symbolic associations with metamorphosis also carry profound resonance. Butterflies and moths, both natural successors to the caterpillar, have long served as metaphors for the soul and spiritual transformation, a symbolism rooted in classical and Christian iconography: “The butterfly’s visible characteristics are grace and beauty. Because of its light, airy flight and its dramatic life cycle, the butterfly nearly universally is a symbol of the human soul.”<sup>316</sup> During war or periods of unrest, these associations were imbued with renewed emotional weight. As the nation grappled with mass loss and personal grief, the image of the butterfly came to represent the fragility of life, the ephemerality of youth, and the hope of transcendence beyond death.

Entomologist Vazrick Nazari noted, “In Roman and Greek antiquity, the butterfly (Psyche) was a symbol of soul and transcendent immortal life after death.”<sup>317</sup> As butterflies often symbolized the soul’s release, it makes them potent emblems of both

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314 Mirjana V. Djordjevic, “Nicotine Content in Other Combustible Tobacco Products,” *Tobacco: Science, Policy and Public Health*, edited by Peter Boyle et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 208-209.

315 The Caterpillar could still be smoking opium in this 1915 version, and this section of the thesis draws a comparison between the hookah and tobacco cigarettes to explore shifting cultural perceptions of smoking. For further reading on the historical rise of cigarette use, see Peter Boyle et al, *Tobacco: Science, Policy and Public Health*.

316 Elaine Jordan, “The Butterfly, Symbol of the Soul,” *Tradition in Action*, accessed 12 June 2025, [https://traditioninaction.org/religious/f036\\_Butterfly.htm](https://traditioninaction.org/religious/f036_Butterfly.htm).

beauty and vulnerability. Simultaneously, moths, who are nocturnal and drawn to a flame, evoked darker themes of fatal attraction and self-destruction.

Within this cultural framework, the Caterpillar may be read not merely as a curious creature of Wonderland, but as an embodied metaphor for the tensions between change and continuity, mortality, and renewal. His ambiguous form taking on both insect and anthropomorphic qualities, along with the suggestion of a costume or garment, further blurs the line between natural evolution and constructed identity. The Caterpillar thus becomes a figure charged with layered symbolism as it is caught in transition, infused with the anxieties and hopes of a world undergoing change.

### **Queen of Hearts**

Jackson's Queen of Hearts (fig. 25) wears a visually interesting gown that both recalls historical costume elements and resonates with stylistic elements found in early-twentieth century fashion. While the character herself is rooted in Victorian interpretations of frenzy and impulsiveness, Jackson's rendering of her elaborate, patterned attire invites comparison with contemporary fashion innovations, particularly the textile designs of Mariano Fortuny (1871-1949). Known for hand-stenciled motifs, Fortuny drew upon classical, non-western, and medieval references to produce clothing that was both historically evocative and radically modern. Referring to Liberty of London,<sup>318</sup> a design house with lush botanically inspired prints, fashion historian Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell compared Fortuny to the design powerhouse: "Fortuny

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317 Vazrick Nazari, "Chasing Butterflies in Medieval Europe," *Journal of the Lepidopterists' Society*, 86, no. 4 (2014), 228.

318 Founded by Arthur Lasenby Liberty (1843-1917), Liberty of London emerged as a defining force in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century design, known for its distinctive textiles, commitment to craftsmanship, and promotion of global decorative traditions.

successfully replicated the Liberty formula of luxurious textiles and unstructured, historicized gowns, creating his own fabrics blockprinted and stenciled with medieval, Renaissance and Asian patterns.”<sup>319</sup> In the Queen’s illustrated costume, we see similar elements. There is a fascination with a bold silhouette, paired with ornamental elements, making a fusion of past and present forms.

Jackson’s Queen of Hearts is dressed in a voluminous gown with a highly decorative surface, suggestive of rich textile work. The dress is full-length and heavily patterned, incorporating what appear to be stylized florid scrollwork motifs across the body of the garment. Her ensemble adopts an exaggerated A-line shape that stands rigidly away from the body, as though stiffened or starched into place. Fortuny’s prints celebrated the materiality of cloth, much like Jackson’s depiction does, drawing the eye to the surface design rather than structural complexity.

The color red plays a significant role in the depiction of the Queen of Hearts, symbolizing authority, aggression, and visual dominance within the composition. While some of the decorative elements on her dress veer toward orange rather than a pure red, the chromatic intensity remains striking. This resonance is deepened when considered alongside the work of Fortuny, who used cochineal, a natural dye derived from insects, to achieve rich reds in his textile designs. Despite the availability of synthetic chemical dyes during his time, Fortuny’s deliberate use of historical dyeing techniques shows a reverence for historical craftsmanship and gives his garments layered historical and material significance.

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319 Kimberly Chrisman-Campbell, “Prince of Prints: The Legacy of Arthur Lasenby Liberty,” *Ornament Magazine* 36, no 4. 2013, 49.

Textile conservator Elena Phipps noted how red is one of the most highly prized colors, having associations within many cultures with fire, fertility, and the life force,<sup>320</sup> but also referenced it as one of the most difficult colors to achieve.<sup>321</sup> It causes a visceral effect, creating a demand for goods containing this hue, and making them desirable objects. Additionally, Phipps also included in her research how Italian designer Mariano Fortuny utilized cochineal for his flowing, unstructured women's garments in the early twentieth century.<sup>322</sup>

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Jackson's 1915 illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* offer a distinctive visual interpretation that reflects contemporary fashion and cultural ideals. Alice's costume draws clear parallels to the work of Poiret, echoing his silhouettes, rose motifs, and signature use of the color pink. The Caterpillar's semi-clothed portrayal suggests an anthropomorphic reading, enriching his symbolic presence beyond a literal insect. Meanwhile, the Queen of Hearts' voluminous gown evokes the influence of Fortuny, aligning with early-twentieth-century efforts to liberate women from restrictive clothing, in a similar manner to Poiret's work. Together, these fashion-informed details position Jackson's illustrations as more than just charming and graceful. They reveal a nuanced engagement with modern design and identity, making his depictions for Alice both timely and original.

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320 Elena Phipps, *Cochineal Red: The Art History of a Color* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010), 5.

321 Ibid.

322 Ibid., 46.



Figure 23. A. E. Jackson's "The Pool of Tears" Alice is leaning forward toward the Mouse, surrounded by water rendered in muted greys and blues. The lifted strands of her long hair and the bow at the back of her dress convey motion, reinforcing the sense of immersion and upheaval.



Figure 24. In A. E. Jackson's illustration, Alice stands in conversation with the Caterpillar, who is seated atop a large mushroom beside a hookah. The oversized mushroom and surrounding forms create a sense of altered scale, reinforcing the oddness of Wonderland and the imbalance of power between the two figures.



Figure 25. In A. E. Jackson's illustration of the Queen of Hearts, the figure is rendered in an ornate gown reminiscent of garments by Mariano Fortuny, adorned with hand-stenciled motifs derived from medieval decorative traditions. The elongated silhouette and richly patterned surface emphasize her theatrical presence.

## GWYNEDD HUDSON

Gwynedd M. Hudson (1881-1935) is more elusive than other illustrators of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as comparatively little biographical information about her survives. However, in addition to her contribution to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1922, her illustrations in publications such as *Peter Pan* in 1931 and *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* by Oscar Wilde<sup>323</sup> and *The Golden Goose*, a traditional folktale by the Brothers Grimm and published in 1939, helped her earn notoriety as a prominent figure in the realm of creative literature, as her works blended elements of fantasy and realism. Her illustrations in these books are endearing, detailed renderings emphasizing enchanting qualities to the story, especially capturing the elements of magic along with the expressive emotions of the characters. For example, her 1931 illustration of Mother looking out the window from *Peter Pan* (fig. 26) shows a rather realistic depiction of a woman wearing a 1930s fashionable dress, with emphasis placed on the seam structure and how the bodice favored a more natural, feminine silhouette, fitted at the waist and flaring gently over the hips, accentuating an hourglass shape. This verisimilitude is juxtaposed with fantasy elements, as a fashionable woman peers out where a magical flying boy took flight.

A British painter and illustrator, Hudson actively worked in the early twentieth century, and is best known for her art in fashion illustration, commencing in the 1920s. Hudson's style categorized elegant and detailed depictions of clothing and accessories, actively capturing the spirit of contemporary fashion trends. She contributed her illustrations to fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, where her drawings helped define the

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323 *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* was first published in 1888 and a later edition was illustrated by Hudson.

aesthetic of the era. Her work features graceful lines and an emphasis on the fluidity of fabric.

In 1916, she created a commonplace advertisement of two figures, but the resulting image is nothing ordinary, telling a substantial amount about fashion history and the culture of the era, showcasing a sense of poetic beauty with storybook quality. The advertisement is for Crème Shalimar, a lotion promising “soft white hands” (fig. 27), and features a woman dressed in layers of Eastern-influenced garments, edged with fringe, while a man wearing a tunic, sash, and turban holds her hand and bows. Although created in 1916, the image appeared in a 1920 House of Dubarry advertisement. The clothing worn by the woman is reminiscent of the Art Deco styles of designer Paul Poiret,<sup>324</sup> who worked in the early 1900s through the 1910 and created garments for celebrating lively times. In 1909, Poiret launched never before seen fashion styles for women, including garments such as harem pants, turbans, and kimonos,<sup>325</sup> reflecting Eastern elements and the influence of Orientalism.<sup>326</sup> This is a reference to the Western fascination with Eastern cultures, such as those of the Middle East, Asia, and North Africa. These Eastern cultures are often depicted in romanticized, exoticized ways, resulting in cultural appropriation as they are often stripped of their original meaning and context, leading to a commodification of Eastern aesthetics, reducing rich cultural traditions to mere decoration. As the fair-skinned woman in Hudson’s illustration dons presumably silk

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324 Like A. E. Jackson, Hudson was working during a period in which the aesthetic innovations of French fashion designer Paul Poiret, especially his emphasis on bold color, stylized forms, and a move away from Victorian restraint, influenced visual culture across the arts, including fashion illustration.

325 It should also be noted that the women wearing these types of garments did not wear a corset, as previously seen in fashionable women’s clothing. Poiret credited himself with freeing women of the corset, but it was not necessarily for their comfort, but rather the shape of the corset interfered with the silhouette lines of his new styles. (“The Corset in Late 20th-Century Fashion,” *Victoria and Albert Museum*, 16 March 2016, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/t/the-corset-in-late-20th-century-fashion/>.)

326 Andrew Bolton and Harold Koda, “Paul Poiret (1879-1944),” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, 1 September 2008, <https://www.metmuseum.org/essays/paul-poiret-1879-1944>.

harem pants, and other elements of non-western dress such as a turban, she becomes a symbol for Western idolatry of the east, while emphasizing the man's otherness and her cultural superiority through promotion of her extremely pale skin. Despite the cultural complexities revealed in something as simple as an advertisement for hand cream, Hudson skillfully illustrates the richness and textures of the clothing worn by both figures, along with the soft yet vibrant appearance of the colorful flowers.

As such, Hudson's work serves a commercial purpose, but also contributes to the artistic conversations surrounding fashion, highlighting the connection between art and style. It also holds historical significance today as an example of a pivotal piece in the evolution in fashion illustration. This sensitivity to visual storytelling and period detail carried seamlessly into her 1922 illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where her artistic style found its fullest expression within Carroll's Victorian tale.

Hudson's charming *Alice* version has its own unique publication story. Boots the Chemists, an eminent pharmacy chain in the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century that is still in business today, sold herbal remedies and health products. Originated in 1849 by John Boot (1815-1860), the establishment ultimately expanded their services, including personal care and healthcare, and later publishing, such as producing children's books and educational materials.<sup>327</sup> In addition to her illustrations in past works such as *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* and *The Golden Goose*, Hudson also created drawings for the Boots version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, published in London in 1922.<sup>328</sup>

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327 "Gwynedd M. Hudson - Boots the Chemist," *Collecting Alice*, accessed 9 January 2025, <https://collectingalice.com/gwynedd-m-hudson-boots-the-chemist-edition/>.

328 The title page states: "Published by Hodder and Stoughton Limited, for Boots Pure Drug Co., Ltd., Nottingham, and Engraved and Printed by Henry Stone & Son, Limited, Banbury and London." The inclusion of both the commissioning company—Boots Pure Drug Co.—and the engraver, who worked from Hudson's illustrations, highlights the collaborative and commercial nature of the book's production.

Hudson created both the twelve full-color illustrations that appear as plates in the book, along with numerous black-and-white line illustrations which also feature red-coral, including chapter headings, vignettes, and decorative borders. These line illustrations relied on stroke thickness and quality to convey concepts such as depth and movement. The combination of the two styles of artwork makes for a visually interesting collection, switching from full color works to the more sparsely detailed drawings. Hudson's color plates are notable for their richly saturated, often dark color palette, lending a dramatic and occasionally somber tone to scenes typically rendered with lighter, more playful and whimsical hues. Author Catherine Nichols remarks on this stylistic choice, stating "Hudson favored a darker, more somber palette than her fellow *Alice* illustrators."<sup>329</sup>

This richer, more dramatic color approach is consistent with the broader Art Deco aesthetics, which often embraced deep hues and high contrast to convey elegance, theatricality, and modern sophistication. The Art Deco movement, which flourished from the 1920s to the 1940s, was a style of visual arts, architecture, and design characterized by bold geometric shapes, rich colors, and lavish ornamentation. Emerging in the aftermath of World War I, Art Deco symbolized modernity, luxury, and optimism, blending traditional craftsmanship with industrial materials and techniques.

In fashion design, Art Deco influenced the evolution of clothing and the textile arts. The movement placed emphasis on sharp, angular designs, which translated into the world of fashion through bold geometric patterns on fabrics. Additionally, there was an association with opulence and luxurious materials, reflected in the use of rich fabrics like

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329 Nichols, 34.

silk, velvet, and satin. Metallic threads, beads, and sequins were also frequently employed to create intricate patterns and embellishments on garments.

Art Deco also celebrated modernity through streamlined silhouettes, and dresses featured clean, elongated lines, often with dropped waists, reflecting the sleek, architectural qualities of Art Deco artistic vision. Evening wear embraced daring styles, such as backless gowns and bias cuts, emphasizing elegance and sophistication. Lastly, the movement's celebration of industry and technology influenced a shift toward practical yet elegant designs. Women's fashion became less restrictive, with looser fits and shorter hemlines allowing for greater freedom of movement, aligning with the lifestyle of the modern woman. Art Deco's influence on fashion extended beyond clothing to create a cohesive design language that reflected the glamour, dynamism, and progress of the era, leaving a lasting legacy in the world of style.

### **Analysis of the Illustrations by Hudson**

#### **Alice**

The opening color plate, situated near the title page, presents Alice with her cat Dinah nestled beside her (fig. 28). Alice wears a white dress with puffed sleeves, and a tiered skirt that falls just above the knee. Each of the two tiers are trimmed in what could be decorative edging of black velvet, adding contrast and texture. A crinoline worn beneath the dress gives the skirt a structured, bell-like shape, allowing it to stand gracefully away from the body. Over the dress, Alice wears a white apron edged with delicate white lace. Her long, blonde hair falls in soft waves to her waist, held back with a simple black headband, echoing the trim on her skirt tiers. Around her neck hangs a coral necklace, providing a touch of warm color. On her feet are white socks and black flat

shoes fastened with crisscrossing straps across the top of the foot. In the line drawing depictions throughout the book, Alice wears the same garment, with the usage of differing line qualities to define her clothing. The combination of the red-coral and black for these drawings adds dimension.<sup>330</sup>

Regarding 1920s fashionable girls' dress, fashion historians Phyllis Tortora and Keith Eubank note "young girls' dresses, like those of adults, were unfitted,"<sup>331</sup> and fashion historian Joan Nunn remarks that "easy-fitting dresses hung from the shoulder to calf in soft fabrics, and...pinafore or jumper dresses were worn over a blouse or dress, decorated with embroidery reflecting the Arts and Crafts fashion of the day."<sup>332</sup> Karina Reddy adds, "the length of the dresses varied by age getting longer as the girls got older. Peter pan collars, smocking, patterned fabrics, and embroidery were all popular in girls' clothing throughout the decade. Many styles looked to womenswear for inspiration, though in the twenties, children's wear was not just a miniature version of adult clothing. There were modifications, but many popular styles for women in the decade already looked girlish, so it made sense to dress girls in similar styles."<sup>333</sup> Additionally, scholars Daniel James Cole and Nancy Diehl note, "little girls wore very short dresses with no waistlines and simple surface decoration."<sup>334</sup>

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330 The illustration depicting Alice eating the cake, after having already drunk the potion that causes her to shrink, provides a notable example of the use of color to emphasize visual details. The top border of the image features a repeating pattern of red and black triangles and inverted triangles. Directly beneath this border, the words "eat me" appear in black, with the lettering underlined by a secondary pattern of red triangles.

331 Tortora and Eubank, 497.

332 Nunn, 202.

333 Karina Reddy, "1920-1929," *Fashion History Timeline* (New York: The Fashion Institute of Technology, 11 May 2018), <https://fashionhistory.fitnyc.edu/1920-1929/>.

334 Daniel James Cole and Nancy Diehl, *The History of Modern Fashion from 1850*, Kindle ed., (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2015), 446.

Hudson's illustrations of Alice present an ensemble that diverges notably from the prevailing fashion for children's clothing as described above. Additionally, although Hudson incorporated certain Art Deco elements into her *Alice* illustrations, particularly through her use of color, she did not draw her fashion inspiration for the characters from the movement. While the period favored a more relaxed, modern silhouette characterized by dropped waists (fig. 29), straight-cut dresses, and decorative elements such as smocking or embroidery inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement (fig. 30), Hudson's Alice wears a dress that appears far more structured and formal. The skirt notably stands away from the body, likely supported by a crinoline or petticoat as mentioned, evoking a fashionable silhouette from the past. The dress also features puffed sleeves and a fitted bodice, both of which depart from the loose, tubular shapes that dominated 1920s fashion for girls.

As Hudson's illustration of Alice does not strictly conform to the dress styles of the 1920s, her costume bears a closer resemblance to girl's fashion from around the mid- to late-nineteenth century (fig. 31). During this time period, children's clothing often featured puffed sleeves and full, structured skirts, which are elements that appear prominently in Hudson's rendering. The silhouette, with its voluminous skirt and emphasis on the upper sleeve, aligns with the aesthetic ideals for delicate, youthful ornamentation. Notably, Alice's skirt also includes two distinct tiers, each edge in what appears to be black trim, possibly velvet, a material associated with luxury and high-end detailing. This kind of embellishment further distances the garment from the functional, simplified styles of the 1920s and instead evokes a more ornamental style of the earlier century.

Hudson's choice to dress Alice in this manner may be read as a deliberate attempt to remove her from a historically accurate visual context of the era. By dressing Alice in a more theatrical, stylized manner, Hudson elevates her from an ordinary child of the 1920s to a more classic, almost signature figure, rooting her in a historically romanticized visual tradition.

While Alice's dress evokes timeless elements drawn from earlier fashions, other aspects of her ensemble reflect the contemporary styles of Hudson's own era. The coral necklace found around Alice's neck is an interesting and timely detail. Coral necklaces (fig. 32) were widely worn in the nineteenth century, as the advent of steam-powered transportation allowed the European middle class to travel to places such as Italy, which were previously reserved for the wealthy due to the prohibitive costs of travel. Harvested in both the Mediterranean Sea and Pacific Ocean, coral used in jewelry is not taken from the living organism itself but rather from its hardened calcium carbonate skeleton. Jewelers then cut and polish this durable material into smooth beads or cabochons, transforming the natural formations into wearable pieces. Additionally, a coral necklace signified other means in addition to being an attractive piece of jewelry. In Europe in the 1900s, coral possessed associations with fertility, life force, and protection against evil, including warding off maladies of both the physical and spiritual kind.<sup>335</sup> Wearing a coral necklace is an amusing choice for Alice, as she needed protection against evil during her trip down the rabbit hole. The inclusion of the coral necklace is a distinctive choice, situating the illustration within Hudson's own contemporary fashion context, in contrast to the other components of Alice's attire, which remain more ambiguous in their period references.

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335 Michele Currie Navaks, "Coral Lives: Literature, Labor, and the Making of America," *The Huntington* (November 21, 2023): <https://huntington.org/frontiers/coral-lives-literature-labor-and-making-america>.

## White Rabbit

Hudson's depiction of the White Rabbit directs the reader's attention. The color plate illustration (fig. 33) features a white rabbit, mid-run, holding a fan and a pair of gloves, with the split sections of his tailcoat lifting from his movements and floating. His garment shows similarities to the waistcoat and coat combination worn by men in the 1800s, heavily and intricately embroidered. In nineteenth-century Europe, men wore a waistcoat over a shirt and under a coat, similar to a vest, as part of semi-formal or formal attire. This waistcoat could be made from materials such as wool, silk or cotton, and could either match or complement the other pieces of the ensemble. Here, the White Rabbit wears a blue waistcoat, trimmed with gold edges, underneath a pink coat. The pink outer garment displays gold floral decorative elements at the neck, sleeve cuffs, and tails. It is also trimmed with gold edging, and gold buttons are visible at the lower back. The cravat, or long, narrow scarf-like piece, hangs from the collar of the White Rabbit's (not visible) shirt and is made of lace. Hudson used thin layers of white to show the transparent qualities of the lace, juxtaposed with small dark circles depicting the decorative elements of lace. This White Rabbit signifies a formal element of time past, as he nervously fears missing his appointment with the Duchess. Carroll writes of the large fan and kid gloves, but leaves the White Rabbit's clothing open to interpretation, as Carroll solely described the animal as "splendidly dressed,"<sup>336</sup> leaving the rest to the illustrator's imagination.

Hudson's interpretation of elegance from an earlier era is evident in her portrayal of the White Rabbit, just as it is in her rendering of Alice. In both cases, the characters

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336 Gwynedd Hudson, illustrator. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (London: Hodder, 1922), 17.

are dressed in fashions that recall the Victorian period, aligning with the time in which Carroll originally wrote the story. This suggests that Hudson was not attempting to completely situate the narrative firmly within her own contemporary fashions, but instead looked back to an earlier style to anchor the tale.

### **Mad Hatter**

The Mad Hatter is dressed in a striking ensemble, with a classic black coat over a bright yellow vest, creating a vivid contrast that draws the eye (fig. 34). A green bow tie adorned with white dots adds a playful touch to his outfit. His pants feature a grey and white check pattern, introducing a layer of visual texture. Crowning his appearance is a large white hat accented by a blue sash, from which wisps of unruly hair escape.

Additionally, in Hudson's illustrations, while Alice retains her natural proportions, the Mad Hatter is characterized by an exaggeratedly large head. This enlargement may serve to emphasize the Hatter's eccentricity and mental unpredictability, drawing the viewer's attention to his expressive face. An enlarged head may also symbolize the dominance of the Hatter's thoughts and madness, making his intellectual quirks a focal point of the illustration.

While men's fashion in 1922 was rooted in tailored sophistication and increasingly modern silhouettes, the Mad Hatter's clothing in Hudson's illustrations playfully exaggerates the contemporary style conventions of the time. His black coat and yellow vest loosely align with the typical three-piece suit ensemble generally worn. Men's wardrobes began to incorporate plaids, stripes, and checks to express individuality within formal norms. The Hatter's checked trousers echo the era's growing interest in patterned fabrics, but were a more extreme example of the trend. Additionally, the

Hatter's look quickly diverges into the theatrical with the spotted bow tie and oversized hat. Typical neckwear and hats were essential in the era, but were more restrained. The pieces of hair escaping his hat further contribute to a sense of untamed energy, directly opposing the groomed, polished appearance that 1920s fashion emphasized. In these ways, his outfit operates as a distorted mirror, borrowing recognizable components but assembling them in an unconventional way.

While Hudson's Mad Hatter is an exaggerated, showy version of 1920s menswear, it nonetheless reflects and amplifies some sartorial trends of the period. Though mainstream fashion leaned toward tailored restraint, there were notable exceptions where flamboyance and ornamentation surfaced, particularly in leisure and evening wear. In this context, Hudson's Mad Hatter, outfitted in a deliberately unconventional manner, resonates with the decorative impulses, blurring the line between eccentric fantasy and the more functional aspects of men's fashion of the era.

## Conclusion

On the whole, Hudson's illustrations bring a sense of timeless elegance to the 1922 version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Her choice to clothe Alice and other characters in styles evoking earlier eras adds a layer of nostalgic charm that sets her work apart. This is evident in Alice's white dress that does not follow the fashionable 1920s silhouette, and the White Rabbit's historic tailored waistcoat. At the same time, the Mad Hatter has exaggerated features and overstated attire.

Overall, Hudson's artistic style blends striking color palettes with meticulous detail, creating a Wonderland that feels both gentle and mysterious. Taken together, the

result is an interpretation that remains visually enchanting while honoring the spirit of the original Victorian story in both tone and fashion choices.



Figure 26. Gwynedd Hudson's 1931 illustration for *Peter Pan* depicts Mother in a stylish 1930s dress, watching from the window as Peter Pan flies away. Her garment is rendered with remarkable attention to detail, from its intricate stitching to its elegant lines. In the foreground, a floral armchair with a cushion and a carelessly dropped teddy bear him at the children's recent presence, adding a poignant domestic detail to the scene.



Figure 27. Gwynedd Hudson's 1916 illustration for Crème Shalimar presents a woman in layered, Eastern-inspired garments trimmed with fringe, her hand clasped by a bowing man in a tunic, sash, and turban. Later appearing in a 1920 House of Dubarry advertisement, the image evokes the exoticism of the period, with the woman's attire recalling Art Deco fashions.

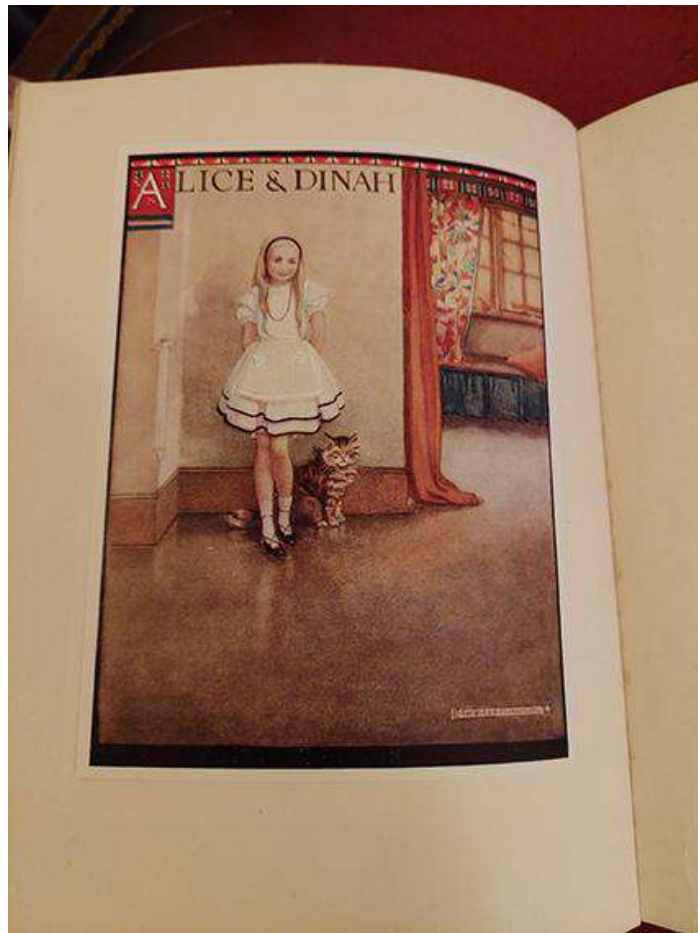


Figure 28. In Gwynedd Hudson's 1922 illustration, Alice appears with her cat Dinah, dressed in a white dress with a pinafore layered over it.



Figure 29. Girl's Georgette Party Dress, 1922. This pink georgette party dress captures the delicate elegance of early 1920s children's fashion. Double pete motifs accent the neckline and form a cape over the armholes, while pleated georgette emphasizes the fashionable low waistline and straight silhouette. Owned by Frances Dodge (1914-1971), the dress reflects both the ornamental charm and modern silhouette of the period. Wayne State University Digital Collections, <https://wayne.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/digital-dress/id/1650/rec/5>.



Figure 30. Girl's Dress, 1915-1920, Liberty & Company. This loose-flowing dress, once belonging to Alleen Kelly Feiss, exemplifies the refined influence of the Arts and Crafts movement on children's fashion. Its distinctive decorative embroidery reflects the movement's emphasis on handcrafted detail and artistic design, elevating the garment beyond everyday wear into a higher expression of style. Wayne State University Digital Collections, <https://wayne.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/digital-dress/id/4085/rec/7>.



Figure 31. Photograph of a young girl, c. 1860s, wearing a light-colored dress with a darker repetitive print, which could possibly be dots. The dress features gathered, puffed sleeves and a skirt supported by a crinoline or petticoat, with four rows of dark trim near the hem. A white apron with lace edges is worn over the dress. While not identical to the white dress depicted in Hudson's 1922 *Alice* illustrations, this historical garment shares notable similarities, including the puffed sleeves, hem trim, overall silhouette, and the presence of a white apron. Thus, this is a closer reference to Hudson's design choices than the fashionable 1920s styles.



Figure 32. Natural coral necklace, circa 1920s, composed of 43 untreated coral beads with an 18k gold clasp. The beads are in excellent vintage condition, exhibiting minor natural surface irregularities typical of coral. Source: [https://www.1stdibs.com/jewelry/necklaces/beaded-necklaces/1920s-natural-coral-gold-necklace/id-j\\_3332413](https://www.1stdibs.com/jewelry/necklaces/beaded-necklaces/1920s-natural-coral-gold-necklace/id-j_3332413).



Figure 33. The White Rabbit in Hudson's illustration is depicted in eighteenth-century fashionable dress. He is shown running, while holding his gloves, with detailed elements of his ensemble visible, such as the lace of his cravat and the embroidery on his waistcoat. The plain background emphasizes his motion, with a visible shadow beneath him.



Figure 34. Hudson's illustration of the Tea Party shows the Mad Hatter as a caricature. The table displays visible food and servingware, while the background remains largely void of detail, except for orange leaves on a tree that evoke Art Deco stylistic elements..

## SALVADOR DALÍ

Salvador Dalí (1904-1989) illustrated a version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in 1969. Commissioned by Random House, he created 12 illustrations, one for each chapter, plus a four-color frontispiece etching. Instead of a bound book, this collection of drawings was presented in a clamshell box, with folded portfolios for each illustration. Only 2,700 copies were produced for this limited edition,<sup>337</sup> and each was signed by the artist.<sup>338</sup> Author Catherine Nichols explains the unique design process: “Dalí turned to the oldest process for reproducing photographic images for printing: heliogravure. Similar to engraving, the method is time consuming and costly. Each heliogravure is printed by hand and considered an original.”<sup>339</sup> Heliogravure is a printing technique that combines photography and engraving to produce richly detailed images.

A Spanish Surrealist painter and printmaker, Dalí earned recognition for creating work that explored subconscious imagery. Both Dalí and Carroll possessed extraordinary imaginations, making this collaboration uniquely compatible despite the time gap. Both exhibited inventiveness through their mediums; Dalí expressed himself through images while Carroll used words. Surrealism refers to an artistic and literary movement from the early twentieth century, where the unconscious mind and imagination were unlocked, producing images that moved beyond the boundaries of reality. Rational thought, traditional art, and societal norms did not have a place in the movement; vision imagery, symbolism and chance associations appeared throughout work by Surrealists. This

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337 Paul Sorene, “Incredible Illustrations for Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland by Salvador Dalí,” 20 October 2019, <https://flashbak.com/salvador-dalis-illustrations-for-alices-adventures-in-wonderland-1969-378542>.

338 A later trade edition reproduced these images in standard book format, making the series more widely accessible beyond the original collectors’ release. This edition was published in 2015 by Princeton University Press as part of the 150th anniversary of Carroll’s work.

339 Nichols, 28.

artwork explored dreams, unexpected juxtapositions, chance control, elements of the absurd, and symbolism. Siri Hiltz, expert in Children's Literature and Literacy, notes: "Growing, shrinking, white knights and caucus races, infants, piglets and games of croquet; the magical and confusing world that Alice falls into fits snugly with the surrealist dream. Lewis Carroll's fantastic tale of a young girl immersed in a dream world epitomizes many of the goals and ideals of the surrealist movement."<sup>340</sup> Hiltz also refers to research published by British scholar J. H. Matthews, who stated that Carroll acted as a "precursor to surrealism,"<sup>341</sup> and he and Dalí were both "readily adopted by the surrealist group."<sup>342</sup> Additionally, Hiltz refers to Matthews' definition of psychic automatism in surrealism, the process of freeing creative outpourings of rational bonds,<sup>343</sup> noting how Carroll performs a similar comparison with *Alice*, as he "created a work in which a young child, Alice, is introduced to her own subconscious, and is quite powerless over it."<sup>344</sup> Hiltz continues, comparing Dalí's illustrations to Tenniel's originals, noting, "the original illustrations by John Tenniel do not attempt surrealist expression inasmuch as they represent the words of Carroll."<sup>345</sup> A further comparison of the two was noted by Hiltz: "His use of washes of color and bleeding lines imply dreaminess just as Tenniel's strong use of line suggested an alternate reality that is just as plausible as our own. Dalí has the ability to create ultra-realistic figures, and uses them to contrast with the dreamy

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340 Siri Hiltz, "Curiouser and Curiouser: An exploration of surrealism in two illustrators of Lewis Carroll's *Alice*," *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature* 15, no 2 (2011).

341 *Ibid.*, 1.

342 *Ibid.*

343 *Ibid.*

344 *Ibid.*

345 *Ibid.*

quality of his other images.”<sup>346</sup> Nichols also felt the two paired together well: “Dalí and Carroll had much in common: both men were ardent explorers of dreams and the imagination, attempting in their art to show the fertile pathways to the unconscious.”<sup>347</sup>

*The Persistence of Memory*, painted in 1931 (fig. 35), is arguably Dalí’s most famous work, and features otherworldly and fantastical qualities. At the center of the composition are several melting clocks, limp and draped over objects such as a tree branch, a distorted face, and a solid block. This depiction of clocks, which are associated with time, defies its conventional rigidity. The rest of the painting is barren, noting stillness, and the concept of time stopping or slipping away.

The clock and time have their own associations within *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, so choosing Dalí to create illustrations for the text is fitting. The White Rabbit exhibits a constant worry about time and creates a tone of urgency. As none of the other characters exhibit this, a juxtaposition is formed between his punctuality within a land of chaos. In the tea party scene, time takes on a tangible presence, almost like a character itself. The Mad Hatter explains he offended Time, trapping them in a perpetual 6:00 and a continuous tea party. Like Dalí’s melting clocks, time here is suspended. Hiltz also notes: “Throughout [Dalí’s] career he created worlds which did not conform to the rules of reality by distorting well-known objects, often items such as clocks which mark the passage of time in a logical and constant manner, the opposite of the surrealist ideals of confusion and disjunction.”<sup>348</sup> Additionally, although the Queen of Hearts repeatedly demands that characters lose their heads, this action is never carried out and there is no mention of when this will actually occur. And lastly, time is arbitrary in the

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346 Hiltz, 3.

347 Nichols, 28.

348 Hiltz, 3.

entire setting of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Alice moves between many different locations and interacts with varying characters, but there is no sense of actual time passing. Wonderland is a dreamlike space, with an illogical nature, and there are no references to actual time markers.

Surrealist ideas also appeared in fashion as well, where designers embraced the movement's fascination with illusion and the unexpected. Throughout the twentieth century, fashion became a medium through which surrealism's playful subversion of reality could be physically experienced, rather than merely observed. Designers experimented with unconventional materials, exaggerated forms, and witty visual metaphors that reconsider the human body as a site of fantasy and surprise. Clothing offered new spaces for surrealism's dreamlike imagery to take shape, as elements such as buttons became eyes, hands formed belts, and hats resembled everyday objects. This merging of art and dress reached its most defining expression in the work of Elsa Schiaparelli (1890-1973), whose collaborations with surrealist artists translated the movement's visual language into garments that questioned the perception and redefined the relationship between fashion and art.

Dalí partnered with Schiaparelli on several Surrealist-inspired designs. One of their most celebrated collaborations exemplifies how fashion and art could merge to challenge aesthetic convention. Together they produced some of the most iconic surrealist garments of the 1930s, including the Lobster Dress<sup>349</sup> in 1937 (fig. 36), where Dalí's painted crustacean motif was printed onto a flowing white silk gown, and the Shoe

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<sup>349</sup>It is noteworthy that Schiaparelli chose the lobster as a central motif in her 1937 dress, given the creature's prominence in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In Carroll's text, the Lobster appears in the "Lobster Quadrille," a dance described by the Mock Turtle. The surreal juxtaposition of elegance and the grotesque in this scene parallels the play of dissonance that Surrealist fashion designers, including Schiaparelli, sought to capture. This makes the lobster an especially fitting symbol for her collaboration with Dalí.

Hat from the same year (fig. 37), which humorously transformed a woman's high-heeled shoe into a millinery piece. These designs encapsulated both artists' fascination with visual contradiction and erotic symbolism, translating Dalí's dream imagery into wearable form. Through these collaborations, Schiaparelli demonstrated that fashion could operate as a conceptual art practice that was provocative, witty, and deeply engaging with the subconscious imagination that defined surrealism.

Through their joint work, Dalí and Schiaparelli merged the languages of art and couture. Of their partnership, Schiaparelli stated:

Dalí was a constant caller. We devised together the coat with many drawers from one of his famous pictures. The black hat in the form of a shoe with a Shocking velvet heel standing up like a small column was another innovation. The Hon. Mrs. Reginald Fellowes, 'Daisy' to her friends, the most talked-about well-dressed woman, the supreme word in elegance at that time, had the courage to wear it. There was another hat resembling a lamb cutlet with a white frill on the bone, and this, more than anything else, contributed to [my] fame for eccentricity. [I] wore it defiantly and certain newspaper columnists have never forgotten it.<sup>350</sup>

Additionally, Schiaparelli shared her story in her 1954 autobiography. The use of the nickname "Schiap," referring to the main character who is herself, is a deliberate and well-known stylistic choice she employed throughout the book. This narrative technique serves as a distinct form of referring to herself in the third person, positioning her life story as both an intimate memoir and a detached observation of a character named "Schiap." Schiaparelli's ability to translate wacky concepts into high fashion stemmed directly from her embrace of Surrealism and a highly thematic approach to design. She viewed the runway as a stage for imaginative spectacle, creating collections that were artistic statements as much as they were garments.

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350 Elisa Urbanelli, editor. *Schiaparelli & Prada: Impossible Conversations* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012), 148.

Surrealism in fashion did not stop in the 1930s. Instead, its playful spirit continued to inspire designers. Emerging decades after surrealism first revolutionized the art world, fashion pieces such as banana peel shoes of the 1980s (fig. 38) continue the movement's fascination with transforming the everyday into the extraordinary. For her Spring/Summer 1989 collection, Paris-based designer Isabel Canovas (1945- ) created silk and leather heels shaped like ripening bananas, with peels unfurling from the toe. A former designer for fashion houses Dior and Louis Vuitton, Canovas established a brief yet memorable brand during the 1980s, known for its playful incorporation of fruit, animals, and humor into high fashion. Rooted in surrealism's fascination with defamiliarizing everyday objects, these shoes turn a mundane, disposable fruit into an object of luxury and art. The banana, which is a bright, playful, and inherently humorous fruit, carries rich symbolic weight. It evokes slapstick comedy, tropical exoticism, sexuality, and mass consumer culture. By translating a fruit or its peels into a shoe, Canovas challenged notions of utility and taste, creating footwear that is both absurd and alluring. Designers such as Kobi Levi (c. 1979- ) have continued this lineage, sculpting shoes that blur the boundary between the wearable and the sculptural. The act of 'stepping into' a banana thus becomes an embodiment of surrealist play, where the body and object merge in a dreamlike transformation. These designs also comment on commodity culture, elevating a cheap, ephemeral fruit into a collectible art object and parodying fashion's obsession with novelty. Their vibrant yellow form, tactile mimicry, and visual absurdity make them instantly attention-grabbing, functioning as both footwear and visual pun. In this way, banana shoes encapsulate the surrealist impulse within fashion, as a way to provoke laughter and reflection by reimagining the familiar, turning function into fantasy.

## Analysis of the Illustrations by Dalí

### Alice

Dalí's 1969 illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* present a distinctly surrealist figure of the protagonist, moving far beyond Carroll's conventional Victorian child. Instead of a literal portrait of the young Alice, Dalí repeatedly inserts an iconic motif from his own lexicon: the "Girl Skipping Rope." Her dress features the outline of a fitted bodice and a wide, full long skirt, but the lack of specific clothing details pushes the focus away from her apparel and toward her suspended motion, which is the jump rope perpetually arcing above her head (fig. 39). This frozen mid-skip motion suggests that Alice is caught in a temporal stasis, a moment of eternal yet unsettling transition. The skipping figure itself is a consistent, static anchor within the surrounding, highly fluid and colorful heliogravure landscapes. This figure, which is often an older, more adolescent or young adult silhouette, immediately de-literalizes the character. By aging Alice, Dalí positions her at the critical juncture of psychology and physical maturity, aligning her journey not with a child's fantasy, but with the Surrealist project of exploring the subconscious, transformation, and the transition from innocence to experience. This interpretive shift frames Wonderland as a profound psychological landscape rather than a simple dream. The visual depiction of this figure emphasizes her symbolic function over her narrative detail. Alice is generally rendered as a stark, black silhouette, ensuring her form is recognized as an archetype rather than a specific individual.

In most of Dalí's illustrations, Alice appears as a black silhouette, emphasizing her role as an observer. One notable exception occurs in the scene where she drinks

potion and changes size. Here, Alice is depicted inside a house that she no longer fits, her arm extending from a window in a way that emphasizes her disproportion (fig. 40). Unlike her usual silhouette, her arm is rendered in a soft pink tone, resembling that of a child. This is the most overtly childlike expression of Alice in Dalí's work, capturing her vulnerability within Carroll's narrative.

## **Caterpillar**

There are several elements that appear throughout Dalí's illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. One is the butterfly. Although butterflies are not explicitly included in the story, they hold symbolism which plays a subtle role in reinforcing the themes of transformation, surrealism, and fleeting moments within the text. The most obvious connection is through the character of the Caterpillar, who Alice meets on her journey. The Caterpillar asks Alice, "Who are you?," referring to themes of identity, change, and self-realization. These are the challenges that Alice navigates throughout the story. Butterflies, appearing repeatedly, symbolize the fleeting and changing nature of Wonderland while also evoking a sense of freedom. Alice is a Victorian child who did not always have the ability to explore new worlds, but in Wonderland she is able to explore her freedom in this new land. Butterflies are also playful, imaginative spirits that coordinate nicely with Carroll's words.

As such, the butterfly effectively encapsulates the transformative spirit of both surrealism and the year 1969 through its powerful symbolism of metamorphosis and the soul. In Dalí's Surrealist context, the butterfly represents a constant state of change, the fluidity of reality, and the journey of the inner spirit, often blurring the lines between conscious and unconscious worlds. This inherent symbolism resonates with the

momentous cultural and political upheaval of 1969. The caterpillar-to-butterfly transformation mirrors the dramatic societal changes of the era, such as the emergence of the counterculture movement, the fight for civil rights, epitomized by events like the Stonewall Riots and Woodstock, and humanity's dramatic leap toward new frontiers with the Apollo 11 Moon Landing. Ultimately, the butterfly serves as an emblem for the era's collective yearning for liberation and rebirth, which is a fragile yet dynamic moment where an old way of life was being shed for something radically new.

In Dalí's illustration of the Caterpillar, the artist presents two distinct interpretations of the creature, reflecting both his fascination with duality and his characteristic blending of the real and the surreal. The first caterpillar is rendered with surprising naturalism, as a small, green and yellow figure whose segmented body is rounded and tactile, shaded to emphasize its soft, almost endearing physicality (fig. 41). This cute, realistic caterpillar sits atop a mushroom, which begins to melt, or dissolve into Dalí's fluid painterly style, and the colors merge as though the pigment itself were still in motion.

In contrast, the second caterpillar dominates the composition, stretching across the scene in a flattened, abstracted form. Composed of black undulating lines punctuated by decorative dots of red, blue, and yellow, this larger figure evokes the rhythm and instability of Dalí's dreamlike worlds. Its body, too, seems to melt and merge with the surrounding space, transforming the familiar into the fantastical.

Behind them, a silhouetted Alice stands as a distant observer. The lower half of her body is composed of a full skirt, created by segments with vertical lines between them. These segments are reminiscent of a butterfly's wing, perhaps illustrating the journey a caterpillar endures from crawling to flying. The skirt is extremely full, and a

skirt of this kind would prove to be extremely difficult to wear while jumping rope. The bodice of Alice's dress is not discernible. A black line, which widens to depict shoulders, is the only distinguishable aspect of the top of her dress. Hiltz sums up this illustration nicely: "Dalí's treatment of the chapter 'Advice from a Caterpillar,' in which Alice meets the caterpillar, is an example of this contrast between reality and fantasy. Dalí creates a scene with only a wash of color and a few black land formations for a background, and places on top of it a very detailed and realistic caterpillar sitting atop a mushroom which looks more like an atomic explosion."<sup>351</sup> In typical Dalí fashion, the scene collapses the boundaries between natural and hallucinatory, using color, fluidity, and form to evoke a psychological landscape rather than a literal one. Through this juxtaposition of two caterpillars, Dalí visualizes the tension between reason and imagination within Carroll's text, while also expressing his own surrealist style.

### **Mad Hatter**

The illustration for Chapter Seven (fig. 42) derives inspiration from the very recognizable *The Persistence of Memory* artwork. This is the chapter where the infamous tea party takes place, and the center of the artwork features a large melting clock, with visible numbers. The hour hand is pointing to the 6, with the minute hand pointing to the 12; it is perpetually 6:00. There are also visible tea setting pieces visible on the clock face, including a tea pot and tea cups with saucers. From the center of the clock, a tree with red orange bark grows, with five butterflies embedded within the blue green leaves of the tree. Alice is again holding her jumping rope, but in this scene, her head is arched backwards. Her back is in a graceful curve, with her head tilted back, and arms up to the

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351 Hiltz, 3.

sky. Her chest is open, expressing both freedom and vulnerability. This pose is associated with a sense of liberation and joy.

However, there is more to this image than just what is visible on the surface. There is no direct depiction of the Hatter himself here. Instead, Dalí portrays a large tree that seems to hold its own hidden personality. Within the canopy of the tree, a softly shaded area of pale yellow draws the viewer's attention, almost like a quiet spotlight. Scattered among the leaves are several butterflies, and one in particular seems to double as an eye, with the surrounding branches forming what could be read as eyebrows. The trunk of the tree, then, becomes a kind of neck, and the green slope of the ground below takes on the suggestion of shoulders. The result is a subtle, almost secretive face emerging from the landscape. Even without a literal Mad Hatter, Dalí seems to suggest his presence through this hidden portrait. It is as if the Mad Hatter has merged with the environment, playing with perception and inviting viewers to question what they see.

## Conclusion

In examining Dalí's illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, it becomes clear that this surrealist approach shapes not only the visual presentation of the story but also its very essence. The dreamlike imagery that fills each page reflects Dalí's fascination with the subconscious and the fluidity of perception, allowing familiar characters to shift forms and resist fixed identities. Alice's depiction as a black silhouette, punctuated by the sudden appearance of her lifelike arm, mirror the constant changes she undergoes in Carroll's narrative. Similarly, the caterpillar has a dual portrayal of realistic and colorful splotches, capturing his shifting personality.

These choices demonstrate Dalí's signature play between reality and imagination, blending with the psychologically rich world created by Carroll. They also echo the broader cultural moment of the 1960s, when fashion itself broke away from the rigid formality of the past, embracing bold, playful, and unconventional styles as a form of rebellion. Like the shifting forms and unexpected juxtapositions seen in Dalí's illustrations, clothing of the era was a personal form of expression and experimentation. Ultimately, the illustrations reflect not only Dalí's surrealist vision but also a deep resonance with Carroll's own approach to character and narrative, creating a dynamic dialogue between the two creative minds.



Figure 35. Salvador Dalí, *The Persistence of Memory*, 1931, oil on canvas, Museum of Modern Art, New York, accession no. 24.1934. It shows the desert-like landscape with melting pocket watches draped over a tree branch, a ledge, and a soft, distorted figure, with distant sunlit cliffs in the background.



Figure 36. Elsa Schiaparelli's 1937 "Lobster Dress" features a long, pale silk evening gown with a large, realistic red lobster painted across the front. This was designed in collaboration with Salvador Dalí, combining surrealism with haute couture.



Figure 37. Elsa Schiaparelli's 1937 "Shoe Hat" is a surrealist hat shaped like a high-heeled shoe, made of black felt with a red sole. It was designed to be worn at an angle, and exemplifies Schiaparelli's playful, avant-garde approach to fashion.



Figure 38. Isabel Canovas' 1989 "Banana Peel Shoes" are designed to resemble peeled bananas with curved, yellow forms creating the surreal effect.



Figure 39. Dalí's illustration of Alice shows a black silhouette of the girl repeatedly jumping rope across a water background, with oversized, glistening tears scattered throughout.

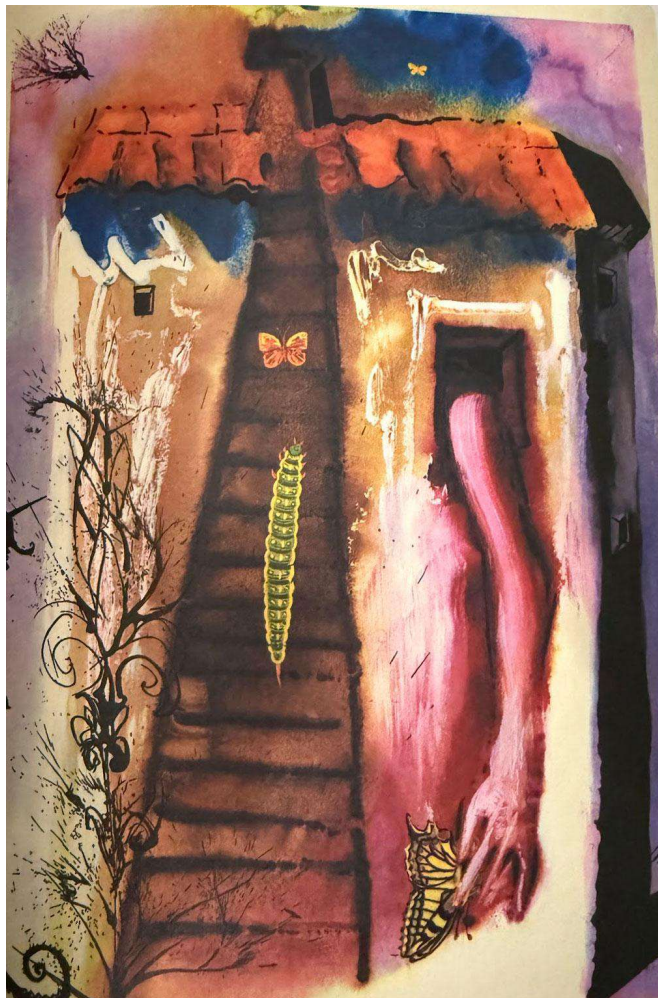


Figure 40. Dalí's illustration shows Alice after she has grown, with a realistic arm extending from a house she has outgrown. Her hand touches a butterfly, which is a recurring image in his work for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

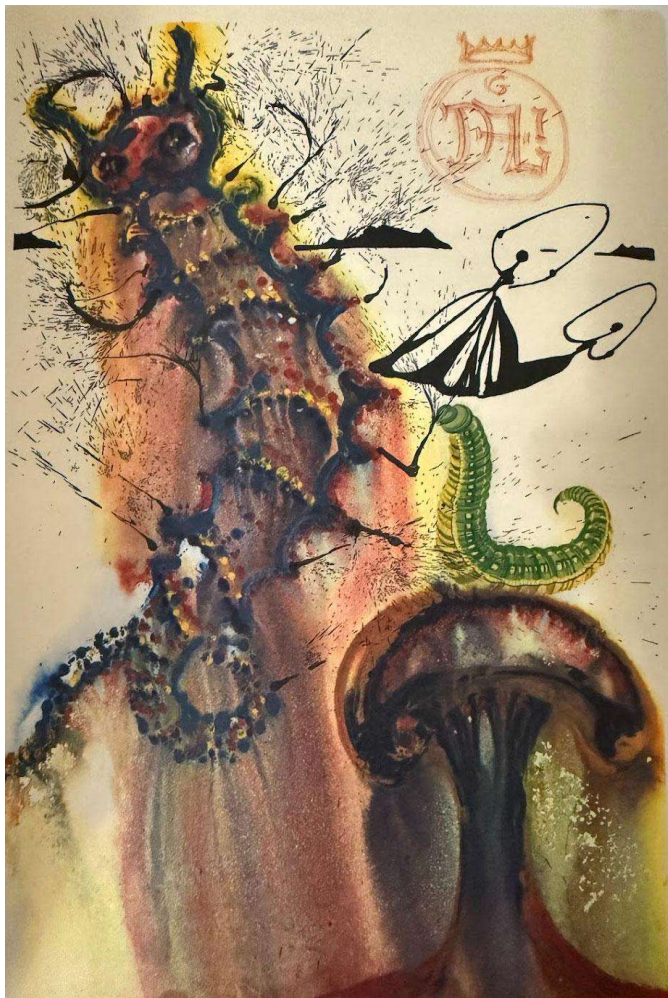


Figure 41. Dalí's illustration depicts two caterpillars. One is drawn realistically, and the other is highly surreal with distorted shapes and dreamlike features, highlighting the contrast between ordinary and surrealist imagery.

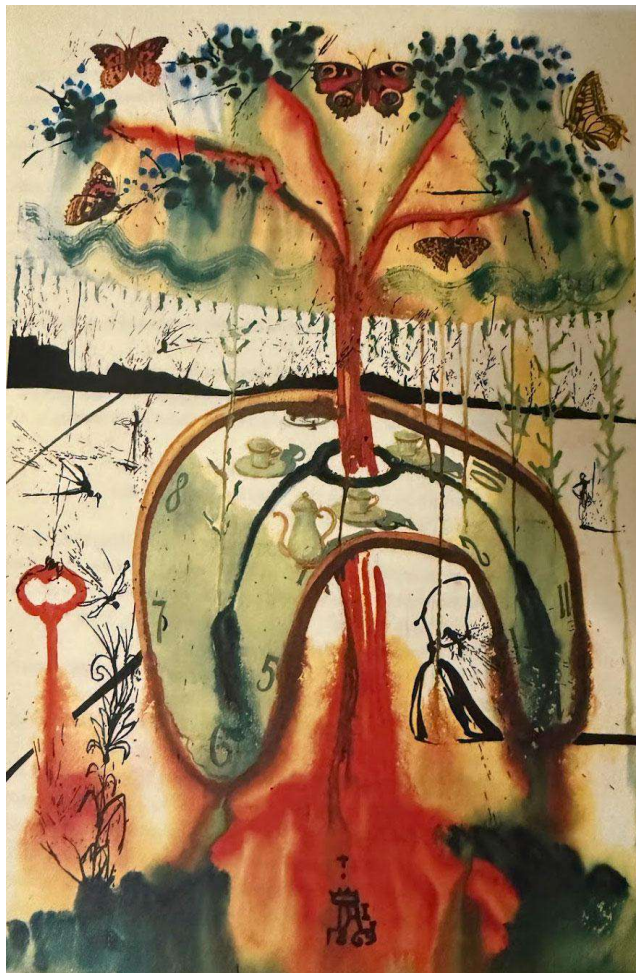


Figure 42. Dalí's tea party illustration echoes *The Persistence of Memory*, featuring a melting clock, linking the surreal distortion of time to the story's endless tea party.

## HELEN OXENBURY

Helen Oxenbury (1938- ) is one of the most influential illustrators in contemporary children's literature, renowned for her ability to blend warmth, humor, and realism in her images. Oxenbury's work spans classic picture books, board books for infants, and imaginative retellings of traditional tales. Her distinctive style is characterized by expressive characters, soft watercolor palettes, and a deep sensitivity to the inner lives of children. She met her husband, John Burningham, who would later become a celebrated children's book illustrator, while studying theatre design at London's Central School of Art and Design in 1957.<sup>352</sup> She originally began her career in scenic design, but left after the demands became impractical once she had young children. Inspired by the success of her husband in children's literature and illustration, she decided to pursue a similar path.<sup>353</sup> In 1967, she published her first children's book, *Number of Things*, and found great success in the field.

Reflecting on her early career, Oxenbury articulates a frustration shared by many illustrators of the time: she "hints at the perceived second class status held by many illustrators of her generation. Drawing for children was 'not frowned upon, but dismissed; it wasn't taken seriously,' she says."<sup>354</sup> It was also not always an easy occupation. In 2025, freelance journalist Susie Measure interviewed Oxenbury regarding her life's work as an artist. Measure asked if Oxenbury felt that female artists were

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352 Lisa Allardice, "Helen Oxenbury: 'I used to hide books from my children - I couldn't bring myself to read them again,'" *The Guardian*, 21 December 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/dec/21/helen-oxenbury-life-illustration-motherhood>.

353 Leonard S. Marcus, *Show Me a Story!: Why Picture Books Matter* (Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2012), 153.

354 Susie Measure, *The Telegraph Online*, "Helen Oxenbury: 'Kids today don't have enough quiet time. They're exhausted'; The illustrator, best known for *We're Going on a Bear Hunt*, is getting her own exhibition-but she wishes they'd ditch the early stuff," 5 March 2025.

overlooked. Oxenbury responded, “I think female anything are always overlooked, aren’t they? It doesn’t have to be illustrators. Are we getting there? I’m not sure. About 20 years ago I thought so, I’m not so sure now.”<sup>355</sup> However, the timing of her career as a children’s book illustrator worked in her favor. In another interview with journalist Lisa Allardice, Oxenbury includes, “‘We were in at the beginning of a great boom of children’s illustrated books,’ she says of the way in which her and Burningham’s careers took off as part of a group of British artists who are now household names, including Janet Ahlberg (*Each Peach Pear Plum*), Quentin Blake (*The Enormous Crocodile* and many more Roald Dahl stories), Raymond Briggs (*The Snowman*), Shirley Hughes (Alfie) and Jan Pienkowski (Meg and Mog).”<sup>356</sup> Oxenbury continues, “It was just wonderful, the energy and excitement. Printing improved. Also publishers got the idea that you could make money out of children’s books - that helps. We were very very lucky.”<sup>357</sup>

In addition to this era of growth in the field, another part of Oxenbury’s success can be attributed to the thought and care she dedicated to her images. She knew that her work would be viewed repeatedly by parents. Oxenbury states, “You have to consider that a board book is looked at with the parent. For the child, that’s the best part – the parent saying: ‘Do you see the this?’ And: ‘Where is the that?’ So you must have a little bit of something in the book that the mother or father will recognize and laugh about, so that they don’t think, *Oh God, I just can’t take that book and look at it again!*”<sup>358</sup> She has a sense of humor that directly relates to the images she produces.

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355 Measure.

356 Allardice.

357 Ibid.

358 Marcus, *Show Me a Story!: Why Picture Books Matter*, 155.

Oxenbury was first introduced to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* during her own childhood, and it was an experience that left a lasting impression on her imagination. Carroll's text became a formative part of her early reading life, remembered vividly later. The 2025 interview with Mesure notes, "Oxenbury's love of drawing started young: she was asthmatic as a child and had hours to kill inside. Are children today too busy to doodle? 'Give them a chance. I don't think kids have enough quiet time. Being bored is all right. They're taken here and taken there. Music lessons and tennis lessons and after school activities. And they're exhausted.'"<sup>359</sup> Allardice notes, "Her mother read *Alice* to her as a child, one of the few books she can remember growing up in Ipswich during the war."<sup>360</sup>

Decades later, Oxenbury returned to *Alice* not as a reader, but as an illustrator, when Walker Books invited her to create a new edition of the classic in the late 1990s. Initially, she hesitated, aware of the challenge of reinterpreting such a beloved and distinguished work, but she ultimately embraced the project as an opportunity to bring her own vision to the story. The complexity of the narrative and the weight of its legacy made the creative process a challenging one. Historian Leonard S. Marcus notes, "It had been a monumental undertaking, a kind of sprinter's marathon, with nearly one hundred drawings of differing sizes and degrees of complexity ultimately required. The project had taken far longer than planned, and, as absorbing as the work had been, Helen was not about to launch directly into the sequel."<sup>361</sup>

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359 Mesure.

360 Allardice.

361 Leonard Marcus, *Helen Oxenbury: A Life in Illustration*, (Somerville: Candlewick Press, 2019), 209. *Through the Looking Glass*, with illustrations by Oxenbury, was published years later in 2005. by Walker.

The newly illustrated edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was published by Walker Books in 1999 and received what author Catherine Nichols described as “almost unanimous rave reviews.”<sup>362</sup> Nichols added, “Critics hailed its fresh approach, deeming its heroine ‘an Alice for the new millennium’ and ‘an Alice accessible to all ages.’”<sup>363</sup> Allardice also notes its success: “Her *Alice in Wonderland* - a sweet-faced Alice in a pinafore and plimsolls - won the Kate Greenaway Medal for children’s book illustration in 1999.”<sup>364</sup>

Nichols states, “Generously illustrated with almost every spread adorned with either spot-art or full-color painting, the book portrays a Wonderland free of malice and hostility. The cartoonlike beasts appear to have neither claws nor fangs, and Alice has no fear as she roams among them. The story’s darker subplot has no place in Oxenbury’s interpretation.”<sup>365</sup> In addition to these descriptions, another distinctive feature of Oxenbury’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* lies in the detailed and thoughtful way she dresses her characters. Clothing in Oxenbury’s illustrations is not merely decorative. Instead, it functions as a crucial tool for elements such as character development and setting the mood. Through fabrics, styles, and textures, Oxenbury reimagines the characters of *Alice*, providing insight into their personalities through clothing. Marcus notes, “Helen decked out certain characters – the churlish Duchess, for example – not in contemporary or Victorian attire but rather in the soigné fashions of the 1920s, an era that fascinated her in part for having been the heyday of her parents’ generation. For Helen, the story of *Alice* would forever be linked to the sound of her mother’s voice reading

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362 Nichols, 33.

363 Ibid.

364 Allardice.

365 Nichols, 33.

aloud to her all those years earlier.”<sup>366</sup> This blending of clothing from different eras creates a layered visual narrative, inviting readers to engage with the characters beyond a single historical moment, emphasizing the story’s enduring, imaginative quality.

### Analysis of the Illustrations by Oxenbury

#### **Alice**

In Oxenbury’s interpretation, Alice is distinctly presented as a child of the 1990s, reflecting contemporary styles that ground the character in a modern, relatable context.

Nichols remarks, “Oxenbury was determined to show Alice as a child of today:

confident, spunky, upbeat, and never in serious danger. Even her clothes are modern, as she wears a blue sleeveless shift dress with visible pockets on the front. Gone are

Tenniel’s stiff petticoats with their crinoline, as Alice gambols in a short blue dress that doesn’t curtail her movements.”<sup>367</sup> Marcus adds, “Helen clothed her Alice in plain white

tennis shoes and a blue tank-top dress and gave her the thoughtful but wide-eyed, open expression of a girl that any young reader might know.”<sup>368</sup> This was in direct response to

Tenniel’s nineteenth-century illustrations, who Marcus describes as having “satirical wit to spare but were arguably too remote – perhaps even too un-child-friendly – for turn-of-the-new-millennium children.”<sup>369</sup>

In Marcus’ book, *Show Me a Story!: Why Picture Books Matter*, a postscript interview was added.<sup>370</sup> Marcus asked if Oxenbury tried to put the Tenniel drawings out of her mind when illustrating her version. Oxenbury replied, “I did try at first – and then I

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366 Marcus, *Helen Oxenbury: A Life in Illustration*, 209.

367 Nichols, 33.

368 Marcus, *Helen Oxenbury: A Life in Illustration*, 200.

369 Ibid.

realized it was impossible because like so many other people I had been brought up as a child with those images, which I liked very much – though they are a bit stiff and frightening. Then I thought, either you just go ahead and allow yourself to be inhibited, and then you find you can't do what you want. I had the chance to use color and to do many, many more illustrations than Tenniel had drawn."<sup>371</sup> Marcus continued, "And you made Alice a girl with whom a young reader might easily identify."<sup>372</sup> Oxenbury replied, "Children don't quite understand all those pinafores and things now. So I just put her in a simple little dress."<sup>373</sup>

The dress and overall style of Alice's garment is of great interest, as the 1980s and 1990s marked a shift in attitude regarding children's clothing. At this time, it increasingly mirrored adult fashion trends, marking a significant shift toward designer influence and branding in children's wardrobes. While it was not the first time children's fashion followed adult trends, these decades saw a marked acceleration of that phenomenon, especially as designers and major brands produced dedicated children's lines.

It started in the 1980s, as adult fashion embraced power dressing, bold silhouettes, and conspicuous branding, and children's fashion followed suit. Designers such as Calvin Klein, Polo Ralph Lauren, and Guess introduced children's lines that replicated adult styles, such as blazers, polo shirts, denim overalls with branded straps, and sweatsuits with logos. These types of children's ensembles also coincided with status-conscious

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370 *Show Me a Story!: Why Picture Books Matter* by Leonard S. Marcus was originally published in 2007. An additional postscript from December 21, 2009 was included in the 2012 edition of the book. This addition provides updated reflections and commentary on developments in the world of picture books since the original publication.

371 Marcus, *Show Me a Story!: Why Picture Books Matter*, 162-163.

372 *Ibid.*, 163.

373 *Ibid.*

branding, as brands such as Esprit, Benetton, and Tommy Hilfiger marketed directly towards parents who wanted their children to reflect the same fashion-forward or aspirational values they saw in adult clothing trends. Additionally, some clothing brands offered new types of clothing aimed at children, such as Jean Paul Gaultier Junior and OshKosh B'gosh. Originally known for utilitarian workwear, OshKosh B'gosh positioned itself as an innovative brand, with its clothing appearing in department stores.

By the 1990s, the concept of 'mini-me' clothing trends became even more pronounced. Children's fashion became more stylized and segmented, as cool, casual, and formal, and mimicking adult clothing. Even more designers expanded their licensing to include children's clothing, such as Donna Karan with DKNY Kids, Armani Junior, and Versace Young. At the mass-market level of clothing, brands like Gap Kids and Old Navy capitalized on casual but on-trend adult styles repackaged for children. The 1980s and 1990s marked the first time branded, mass-produced designer clothing for children became widely available and commercially mainstream. This change occurred as the industrial scale of production and global trending increased, the cultural emphasis on individual style and status was raised, and the growth of children's clothing as a profitable sector in its own right.

The dress worn by Alice (fig. 43) is similar to an existing Gymboree girl's dress from the 1990s, with two pockets and embroidery of flowers at the neck (fig. 44). Gymboree is a beloved American children's clothing brand founded in 1976 and later grew into a public retail chain in the 1980s and 1990s. It is well-known for its coordinated, mix-and-match collections. Under merchandising lead Nancy Pedot (1951- ), who was hired in 1989, Gymboree revamped its offerings for newborns up to age six by introducing brightly-colored, high-quality dresses, jumpers, pants, and tops,

and by the mid-1990s, the brand had a strong reputation for stylish but durable girls' clothing.

Also, in the mid-1990s, Gymboree introduced Matchmatics,<sup>374</sup> a store strategy encouraging shoppers to mix and match coordinated tops, outerwear, and accessories to build outfits. A typical outfit might include a jumper or dress with a coordinating top, a pair of matching leggings, a sweater, jacket, or hoodie, and coordinating accessories such as a hat, socks, or a scarf. Pieces were intentionally styled to work interchangeably. For instance, a flower-themed dress could be paired with matching tops or sweaters, encouraging shoppers to build multiple outfits from a single collection.

In addition to the 1990s-style blue dress, Alice wears white canvas lace-up sneakers on her feet, and shoes of this type were a staple in children's fashion during the late 1990s, celebrated for their simplicity, practicality, and versatility. Brands such as Converse and Keds dominated the market, making these sneakers an instantly recognizable and accessible item for many children. By depicting Alice wearing these familiar shoes, Oxenbury grounds the character firmly in a relatable, everyday reality for young readers of the time. This choice not only modernizes Alice's appearance but also strengthens the connection between the reader and the character, inviting children to see themselves reflected in the story.

Oxenbury's decision to depict Alice's older sister (fig. 45) in her edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is also notable, particularly because many illustrators omit this figure entirely. Her appearance is a quiet yet engaging surprise, and the two are placed in a recognizable sibling dynamic. Oxenbury also sets this scene apart through the sister's clothing, which reflects the casual everyday style familiar to children at the time

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374 Anna Dubrovsky, "Gymboree Thinks Smaller, Gets Bigger," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 January 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-jan-22-fi-gymboree22-story.html>.

when the book was published. She wears a simple white tee-shirt, a cotton lace skirt with cutout details, and white shoes. This modern look places the illustration firmly in its own time period and creates an approachable, down-to-earth feeling. Alice's relaxed posture as she leans against her sister shows an easy, affectionate bond between them, capturing a sibling relationship built upon comfort and trust.

## **White Rabbit**

In contrast to Alice and her sister, whose clothing reflects Oxenbury's contemporary moment, the White Rabbit's attire is rooted in a more traditional, historical style (fig. 46). Like many illustrators before her, Oxenbury outfits him in formal wear, complete with a waistcoat and tailcoat. What makes her interpretation stand out, however, is her unexpected use of an almost entirely white palette. The White Rabbit is, quite literally, white from head to toe. His coat features subtle circular patterns to suggest texture, his waistcoat is a flat white, and delicate ruffles at the collar and wrists peek out from beneath the jacket. He also wears a small pair of pince-nez perched near his nose. Aside from touches of pink on his nose and ears and some beige shading along his legs, back, and the back of his head, he remains strikingly pale. This lack of color draws the viewer's eye, making him visually arresting despite his simplicity. Additional details such as his whiskers and the slightly uneven linework used to indicate fur, give him personality and prevent the design from feeling overly stark.

A surviving 1780s men's ensemble (fig. 47) from the Olive Matthew Collection, now housed in the Chertsey Museum in Surrey, England, offers a useful point of comparison for the White Rabbit's formal attire. The outfit consists of a matching coat, waistcoat, and breeches, all in well-preserved condition. Each piece is richly hand-

embroidered by a highly skilled professional, in colored silks, with floral motifs and garlands of roses winding across pocket flaps, around the collar, and down the fronts of both the jacket and the waistcoat. The suit reflects the refined features of 1780s men's formal dress, including a streamlined silhouette and a high collar, and its colors and ornate decoration and pristine condition, suggest it may have been worn by a bridegroom.<sup>375</sup>

## Duchess

Oxenbury's depiction of the Duchess is especially striking, as she dresses the character in an ensemble loosely inspired by fashion worn among upper-class women in the early 1900s through the 1930s.<sup>376</sup> The Duchess wears a fitted sea-foam green dress (fig. 48) that recalls the period's look, even though her older, fuller figure differs from the narrow, idealized 1920s or 1930s silhouettes. Rather than aiming for perfect historical accuracy, Oxenbury creates a simplified, exaggerated version of the era's style, and it leans intentionally toward the gaudy. This effect is heightened by the accessories, including a string of pearls at her neck, a crown adorned with red jewels, and tall white feathers pluming dramatically from its center. A fur, or faux-fur, stole draped around her arms completes the lavish ensemble. Together, these choices turn the Duchess into a playful caricature of bygone fashion, emphasizing both her over-the-top extravagance

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375 Grace Evans, "Chertsey Museum 18th and 19th century menswear highlights", *The Costume Society*, 13 February 2022, [https://costumesociety.org.uk/blog/post/Chertsey\\_Museum\\_18th\\_19th\\_century\\_menswear\\_highlights](https://costumesociety.org.uk/blog/post/Chertsey_Museum_18th_19th_century_menswear_highlights).

376 As previously noted, historian Leonard S. Marcus referred to the Duchess' dress as from the 1920s, but the silhouette also mimics the fashionable style from the previous Edwardian period. Many older women in the 1920s continued to wear silhouettes and garments that carried over from the Edwardian period, as fashion changes often took longer to be fully adopted. While younger generations embraced newer styles quickly, older women frequently retained elements of earlier trends in cut, fit, and overall silhouette.

and Oxenbury's humorous approach to reimagining Carroll's slightly ridiculous character.

Lavish trims and oversized hats were seen in Edwardian fashion, and Oxenbury's Duchess followed this aesthetic. English novelist and playwright J. B. Priestley noted, "The gap between outrageous youth and shocked age was widening. The young men were wilder, and even nicely brought-up girls were eluding chaperones to have a fling. People with more money than sense grasped every opportunity to show they had more money than sense. So, for example, in more than one capital, the 1913 season celebrated itself by elaborate and hugely extravagant fancy-dress balls, at which many a guest risked bankruptcy trying to look like somebody else for at least one night."<sup>377</sup> Priestley's words of the period's flamboyant attitude toward fashion directly resonates with Oxenbury's Duchess. These years saw a widening gap between traditional expectations and increasingly showy, attention-seeking styles, culminating in lavish events where guests risked financial ruin simply to outdo one another visually. Oxenbury places the Duchess squarely within this spirit of excess. Her gaudy crown, dramatic feathers, pearls, and fur all signal a character eager to project status, even to the point of absurdity. In Wonderland, this manifests as a humorous exaggeration rather than a social reality, but the underlying impulse is the same. She is loud, domineering, and dramatic, and Oxenbury emphasizes these traits through her clothing, turning the Duchess into a memorable character.

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377 J. B. Priestley, *The Edwardians*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 254.

## **Mad Hatter**

As noted, there is a disconnect between how the characters are dressed; they are not all wearing fashionable clothing from the same era. As Alice is wearing contemporary clothing from the date of the publication, the White Rabbit, Duchess, and Mad Hatter (fig. 49) are not.

Oxenbury's Mad Hatter appears in a delightfully mismatched ensemble, including a pink bowtie, white shirt with visible buttons, light green vest, and a yellow and black checked jacket, paired with bright orange trousers and simple black shoes. On his head are three stacked canvas boater hats, which amplify his comical appearance. While these garments do not directly reflect 1990s fashion, they form an intentionally humorous outfit that children of the era would recognize as silly.

It is especially interesting that Oxenbury dresses Alice in contemporary clothing to make her relatable, while other characters draw from an eclectic mix of historical styles, all contributing to a unique Wonderland.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, Oxenbury's illustrations create a visually cohesive Wonderland by grounding Alice and her sister in simple, modern garments that feel familiar and approachable to young readers. In contrast, the supporting characters draw from a wide range of historical fashions, adding depth, humor, and a sense of timeless eccentricity. This blend of contemporary simplicity and bygone style underscores Oxenbury's ability to recontextualize *Alice* in a way that feels both fresh and enduring.



Figure 43. Oxenbury's illustration shows Alice standing outdoors, indicated solely by a patch of grass beneath her feet. Alice wears a short blue shift dress with visible front pockets and white sneakers, presenting her in contemporary, casual clothing. She holds the Duchess's baby, shown mid-transformation as a pig, dressed in pink baby pajamas and a white ruffled cap. The absence of a detailed background isolates the figures, drawing attention between Alice's modern appearance and the ridiculousness of the infant pig she carries.



Figure 44. 1990s Gymboree girl's dress. Cotton blend knit sleeveless dress with red and pink floral embroidery at neckline, with pockets.



Figure 45. Alice is seated on the grass beside her older sister, leaning comfortably against her as the sister reads from a book. The two figures are positioned outdoors, with green grass beneath them and a simple backdrop of blue sky and a tree behind them. Both appear relaxed and at ease.



Figure 46. The White Rabbit is dressed in all white clothing modeled after eighteenth-century fashion. His outfit includes layered garments with visible fabric textures that suggest fine tailoring.



Figure 47. 1780s men's ensemble, Olive Matthews Collection within the Chertsey Museum, Surrey, England.  
[https://costumesociety.org.uk/blog/post/Chertsey\\_Museum\\_18th\\_19th\\_century\\_menswear\\_highlights](https://costumesociety.org.uk/blog/post/Chertsey_Museum_18th_19th_century_menswear_highlights).

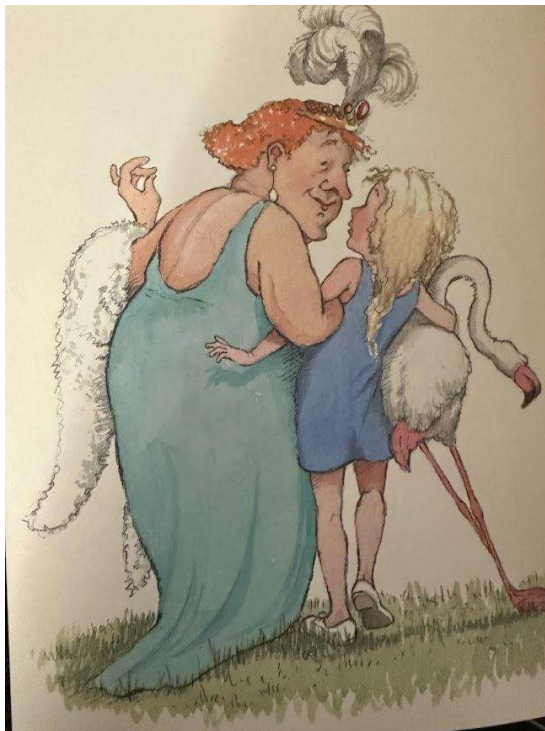


Figure 48. Oxenbury incorporates elements of fashionable Edwardian dress along with 1920s and 1930s fashion for the Duchess, but the overall effects is excessive and lacks visual harmony, fitting the character's personality.



Figure 49. The Mad Hatter's clothing does not correspond clearly to any specific historical period, presenting an overall appearance of deliberate incongruity.

## CHAPTER THREE

### DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF *ALICE* STUDIED: NON-ENGLISH

#### URIEL BIRNBAUM

Uriel Birnbaum (1894-1956) was an Austrian-Jewish writer, painter, and poet, known for his prolific and eclectic contributions to early twentieth-century European literature and art. He published over 600 poems, numerous illustrated books, and essays. His visual art, often described as dark, stylized, and visionary, is particularly significant. Despite his extensive output, Birnbaum remained largely outside the mainstream cultural circles of his time, partly due to his reclusive nature and the esoteric character of his work. Among his best-known works is the *Weltuntergang* (Apocalypse) cycle, a series of 100 expressionist drawings created between 1919 and 1921. He also produced literary writings on biblical and historical figures including Job, Napoleon, and Moses.

Birnbaum was deeply interested in how stories could be adapted and shown to new audiences, both in words and images. This makes the history of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in German especially relevant, as it is a text that traveled beyond its English origins into other languages and cultural contexts. The 1869 German edition of *Alice*, which appeared under the title *Alice's Abenteuer im Wunderland*, was the first instance of Carroll's story being translated into a language other than English. For this edition, the publisher retained the illustrations by Sir John Tenniel, originally created for the English version. Tenniel's wood-engraved images were adapted to accompany the German text, ensuring that readers encountered both Carroll's story and its familiar visuals in their own language.

Children's literature and translation scholar Emer O'Sullivan, in her chapter "Miss Zimmerman and Her Successors: German Visions of Alice in Wonderland,"

recounts how Antonie Zimmermann produced this first German translation.

Zimmermann, who taught German and was personally acquainted with Carroll's Aunt Caroline, was considered well-suited for the task.<sup>378</sup> Carroll approved of her work, stating in the author's note within the German 1869 edition, "The author wishes to express his appreciation to the translator, who has replaced the occasional parodies of English children's songs and poems—which naturally would not have made sense to young Germans—by parodies of well-known German ones. By the same token, often untranslatable English puns have been replaced by appropriate German ones, which the book owes solely to the skill of the translator."<sup>379</sup>

O'Sullivan explains why this version was so well received: "Zimmermann's translation is one which succeeds where many subsequent translators fail. It is a careful, modestly creative, foreignizing translation; the original location is retained, Alice remains an English girl, albeit one who speaks German."<sup>380</sup> She goes on to add, "Zimmermann succeeds in translating a complex, linguistically challenging, and, at that time, entirely 'foreign' text for German children in such a way that its innovative, startling, unfamiliar, contradictory, even anarchic and threatening character is reproduced. Not without the occasional weakness, it is nonetheless a remarkable achievement, a legacy for future translators to build on."<sup>381</sup>

This translation marked a significant milestone as the first foreign-language edition of Carroll's text. By introducing Carroll's imaginary world to a non-English-

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378 Emer O'Sullivan, "Miss Zimmermann and Her Successors: German Versions of Alice in Wonderland," *Alice in a World of Wonderlands*, edited by Jon A. Lindseth and Alan Tannenbaum, vol. 1 (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2015), 259.

379 This passage was translated by Emer O'Sullivan from the 1869 German message within *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

380 O'Sullivan, 260.

381 *Ibid.*, 261.

speaking audience, this translation not only demonstrated the story's broad cultural resonance but also laid the groundwork for a long tradition of *Alice* in German literary and artistic contexts. Its publication paved the way for later German editions, culminating in the richly illustrated 1923 version featuring original artwork by Uriel Birnbaum. Birnbaum's illustrations reflected a distinct visual interpretation, signaling the evolution of *Alice's* reception and adaptation within German-speaking cultures.

This 1923 German edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was translated by Victor Schottländer. Titled *Alice im Wunderland*, this iteration presented a new interpretation of Carroll's text both visually and linguistically. Schottländer's translation contributed to a growing body of German-language adaptations, and paired with Birnbaum's expressive and modernist illustrations, it represented a significant cultural reinterpretation of Carroll's classic for early twentieth-century German readers.

Uriel's father, Nathan Birnbaum, gave Zionism its name and was one of its earliest advocates, though he later became critical of it.<sup>382</sup> While Uriel Birnbaum is primarily remembered for his striking and often uncanny illustrations for *Alice*, his work can be contextualized within the broader cultural and intellectual movement shaped by his father. Both father and son, in their respective fields, engaged deeply with questions of identity, belonging, and cultural reinvention. Nathan Birnbaum worked to define Jewish identity in a world where Jews felt displaced, navigating the tensions of exile and the longing for a homeland. Uriel, similarly, used his artistic imagination to transform Carroll's text into a strange, imaginative twist for German readers. His illustrations capture a sense of being out of place and navigating unfamiliar worlds, which are ideas that echo the broader questions of cultural belonging his father confronted politically. In

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382 Kyle Dugdale, "City of God: On the Longing for Architectonic Perfection, a Reminder by Uriel Birnbaum," *The Individual and Utopia: A Multidisciplinary Study of Humanity and Perfection*, edited by Clint Jones and Cameron Ellis (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015), 180.

both cases, father and son were exploring what it means to belong and how to find a place in a world that is both familiar and foreign.

Some of Birnbaum's other works surrounding affiliation and acceptance are closely tied to *Alice*. Historian Kyle Dugdale described Birnbaum's book *The Emperor and the Architect: A Tale of Fifty Pictures*:<sup>383</sup> "It sounds almost like a children's story; and at first glance its images might support that impression. The figuration has a child-like, perhaps even childish quality to it – deftly-sketched black outlines containing fields of bold, bright colour, with an enigmatic character that resides somewhere between that of a comic strip and that of a stained glass window."<sup>384</sup> Dugdale continues, noting how in reality, this is not a book created for children, but one that holds deeper meaning: "What sounds and looks, at first, like a picture book, proves in reality to be a critique: a vigorous, uncompromising critique not only of modernity's aspirations to the construction of a contemporary utopia, but of the very foundations of modernity itself, measured in their architectural, political, and spiritual dimensions, and found wanting. It is a definitively anti-utopian work by an author who is explicit, in other texts too, as to his rejection of utopian ambitions."<sup>385</sup> *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* can also be described as anti-utopian in that it presents a world that is disordered, unstable, and resistant to reason, rather than idealized or perfect. It is almost the opposite of a utopia, as it is a space where rules exist but make little sense, and the attempt to belong or make sense is constantly challenged. Dugdale's descriptions of Birnbaum's illustrations resonate strongly with this approach. In his work for *Alice*, Birnbaum used pen and ink

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383 This is the title translated in English. The title in German is *Der Kaiser und der Architekt: Ein Märchen in fünfzig Bildern*.

384 Dugdale, 181.

385 Ibid., 182.

drawings to emulate the bold, high-contrast aesthetic of woodcut techniques, characterized by heavy black lines, stark forms, and simplified shapes. The tone of these images conveys a dark, symbolic, and distinctly modernist interpretation of the classic.

### [Analysis of the Illustrations by Birnbaum](#)

#### **Alice**

The most noticeable and memorable detail of Birnbaum's illustrations is the use of heavy black outlines defining each object, which are then filled with bold, intense colors. The color palette is largely deep and saturated, with certain elements highlighted in bright, contrasting tones.

In 1920s Germany, children's clothing tended to be practical and simple. Fashion historian Vivika Berggren Torell notes, "The passion for fresh air and sunbathing influenced children's fashion," adding "parents were advised to dress the children in as little as possible in summer since sunlight was seen as healthy. A common interest in leisure wear influenced children's fashion."<sup>386</sup> Elaborate or highly decorative dresses were uncommon for everyday wear, reflecting both social norms and the need for functionality. Torell continues, "the most common everyday clothes for girls were a dress or skirt and a blouse...in the 1920s, the dress was short and had a long bodice, a small skirt, and a belt at the hip."<sup>387</sup> Alice's clothing reflects this unadorned style (fig. 50). She wears a plain white or grey dress with a high neck, short sleeves, which gathers at the waist, forming a blousant in the bodice. The skirt of the dress ends just at the knee. Her legs are covered with light blue stockings, and her hair is tied back off of her face in a

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<sup>386</sup> Viveka Berggren Torell, "Children's Clothes," *Berg Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion, vol. 8: West Europe* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 465.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

ponytail and adorned with a white bow. On her feet are sturdy brown shoes, completing an outfit that is modest, functional, and typical for girls of the era.

Alice's full ensemble is seen in other images (fig. 51, 52) throughout the story, and at times, the coloring of both her dress and stockings changes. In the image where Alice reaches for a key on a table, her dress is pink-mauve in hue, and her stockings are grey. Yet when she is pictured with the Gryphon and Mock Turtle, her dress and stockings are best described as white, with some pink shadowing on her dress. Birnbaum is not concerned with continuity of dress throughout, and her clothing appearance shifts as she navigates Wonderland. Rather than functioning as a stable marker of identity, dress becomes responsive to circumstance, reinforcing the sense that Alice's position within this world is unsettled. These shifts may reflect the illustrator's practical focus on individual images rather than a unified costume design. As a result, Alice's dress is changeable, responding to the demands of each illustration.

The Frog Footman (fig. 53) also appears in Birnbaum's version, acting out his role as a messenger, showing obedience and very little personality beyond this. Tenniel depicted this character wearing formal livery from the eighteenth century. Birnbaum selected a brown jacket paired with matching knee-length trousers and coordinating brown shoes. In 1920s Germany, male workers in service roles wore clothing that signaled their occupation and social status. Household staff, butlers, footmen, and valets could wear a formal black or dark suit with a white shirt and bow tie. Some households required livery, similar to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century styles. If a 1920s German character wore an ensemble similar to Birnbaum's Frog Footman, it would convey a decent amount about his social status, occupation, and personality. Occupations such as rural laborers, apprentices, or lower-level domestic services would wear knee

breeches, marking them as a lower- to middle-class worker in a service role or domestic work. As knee breeches had fallen out of style by the 1920s, their inclusion implies the wearer clings to older customs or is unconcerned with current trends.

Overall, these images are dark. This gives Wonderland the appearance of a gloomy, nightmarish appearance rather than a sunny, jovial place.

### **Queen of Hearts**

Although Birnbaum drew a substantial number of characters in Alice, relatively few are depicted wearing clothing. Many of the well known characters, such as the Caterpillar, Cheshire Cat, Gryphon, and Mock Turtle are all shown in their natural forms without garments. This is not unexpected, but their lack of clothing contrasts sharply with human characters, making those who are clothed, such as the Queen of Hearts (fig. 54), stand out even more. The Queen, seen from the back in a simple gown, provides an opportunity for analysis. Fashionable 1920s gowns were starting to feature lower waistlines, just above the hips, but still often had long skirts. Dresses had simple silhouettes with minimal ornamentation. Fabrics such as silk, satin, or fine wool made up these garments, and fur-trimmed coats or capes would be worn in the winter.

Birnbaum's representation of the Queen of Hearts fits with the overall simplicity seen in his illustrations, showing minimal ornamentation. However, the styling of her garment does not align with what would be considered fashionable attire for a figure of high status in his contemporary period. Instead, the Queen wears a red long-sleeved gown beneath a grey sleeveless overdress, featuring a loose waist and an extended train, giving her an archaic and ceremonial appearance rather than one of current high-fashion elegance.

The absence of contemporary fashion distances the Queen of Hearts from everyday social reality, rendering her more abstract than human. Her dress resists identification with a specific historical moment, instead situating her within a generalized realm of authority and ritual. In contrast to Alice's shifting appearance, the Queen's costume appears fixed and unyielding, visually underscoring her role as a static force within Wonderland.

While the Queen of Hearts' costume deliberately rejects contemporary fashion, other forms of dress in 1920s Germany reflect the ways clothing could engage directly with social and economic realities. One striking example is the so-called Victory Dress (fig. 55), a garment born out of the extreme inflation and economic collapse in the early 1920s.

In response to the widespread chaos of postwar Germany, some women used fashion to comment on the nation's crisis. The Victory Dress, crafted from cotton and hyperinflated German currency, stands as a remarkable symbol of protest, defiance, and the tragic absurdity of the economy after World War I. While living through this, women transformed the worthless money into wearable garments, fashioning outfits that both mocked and commemorated the cost of victory in the war. Known also as Victory Parade Dresses, these creations were not intended for conventional beauty, but instead made bold visual statements about resilience and social critique. Only a handful of these dresses survive today. As a cultural artifact, the Victory Dress illuminates the ways clothing can operate as a medium for social commentary; it embodies creativity in crisis and demonstrates that even amid scarcity, fashion can serve as a vehicle for personal and collective expression. In juxtaposition to Birnbaum's Queen of Hearts, whose archaic, ceremonial attire emphasizes authority and timelessness, the Victory Dress reminds us

that contemporary clothing could function as a form of resistance, reflecting the pressures, anxieties, and agency of women in a turbulent historical moment.

## Conclusion

Birnbaum's illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* must be understood within the broader historical context of postwar Germany. Since 1914, the country had endured severe wartime shortages, including widespread hunger, followed by military defeat, the punitive terms of the Treaty of Versailles, political instability, and economic collapse. Although German Jews had achieved full civil equality and were highly visible in Weimar cultural and intellectual life,<sup>388</sup> they were increasingly scapegoated for Germany's defeat and social unrest. As a Zionist, Birnbaum was acutely aware of Jewish vulnerability and the possibility of displacement, and this consciousness may have shaped his interpretation of Carroll's narrative. *Alice*, after all, is a story structured around sudden estrangement. A child is abruptly removed from her familiar surroundings and thrust into a disorienting, often hostile world.

In Birnbaum's illustrations, Alice appears unusually subdued, her clothing rendered in drab tones that nearly cause her to disappear into her surroundings. This visual restraint, combined with the overall grimness of the imagery, distinguishes Birnbaum's work from other contemporary translations and suggests an underlying sense

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388 The Weimar Republic refers to the German democratic state that existed from 1919 to 1933, established following Germany's defeat in World War I and the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859-1941). Despite profound political instability, economic crisis, and social unrest, the Weimar period was marked by an extraordinarily vibrant cultural and intellectual life. Artists, writers, architects, filmmakers, and theorists associated with movements such as Expressionism, New Objectivity (Neue Sachlichkeit), and the Bauhaus contributed to radical experimentation across the arts. Jewish intellectuals and artists played a prominent role in this cultural landscape, particularly in urban centers such as Berlin, participating actively in publishing, theater, visual art, music, and academic life. At the same time, this cultural prominence coexisted with rising antisemitism and political extremism, rendering Jewish participation both highly visible and increasingly vulnerable.

of foreboding. Rather than playful fantasy, Wonderland becomes a space where security is fragile and conditional, and rights can exist in one moment and be withdrawn in the next. This reflects the anxieties of a historical moment marked by instability, uncertainty, and the looming threat of forced uprooting, as legal equality for Jews existed, but safety and belonging were not guaranteed.

As such, Birnbaum's work reflects a combination of both his artistic style and the context of his era, and Wonderland is not a stable or playful space. His use of darker tones and simplified forms conveys a sense of mystery, consistent with the more conservative and restrained aesthetics of early twentieth-century Germany. Alice's simple clothing, sometimes depicted in varying shades, emphasizes her youth. Additionally, Alice does not appear protected, centered, or empowered. The scarcity of clothed characters draws attention to the clothing seen, whose garments convey status and narrative significance, or lack of it. Together, these choices demonstrate Birnbaum's subtle social commentary within his visual interpretation of Carroll's story.



Figure 50. Alice is depicted in a simple dress and blue stockings. Strong black outlines define the forms, while pops of color and highlights emphasize details, creating a strong contrast.



Figure 51. Birnbaum's illustration presents the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon in animated motion, with a smaller, seated Alice in the foreground. The landscape shifts from green grass to brown sand, receding toward the distant sea.



Figure 52. Alice is at the bottom of the rabbit hole and stands in a hallway with many doors. She stretches toward a key resting on a table in the center of the space. As in Birnbaum's other illustrations, the figures and architectural details are defined by bold, dark black outlines that give the scene graphic clarity.



Figure 53. Alice approaches two tall, closed doors. Behind her is the Frog Footman. Dark black lines articulate the folds and creases of their clothing, a characteristic feature of Birnbaum's style that heightens contrast.



Figure 54. Alice stands by the Queen of Hearts, whose garment is notably plain, evoking a generalized, vaguely historical notion of royalty rather than than a specific period style.



Figure 55. A woman in Amsterdam, circa 1922, wearing a Victory Dress made from 100 Mark notes. The Victory Dress exemplifies creativity and protest through clothing amid economic crisis.

## LOLA ANGLADA

Dolors Anglada i Sarriera (1892-1984), commonly known as Lola Anglada, was a prominent Catalan writer and comic artist, whose work played an important role in the development of children's literature and visual culture in early twentieth-century Spain. She was deeply connected to her Catalan identity, which influenced both her artistic subjects and her commitment to publishing in the Catalan language. Catalan is a distinct Romance language, separate from Spanish (Castilian), with its own literary tradition and cultural history, spoken primarily in Catalonia and other regions of northeastern Spain. Born in Barcelona, Spain, she began writing and illustrating her own stories at a very young age, and at the age of thirteen, received early recognition when one of her illustrations appeared in the satirical weekly publication *Cu-cut* in 1905. By 1909, her work was regularly being published in *En Patufet*, and she went on to collaborate with several other children's magazines, including *En Jordi*, *En Patufet*, *La Mainada*, and *La Nuri*, which she founded in 1925.<sup>389</sup> In addition to her work in periodicals, Anglada authored and illustrated several books that were well received by the public, including *En Peret* (1928), *Margarida* (1928), *Monsenyor Llangardaix* (1929), and *Narcís* (1930).<sup>390</sup>

Anglada's work reflects her Catalan background, particularly during the Spanish Civil War. During this period, she joined the *Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT)*<sup>391</sup>

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389 Viu, "Lola Anglada: The Last of the Classical Catalan Illustrators," *The Attic*, 3 March 2024, <https://theatticbyviu.substack.com/p/the-attic-28-lola-anglada>.

390 Ibid.

391 The Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), founded in 1888, is a major Spanish labor union founded in 1888 that aligned itself with Republican and antifascist causes. During the Spanish Civil War, it played a significant role with the Republican coalition. Anglada's membership reflects her political commitment and support for workers' rights and the Republican movement. Its political position and internal tensions among leftist factions are discussed in George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* (1938), a firsthand account of the conflict and its ideological divisions.

and collaborated with the *Comissariat de Propaganda* of the *Generalitat de Catalunya*,<sup>392</sup> using illustration as a tool for communication and social influence. In 1937, amid the conflict, she wrote and illustrated *El més petit de tots*, a work that reflects her belief in the power of children's literature to shape values.<sup>393</sup> The book promotes republican and antifascist ideals while also addressing the emotional toll of war and emphasizing the importance of peace. Through her work for children's magazines, books, and propaganda, Anglada used visual storytelling to instill regional ideals, while also celebrating Catalan traditions, with emphasis on depicting local customs, historical dress, and childhood experiences which reinforced a sense of cultural continuity and pride at a time when Catalan autonomy and language were politically contested. In this way, Anglada's art functioned not only as a creative expression, but also as a subtle form of cultural activism, helping to sustain Catalan identity. This blending of artistic expression and political engagement exemplifies Anglada's broader contribution to Catalan culture and supports her recognition as the last classical Catalan illustrators of the twentieth century.<sup>394</sup>

Although this focus on Anglada's work starts in the 1930s, it is important to recognize that pride in textiles and fashion has long been embedded in Catalonia's cultural identity. From the late-nineteenth century onward, clothing and textile production were understood not only as economic enterprises but also as powerful makers of regional heritage and artistic achievement. Beginning in 1883, during the height of the Catalan Renaixença, the Barcelona Town Council initiated the collection and public

<sup>392</sup> The *Comissariat de Propaganda* of the *Generalitat de Catalunya* was a government agency established in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War to promote Republican and antifascist ideals through visual art, publications, and media, using culture as a tool to mobilize public support and resistance against Francoist forces.

<sup>393</sup> Viu.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

display of historical textiles and clothing as a means of celebrating Catalonia's cultural and industrial identity. These exhibitions highlighted the region's long-standing role in sartorial production and trade, presenting both local garments and international textiles to underscore Catalonia's connections to domestic and global fashion networks. The efforts of artists, collectors, industrialists, and museum professionals reflected a shared recognition of clothing as a powerful symbol of Catalonia's cultural, social, and economic heritage.<sup>395</sup> Additionally, "Catalan dress contributes to cultural narratives of regional-national identity that are, at the same time, constitutively interconnected and transnational in character."<sup>396</sup> This means that Catalan clothing helps tell stories about Catalan identity, but those stories are not isolated or purely local. Instead, they are formed through connections both within Spain and across national borders. Despite this strong connection to Catalan identity, the region's fashion has often incorporated influences from abroad, particularly France as well as other parts of Europe, demonstrating that Catalonia's sartorial history is shaped not only by local traditions but also by transnational trends and exchanges.

An interesting extension of Anglada's artistic interests can be found in the Dolls Collection at the Museu de Sitges, located in Sitges, a coastal town in Catalonia, Spain. It comprises more than 400 dolls dating from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Representing a wide range of styles, materials, manufacturers, and social contexts, the collection reflects Anglada's sentimental desire to recreate both childhood and the everyday life of a vanished past society. As objects historically made for girls, the dolls offer insight into social class, gender expectations, changing customs, and especially

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<sup>395</sup> Francisco Fernández de Alba and Marcela T. Garcés, *Fashioning Spain: From Mantillas to Rosalía* (London: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021), 187.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

historical fashion, with garments that mirror contemporary dress of their respective periods.<sup>397</sup> Crafted from materials such as papier-mâché, wood, and fine porcelain, with some even featuring mechanical movements or music, the dolls function as visual records of dress and material culture. This attention to historical clothing and lived experiences becomes particularly relevant when examining Anglada's illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, where costume plays a central role in shaping character, time, and identity.

Anglada's illustrated edition, *Alicia en el país de las Maravillas*, first published in 1927 by Editorial Juventud, offers a distinctive and imaginative interpretation of Carroll's classic tale. Juventud was founded in Barcelona in 1923 by José Zandrera Fecha (1894-1969) as a publishing house that initially produced accounting books before quickly becoming one of Spain's most influential publishers of children's and juvenile literature.<sup>398</sup> By the mid-1920s and beyond, Juventud was instrumental in introducing Catalan readers to major international works, including translations of *Peter Pan* and *Heidi*, helping to shape modern children's literary culture in Spain. The editorial house specialized not only in youth fiction but also in accessible, high-quality editions and later expanded into broader genres, maintaining a significant role in Spanish and Catalan publishing well into the twentieth century.<sup>399</sup> Juventud's early focus on translating and disseminating classic children's stories reflects broader cultural developments in Barcelona's vibrant publishing scene during the 1920s.

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397 "Collection of Dolls Lola Anglada and other collections," *Museus de Sitges*, accessed 4 November 2025, <https://museusdesitges.cat/en/colleccions/collection-dolls-lola-anglada-and-other-collections>.

398 "Editorial Juventud will celebrate its 90th anniversary in 2013," *The Blog of the Miguel de Cervantes Virtual Library*, 7 January 2103, <https://blog.cervantesvirtual.com/editorial-juventud-cumple-90-anos>.

399 Ibid.

This dissertation examines Anglada's 1958 publication<sup>400</sup> of *Alicia en el pais de las Maravillas*, a reprint of her original 1927 edition.<sup>401</sup> In Anglada's version, Alice is dressed in contemporary clothing of the 1920s, making her familiar with young readers of the time, while other Wonderland characters wear garments inspired by a variety of historical periods. Her illustrations combine humor, very expressive characterization, and careful attention to the details of costumes, reflecting her long-standing interest in childhood, historical dress, and visual storytelling. By blending contemporary and historical storytelling styles, Anglada creates a unique and visually rich Wonderland.

### Analysis of the Illustrations by Anglada

#### **Alice**

For little girls, ensembles in the 1920s were composed of "loose, smocklike dresses that often had a yoke at the neck. Many had matching bloomers that could be seen underneath the short skirts. Smocking and embroidery were favored decorations. In the 1920s young girls' dresses, like those of adults, were unfitted. In the 1930s waistlines of dresses returned to anatomical placement."<sup>402</sup> In Anglada's illustrated edition, Alice is depicted wearing a short-sleeved white dress that falls just above her knees (fig. 56), fitting with the overall 1920s fashionable clothing description. Her dress has an A-line

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400 Published in 1958, this edition appeared during the period of authoritarian rule in Spain under Francisco Franco (1939-1975). However, the illustrations reproduce Anglada's 1927 work and reflect pre-Civil War visual contexts.

401 The edition under study for this dissertation, published in 1958, contains black-and-white illustrations throughout the text, with the only color illustration appearing on the cover. It is presumed that the original 1927 edition featured the same black outlined illustrations, although this cannot be confirmed directly, as the 1927 printing is not available for examination. For the purposes of this analysis, the illustrations are treated as representative of Anglada's 1927 artwork.

402 Phyllis Tortora and Keith Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume: A History of Western Dress*, 5th edition (New York: Fairchild Books, 2010), 497.

skirt that hangs slightly loose, paired with a scooped neckline, creating a simple, youthful silhouette. Over the dress, she wears an apron with thin straps at the shoulders. The apron's white background is dotted with small, light blue spots, and ties in the back in a large bow. Her legs are covered with white stockings, and on her feet she wears flat white shoes secured with a strap across the instep. Completing the ensemble, Alice's brown hair is held back by a white headband topped with a large white ribbon bow. As noted above, her outfit includes matching bloomers, fashionable for young girls of the era, which are visible in the illustration of Alice falling down the rabbit hole (fig. 57) and throughout the book within other drawings. Presumably, these bloomers are white, coordinating with her dress and apron. Alice's clothing in Anglada's illustrations closely reflects the typical attire of young girls in the 1920s. Short-sleeved, knee-length dresses with slightly loose, A-line skirts were common, allowing for ease of movement while maintaining a modest and tidy appearance. Aprons were often worn over dresses, both for practical purposes and as a decorative element, and patterns such as small dots or simple prints were fashionable for children's garments. Additionally, fashion historian Jayne Shrimpton comments on the length of the garment in association with age: "Girls' age differences were still expressed in the length of their garments, frock and skirt hemlines lengthening slightly as the girl grew older."<sup>403</sup> Alice's dress hits above her knees, which is longer than the fashionable shorter dresses worn by even younger children. Overall, Anglada's design presents Alice as practical, making her visually accessible while maintaining a sense of charm.

A surviving example of a 1920s child's dress (fig. 58) further supports the contemporary nature of Alice's costume in Anglada's illustrations. Made of simple white

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403 Jayne Shrimpton, *Fashion in the 1920s* (Long Island City: Shire Publications, 2013), 49.

cotton, the dress features openwork lace detailing that adds decoration without overwhelming the garment.<sup>404</sup> Its loose, A-line silhouette and short sleeves closely resemble the dress worn by Alice. This visual comparison underscores how Anglada's depiction of Alice aligns with everyday children's clothing of the period.

In the 1920s, it was fashionable for young girls to wear large bows on top of their heads, often positioned at the crown or slightly to one side. These bows were typically made from materials such as silk, satin, velvet, or grosgrain ribbon, and could range in size from modest to dramatically oversized, serving as a prominent accessory. Colors included white, pastels, and occasionally brighter shades, often chosen to coordinate with the child's dress or hair accessories. The bows functioned both as decorative accents and as markers of social and fashion awareness, reflecting broader trends in children's dress that favored a polished, tidy, and visually appealing appearance. Surviving photographs from the era (fig. 59) frequently show young girls with bows as large as their faces, placing them within 1920s fashion trends while also providing context for Anglada's depiction of Alice with a substantial bow atop her head.

In the 1920s, young girls in Catalonia, like elsewhere in Europe, typically wore the same garments of simple dresses with aprons. While Anglada's illustrations frequently reflect Catalan culture, folklore, and historical dress in her broader body of work, her depiction of Alice aligns more with general 1920s children's fashion rather than specifically Catalan clothing. Alice's short-sleeved dress, patterned apron, and ribboned headband present a contemporary, broadly European style.

Additionally, on the cover of the book, Alice is depicted with brown hair and blue eyes. There is limited historical data on hair and eye color specifically among Catalan

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<sup>404</sup> While Alice's dress in Anglada's illustrations does not feature openwork lace of this type, the comparison remains useful due to the shared fabric choice, loose A-line silhouette, short sleeves, and overall simplicity characteristic of 1920s children's dress.

people in the 1920s,<sup>405</sup> but broader patterns in Spain and southern Europe provide some context. Historically, the most common combination of traits in Spain has been brown hair with brown or hazel eyes,<sup>406</sup> reflecting Mediterranean genetic influences. Lighter features, such as blue eyes or fair hair, are less common, estimated at about 16% of the population, though they do occur due to historical genetic diversity and European admixture.<sup>407</sup> The depiction of Alice with blue eyes, therefore, is notable as it does not necessarily reflect the most common local phenotypes in Catalonia at the time. Blue eyes and lighter hair are more frequently found in northern European populations, and while rarer in Spain, they do occur as part of the natural variation in eye and hair color.<sup>408</sup> This choice may also reflect an attempt to set Catalans apart from other Spaniards by visually associating them with northern Europeans. Additionally, an unpublished self portrait attributed to Anglada from 1918 (fig. 60) shows that she herself had brown hair and blue eyes. It is likely that this choice for Alice draws on either a likeness of Anglada herself, or Western European artistic conventions that associate blue eyes with youth and innocence, emphasizing Alice's childlike character rather than providing a strictly ethnographically accurate portrayal.

## White Rabbit

First of all, it is imperative to note, before any other examination, that Anglada's edition features Alice and the White Rabbit (fig. 61) on the cover. However, the rabbit is

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405 Or even within the 1950s, during the timeframe of the *Juventud* reprint.

406 "What percentage of people in Spain have blue eyes?", *Study Country*, accessed 4 November 2025, <https://www.studycountry.com/wiki/what-percentage-of-people-in-spain-have-blue-eyes>.

407 *Ibid.*

408 "How Common is Brown Hair and Blue Eyes?," *Biology Insights*, 19 August 2025, <https://biologyinsights.com/how-common-is-brown-hair-and-blue-eyes>.

depicted with brown fur rather than white. In the text, the character is introduced as the “Conejo Blanco,”<sup>409</sup> following Carroll’s original description of a white-furred rabbit. Because the interior illustrations are all black-and-white line drawings, this discrepancy does not create confusion within the narrative. On the cover, however, the color choice is clearly inaccurate. While multiple rabbits appear in Carroll’s story, such as the March Hare, the distinct clothing and recurring imagery confirm that this animal on the cover is intended to represent the White Rabbit. As this edition is a 1958 reprint, it is likely that the colorist responsible for the cover was unaware of, or overlooked, the significance of the character’s name in relation to his fur color.<sup>410</sup> This could be due to several factors, such as lacking familiarity with the story, or simply prioritizing aesthetic considerations for the cover over the textual accuracy.

In Anglada’s illustrations, the White Rabbit<sup>411</sup> is dressed with remarkable attention to details, evoking the refined fashion of Regency-era gentlemen such as George “Beau” Brummell (1778-1840). He wears a white shirt with a high, visible collar and decorative cuffs at the wrists, complemented by a cravat neatly wrapped around his neck. Over this, he wears a blue coat without a visible waist seam, beneath which a white waistcoat peeks out just enough to reveal its presence. A darker cloak or cape serves as outerwear, adding a sense of formality and layered sophistication. His trousers are light blue with vertical white stripes, and he completes the ensemble with a black top hat. A watch on a chain hangs from his waistcoat.

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409 Lola Anglada, illustrator. Lewis Carroll, *Alicia en el país de las Maravillas*. Barcelona, Spain: Editorial Juventud, 1958, 9.

410 This colorist is probably also in part responsible for the blue eyes on Alice.

411 Although the White Rabbit is depicted with brown fur on the cover of Anglada’s edition, this dissertation will continue to refer to him as the ‘White Rabbit,’ following Carroll’s original designation. This approach avoids confusion and maintains consistency with the text, despite the discrepancy in color.

This outfit mirrors Brummell's aesthetic (fig. 62), which emphasized tailored coats, crisp shirts with high collars, carefully tied cravats, and attention to proportion and understated elegance. Brummell, widely regarded as the arbiter of men's fashion in Regency England, established the standard for understated, yet precisely tailored clothing, emphasizing fit, proportion, and simplicity. He popularized the modern three-piece suit, complete with a waistcoat and cravat, moving away from the breeches and formal attire that predominated until the early 1800s. Brummell's everyday wear, as depicted in images from his time, included a tailcoat cut without a waist seam, creating a distinctive curve around the hips and producing characteristic 'pulls' near the buttons. The sleeves were long, set high in the shoulder without any padding, and trousers featured stirrups beneath the feet to prevent riding up, often paired with high boots. Accessories such as a top hat and neatly wrapped cravat completed the ensemble, reflecting both refinement and attention to detail. Brummell famously claimed to spend five hours dressing each day and even recommended polishing boots with champagne,<sup>412</sup> emphasizing the meticulousness central to his aesthetic. His style, which came to be known as 'dandyism,' balanced elegance with a sense of ease, and his approach to clothing, including precise tailoring, subtle sophistication, and careful accessorizing, would influence European fashion for decades.

Additionally, although corsets are most commonly associated with women's fashion, men in the Regency period often wore corset-like garments or tightly laced stays as part of achieving the desired silhouette of the era. Dandies such as Brummell sought a narrow, well-defined waist and smooth posture, and some Regency gentlemen used

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412 Charlie Carballo, "How to Polish Your Shoes With Champagne Like 19th Century Dandies: Beau Brummel, a style influencer of the 1800s popularized the method," *Women's Wear Daily*, 6 May 2025, <https://wwd.com/footwear-news/shoe-trends/clean-shoes-with-champagne-1237803453>.

corsets or tight-lacing techniques<sup>413</sup> to sculpt their figures and support the tailored clothing that defined their style. This practice was not unusual at the time, as military officers and fashionable men both embraced figure-shaping undergarments to enhance the aesthetic of a slim torso beneath fitted coats and waistcoats. Anglada's White Rabbit exhibits this fashionable dandy silhouette, suggesting that the character may also be wearing a corset or tightly fitted undergarment to achieve the desired form beneath his own tailored coat and waistcoat, and the attention to these details emphasizes his sophistication. By clothing the White Rabbit in this manner, Anglada not only signals his social refinement and nervous poise, but also visually contrasts him with Alice's simple, practical attire, highlighting the differences in class, age, and temperament between the characters.

### **Caterpillar**

In Anglada's depiction of the Caterpillar (fig. 63), his segmented body is rendered through varying degrees of shading to suggest depth and form, yet his upper limbs are clearly clothed in tailored garments. The arms display gathering at the shoulders, which is indicative of a fitted coat or jacket, and buttons at the cuffs which signify a structured sleeve. Beneath the outer garment, decorative lace cuffs and a visible collar imply a shirt underneath, and the Caterpillar also wears a cravat wrapped around his neck, reflecting a conscious attention to costume rather than a purely naturalistic insect form.

One of the most distinctive features of his attire is the hat on top of his head, which is very similar to a surviving Turkish smoking cap from around the 1870s. (fig.

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413 "Beau Brummel," *Miscellany*, accessed 1 November 2025, [https://www.marquise.de/en/1800/arte/a181x\\_2.shtml](https://www.marquise.de/en/1800/arte/a181x_2.shtml).

64). This cap, now located in the collection of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, is described as follows:

During the nineteenth century, men generally wore indoor caps only in bed. However, since gentlemen did not smoke around ladies, they withdrew to indulge in cigars, donning special jackets and smoking caps to protect their garments and hair from odor; this activity also offered a chance for escapism. Smoking caps were therefore typically exotic in shape – usually between a pillbox and a fez – and richly decorated, as shown in the wove and embroidered patterns on [this] example...with dashing tassels.<sup>414</sup>

In this description, the fez is also mentioned, and the fez from the Ottoman Empire is defined as “a flat-topped, conical, brimless hat often accessorized on top with a tassel,”<sup>415</sup> and was visually distinct from Western headgear and became a visually distinctive signifier of the region.<sup>416</sup> Additionally, in common with many traditional visual interpretations of Carroll’s story, the Caterpillar is shown smoking a hookah, reinforcing a visual link to the original text even as Anglada infuses his clothing with stylized, historic references. His cap resembles the historic smoking caps of the nineteenth century, and the visible jacket may suggest a corresponding smoking jacket. As these caps were often influenced by the fez, the headwear also conveys an unfamiliar yet sophisticated quality. This combination contributes to the Caterpillar's enigmatic appearance in Anglada's illustration.

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414 “Men's Smoking Cap,” c. 1870s, Turkey. *Philadelphia Museum of Art*. <https://www.philamuseum.org/objects/307846>.

415 Derek Bryce, “Dress Reforms of the Early Twentieth Century in Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan,” *Berg Encyclopaedia of World Dress and Fashion, vol. 5: Central and Southwest Asia* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2010), 52.

416 *Ibid.*, 53.

## Queen of Hearts

In Anglada's illustrations, the Queen of Hearts (fig. 65) is dressed in a comparatively restrained and generalized royal costume, especially when contrasted with the highly specific and historically grounded gown worn by the Duchess. The Queen appears in a full-bodied robe with decorative trim, a sash, and an embellished hem, accompanied by a crown and a sword. There are visual elements that immediately communicate her authority and royal status. For child readers in the 1920s, these symbols would have been instantly recognizable, clearly identifying her as a queen without requiring historical or fashion history knowledge. Unlike the Duchess' robe à la française, however, the Queen's attire does not evoke a distinct time period or cultural context. Instead, it functions as a generic representation of monarchy.

This deliberate lack of specificity may reflect Anglada's intent to prioritize symbolic clarity over historical reference, allowing the Queen of Hearts to embody the archetype of power and tyranny rather than a historically situated ruler. By clothing her in a timeless, conventional form of royal dress, Anglada reinforces the Queen's role as a universal figure of authority.<sup>417</sup>

## Conclusion

Taken as a whole, Anglada's illustrated edition of *Alicia en el país de las Maravillas* presents a carefully balanced visual world that blends accessibility, fantasy, and historical reference. Alice herself is dressed in simple, contemporary clothing that would have felt familiar to young readers of the 1920s, grounding the story in a

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<sup>417</sup> Anglada was affiliated with leftist and Republican-leaning circles in Spain, which opposed monarchy. Her depiction of the Queen of Hearts can therefore be understood as symbolic rather than tied to any historical ruler.

recognizable childhood experience. In contrast, characters such as the White Rabbit, the Duchess, and the Caterpillar are clothed in garments drawn from earlier historical periods or symbolic traditions, marking them as distant, eccentric, and firmly embedded within Wonderland rather than the real world. The Queen of Hearts, while clearly identifiable as royalty through her crown, robe, and regalia, wears a deliberately generalized costume that signals authority without evoking a specific historical era, reinforcing her role as an archetypal figure of power rather than a culturally or temporally grounded one.

Although much of Anglada's broader body of work engages directly with Catalan culture and identity, her interpretation of *Alice* relies instead on broadly European fashion references, favoring visual clarity and imaginative appeal over regional specificity. This choice, however, may itself reflect a Catalan self-identification with European modernity and cultural progress, and an understanding of Catalonia as aligned more closely with the European mainstream than with a narrowly defined or traditionalized conception of Spanish identity. Unlike her explicitly Catalan-themed projects, Anglada does not dress Alice in regional costume or anchor her visually within a specific local geography. Instead, Alice is shown as a modern child of her time, dressed in fashionable styles that were common across Europe, rather than as a symbol of a specific place or culture. When viewed within the political and cultural limits of the Francoist period, this lack of obvious Catalan markers does not suggest a rejection of identity, but rather a careful and deliberate choice. By drawing on European fashion, and styles that were reminiscent of clothing in Paris rather than Madrid, Anglada presents an Alice who feels modern and forward-looking. Neither clearly Catalan nor simply Spanish, this version of Alice becomes a figure through whom Anglada quietly navigates questions of identity,

balancing her cultural values with the narrative demands of *Alice* and avoiding overt political statements through the subtle use of dress.

The edition is further distinguished by its lack of interior color plates with the narrative carried through expressive line drawings. Decorative elements, including repeating illustrated headers of putti with a vase at the start of each chapter and ornamented initial letters framed within decorative boxes, enhance the visual rhythm of the book. Together, these design choices create an engaging and visually rich edition that would have appealed to Catalan readers of the 1920s, offering a world of Wonderland that is both inviting and distinctly styled.



Figure 56. The cover depicts Alice dressed in contemporary attire reflective of the period. She stands outdoors in a pastoral setting, with a softly rendered landscape behind her. She carries the baby pig, which is an element directly from Carroll's narrative. The muted color palette and restrained tonal contrasts create a subdued atmosphere.

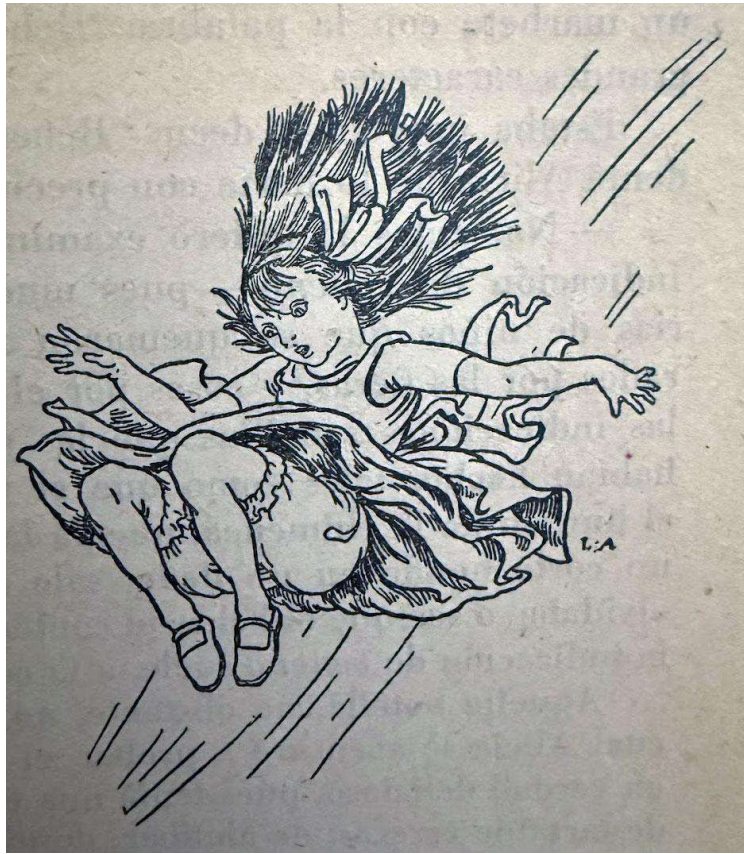


Figure 57. Alice is depicted mid-air, her hair standing on end and her skirt flying upward to reveal her bloomers. Action lines accentuate the movement, underscoring the speed of the fall.



Figure 58. Surviving white lace dress from c. 1920s featuring delicate lacework throughout.



Figure 59. This surviving 1920s photograph shows a young girl posed formally for the camera. She wears a large, fashionable bow prominently on top of her head, a popular accessory for children during the period.



Figure 60. Anglada self portrait, detail, from 1918. <https://naciodigital.cat/cultura-i-mitjans/descobreixen-sense-voler-una-pintura-inedita-de-lola-anglada.html>

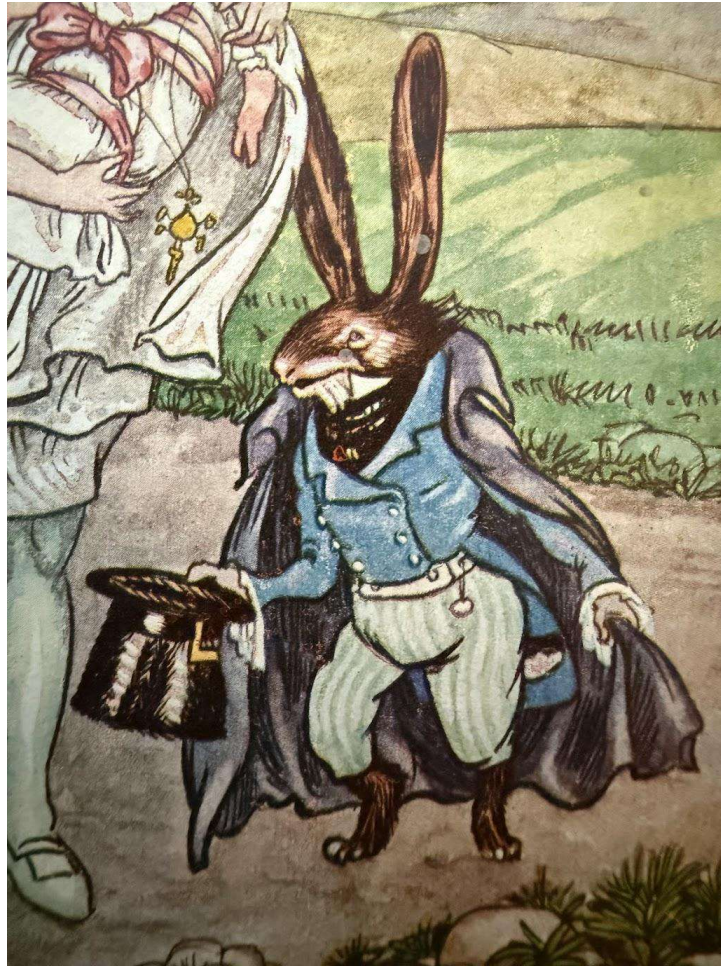


Figure 61. Though traditionally associated with white fur, the White Rabbit has brown fur and is dressed in elevated, carefully tailored attire that recalls the refined elegance of Regency fashion, aligning his appearance with the aesthetic associated with Beau Brummell.



Figure 62. Beau Brummel by Robert Dighton, 1805. Brummell is depicted in the restrained yet meticulously tailored attire that defined Regency dandyism: a dark, close-fitting coat without a visible waist seam, a crisply tied cravat, fitted trousers, high leather boots (that apparently were shined with champagne), gloves, and a top hat. He reportedly spent five hours each day perfecting his appearance.



Figure 63. The Caterpillar by Anglada is shown seated atop a mushroom, holding a hookah. He wears a smoking cap and has a visible jacket, with sleeves detailed by buttons at the wrists and finished with ruffled lace cuffs.



Figure 64. c. 1870s smoking cap, similar in overall form to a fez, constructed of soft fabric and designed to be worn indoors while smoking. This type of cap was worn to absorb the odor of smoke and prevent the wearer's hair from retaining the scent.

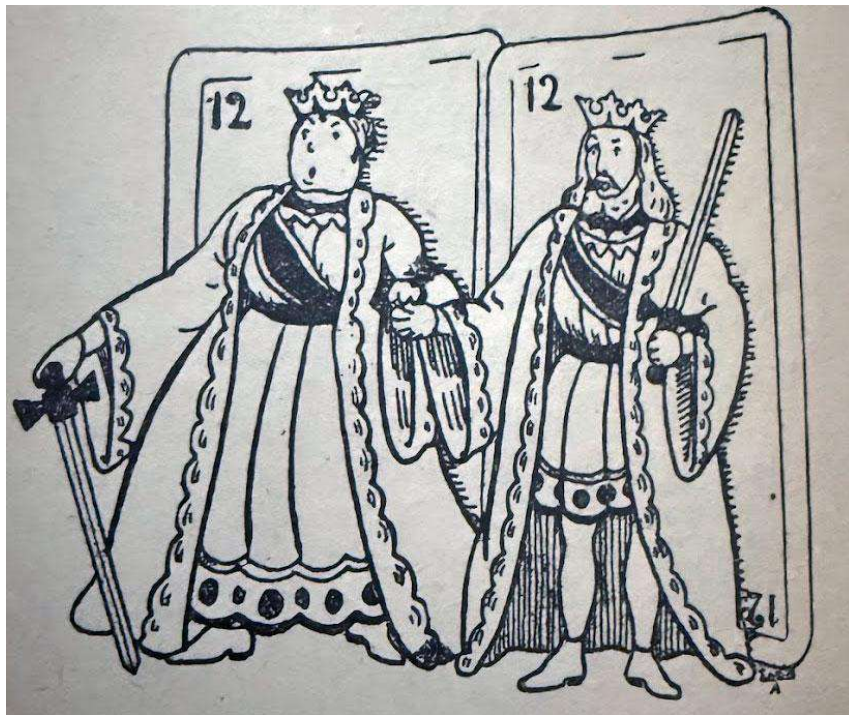


Figure 65. This line-drawn illustration depicts the Queen of Hearts standing beside the King. Rendered in a simplified, graphic style, the Queen wears recognizable symbols of royalty, including a crown and formal court dress.

## SIMONE DELEUIL

Simone Deleuil<sup>418</sup> was a mid-twentieth-century French illustrator best known for her vibrant and narrative-rich work in children's literature during the 1950s and early 1960s. Though detailed biographical information about her life remains scarce in mainstream art historical sources, Deleuil's artistic footprint is preserved through numerous illustrated volumes published in France, particularly for prominent youth imprints such as Éditions Bias and Magnard. Her work includes visually engaging editions of classic tales, such as the 1958 French edition of *Blanche-Neige (Snow White)* where her color plates and black-and-white drawings give the Grimm fairy tale a distinctly mid-century aesthetic, along with her earlier edition of *Alice au pays de merveilles* from 1954, which is notable for its interactive sliding-disk illustrations. Deleuil's work also appears in narrative books like *Les Compagnons de l'Arc* and other storybooks where her illustrations complement and expand upon the text, contributing to the visual culture of postwar French children's publishing. Despite limited archival documentation or scholarly biographical writing, her illustrations are collected and traded as examples of French book art of the period, reflecting both the stylistic norms and marketing practices of children's literature in post-war Europe.

Despite the scarcity of biographical information on Deleuil, her illustrations offer a rich visual archive through which the cultural values and aesthetic norms of mid-century France can be examined, beginning most clearly with the fashions she depicts, making the clothing a productive starting point for understanding the broader cultural context in which she worked.

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418 Little biographical information about Simone Deleuil, including birth and death dates, has been located in existing scholarship.

## Analysis of the Illustrations by Deleuil

### **Alice**

In Deleuil's illustration, Alice is depicted in full length (fig. 66), caught mid-stride as she follows the White Rabbit to a small door.<sup>419</sup> Her dress features a distinctly cinched waist achieved by a red belt, and a full, circular skirt that expands outwards from the hips. The flutter sleeves attached to the bodice of Alice's dress add soft volume at the shoulders, contributing to a gently structured upper body that echoes the postwar ideals of delicacy and grace, even for a young girl. The dress is constructed in a white fabric patterned with red polka dots, combining youthful playfulness with contemporary fashion sensibilities. Alice's appearance is further completed by blonde hair pulled into a ponytail and secured with a small red bow, red socks folded at the ankle, and flat-soled black shoes. Deleuil's Alice can be read as a miniature reflection of adult fashion, translating the hallmarks of 1950s couture into child-friendly form.

After World War II, clothing for young girls in the United States and Western Europe reflected prevailing views of female ideals and proper appearance within the family. Children's clothing was increasingly designed to align with adult fashion trends, reinforcing ideas about gender roles and social respectability from an early age. These ideals were disseminated through widely available ready-to-wear clothing ideals, as well as commercial patterns and home sewing practices, ensuring stylistic consistency across class lines.

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<sup>419</sup> This image is part of a sliding-disk or interactive format; the illustration is not simply a flat image but features a central metal dial and cut-outs characteristic of the book's mechanical disk design, allowing elements of the scene to move as the dial is turned.

Fashion historians Phyllis Tortora and Keith Eubank note “echoing the silhouette of adult women's styles of the 1940s and 1950s, girl's dresses had full skirt and fitted bodices.”<sup>420</sup> This mirroring of women’s fashion reinforced visual continuity between mothers and daughters, particularly in formal or public settings. Girls’ dresses were also characterized by gentle color palettes, short hemlines, paired with decorative touches such as lace; these elements appeared on both handmade garments and ready-made designs.

Family historian Kae Kerr further emphasizes the structural similarities between women’s and girls’ dresses during the period, explaining that “girls’ clothes mimicked women’s fashion trends: a full-circle skirt was always worn with a petticoat or slip.”<sup>421</sup> These undergarments were essential to achieving the fashionable silhouette popularized by mid-century women’s wear. Kerr also notes that hemlines remained above the knee, though their exact length varied, reflecting age, occasion, and prevailing tastes.<sup>422</sup> Together, these elements reveal how 1950s fashion for young girls functioned not merely as children’s clothing, but as a scaled-down extension of contemporary women’s fashion.

The Simplicity 3502 sewing pattern<sup>423</sup> (fig. 67) from circa 1952 offers an interesting, fashionable point of comparison with the dress worn by Alice in Deleuil’s illustrations. The white cotton fabric patterned with red polka dots reflects a stylistic

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420 Phyllis Tortora and Keith Eubank, *Survey of Historic Costume: A History of Western Dress*, 5th edition (New York: Fairchild Books, 2010), 536.

421 Kae Kerr, “1950s Retrospective on Children’s Fashions: Petticoats and Mary Janes,” *Humble Contributions to the Peoples’ History*, accessed 1 November 2026, <https://psalmboxkey.com/2014/01/31/1950s-retrospective-on-childrens-fashions-petticoats-and-mary-janes/>.

422 Ibid.

423 The pattern is described as the following: Child’s One-Piece Dress, Transfer Included: The upper edge of the bodice is scalloped. In Style 1 a button trims each scallop. A rounded collar tops the contrast yoke. The short puffed sleeves have scallop trim. The skirt features soft pleats. Armhole bands in Style 2 are scalloped. The gathered skirt features apple applique pockets. Thirteen pattern pieces.

choice firmly rooted in the period, and it is one that was readily available to consumers through fabric and department stores catering to home sewers. During this era, sewing was a common domestic skill, and it was typical for mothers to produce garments for their children using commercially available patterns, making such stylish designs accessible.

Additionally, there is a close visual correspondence between the Simplicity 3502 pattern and Deleuil's depiction of Alice, suggesting an intriguing overlap between illustrated fantasy and everyday dress, in which fictional imagery and domestic practice correspond. This crossover becomes even more layered when considering Deleuil's association with *Snow White*, a narrative centrally associated with an apple. The Simplicity pattern's apple appliqué pockets unexpectedly merge these two fairy tale worlds, visually combining motifs from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Snow White*, within a single wearable garment, while also suggesting the influence of widely circulated animated films, most notably Disney's *Snow White* (1937) and *Alice in Wonderland* (1951), underscoring how popular illustration, film, children's literature, and home sewing culture intersected in mid-century visual and material culture.

Furthermore, this study is further expanded upon by a personal and material archive that combines that boundaries between historical analysis and lived experience. The Simplicity 3502 sewing pattern under discussion was also originally used by my grandmother to construct a dress for my mother in approximately 1952-53, and this garment survived within my family and remains in our possession. As a result, this pattern and its material outcome function not only as historical artifacts, but as inherited objects through which intergenerational practices of making, wearing, and preservation can be traced.

As a fashion historian with proficiency in sewing, I chose to remake this dress for my own daughter using the original vintage pattern. Working with a 1950s pattern offered insight into the assumptions embedded in home sewing at the time, including expected levels of skill, approaches to fit, and material choices. At the same time, the process highlighted how easily patterns can be adapted for contemporary use, allowing historical designs to remain wearable and relevant.

The dress originally worn by my mother in the early 1950s, preserved as a surviving garment (fig. 68) and my daughter wearing a newly constructed version in 2025 (fig. 69) demonstrate how children's clothing and home sewing practices persist over time. This continuity underscores the role of home sewing as both a practical and creative practice, one that connects illustrated fantasy, domestic labor, and family history through making and wearing.

## **White Rabbit**

Turning from Alice to the White Rabbit shifts the focus from girls' fashion to representation of boys' dress in the 1950s as interpreted through Deleuil's illustrations.

Clothing for young boys in the 1950s emphasized neatness, structure, and practicality, reflecting broader expectations of respectability and discipline, even though dress started to relax. Fashion historians Tortora and Eubank state:

“The practice of dressing young boys in jackets and knickers in the years prior to adolescence was abandoned after the war. Although suits with short pants were available for very young boys, most boys' suits had long pants and were like those of adult men. Younger boys wore Eton jackets; boys of all ages wore blazers. Dress shirts were worn with suits and jackets. The most common casual shirt styles were knitted T-shirts that were pulled over the head and polos with collars and buttoned vests at the front; in cold weather woven sports shirts and plaid flannel shirts were worn.”<sup>424</sup>

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424 Tortora and Eubank, 536.

Additionally, denim jeans become acceptable for everyday wear, along with knitted sweaters and cardigans, which gained popularity in the 1940s and continued to be widely worn in the 1950s.<sup>425</sup> Fashion historians Daniel James Cole and Nancy Diehl note that in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), actor James Dean (1931-1955), costumed by Moss Mabry (1918-2006) in jeans, a t-shirt, and a red windbreaker, presented a look that was widely imitated in everyday life, reflecting the growing movement toward more casual forms of men's dress during this time.<sup>426</sup> Although no longer frequently paired with ties or blazers, collars could be seen as a defining feature of boys' shirts during this period. Pointed collars were most common, though rounded Peter Pan-style collars also appeared in younger boys' garments. Shirts were typically worn buttoned to the neck, reflecting a tidy appearance. Whether part of a complete outfit or worn beneath sweaters or jackets, white shirts and their collars played a central role in shaping a polished look.

Deleuil's White Rabbit (fig. 70) displays some elements of dress from the 1950s. The White Rabbit is depicted in motion, captured mid-run with a visible panicked expression. He wears a blue tail coat decorated with gold buttons, drawn with a noticeably loose cut. Unlike tighter-fitting versions seen in other illustrated interpretations, Deleuil's coat includes excess fabric, particularly around the arms, which emphasizes the movement and urgency. Beneath the coat, a white shirt extends beyond the sleeves, and a collar is visible at the neckline, reinforcing the formality of his dress, even when in motion. The looser cut of the coat and the visible collar place the White Rabbit within the contemporary era of the illustrator, rather than the tighter fitting tail coat and cravat which are characteristics of eighteenth-century garments.

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425 Reddy.

426 Daniel James Cole and Nancy Diehl, *The History of Modern Fashion from 1850*, Kindle ed., (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2015), 721.

The surrounding scene further heightens the sense of activity. As the White Rabbit runs, blades of grass are visible beneath his feet, situating him firmly within a natural landscape. A blue frog appears nearby, notably unclothed, while a mouse runs alongside him, who is wearing red overalls. This contrast between dressed and undressed animals introduces visual variety and underscores the selective use of clothing to signal character and social identity within Deleuil's illustration.

It is also interesting that the mouse is wearing overalls. Overalls were widely worn by young boys in the 1950s, particularly for play, casual wear, and informal settings.<sup>427</sup> They were valued for their durability and practicality, making them especially popular for active children. While denim overalls were common for everyday wear, versions made from lighter fabrics such as cotton or corduroy also appeared, sometimes in brighter colors.

Although overalls were generally associated with workwear and leisure rather than formal dress, they were firmly established as acceptable children's clothing. For younger boys especially, overalls signaled childhood and freedom of movement, contrasting with the more structured trousers and collared shirts worn for school, church, or special occasions. In visual culture and illustration, overalls often emphasized youthfulness and informality, marking a character as playful or working-class rather than strictly proper.

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427 "Work Clothes: Bib Overalls and Coveralls," *Witness2Fashion*, 8 April 2018, <https://witness2fashion.wordpress.com/tag/overalls-for-children-1890s-1900s-1920s-1930s-1940s-1950s/>.

## Mad Hatter

Deleuil's depiction of the Mad Hatter (fig. 71) incorporates recognizable elements of men's fashion from the 1950s, translating contemporary adult dress into the illustrated world of *Alice*. Deleuil's Mad Hatter is depicted wearing a green suit jacket, with structured, padded shoulders that give a slightly exaggerated silhouette. On his head sits a tall black top hat, a classic accessory.<sup>428</sup>

By the 1950s, the top hat had largely fallen out of regular use in men's fashion. Once a staple of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century formal dress, it had been displaced by softer felt hats, such as fedoras or homburgs. However, it did not disappear entirely, but survived in specific, symbolic contexts. Top hats remained technically correct for white tie ensembles, worn for events such as the opera, diplomatic events, or formal weddings. They were also seen on stage and in films as a symbol of eccentricity, whimsy, or theatricality, worn by performers such as Fred Astaire (1899-1987). When used in illustration, such as Deleuil's Mad Hatter, the top hat functions as a visual cue, and it marks him as a figure who exists slightly outside ordinary social expectations.

The combination of the bright jacket and formal headwear also creates a visual contrast. In the early 1950s, a slightly oversized suit was fashionable for men in this era, as jackets were typically designed with wide shoulders and noticeable lapels, and double-breasted styles were especially common. After wartime clothing restrictions ended in 1945, trousers were once again made with cuffed hems.<sup>429</sup> In the early 1950s, the

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428 On Deleuil's cover illustration, some animals, such as a squirrel or a mouse (it is hard to differentiate exactly what type of animal it is), appear without clothing, while the White Rabbit, previously described, wears garments and a black bird wears a red head kerchief. Similarly, within the illustration of the running White Rabbit, the frog is unclothed and the mouse wears overalls. This distinction may reflect a common convention in children's illustration, where clothing signals narrative or social importance. Animals with clothing are visually marked as individual characters with agency, while unclothed animals occupy the background or environment.

429 Tortora and Eubank, 531.

previously loose silhouette gave way to a slimmer style with the introduction of the grey flannel suit, which featured reduced shoulder padding and a narrower overall cut.<sup>430</sup> Shirts were not tailored to the body, as casual shirts were intentionally loose in fit, reflecting the relaxed approach to everyday dress that characterized 1950s daywear.<sup>431</sup> Additionally, although the grey flannel suits were typically conservative in color, variety was added through dress shirts, which were often produced in colors. Advances in technology also led to the introduction of blended fabrics, including polyester mixed with cotton, creating wash-and-wear shirts that wrinkled less than traditional all-cotton garments.<sup>432</sup>

## Conclusion

Taken together, Deleuil's illustrations show a careful balance between fantasy and contemporary dress. Alice's white dress with red polka dots follows the fashionable silhouette of the 1950s, scaled appropriately for a young girl. The White Rabbit, though grounded in long-established visual conventions, incorporates subtle mid-century details such as a looser coat and visible collared shirt. The Mad Hatter similarly appears in garments that reflect recognizable elements of 1950s menswear. Rather than presenting a strictly historical or fantastical wardrobe, Deleuil's costuming situates Wonderland within a visual world that feels both familiar and slightly infused with fashions of its own time, giving each character a distinctive presence that bridges reality and imagination.

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430 Tortora and Eubank, 531.

431 Berle, "Men's 1950s Fashion Style: How to Nail to Look," *Pressed and Proper*, accessed 18 December 2026, <https://berle.com/blogs/announcements/mens-1950s-fashion-style-nail-look?srsltid=AfmBOoreKpJLTJGsl825ebi2MEmsFfyQPZaejFvxILIX6MTyjEWYplsd>.

432 Tortora and Eubank, 532.



Figure 66. In Deleuil's illustration, the scene captures Alice in motion as she follows the White Rabbit, her dress reflecting mid-century children's styles translated into illustration.



Figure 67. Simplicity Pattern 3502 pattern envelope from circa 1952. The envelope illustrates two variations of a child's dress, reflecting mid-century home sewing aesthetics and design versatility.



Figure 68. Surviving dress sewn from Simplicity Pattern 3502, c. 1952-1953. Constructed by my maternal grandmother, Nella DeGroot Hoving. The garment features a meticulous gathering of the full skirt at the waist seam, puffed sleeves, and appliquéd apple pockets with hand-embroidered stems and leaves.



Figure 69. Dress sewn from early 1950's Simplicity Pattern 3502, worn by Caroline Elyse Blackowski in September 2025. Constructed by the author as a contemporary adaptation of the vintage pattern, featuring a scalloped neckline, scalloped flutter sleeves, and a pleated skirt, rather than the gathered skirt and puff sleeves from my grandmother's version. This demonstrates the pattern's continued flexibility and relevance.



Figure 70. Deleuil depicts the White Rabbit running through grass outdoors, dressed in a blue tailcoat worn over a white shirt with a visible collar.



Figure 71. Deleuil's 1954 cover illustration for *Alice au pays de merveilles* presents Alice speaking with the Mad Hatter in the foreground, with the White Rabbit and the King and Queen of Hearts positioned behind them.

## TOVE JANSSON

Tove Jansson (1914-2001) was a writer and artist known for her distinctive visual style, making her an influential figure in twentieth-century Nordic art and literature. She illustrated a Swedish-language<sup>433</sup> version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, entitled *Alice i underlandet*, which was first published in 1966 by Bonniers publishing house in Sweden. An English-language edition with her art did not appear until 2014, when it was published by Tate Publishing in the United Kingdom, using Carroll's original words alongside Jansson's 1966 artwork.

Jansson is described as the “inventor of the Moomin trolls”<sup>434</sup> and a “Scandinavian institution, and her strange, gentle, unfailingly polite little creatures have delighted millions around the world. Jansson originally came up with the Moomins, or something very like them, in her childhood, and continued developing them when she became a professional artist and illustrator. They first appear in her adult work in political cartoons she drew for the satirical magazine *Garm*.”<sup>435</sup> Historian Paul Gravett tells of their origins, how during a summer's day in the 1930s, Jansson illustrated a “quick, minimal pencil graffito of a long-nosed, armless, earless, grumpy troll.”<sup>436</sup> What began as a rough sketch grew into a sensation, transforming her creation into cultural phenomenon.

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433 Jansson was a Finnish citizen, but her first language was Swedish, reflecting her family's Swedish-speaking heritage. For the purposes of this dissertation, both Swedish and Finnish cultural elements of the period will be considered.

434 *Literary Wonderlands: A Journey Through the Greatest Fictional Worlds Ever Created*, edited by Laura Miller (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2016), 166.

435 Ibid.

436 Paul Gravett, *The Illustrators: Tove Jansson* (New York: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 2022), 34.

Historian Tuula Karjalainen noted, how Jansson’s Moomins “immediately attracted much attention and unreserved admiration,”<sup>437</sup> and after gaining international recognition for her Moomins, Jansson ultimately went on to bring her artistic style to Carroll’s work. Her feelings about Carroll and *Alice* are evident in surviving letters between Jansson and Åke Runnquist (1919-1991), a director at Bonniers. A small number of the nineteenth-century correspondence between Carroll and Tenniel survives, leaving little trace of their collaborative decision-making between author and illustrator, but these letters reveal the strength of a working relationship and shed light on Jansson’s process. Her partnership with Runnquist actually began earlier than their *Alice* collaboration, as she provided illustrations for *The Hunting of the Snark*, published under the Swedish title *Snarkjakten*, in 1959. Her interpretation of this Carroll text secured her position for working on *Alice*. Boel Westin, Swedish literary scholar, notes that when Runnquist was looking for an artist for *Alice*, “for him there could only be one illustrator: Tove Jansson.”<sup>438</sup>

In a letter dated February 8, 1965, Jansson wrote the following statements regarding the *Alice* project:

Now, though, I’m consoling myself with the fact that Alice’s head is actually far<sup>439</sup> too big, among other quibbles. But we shall try to keep her, at least. That rather delicate face, lots of hair and skirts, utterly naturalistic and prim-looking in such a surreal context? We can’t make her into a modern Stockholm girl. Not even with a ponytail. (Assuming they are still modern) These stories are terrifying. Can I draw them in horror style? The way I saw them when I was little. (I love horror stories nowadays, too) Are they being published for children or grown-ups? Or both?<sup>440</sup>

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437 Tuula Karjalainen, translated by David McDuff, *Tove Jansson: Work and Love* (New York: Penguin Group, 2013), 176.

438 Tove Jansson, *Letters from Tove*, edited by Boel Westin and Helen Svensson. Translated by Sarah Death (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 10.

439 All underlining in quotations is reproduced as it appears in the author’s original text.

440 Jansson, 474.

She continues, “Alice is an even more serious undertaking, though. She’s a kind of symbol. Shall we take the surreal approach? Not Poe, a little lighter. Keep the court of playing cards more on the margins. Dare one go for a bit of adult symbolism? The worst part is that they talk such an awful lot. Tenniel picked out all the scenes that could bear illustration—there aren’t as many as one might think—anyone assuming his mantle will have to draw exactly the same thing.”<sup>441</sup> Jansson continues, “Lewis Carroll was clearly completely pathological, there’s no way of making anything idyllic out of it. English people must be pretty dysmorphic, don’t you think, for all their cool understatement—or maybe because of it. Can’t we just do an out-and-out horror book. Because that’s what it is.”<sup>442</sup> Gravett expands upon these feelings, noting “she was still constrained by the commission, her sixty-two images, fifty black and white in ink and twelve glowing in colorful brushstroke conveyed the book’s heightened reality.”<sup>443</sup> Westin adds, “the Lewis Carroll texts challenged her quality as an illustrator. As she told Åke, to attempt Alice after John Tenniel’s emblematic pictures was daunting: the Carroll text had already been illustrated definitively.”<sup>444</sup> Ultimately, Jansson’s treatment of the fictional girl is summarized by Gravett: “By maturing her Alice to a pre-adolescent girl and spotlighting parts of the text that Tenniel had never tackled, she invited readers into another Wonderland that was both Carroll’s and her own, recalling her childhood frissons.”<sup>445</sup>

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441 Jansson, 475.

442 Ibid.

443 Gravett, 81.

444 Boel Westin, *Tove Jansson: Life, Arts, Words*, translated by Silvester Mazzarella (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 329.

445 Ibid.

As noted above, Jansson invoked the phrase ‘modern Stockholm girl,’ referring to a specific place and type. To imagine what such a figure might have looked like in mid-1960s Sweden is to situate her within the styles of the decade. A young female inhabitant of Stockholm during this time might be seen in a short, A-line skirt paired with a simple blouse or sweater, or in streamlined trousers and a fitted jacket. Practical flats or low-heeled boots would complete the look, while details such as geometric prints, bold colors, and a bobbed hairstyle align with contemporary trends.

Katja Ingergard Geiger (1920-2017), also known as Katja of Sweden, is perhaps the most internationally recognized Swedish fashion designer of the era. Her designs were clean, wearable and modern. The Röhsska Museum notes: “‘What I wanted to achieve,’ Geiger has said, ‘was to liberate women by offering them beautiful, comfortable, wonderful clothing—easy to care for and live in without having to think about how they would work for home, work, kids, travel, entertaining and so forth.’”<sup>446</sup> Although Katja of Sweden primarily designed for adult women, the hallmarks of mid-1960s fashion were often reflected in children’s clothing as well. Fashion for young girls reflected broader trends in adult women’s clothing, emphasizing clean lines, simple silhouettes, and modern details adapted for children. Fashion historians Phyllis Tortora and Keith Eubank note, “When the full-skirted New Look styles for women began to be replaced by loosely fitted lines in the early 1960s, girls’ dresses also gradually took on a looser fit. Slightly A-line, princess-cut ‘skimmers’ were popular as dresses in summer and jumpers in winter. Skirts shortened, ending well above the knee. With the short skirts in cool weather, girls wore long tights in matching or contrasting colors and in a variety of textures.”<sup>447</sup> However, Jansson’s original intentions make it clear that this image was

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446 Röhsska Museum, “Katja of Sweden,” 4 June 2020, <https://rohsska.se/en/katja-of-sweden/>.

447 Tortora and Eubank, 572.

not how she envisioned Alice. Her portrayal sought to distance the character from contemporary trends, emphasizing instead a more timeless and imaginative figure.

### Analysis of the Illustrations by Jansson

#### **Alice**

In examining Jansson's illustrations of Alice, her hairstyle immediately stands out. Like Tenniel's iconic depiction, Jansson's Alice has long hair that is slicked back and pushed away from the face (fig. 72). Most of Jansson's drawings show no headband or ribbon holding the hair in place, though in some instances sections are gently pulled back and secured at the back of the head with presumably a simple hairpin. Regardless of these small variations, her hairstyle clearly does not reflect the bobbed cuts popular in the 1960s, reinforcing a look that is classic rather than tied to contemporary fashionable trends.

Turning to Alice's dress, Jansson's depiction is notably minimal in detail, both in terms of texture and color, as well as the overall form (fig. 73). While it is clear that Alice is fully clothed, the specifics of her attire remain understated. The dress is long-sleeved, with subtle ruching or gathering at the shoulders where the sleeves meet the bodice. The skirt is A-line in silhouette, gently flaring from the waist to just above the knee. Across both the black-and-white ink drawings and the color plates, the dress is consistently rendered in white. This extends to her stockings and shoes, which are also white, the

latter in a simple Mary Jane<sup>448</sup> style. The overall effect is one of simplicity and restraint, emphasizing form and silhouette over elaborate ornamentation.

One could argue that Jansson's depiction of Alice with its minimal dress details, clean lines, and simple, all-white silhouette echoes the fashionable sensibilities of the mid-1960s. Yet, other elements, such as contemporary patterns, accessories, or hairstyles could have anchored her more firmly in that era (fig. 74). By omitting these, Jansson reinforces her original intent to have Alice remain a figure that is not tied to a specific time and place. Her design instead blends seamlessly across periods through its understatement and timeless simplicity.

Even as an adult illustrator in 1966, Jansson retained echoes of the 'horror' she remembered from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a child, incorporating subtle but effective unsettling elements into her images. In one color plate (fig. 75), Alice converses with the Cheshire Cat while large bats swirl ominously around them, adding a dark, almost Gothic undertone to the scene. Another plate (fig. 76) depicts a chaotic landscape with an orange background. Animals of all kinds such as bats and hybrid creatures whose forms recall armadillos, moose, raccoons, and badgers scatter in panic, creating a sense of disorder and tension. The use of ambiguous animals here parallels the fantastical creatures of her Moomins, in which trolls and animals often blur together in imaginative forms. It does not even matter exactly what types of animals these are, the chaos of the scene is still understood.

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<sup>448</sup>In earlier editions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that I examined, similar styles of shoes worn by Alice were not referred to as 'Mary Janes,' as this term was not commonly used in the earlier eras. The name 'Mary Jane' was popularized in the early-twentieth century, deriving from a character named Mary Jane in the Buster Brown comic strip created by Richard Felton Outcault in 1902. The Brown Shoe Company used the name 'Mary Jane' for their children's shoes in 1904, following a licensing agreement with Outcault.

Even Alice herself is sometimes depicted in subtly frightening ways. In the illustration where she talks to the pigeon, the bird asks whether she is a serpent (fig 77). Her body is reduced to a long, cylindrical tube, giving her a serpentine, almost uncanny appearance, far removed from the more conventional depictions of Alice as merely a large girl with a long neck. Through these visual choices, Jansson preserves her memories of the eerie and unpredictable qualities of Carroll's Wonderland, while simultaneously blending them within her own artistic style. Additionally, because Alice is depicted in all white with minimal detail, she almost recedes into the scene, allowing the surrounding environment and the events unfolding all around her to take visual and narrative precedence.

### **White Rabbit**

Jansson's White Rabbit retains the traditional waistcoat and jacket (fig. 73) seen in earlier illustrations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, rather than adopting the fashionable men's clothing of the 1960s. Like Alice, his garments are rendered with minimal detail, leaving the fabrics, patterns, and textures largely unspecified. Yet the essential elements such as a tailored jacket, high collar, and fan signal a style from a bygone era, anchoring the character in an unspecified historical era rather than contemporary context.

### **Caterpillar**

The color plate illustration of the Caterpillar (fig. 78) is particularly striking. As in many earlier depictions of the story, the Caterpillar is shown smoking a hookah. His body is a rich blue, and his eyes appear dazed and unfocused as he takes a puff, giving him a

relaxed, ethereal presence. The Caterpillar's body is segmented with ridges highlighted by black shadowing, giving his form depth and texture. Though he wears no clothing, the careful attention to the contours and shadows of his body creates visual interest.

In this image, Alice's full figure is visible, again depicted with minimal lines and detail. Her plain white dress and slicked-back blonde hair remain consistent with her other illustrations. In contrast, the large mushroom on which the Caterpillar sits is rendered with remarkable intricacy. The gills on the underside are carefully hatched to suggest texture and shadow, while the top edge of the mushroom's cap displays black and yellow coloring with subtle orange shading. The base of the mushroom is deepened with black tones. This combination of minimal detail on the human figure within a rich, textured natural environment creates a visually captivating scene, highlighting Jansson's ability to balance simplicity with intricate focus.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, Jansson's 1966 illustrated version of *Alice* presents a unique visual interpretation that deliberately avoids anchoring the story in a specific historical or cultural setting. By placing the characters in an undefined era, Jansson distances them from contemporary Nordic influences, instead drawing upon the dreamlike, frightening atmosphere she remembered from childhood readings. Her illustrations can evoke a sense of horror, enhancing the scarier qualities of Carroll's narrative. Karjalainen noted that children's stories "activated Tove's childhood feelings of happiness – of being a small child close to her mother, listening to hair-raising adventures and tingling with excitement, while still being safe."<sup>449</sup> Perhaps Jansson wanted to mimic that juxtaposition

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449 Karjalainen, 123.

of fear and comfort in her own artwork. Stylistically, her imagery bears strong resemblance to her renowned Moomins, by blending whimsy with psychological depth. Jansson's contributions as an illustrator not only reimagines Wonderland, but gives readers with lasting, hauntingly beautiful images of Carroll's classic tale.



Figure 72. Alice listens as the Mock Turtle and Gryphon tell their tale. Her figure is almost lost in Jansson's muted, delicate lines.



Figure 73. In stark black ink, an enlarged Alice is out of scale in relation to the rows of trees that surround her. Her long-sleeved white dress lacks detail. In the distance, the White Rabbit hurries forward, wearing the familiar waistcoat and jacket that were made iconic from Tenniel's nineteenth-century illustrations.



Figure 74. Image from Sears Spring/Summer 1966 catalog showing two young girls in distinctly period-specific mod dress. Their garments feature solid colors with contrasting piping and white gloves, emphasizing contemporary looks in contrast to the more generalized, timeless illustrations of Tove Jansson.



Figure 75. Alice walks through tall green grass and oversized red flowers with the Cheshire Cat by her side and three bats circling overhead. The colors are vivid, but there is an eerie tension that is present.



Figure 76. Amid a disorienting orange backdrop, Alice stands surrounded by a frenzy of animals. They are running, flying, and scattering in all directions. The chaotic motion and odd color cast the scene in a nightmarish light, showing Jansson's darker interpretation of Wonderland.



Figure 77. The pigeon recoils in fear, accusing Alice of being a serpent. Alice's human form has vanished, replaced by a long, tubular shape that winds through the scene like a snake.



Figure 78. Perched on top of a mushroom, the blue Caterpillar exhales smoke from his hookah, and his body is dense with detail and presence. Alice, by contrast, fades into the background. She is minimally drawn, almost as an afterthought.

## NICOLE CLAVELoux

Nicole Claveloux (1940- ) created a French psychedelic version of *Alice*, titled *Les Aventures d’Alice au pays des merveilles*, translated by François Ruy-Vidal and published by Grasset-Jeunesse in 1974. Claveloux started working in Paris in 1966, producing illustrations for children’s books, magazines, and comics.<sup>450</sup> Illustrator Sarah Gossett underscores the formal distinctiveness of Claveloux’s work, noting that her “pen hatching is fulsome, gathering modeled presence on the paper; her colors are bright, clashing gouache, layered in separate blotches, often defining form through a secondary, contourless outline.”<sup>451</sup> She further observes that Claveloux’s airbrushed gradient backgrounds produce “hand-fashioned transitions”<sup>452</sup> which “lend to her horizons a kind of psychic intensity that reminds the reader...that these are internal projections.”<sup>453</sup>

Considering this, Claveloux’s interpretation of *Alice* is also notable for the ways it incorporates textual elements in the visual field. Unlike most illustrators for Carroll, she directly integrates fragments of the original verses, allowing text and image to coexist as part of the same space. *Alice* expert Natalia Bragaru notes, “Rarely illustrated are some of Carroll’s famous parodies, those brilliant and humorous twists on traditional verses, songs and rhymes. Known to me (and my *Alice* collecting friends) are just a few

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450 Sara Gossett, “The Psychedelic Illustrations of Nicole Claveloux,” *Golden Haze*, 4 December 2012, <https://goldenhaze.blogspot.com/2012/12/the-psychedelic-illustrations-of-nicole.html>.

451 Ibid.

452 Ibid.

453 Matthias Wivel, “The Green Hand and Other Stories,” *The Comics Journal*, 4 December 2017, <https://www.tcj.com/the-green-hand-and-other-stories>.

illustrators who have attempted it, amongst them in German Franz Haacken, French Nicole Claveloux and...British illustrator Chris Riddell.”<sup>454</sup><sup>455</sup>

Comic studies scholar Benoît Crucifix observes that Claveloux’s work in the 1970s often moved fluidly across children’s book illustrations, graphic design, and the language of comics. Her interpretation of *Alice* can be seen as a key site where these different strands converge, embodying the hybrid quality that defines her art. Crucifix notes how Claveloux’s picture books directly relate to her comics, as “her graphic style adapts equally well to the specificities of each media while frequently mingling their main properties.”<sup>456</sup> He explains how Claveloux’s illustrations for *Alice* use grids and speech bubbles in unconventional ways (fig. 80) to create a disorienting, maze-like reading experience,<sup>457</sup> creating a chaotic mix of voices and stories, blurring identities.<sup>458</sup> Crucifix concludes, as Claveloux worked in the 1970s, this time period “allowed for rich and productive crossovers between comics and picture books, blurring boundaries that quickly became rigid in the 1980s. Claveloux was at the forefront of the new impulses in both comics and children’s books.”<sup>459</sup>

Additionally, Claveloux is often compared to artist Heinz Edelmann (1934-2009) for occupying similar styles in their artworks. Claveloux and Edelmann both worked in a psychedelic style, using bright colors and flowing, dreamlike shapes.

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454 Natalia Bragaru, “Is this the Holy Grail of illustrated ‘Alice’, by John Vernon Lord,” *Kids Book Explorer*, accessed 1 August 2025, <https://www.kidsbookexplorer.com/alices-adventures-in-wonderland-lewis-carroll-john-vernon-lord/>.

455 Yayoi Kusama, another illustrator considered in this dissertation, also visualized Carroll’s wordplay in “How doth the little crocodile.” In her version, the crocodile is playfully depicted wearing a hat. (fig. 79)

456 Benoît Crucifix, “Between Ah! Nana and Okapi: Nicole Claveloux at the Crossroads,” in *Drawing (in) the Feminine*. Edited by Margaret C. Flinn (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2024), 62.

457 *Ibid.*, 62.

458 *Ibid.*, 63-64.

459 *Ibid.*, 71.

Edelmann is best known for designing the look of the 1968 animated film *Yellow Submarine*, starring the Beatles. Because he was working in animation, his designs needed to be easily reproduced from one frame to the next, so the sense of motion is literal. Claveloux, on the other hand, created vibrant art mainly for books and magazines, such as *Metal Hurlant* and *Ah! Nana*. Her work also uses rich, intense color and organic, shifting forms. Instead of being tied to moving images, the sense of movement comes from the way figures melt into their surroundings.

The contexts they worked in also shaped their art. Edelmann's style was part of the global pop culture of the 1960s, connected to the Beatles and seen by audiences around the world. Claveloux's work was more personal and experimental. Her stories often carried a surreal, sometimes melancholy or erotic tone, and she challenged social norms of the time. As both artists draw on a shared vocabulary of bold color palettes, flowing lines, and ornamentation, Edelmann's work was outward-facing and made for mass entertainment, while Claveloux's was more inward-looking, using the style to explore dream states, identity, and alternative points of view.

Building on the comparison of Edelmann's bold illustrations and Claveloux's darker, storybook-inspired style, art historian Matthias Wivel emphasizes how her work draws on folklore traditions while echoing the visual language of *Alice*: "Fairy tales clearly form the substrate of Claveloux's approach, and some of her best stories retain their vernacular punch. Most successful in this regard is '*The Tale of Blondie, Dearest Doe*, and *Fat Kitty Cat*'—a tightly rendered Gothic tale of a baby fleeing her evil stepmother queen to shack up with a cat in the forest. Its affluent, fervid preadolescent

symbolism recalls *Alice in Wonderland*, which Claveloux—surely not coincidentally—had illustrated with inspired Heinz Edelman-like inflections of John Tenniel in 1974.”<sup>460</sup>

Despite a decade infused with artistic elements in disco, boho, and a liberated creative spirit, psychedelic fashion had started to fade. Yet, there are some designers, especially those embracing prints, color, and non-traditional forms, that reflect the aesthetic in spirit. One of these designers that is worthy of note is Yves Saint Laurent (1936-2008). By the mid-1970s, Saint Laurent used exoticism and textural drama, such as tunics, harem pants, and ethnic-inspired accessories, to build fantastical ensembles rooted in multiple cultural references (fig. 81). While not strictly psychedelic, this dress leaned toward richly detailed, colorful escapism. The Museum at FIT notes, “in order to create this couture evening ensemble, Saint Laurent drew upon the same bohemian influences that inspired late 1960s anti-fashion.”<sup>461</sup> In his hands, humble patchwork becomes a cubist design of painterly silks, while bold colors and patterns work in harmony.”<sup>462</sup> This is relevant because his fabrics and ornamentation shared the immersive, otherworldly quality present in Claveloux’s prismatic style, though filtered through couture polish.

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460 Wivel.

461 Anti-fashion in the late 1960s described clothing that rejected couture norms and seasonal trends in favor of informality, individuality, and political expression. Association especially with hippie and countercultural dress, elements such as tie-dye, bell-bottoms, ethnic garments, vintage, and handmade customized items helped mark a shift from designer-led style to street-driven self-expression.

462 Yves Saint Laurent Set, *The Museum at FIT* (New York, New York: Fashion Institute of Technology), <https://fashionmuseum.fitnyc.edu/objects/21984/set--blouse--coordinating-skirt?ctx=04885a4ec43788342c64b44f7710ba6b8af1316b&idx=10>.

## Analysis of the Illustrations by Claveloux

### **Alice**

In Claveloux's illustration (fig. 82), the background glows with a flat, bright yellow, while the white foreground is lightly shaded in beige, creating a stage-like space for the scene. Four oversized flamingos, identical in posture and stepping in perfect unison, stride across the composition in a line, as if performing a choreographed dance. There are four more flamingos in the background, also walking in unison, but in the other direction. Beneath the larger than life flamingos stands Alice, glancing downward at a purplish hedgehog, who is a distinctly British touch that underscores the story's original cultural setting.

Alice's costume is striking. Her full, bell-shaped skirt flares dramatically away from the body, revealing a glimpse of white petticoat, and is divided into vertical panels that shift in color from purple to red, orange, coral, and finally yellow. A pink apron wraps over the skirt, though Alice's sideways stance in this illustration keeps the ensemble partially obscured. Her light auburn hair is drawn back with a pink flower tucked at the side, lending her a youthful, almost theatrical appearance against the bizarre procession of the birds.

In Claveloux's illustration for the scene of Alice falling down the rabbit hole (fig. 83), the central focus is a large, glowing sphere that shifts in gradient from lime green to deep purple. On one end of the sphere, Alice stands upright among the trees and flowers whose roots visibly pierce into the sphere itself, anchoring them to its core. The foliage echoes the sphere's palette, with leaves shifting from purple to green, blending natural forms with dreamlike color. Above this grounded Alice floats a constellation of fantastical motifs, including a yellow sun, clouds, stars, a fish, a bird, and even a sleeping

bull, suggesting a dreamlike layering of natural, cosmic, and mythological imagery. On the opposite side of the sphere, another Alice clings to the surface as though slipping or falling, mirroring her narrative descent. Here, the trees morph into banana trees, still rooted into the sphere, while the space below darkens into ambiguous, shadowy forms such as scorpion's tale, a ram, and a hybrid man-eagle figure. The entire composition is set against a pale orange background, which intensifies the glow of the central orb. As an interpretation of the rabbit hole, the image is effective as it replaces the literal tunnel with a spherical world whose two poles contrast each other. By anchoring Alice both upright and upside down, Claveloux captures the paradox of the rabbit hole as both an entry into wonder and a destabilizing plunge into the unknown. In both positions, Alice wears the same ensemble previously noted, including a tiered skirt rendered in a matching gradient, though when she is upside down her pantaloons, edged with tiered trimming, become visible.

While 1970s fashion often embraced individuality and eclecticism, this ensemble still defies fashionable norms. Unlike the denim jeans, simple skirts, or practical dresses of the era, Alice's outfit is highly fantastical, marked by the exaggerated fullness of the skirt, the vivid color panels, and the glimpse of the white petticoat, highlighting the imaginative world that Claveloux creates, where clothing becomes a tool for visual storytelling rather than a reflection of reality.

Fashion historian Clare Rose explains that by the mid-1970s, mainstream style shifted away from the modern youthful looks of the 1960s and embraced fantasy and nostalgia instead. Denim was reinterpreted with Western-inspired details such as cowgirl skirts, waistcoats, and checked shirts.<sup>463</sup> Rose adds that another defining trend of the

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<sup>463</sup> Clare Rose, *Children's Clothes Since 1750* (London: B. T. Batsford Limited, 1989), 136.

1970s was sportswear, which was once only used for athletic activities. Items such as tracksuits, sweatshirts, and leggings became widespread across all age groups, including adults.<sup>464</sup> Although these descriptions of styles of clothing fashionable for girls in the 1970s differ from what Claveloux drew for Alice, there is one common element. Rose includes in her text the description of “a nylon anorak printed with psychedelic patterns in shades of blue and purple.”<sup>465</sup> Considering this kaleidoscopic connection, Claveloux’s imagery resonates partly with some of the decade’s aesthetic sensibilities. Just as certain garments of the period embraced hypnotic patterns through bright and bold prints, Claveloux’s illustrations employ a similarly vivid palette and hallucinatory style. In this way, her colorful approach to visual design connects her work to the broader artistic climate of the 1970s, even while Alice’s clothing itself remains outside the realm of contemporary fashion.

While Alice is most often portrayed in Claveloux’s book wearing her bright rainbow dress, one striking image offers a startlingly different, almost nightmarish vision of the heroine. In the scene where she debates with the pigeon about whether or not she is a serpent, Alice’s body is transformed into a snake coiling tightly around a bird’s egg (fig. 84). The shell of the egg is already cracked, revealing the exposed yolk within, a detail that adds both vulnerability and unease. Her hair is replaced with large scales in yellow and pale greens. These scales, at first glance, resemble flowing blonde hair before their reptilian nature becomes clear. As if to heighten the sense of distortion, Alice’s tail ends in a second, smaller Alice head, itself entwined around another fractured egg from which a baby bird emerges. This unsettling transformation, suggestive of a bad acid trip inversion of her usual rainbow-clad self, stands in direct contrast to the cheerful,

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464 Rose, 136.

465 Ibid., 137.

colorfully-dressed Alice seen elsewhere in the book, emphasizing the extremes of Claveloux's imaginative range.

### **Mock Turtle and Gryphon**

In Claveloux's full-page color illustration of the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon (fig. 85), the layout itself is particularly striking. The upper portion of the image depicts two lobsters dancing together alongside Alice dancing with a lobster. This is a scene that emerges from a speech bubble extending directly from the mouths of the Mock Turtle and Gryphon below. This visual connection links the characters' dialogue to the action, creating a dynamic interplay between text and image.<sup>466</sup> While the Mock Turtle and Gryphon are not depicted wearing any clothing, this is a choice consistent with other illustrators who depict these creatures without garments. However, Claveloux infuses their bodies with extraordinary textural and chromatic detail. The Mock Turtle's bumpy skin is defined by precise black lines, contrasting with the smoother surface of his shell, while the Gryphon's muscular system is highly developed. His body is rendered in a vibrant gradient spanning the full spectrum of the rainbow, with sections of pink, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple visible. Even in the absence of conventional clothing, these characters receive meticulous attention, highlighting Claveloux's commitment to expressive detail. The setting further enhances the scene's uniqueness, as the characters dance on a beach, with large, black-and-white waves crashing dramatically behind them, creating a striking juxtaposition of vibrant figures against a stark, stylized environment.

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<sup>466</sup> This example of Claveloux's use of speech bubbles echoes the narrative and visual strategies discussed earlier by comics scholar Crucifix.

## Mad Hatter

Claveloux's treatment of the Mad Hatter is remarkable precisely for its restraint. Given that the Hatter is one of the most outlandish and theatrical figures in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, one might expect Claveloux to showcase him, taking full advantage of her multicolored style. Instead, his presence in the full-color tea party illustration is largely minimized. The abundance of the tea party itself takes center stage, as teapots, cups brimming with spoons, plates of sweets, a platter stacked with pocket watches, and assorted animals fill the composition. The Mad Hatter is represented primarily through his signature accessory, as his tall, exaggerated top hat juts above the huddle of characters obscuring the rest of his body (fig. 86). Echoing this motif, the table is scattered with miniature top hats in a spectrum of colors, playfully multiplying his presence without showing him directly. In the background, Claveloux inserts a black-and-white hatched rendering of Alice's face, disembodied and highly detailed, with careful shading on her eyes and lips to create depth. This depiction recurs elsewhere in the book, standing apart from the rainbow-clad, full-bodied Alice of other illustrations. The juxtaposition of the abstracted, monochrome face of Alice and the vibrant, fully clothed figure adds to the scene's strangeness, further displacing the Hatter from his expected role at the center.

The Mad Hatter, with his eccentric personality and flair for excess, would have been an ideal candidate for representation within the fashion trends of the 1960s and 1970s, particularly within the Peacock Revolution. This movement marked a dramatic shift in menswear, rejecting conservative grey and black suits in favor of bold colors, patterned fabrics, frilled shirts, and ornate accessories. Men embraced velvet jackets, embroidered waistcoats, wide ties, and flamboyant hats, which were all versions of

garments that blurred the line between fashion and costume. Social anthropologist Joshua M. Bluteau places the look within a broader frame of fashion history: “These clothes are not simply a set of curiosities from a brief sartorial aberration but a vital piece of the jigsaw in the circular narrative of fashion, masculinities and esthetics.”<sup>467</sup> What was once considered outlandish has since resurfaced in expressive tailoring. The Mad Hatter’s theatrical persona aligns perfectly within the Peacock Revolution’s aesthetic of exaggerated display, making him a natural fit for the revolution’s spirit. Had Claveloux chosen to depict him in this vein, her vibrant style could have amplified his role as a fashion-forward figure of Wonderland.

In this way, Claveloux reconsiders the signature tea party not as a showcase for the Mad Hatter’s eccentricities, but as a fragmented composition where props, patterns, and disembodied imagery take precedence over the character himself.

## Conclusion

Claveloux’s 1974 illustrations for *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* stand out for their dazzling use of color, inventive imagery, and distinctive sense of style. The recurring motif of gradation, which is visible in Alice’s clothing, the Gryphon’s skin, and countless other backgrounds and surfaces, creates a visual rhythm that ties the work together and reflects her broader artistic vocabulary. By merging familiar characters with surreal textures, unexpected details, and rainbow-hued landscapes, Claveloux reimagines Wonderland as a dreamlike world suspended between fantasy and fashion. Her psychedelic aesthetic not only situates the work firmly within the cultural movement coming out of the 1960s and into the 1970s, but also resonates with the era’s fascination

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<sup>467</sup> Joshua M. Bluteau, “The Peacock Revolution: Men’s Fashion from 1966-1970,” *Fashion Theory* 27, no. 5 (2023), 749.

with bold design across art, products, and clothing. In this way, her *Alice* is both of its time and timeless; this interpretation dazzles the eye while offering a fresh lens on Carroll's tale.



Figure 79. Yayoi Kusama, *How doth the little crocodile*, illustration from her version of *Alice*. While Natalia Bragaru does not highlight Kusama's edition as including illustrated parodies, this image is notable for a gold bracelet set with a red gemstone and the crocodile's hat, embellished with the artist's signature polka dots in white and purple, reflecting the playful attention to costume and adornment within her interpretations of Carroll's text.

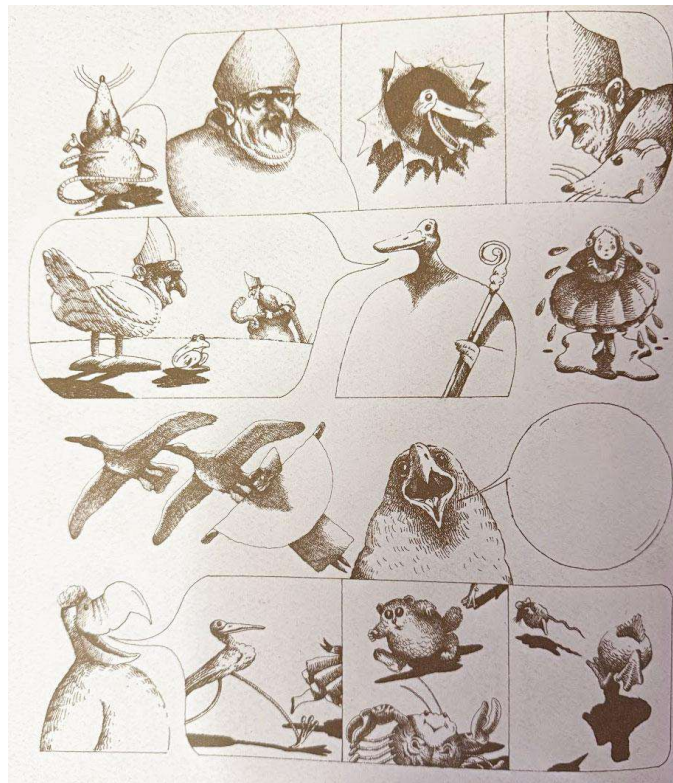


Figure 80. Unconventional grids and speech bubbles turn Claveloux's illustrations of *Alice* into a multi-voiced visual maze.



Figure 81. Yves Saint Laurent, Ensemble, 1979. Silk organza, satin, and taffeta. France. A silk organza blouse printed with large multicolor florals (orange, pink, aqua, green, and magenta) are paired with a patchwork ankle-length skirt in satin and taffeta. Source: <https://fashionmuseum.fitnyc.edu/objects/21984/set--blouse--coordinating-skirt?ctx=04885a4ec43788342c64b44f7710ba6b8af1316b&idx=10>

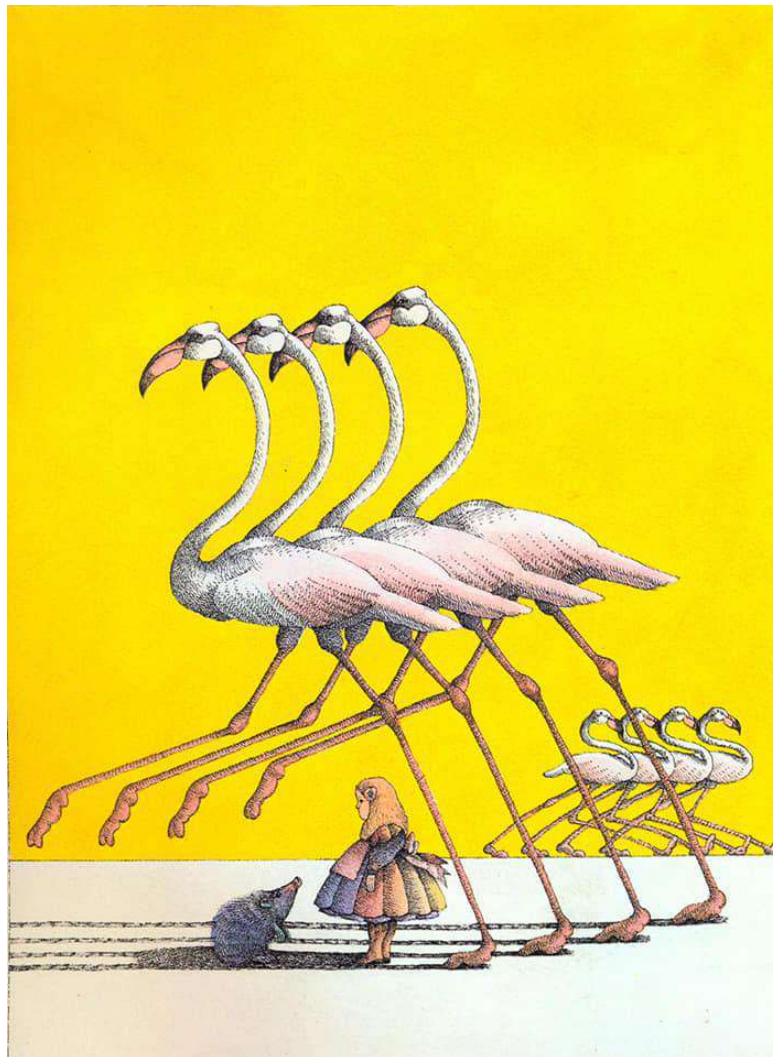


Figure 82. Alice engages with a hedgehog as oversized flamingos parade past, in Claveloux's 1974 illustration for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

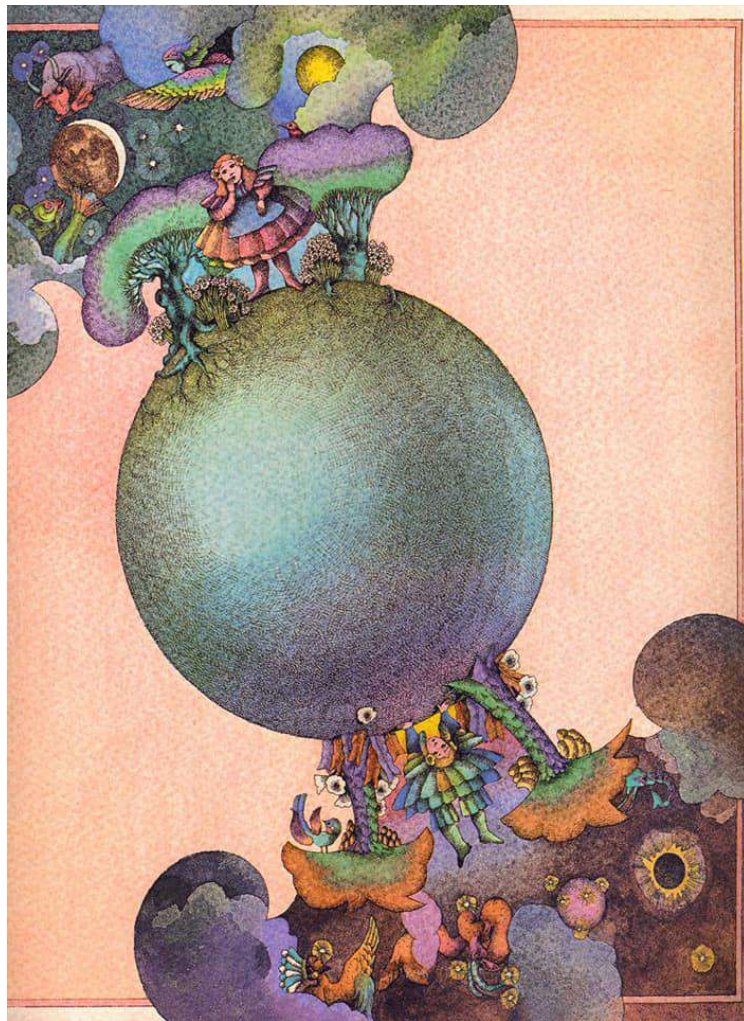


Figure 83. Alice's passage into Wonderland is depicted as her appearing on both sides of a sphere, with illustrator Claveloux surrounding the scene in mystical and cosmic imagery to emphasize the transformative journey.

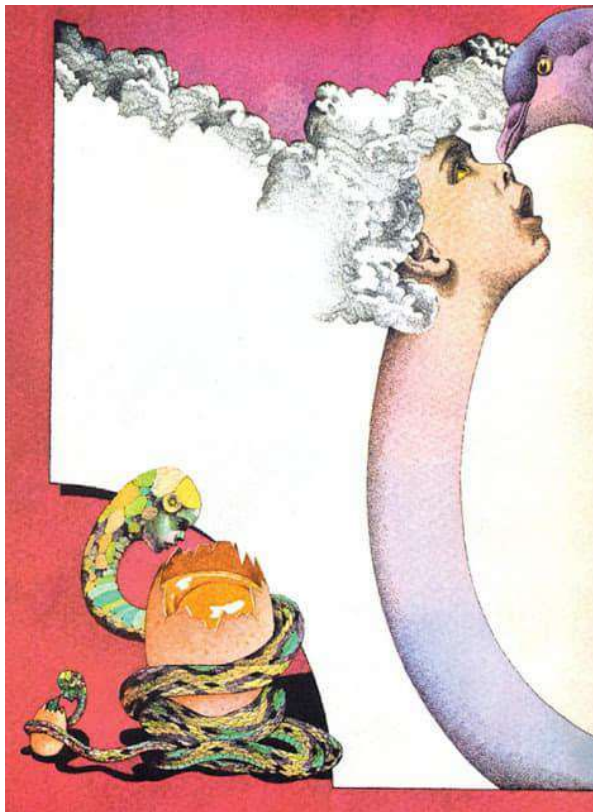


Figure 84. Claveloux portrays a reptilian Alice with heads at both ends of a snake's body coiled around a cracked egg, while another elongated version of Alice with cloud hair converses with a pigeon.



Figure 85. On a flat beach framed by rolling waves, Claveloux depicts the Lobster Quadrille with Alice dancing alongside a lobster in one panel, while the Mock Turtle and Gryphon perform together in another.

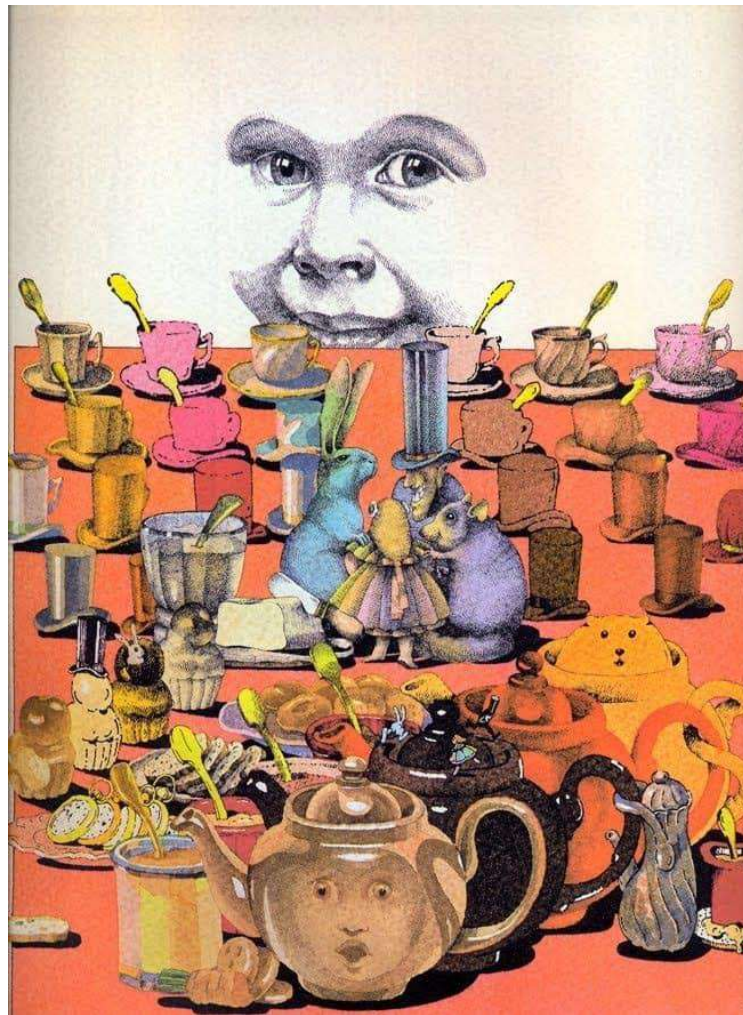


Figure 86. Claveloux's tea party illustration shows Alice in her rainbow dress at the table with the Mad Hatter and other guests, surrounded by teapots, cups, and platters of food. A large black-and-white rendering of Alice's face looms in the background, positioning her both as participant and observer.

## DUŠAN KÁLLAY

Dušan Kállay (1948- ) gained worldwide acclaim for his work as a painter, printmaker, and illustrator. He earned a Master's Degree in painting and printmaking from the Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava in 1972,<sup>468</sup> and is described by KADS New York, a creative art studio, as “an excellent illustrator and colorist whose illustrations and paintings are closely linked by the phenomenon of color.”<sup>469</sup> Additionally, the Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum states: “He sees the stories he brings to us through a lens of detachment, humor and gentle irony. Perhaps he drew some inspiration from Dadaists or Surrealists; in any case, he discovers hidden humanized legacies in dramatic situations and banter. He bases his work on the conviction that ‘the world is much wider than the world that we can see.’”<sup>470</sup> Throughout his career, Kállay combined imaginative imagery with technical mastery, producing illustrations, paintings, and graphic works that blend the fantastical with the philosophical. His art, celebrated internationally and rooted in a distinctive Slovak tradition, reflects both a deeply personal vision and a universal appeal that continues to resonate with audiences worldwide.

The impact of Kállay's artistry is perhaps most evident in his celebrated illustrations for the Slovak edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which earned him the Lewis Carroll Society of North America's Grand Prize in 2015.<sup>471</sup> In an interview with historian Juraj Vojtek following this distinction, Vojtek states, “we should not forget

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468 “Dušan Kállay,” *KADS New York*, accessed 1 August 2025, <https://www.kadsny.com/dusan-kallay>.

469 Dušan Kállay within “The Magical World of Colors,” *Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum*, 2018, <https://danubiana.sk/en/vystavy/magicky-svet-farieb>.

470 Ibid.

471 This honor took place in 2015, marking the 150th anniversary of the original publication of the original Carroll book.

that the popularity of the book in Slovakia is to a great degree the merit of Dušan Kállay's illustrations."<sup>472</sup>

Curator Katerina Kyselica notes that Kállay's artistic ability has been recognized for enabling him to "create unique, imaginary worlds reflecting the complexities of life and depth of the human soul."<sup>473</sup> This imaginative approach is evident in his own reflections on illustrating *Alice*, where he explains, "After I received the commission to illustrate *Alice in Wonderland*, I came across a section of the book in which Carroll describes birds in the presence of Alice, who is sitting on a small stool. This theme and situation caused me to envision a flock of wild birds attempting to foster paradise through the simple act of sitting together, tightly wedged next to one another. The imagery acts not only as the paraphrase of Alice but also as an independent theme that I further developed, like in the etching *Paradise of Wild Birds*."<sup>474</sup> Here, Kállay demonstrates how he carefully considers not just narrative content but symbolic potential, transforming a brief moment in the text into a visual metaphor that stands on its own.

Kállay originally created his imaginative and surreal illustrations for the 1984 Slovak edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, titled *Alica v krajine zázrakov*, published by Mladé letá. Notably, the same set of illustrations was later repurposed for

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472 "Some Notes on the Translation as an Interpretive Art and Communication as Well: Interview with Juraj Vojtek," *Communication Today* 7, no. 1 (2016): 120.

473 Katerina Kyselica, "For Dušan Kállay, Everything Relates to Everything Else," *Celebrating Print*, 8 January 2018, <https://www.celebratingprint.com/post/2018/01/08/for-dusan-kallay-everything-relates-to-everything-else>.

474 Ibid.

the 2010 Faroese edition,<sup>475</sup> *Lisa í Leikalandi og inn ígjøgnum spegilin*,<sup>476</sup> which includes both *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*. This reuse of Kállay's artwork across editions highlights the enduring appeal and cross-cultural relevance of his illustrations beyond their original Slovak content. This is common practice, as Tenniel's original illustrations also have been widely repurposed across countless editions and translations, serving as a visual foundation for the story. Notably, the original Faroese edition in 1988 also used Tenniel's 1865 illustrations.

While the reuse of Kállay's illustrations in the 2010 Faroese publication demonstrates their enduring visual impact, it is essential to return to their original context. Understanding the conditions under which these works were first created in 1984 Slovakia provides crucial insight into their deeper cultural and symbolic significance. This closer look helps illuminate the underlying messages embedded in Kállay's work.

It is not entirely apparent where Kállay was living in 1984, but it is known he was born in Bratislava, in what was then Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia) in 1948, and continued on to college and a professional career there. It is likely that he was also residing in Bratislava in 1984, as he was active at the Academy of Fine Arts, which is also located in the city.

At this time, Bratislava was the capital of the Slovak Socialist Republic, one of the two federal republics of communist Czechoslovakia. Public life was categorized by elements such as conformity and the prioritization of socialist values. Cultural institutions

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475 The sole Faroese translation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was produced by clergyman Axel Tórgarð (1923–2011). Bergljót av Skarði and Kristinbjørg Høgnesen, "Alice in Faroese," In *Alice in a World of Wonderlands*, edited by Jon A. Lindseth and Alan Tannenbaum, vol. 1, 230. (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press), 2015.

476 In Tórgarð's translation, the protagonist's name is changed to *Lisa*, a common Faroese name rather than *Alice*, which, though used in the Faroes, carries a more foreign tone and does not conform to Faroese grammar. The change also produces alliteration in the title, *Lisa í Leikaland* ("Lisa in Toyland"), lending it a catchy, poetic quality. In addition, the "Mad Hatter" is adapted to *Hattamakari* ("hatmaker"), as there is no Faroese equivalent for the idiom "mad as a hatter." (av Skarði and Høgnesen, 230.)

such as theaters, galleries, and universities were active but closely monitored and censored. Despite this, artists such as Kállay found subtle ways to embed symbolism and critique within their work. Kállay would also work within state structures to navigate a delicate balance between creativity and state expectations. Although Bratislava was politically repressed, it was a culturally vibrant city.

Surrealist art can be understood as a subtle yet powerful form of resistance to communist rule, particularly in tightly controlled administrations like Czechoslovakia in the twentieth century. As regimes promoted idealized forms of artwork, surrealism valued dreams, the subconscious, and irrationality. If realism was rejected, surrealist art inherently challenged the leadership's monopoly on truth and reality. This occurred through layered symbolism, fantastical imagery, and open-ended interpretations.

Kállay's artwork can be meaningfully related to showing surrealist tendencies within a communist system, particularly in how it uses imagination, symbolism, and ambiguity to navigate and subtly resist the constraints of authoritarian control. His artwork, though not overly political, resonates with the surrealist tradition, in its imaginative complexity and symbolic ambiguity. In the context of 1980s communist Czechoslovakia, this style offered a subtle form of resistance, providing both the artist and the viewer with a space for introspection, interpretation, and quiet defiance against ideological conformity.

### [Analysis of the Illustrations by Kállay](#)

#### **Alice**

In Kállay's illustrations, Alice wears a fairly simple yet charming outfit (fig. 87) consisting of a blue sleeveless shift dress the ends above the knee. The dress features

gentle gathering at the yoke, which adds subtle texture to the bodice. A belt with a pointed end cinches the waist, complementing the clean lines of the skirt, which includes two external pockets on either side. Underneath the dress she wears a white short sleeved tee shirt.

Children's clothing in this era reflected the realities of life under a centrally planned economy, with limited consumer choice, state-controlled manufacturing, and a focus on function over style. It reflected the practical and modest nature of everyday life. Limited materials, uniform designs, and a lack of Western influence shaped a generation whose clothing emphasized function and durability over personal expression.

The design of garments was typically simple, and flashy or brand-name clothing choices from the West were unavailable or frowned upon. Girls often wore cotton dresses with simple patterns and modest hems. In colder seasons, hand-knit wool sweaters were widespread, often made by grandmothers or mothers. Color choices for garments were generally muted, such as browns, grays, navy, and faded pastels.

Zuzana Šidlíková, a fashion historian, curator, and author specializing in the study of fashion and textile culture in Slovakia, notes: "The view of fashion changed with socialist ideology. The word fashion was replaced by the terms dress and apparel. Fashion was characterized as durable, easy to maintain, useful, youthful and optimistic. It lost its elitist nature and its social function was changed."<sup>477</sup> There is a strong possibility that Alice's dress represents a garment that would have been made at home, as Šidlíková notes that by the 1970s, roughly one third of girls' and women's clothing in Slovakia was homemade.<sup>478</sup> In addition to the prevalence of home sewing, certain clothing brands also

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<sup>477</sup> Zuzana Šidlíková, *Lost (m)ODE: Clothing Culture in Slovakia from 1944 to 1989*, translated by Elena & Paul McCullough, (Bratislava: Slovart, 2016), 11.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

achieved considerable success. Companies such as Pleťa produced modern knitwear for women, men, and children, and their appeal eventually extended beyond Slovakia. Pleťa garments were exported to markets including Hungary, the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, France, Iceland, Libya, and Jordan.<sup>479</sup>

The use of the color blue for Kállay's depiction of Alice's dress is also interesting. Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* gradually gained popularity over the decade after its initial release, and its portrayal of Alice in a blue dress with a white pinafore became an iconic visual interpretation that has since shaped the character's image in popular culture worldwide. In 1980s Slovakia, public access to media, including locally produced work that challenged the Communist government, along with Western media, especially from the United States, was severely limited and heavily censored,<sup>480</sup> and this would include films like Disney's animated 1951 *Alice in Wonderland*. Disney films were generally not shown in cinemas or broadcast on state television, and locally made alternatives were introduced.<sup>481</sup> The regime sought to limit the influence of Western capitalist culture, especially American entertainment. Some individuals with relatives living abroad might have had access to viewing Disney films, but this was rare and unofficial, as ownership of Western media could be seen as suspicious or subversive.

Educated or artistic circles might have known about the Disney film adaptation, even if they had not seen it firsthand. Some imagery or character styles from Disney's version may have filtered in through illustrated books, Western magazines, though likely in vague or indirect ways. For the general public, however, the Disney version would

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479 Šidlíková, 129-131.

480 "The Power of the Powerless: Five Banned Films from the Czechoslovak New Wave," *Film at Lincoln Center*, accessed 10 December 2025, <https://www.filmlinc.org/series/the-power-of-the-powerless-five-banned-films-from-the-czechoslovak-new-wave/>.

481 Peter Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave*, (New York: Wallflower, 2005), 209.

have remained largely inaccessible, reinforcing the importance of local adaptations, like Kállay's illustrations.

While it is uncertain whether Kállay had direct access to Disney's *Alice in Wonderland*, his decision to depict Alice in a blue dress may reflect an awareness of the iconic visual motif. However, within his own surrealist framework, the color choice functions less as a cultural reference and more as a compositional device, contrasting with the chaos of her surroundings and reinforcing her psychological isolation.

In Kállay's illustrations, Alice is depicted with a distinctively modest and somewhat unconventional haircut, when viewed by today's standards. It is a trimmed, brown bob with blunt, unusually short bangs. This simple, utilitarian style reflects the everyday reality of children's grooming in 1980s Slovakia, where practicality and conformity were emphasized over fashion or individual expression. During this period, haircuts for young girls were often administered at home or in state-run salons, favoring easily maintained styles.<sup>482</sup> By giving Alice such a haircut, Kállay not only localizes her appearance within a specific historical and geographic context but also subtly distances her from the idealized, polished version of Alice found in Western media. The choice reinforces Kállay's surreal, grounded interpretation of the character, who is rooted in the social textures of his own world, rather than solely in a fantasy untouched by political or cultural constraints.

In contrast to the full-body image, Kállay also presents a more surreal depiction of Alice. In this illustration, Alice's head appears disproportionately enlarged and confined within a delicate, skeletal frame resembling a precarious wooden scaffold. Kállay's choice to illustrate Alice's oversized head trapped in a fragile structure of small wooden

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482 Thomas K. Murphy, *Czechoslovakia Behind the Curtain: Life, Work and Culture in the Communist Era* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2018).

sticks (fig. 88) opens up rich symbolic meanings, especially when viewed in the context of communist-era Czechoslovakia. As her large head is crammed into a delicate, makeshift structure, it evokes the image of an individual mind or identity constrained by an inadequate or rigid system. In the communist context, this could symbolize how personal thought, creativity, or growth was stifled by the fragile ideological framework of the regime. The wooden sticks suggest something unstable and imposed, barely holding together against the force of expanding consciousness. Additionally, Alice's disproportionate head could be seen as a symbol of imagination and intellect, pushing against the confines of structure can be a metaphor for the artist's mind outgrowing the limitations of censorship and ideological control. Kállay may be alluding to how free thought or artistic exploration inevitably put pressure on authoritarian boundaries. And, as mentioned, the sticks themselves are structurally weak. This suggests that the system is precarious, and could easily collapse under the pressure of expanding thought, personal awareness, or cultural evolution. In this way, the image subtly communicates a critique of the regime's unsustainability.

Kállay's depiction of Alice's large head constrained within fragile lattice wooden sticks can be interpreted as a veiled critique of the government's attempt to suppress intellectual and personal growth. The tension between expansion and confinement subtly reflects the broader pressures faced by artists and individuals living under ideological control.

## **White Rabbit**

Kállay's designs were created in socialist Czechoslovakia, where western fashions and overly aristocratic fashion symbols would feel very much out of place. Victorian-era

illustrations, such as Tenniel's, featuring a White Rabbit in formal dress do not blend with the specific cultural and political movement of Kállay's world. Kállay illustrates the White Rabbit wearing a simple red, grey, and white striped vest rather than a formal waistcoat or frock coat (fig. 87). A vest is approachable and basic, and does not signify high society or wealth, and Kállay's choice keeps the character relatable to young readers.

Although the color red had ideological associations in socialist Eastern Europe, when paired with grey and white it becomes less overtly political. However, it is more likely that the bold colors, simplified form, and graphic pattern echoes the modern aesthetic of the era. Kállay's choice reflects both cultural adaptation and modernist illustration style, making the White Rabbit visually accessible and ideological neutral and translating a Western story into a local, socialist-era visual language.

While there is relatively little narrative information about the White Rabbit beyond his distinctive striped vest, the interactions between Alice and other animals in Kállay's illustrations help situate him within the broader world of the story. In illustrations such as the previously mentioned one where Alice sits surrounded by a flock of brightly colored birds (fig. 89), Kállay emphasizes whimsical, surrealized creatures whose forms and colors are as much about visual composition as they are about character. These encounters reflect Kállay's larger artistic approach, combining playful abstraction, bold color, and imaginative design to create his version of Wonderland.

The birds surrounding Alice are highly colorful, in shades of green, white, orange, and purple, and are stylized depictions rather than realistic. This reflects Kállay's tendency to prioritize design, pattern, and decorative composition over naturalism. He often used bold and unexpected colors in his work to create visual interest. Additionally,

the slightly abstracted creatures with long beaks and unusual colors enhance the surreal atmosphere of the story, fitting in with the Eastern European illustration tradition that leaned toward imaginative and graphic storytelling. Kállay repeatedly combined bold color and stylized forms within dynamic compositions in his other work, creating visually engaging, modern scenes. This illustration of Alice and the birds is a prime example of how Kállay balances storytelling with design sensibility.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, Kállay's 1984 Slovak illustrations present a cohesive visual world in which both Alice and the creatures she encounters reflect his distinctive style. Alice, with her short hair and simple blue dress, and the White Rabbit, in his striped vest, embody the modern accessible aesthetic of the time, while the vividly colored, stylized birds with long beaks demonstrate his playful approach to form, color, and composition. His illustrations also suggested the sense of entrapment or disorientation. Together, these elements showcase Kállay's ability to reinterpret a classic Western story for a 1980s Slovak young audience.



Figure 87. Dušan Kállay's 1984 illustration for *Alica v krajine zázrakov* (Alice's Adventures in Wonderland), published by Mladé letá, depicts Alice in a simple, modern outfit: a blue sleeveless shift dress ending above the knee worn over a short-sleeved white shirt. Her brown bob frames her face, with unusually short, blunt bangs.



Figure 88. Dušan Kállay's 1984 illustration emphasizes Alice's head in large scale, framed and seemingly trapped within a geometric structure of wooden sticks. This reflects the surreal and disorienting atmosphere of Wonderland while highlighting Kállay's distinctive graphic style.



Figure 89. Here, Alice sits on a stool surrounded by a vibrant array of surreal, colorful birds. Her dress is simplified to a plain blue shift, losing the detailing seen in other depictions.

## YAYOI KUSAMA

Translating *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* into Japanese has long posed a challenge for scholars and writers, who grapple with Carroll's wordplay and cultural references. *Alice* enthusiast and collector Yoshiyuki Momma notes, "More than one hundred Japanese translators have now attempted the book. These include famous Japanese novelists, poets, professors, and children's story writers. But it proved difficult to understand and translate the *Alice* books for those whose mother tongue was not English and whose culture was so different from that of Victorian England."<sup>483</sup> Despite these difficulties, many Japanese translators attempted the task, attesting to the novel's enduring appeal across languages and cultures. Just as translators labored to render Carroll's text to Japanese readers, illustrators have likewise worked to interpret *Alice* visually. A significant number of Japanese artists have taken on this project, each offering their own perspective of Carroll's dreamlike world. Momma adds, "the *Alice* stories have been illustrated by more than one hundred Japanese artists. Most collectors of Lewis Carroll know the works of Kuniyoshi Kaneko, and his 1994 edition is in great demand. It is true that many Japanese illustrators have been influenced by the illustrations of John Tenniel, but many have produced highly innovative images. For example, Takako Hirai created her own world of *Alice* in a 2011 calendar (showing Alice in a pink dress, not blue), which brought her great acclaim in Japan."<sup>484</sup> Among them, Yayoi Kusama (1929- ) also stands out as a figure whose engagement with *Alice* extends beyond mere illustration. Her 2021 English-language edition reveals not only the global

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<sup>483</sup> Yoshiyuki Momma, "Alice in Japanese: Named One of 'The Best 100,'" in *Alice in a World of Wonderlands: Translation of Lewis Carroll's Masterpiece*. Edited by Jon A. Lindseth and Alan Tannenbaum (New Castle: Oak Knoll Press, 2015), 316.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

reach of Carroll’s story, but also how a Japanese artist could return to the English original to craft an interpretation deeply shaped by her own artistic language. Kusama’s *Alice* and her artwork will be the focus of this section.

Kusama is a world-renowned Japanese artist known for her distinctive and innovative works spanning a wide range of mediums, including painting, sculpture, installation, performance art, and writing. Born in 1929 in Matsumoto, Japan, Kusama’s artistic journey began in her childhood, where she experienced hallucinations that influenced her signature style. She drew “while her nation was rocked by political and economic instability.”<sup>485</sup> These hallucinations often involved patterns, dots, and fields of repetition, which are themes that would ultimately become central to her art.

She is best known for her use of polka dots, which she describes as representing “dissolution and accumulation. Proliferation and fragmentation.”<sup>486</sup> These dots represent a way to dissolve individuality and merge into the cosmos. Her work often explores themes of mental health, identity, and the human experience as her struggles with anxiety and hallucinations profoundly influenced her work. Additionally, the vibrant use of color and repetitive patterns creates a visual intensity that blurs the boundaries between art and environment.

East Asian Languages and Cultures Professor Amanda Kennell notes:

Because Yayoi Kusama explicitly ties herself to her art within the artworks themselves, it is necessary to consider her personal life when examining her art. This counters the normal approach to art, wherein some separation is maintained between the art and the artist’s life. A distressed artist may yet produce an uplifting sculpture, while a contented artist may craft scenes of anguish. Kusama’s insertion of herself into her art requires analyses of the art to

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485 Amanda Kennell, *Alice in Japanese Wonderlands: Translation, Adaptation, Mediation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2023), 75.

486 Laura Hoptman, Akira Tatehata, Udo Kultermann, and Catherine Taft, *Yayoi Kusama* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2017), 117.

also attend to the artist. However, the method by which Kusama combines herself with her art makes this a delicate operation.<sup>487</sup>

She continues:

Kusama merged her art, her carefully crafted worlds, and herself into a cohesive whole by exploiting depersonalization disorder, an illness from which she has long suffered. Depersonalization disorder involves a sense of detachment or distance from one's own self in body and mind. However, there are really two depersonalization disorders to consider regarding Yayoi Kusama: her illness itself, and her illness as she has portrayed it within her art. In other words, to discuss the role of depersonalization disorder in Kusama's art is not to render a medical opinion on her mental state, but to examine Kusama's artistic persona and how she has framed her oeuvre.<sup>488</sup>

After moving to New York City in 1958 and becoming a key figure in the avant-garde scene of the 1960s where she participated in happenings<sup>489</sup> and created large-scale installations that challenged conventional artistic norms, she ultimately returned to Japan in 1973, where she continued to create and publish novels, poetry, and essays. Around this time, she voluntarily moved to a psychiatric hospital in Tokyo, which is a decision that reflects her ongoing commitment to mental health care. She has a studio nearby which allows her to continue to create art prolifically.

Kusama's work intersected with movements like Pop Art and influenced other artists of the time. One element of Pop Art that has similarities in Kusama's work are Benday dots. Named after illustrator and printer Benjamin Henry Day Jr. (1838-1916), Benday dots were originally a printing technique from the nineteenth century. Small, colored dots were used to create shading and secondary colors on cheap, mass-printed materials, such as comic books and advertisements. Leading Pop Artist Roy Lichtenstein

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487 Kennell, 77.

488 Ibid.

489 A happening was a form of performance art that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, characterized by its spontaneity and audience participation, which often blurred the boundaries between art and everyday life.

(1923-1997) used “heavy black outlines, flat primary colors, and the Benday dots used to add tone in printing”<sup>490</sup> in his paintings, drawing inspiration from advertisements and cartoons of the era. For example, art historian Kevin Hatch described one of Lichtenstein’s works as “adhering to the formula of one or more broad strokes sweeping over a regularized ground of Benday dots.”<sup>491</sup> Lichtenstein mimicked the mechanical reproduction of comics, blowing up tiny dots into large-scale paintings to comment on mass media, consumerism, and the blurred line between high and low art.

Around the same time that Lichtenstein was appropriating the visual language of mechanical reproduction through Benday dots, fashion designer Paco Rabanne (1934-2023) was reimagining the material possibilities of clothing in similarly radical ways. Within the late 1960s, Rabanne challenged traditional garment construction by using unconventional materials such as metal discs, plastic, and aluminum, which he connected using chain mail techniques (fig. 90). Many of these components were circular, giving his designs a distinct visual rhythm reminiscent of dot patterns, though rendered in three-dimensional form. While Rabanne’s ‘dots’ are not printed or painted, their repetition and modular arrangement evokes a parallel formal language. The Kyoto Costume Institute notes, Rabanne “overturned the common belief that clothes had to use thread and fabric, and shocked many with his use of new materials like plastic as fabric.”<sup>492</sup> His work, though situated within fashion, shares with Pop Art a fascination with industrial processes and futuristic aesthetics.

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490 Marilyn Stokstad, *Art History*, 2nd edition, vol. 2 (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, Inc., and Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2002), 1143.

491 Kevin Hatch, “Roy Lichtenstein,” in *Pop Art: Contemporary Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 57.

492 Kyoto Costume Institute, *Fashion: A History from the 18th to the 20th Century* (Los Angeles: Taschen, 2002), 580.

Benday Dots are mechanical, uniform, and comic-inspired, while Kusama's dots are organic, obsessive, and hand-applied. The dots in Pop Art are a bit of irony as a critique on mass consumerism, while Kusama's are an expression of the inner psyche. Rabanne's circular discs can be seen as part of a broader cultural turn toward abstraction, repetition, and a breakdown of medium-specific boundaries during the 1960s.

Kusama's lifelong engagement with patterns and repetition finds a natural extension in her illustrations for *Alice*. Kennell adds, "Yayoi Kusama has wielded *Alice in Wonderland* to add depth and cohesion to her art throughout her career."<sup>493</sup>

Considering all this, it is not surprising that Kusama's illustrated edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was not the artist's first encounter with Carroll's story. Long before she created the hallucinatory polka-dotted images that recontextualize Alice's world on the printed page, Kusama hosted an "Alice in Wonderland Happening" in August 1968 at José de Creeft's *Alice in Wonderland* sculpture in Central Park, New York (fig. 91). The performance combined Kusama's trademark sense of spectacle, including costumes, body paint, nudity, and public participation, mixed with Carroll's themes of transformation and altered perception. A press release written by Kusama for the event stated:

Featuring me, Kusama, mad as a hatter, and my troupe of nude dancers. How about taking a trip with me out to Central Park where free tea will be provided under the magic mushroom of the Alice In Wonderland Statue. Alice was the grandmother of the Hippies. When she was low, Alice was the first to take pills to make her high. I, Kusama, am the modern Alice in Wonderland...Rendezvous at the Alice in Wonderland Statue in Central Park, Sunday 11 August at 5 a.m. Because of the appropriate hour, free tea will be provided.<sup>494</sup>

Kusama wore a jumpsuit adorned with her signature polka-dotted fabric on the front bodice, with matching dotted material at the arm cuffs, with trailing extensions that

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493 Kennell, 75.

494 Hoptman, et al., 112.

would accentuate her movements. This earlier event shows how deeply the *Alice* narrative resonated with Kusama's artistic concerns, providing a conceptual foundation that she would return to decades later in her book illustrations.

When Kusama did illustrate the story in book form, what really stands out within Kusama's edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is its sparse depiction of human figures. Rather than focusing on character portraits or narrative scenes, the majority of her illustrations highlight objects and creatures, such as mushrooms, sea life, flowers, gourds and various foods, which are all executed in her signature style. Her renowned polka dots appear on nearly every page, often dominating the composition. Some spreads consist solely of dots against a solid background, reinforcing her obsessive visual language. The color palette is striking, with frequent use of the vivid primary colors of red, yellow, and blue, alongside bold accents of green, magenta, orange, black, and white. The overall effect is one of intense visual impact, more aligned with graphic design than traditional illustration, emphasizing boldness, repetition, and abstraction over narrative clarity.

One interesting illustration to note is the rabbit hole. At the start of the story, Kusama includes this element, departing from a more widely-used depiction of Alice mid-fall, instead focusing entirely on the space itself (fig. 92). The image is depicted in stark black and white, emphasizing the intricate, almost hypnotic texture of the hole. Kusama's dotted motif transforms the interior of the tunnel into a dynamic, undulating pattern, suggesting depth and motion without depicting a figure. The repetition and variation of the dots creates senses of both infinity and constriction. In this way, the rabbit hole becomes not just a setting, but a fully immersive visual experience.

## Analysis of the Illustrations by Kusama

### Alice

As noted, in contrast to most illustrated editions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Kusama's version notably omits any depiction of Alice at the start of the story. Other editions often begin with an image of Alice to accompany the text as Alice sits by her sister, and these illustrations immediately establish her appearance and act as an introduction. They also situate her within a particular cultural or fashion context. Kusama, however, handles the subject matter differently. Instead, Alice is first seen after conversing with the Caterpillar, while her neck is elongated (fig. 93), and then as a small figure within a dotted gourd 'house' after the words "The End" complete the story (fig. 94). Additionally, these two versions of Alice do not really resemble one another and almost look to be two totally different characters.

While Kusama's edition presents two possible visuals of Alice, not every figure presumed to be the main character is so easily identified. One image in particular, the elongated, long-necked figure, raises questions about whether it truly represents Alice at all. Its distorted form lacks the visual markers of the character, leaving open the possibility that this figure is instead another presence within Wonderland, or even a more abstract embodiment of transformation itself. In Carroll's text, Alice meets the Caterpillar seated on a mushroom, but Kusama does not clearly show either the insect or the scene. Instead, a few pages later, she provides this figure in question that could be read as Alice herself, in an elongated, patterned, and abstracted form, or a distorted Caterpillar. The lack of defining features, such as Alice's dress or the Caterpillar's hookah, makes it hard to pin down.

This deliberate ambiguity is consistent with Kusama's style. She frequently dissolves distinctions between characters and environments, allowing bodies to merge

with patterns. In this sense, the figure may not be meant to ‘be’ Alice or the Caterpillar exclusively, but rather to embody the encounter itself as a moment of transformation, uncertainty, and shifting identity.

This overall absence of Alice is striking, especially in a narrative so centered on a singular protagonist. Instead, Kusama’s focus falls almost entirely on abstract forms, objects, and animals, with her signature polka dots taking precedence. The visual emphasis on pattern over character suggests a deliberate shift away from personal identity. In doing so, Kusama offers a radically different interpretation of the story, questioning Alice’s importance within her own narrative.

Kusama’s choice to limit Alice’s visual appearance can also be connected to her own mental health and artistic concerns. Kusama states,

I was often troubled by a thin silk-like greyish-coloured veil that came to envelop me. On the day this happened, people receded far away from me and looked small. I could not comprehend what was being discussed between me and others. When I went out on such a day, I forgot my way home and, after wandering some time, I often crouched under the eaves of someone’s house to spend the whole night quietly in the darkness, trying to remember how to get home. I lost the sense of time, speed and distance, and of how to talk with people. I ended up locking myself in a room. Thus I turned into a more manageable, ‘worthless child.’<sup>495</sup>

As noted, she has spoken openly about experiencing hallucinations since childhood, often involving dots, flowers, and patterns that seemed to take over her surroundings and even her sense of self. Much of her art reflects these experiences, blurring the boundary between self and environment and creating a sense of loss of identity. In this light, the absence of Alice throughout the story may suggest an erasure of the individual, replaced by Kusama’s obsessive visual language of repetition and pattern. The dominance of dots and abstract forms can be read not only as stylistic choices, but

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495 Hoptman, et al., 117.

also as reflections of a state where identity becomes unstable or dissolves. In this way, Alice's disappearance suggests she is almost consumed by Wonderland itself.

At the end of the book, Alice appears in full color, wearing a red dress with a white polka dot print. Only part of the garment is visible, yet enough detail emerges to establish it is a long-sleeved dress with a white Peter Pan collar and matching white belt placed at the natural waist.<sup>496</sup> The ensemble is completed with a red bow atop her long, brown, wavy hair. Once again, this inclusion of a dotted garment transforms Alice into an extension of the artist's own dot-filled world.

### **Participants at the Queen's Croquet-Ground**

At the opening of Chapter VIII, "The Queen's Croquet-Ground," Kusama inserts a puzzling full-page illustration of black and white female figures (fig. 95). All are rendered in her characteristic style, yet their role in the narrative is unclear. Carroll's text introduces Five, Seven, and Two, who are playing cards, and appear as gardeners painting white roses red to avoid the Queen's wrath.<sup>497</sup> However, Kusama's figures are not identifiable as playing cards, nor are they differentiated as gardeners. Instead, the image presents a crowd of women whose connection to the scene is left ambiguous. Even more striking is the absence of any visual reference to roses or paint, which are objects central to the chapter and easily portrayable within Kusama's artistic style.

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496 Surprisingly, Alice's dress partially resembles Kusama's costume at the August 1968 Alice in Wonderland Happening that took place in Central Park. The illustration of Alice looks a lot like Kusama in her artistic performance.

497 In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the scene involving the gardeners painting the roses red appears as Alice encounters three playing card gardeners (Two, Five, and Seven), who are hurriedly painting white roses with red paint. They confess to her that they mistakenly planted a white rose tree instead of a red one, and are attempting to cover their error before the Queen of Hearts arrives.

Kusama's decision to include few figures overall makes this sudden cluster of women even more jarring. The women, all represented similarly, may evoke repetition and pattern, which are themes Kusama consistently explored. This suggests that identity in Wonderland dissolves, in the same way Kusama's dots obscure objects. This disjunction between text and image makes the illustration something of an anomaly within the edition. Rather than reinforcing the narrative, Kusama's figures seem to sidestep it.

### **Alice's Sister**

Like Kusama's inclusion of characters at the Queen's Court, this is unexpected. In *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Alice's sister is never given a name. She is simply referred to as 'her sister' in the opening and closing scenes of the book. At the end of the story, when Alice awakens from her dream, her sister often functions as a contemplative figure. She observes Alice's return and reflects on the adventures, inviting the reader to consider what lessons or emotional growth Alice has gained.

One more unusual aspect of Kusama's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is her inclusion of a head illustration, representing Alice's sister (fig. 96). Unlike most editions, which focus almost exclusively on Alice herself or other scenes from the story, Kusama isolates this secondary character, presenting her in a stylized, almost abstract form. The head floats independently, framed only by Kusama's characteristic patterns. This choice is both intriguing and slightly unsettling, as it draws attention to a figure who is normally peripheral, transforming her into a visual focal point and one of the few pictorial depictions of humans throughout the entire book. By doing so, Kusama expands the

narrative possibilities of illustration, highlighting the emotional and symbolic resonance of characters who might otherwise remain in the background.

### **Self Portrait of Kusama**

The final illustration in Kusama's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is also particularly striking for its departure from the book's otherwise sparse depiction of characters. This is a self portrait (fig. 97) of Kusama herself. Illustrated in the same style as the rest of the book, her face and body are composed entirely of pattern. Her hair appears as a field of green dots on a white ground; her yellow skin is covered with red and white polka dots; and her turtleneck is structured by purple and white stripes filled with even more dots. The background is a dense black field traversed by white linear patterns.

By inserting herself into the final image, Kusama blurs the boundary between creator and character, aligning her own persona with that of Alice. This identification is made explicit on the book's final page, where wording from Kusama's 1968 happening is quoted: "I, Kusama, am the modern Alice in Wonderland." In placing her own likeness within the narrative, Kusama not only claims authorship over this reinterpretation of Carroll's text, but also positions herself as a figure navigating and reshaping her world of all-encompassing dots.

### **Conclusion**

Working during the height of the Pop Art movement in the 1960s, Kusama developed a distinctive visual language centered on repetition and dots, which are motifs drawn not from mass media or commercial imagery, but from her own psychological

experiences and hallucinations. Her deep personal identification with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, particularly with characters like the Mad Hatter and Alice herself, made the story a fitting vehicle for her artistic expression. Through her illustrations, Kusama reframes Wonderland in her signature style, layering the narrative with obsessive patterns that both reflect and distort reality. The collaboration between artist and text becomes more than visual representation; it becomes a self-reflective act, merging Kusama's inner world with Carroll's surreal landscape in a way that is both visually compelling and psychologically resonant.



Figure 90. Paco Rabanne, top, c. 1969. Constructed from pink and white plastic discs, white beads, and stainless steel rings, this piece exemplifies Rabanne's radical approach to fashion as a modular, sculptural form. The Kyoto Costume Institute notes how the cool, inorganic surface of the metal 'fabric' creates a striking visual and tactile contrast against the human body.



Figure 91. Yayoi Kusama, pictured front right, at her Alice in Wonderland Rendezvous, Central Park, August 11, 1968. Dancers Ernie Blake, Rick Erling, Lydia Lee, Ted Ryan, and Paul Sanford participated in Kusama's 'happening,' which she referred to in advance as: "My world is peopled by a group of real nude girl and boy dancers covered in genuine hand-painted polka dots." (Akira Tatehat, et al. *Yayoi Kusama* (New York, New York: Phaidon Publishing, 2017), 112.)

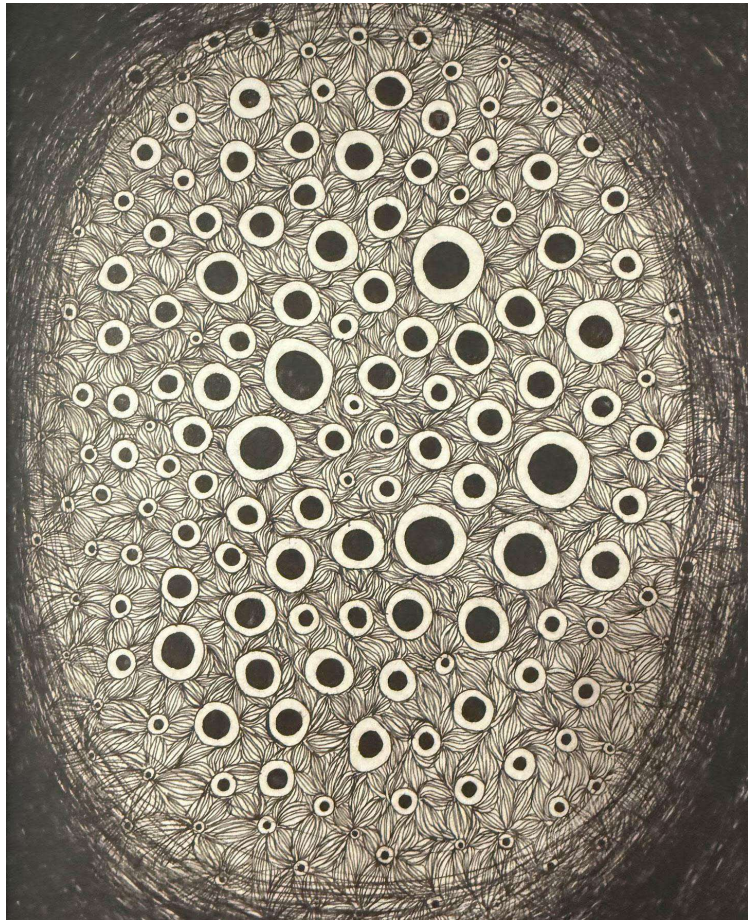


Figure 92. Kusama's illustration of the rabbit hole is rendered in a severe black-and-white palette, in which infinite space is abstracted into a rhythmic pattern.



Figure 93. In Kusama's depiction of Alice, the figure's elongated neck and abstracted features render her almost unrecognizable as a young girl. The distortion blurs the boundary between Alice and the Caterpillar, suggesting a merging of identities.

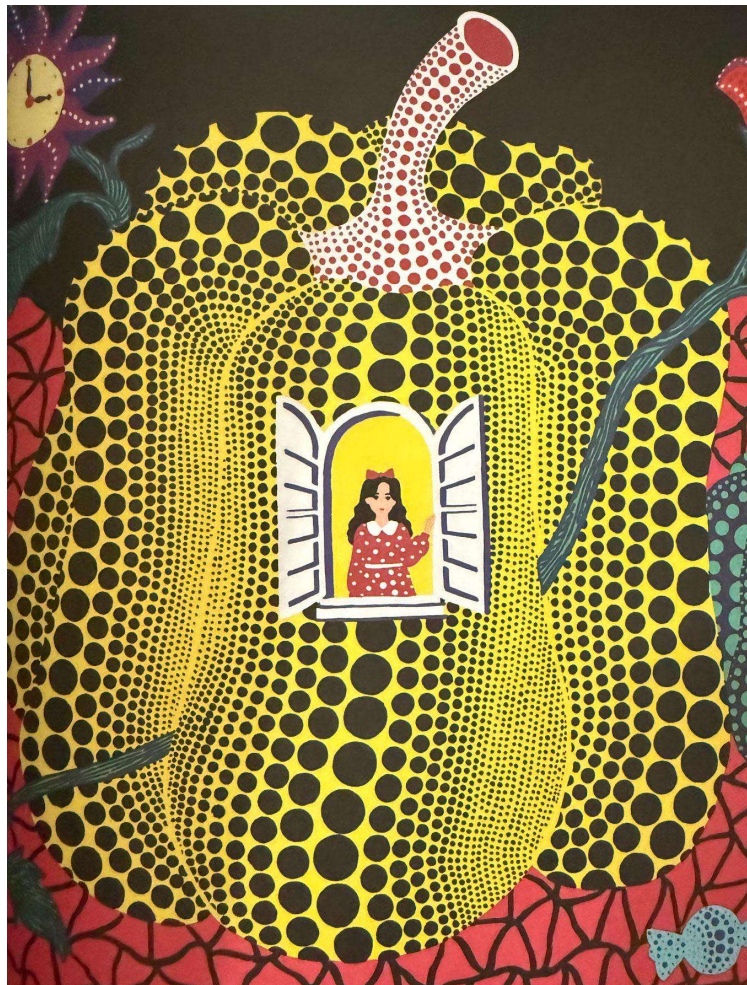


Figure 94. Here, Alice appears very small, enclosed within a yellow guard that is patterned with black dots, which is an iconic motif central to Kusama's work. The enveloping, dotted form emphasizes both scale and containment, reflecting the artist's exploration of space, repetition, and immersive environments.



Figure 95. In Kusama's illustration of the gardeners, Carroll's text is interpreted differently than in many other renditions: the figures are not playing cards, but a crowd of women whose identities remain indeterminate. Their presence emphasizes the human, rather than the fantastical aspect of the garden while leaving their specific roles and relationships open to interpretation.

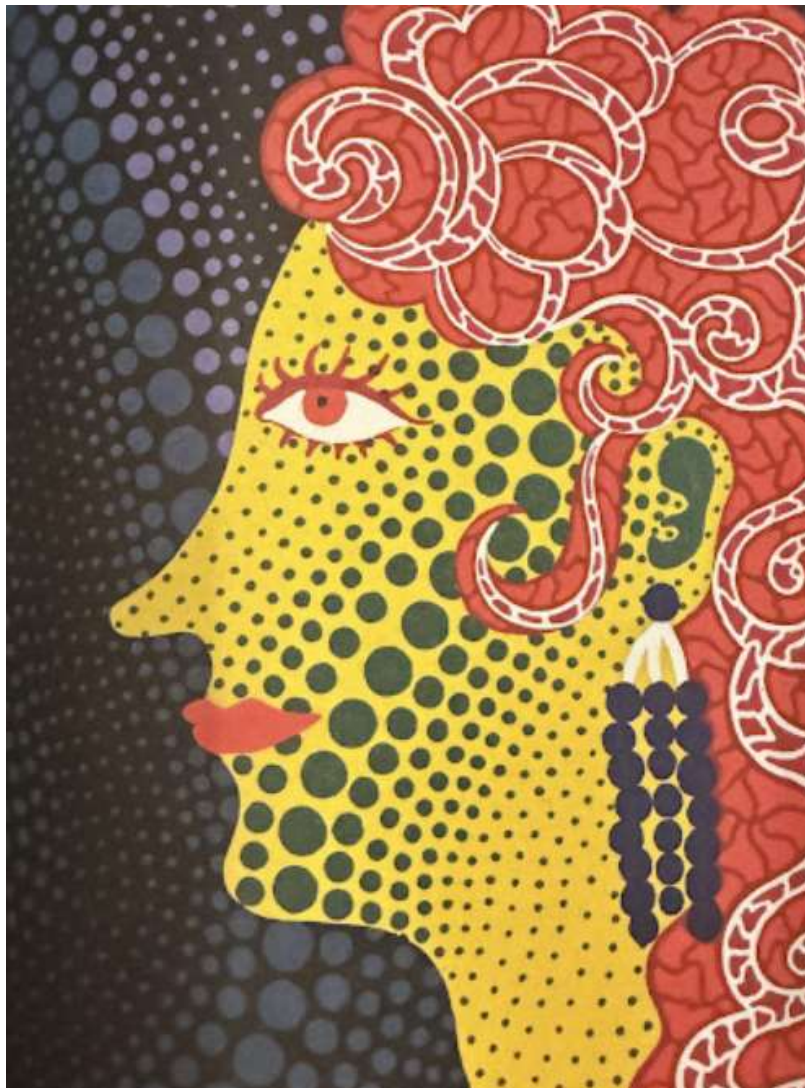


Figure 96. In Kusama's rendition, a woman's head, representing Alice's sister, appears adorned with the signature dotted motif central to the artist's work. This character, rarely depicted in other editions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, is highlighted here, merging Kusama's visual language with a less frequently illustrated figure from Carroll's text.

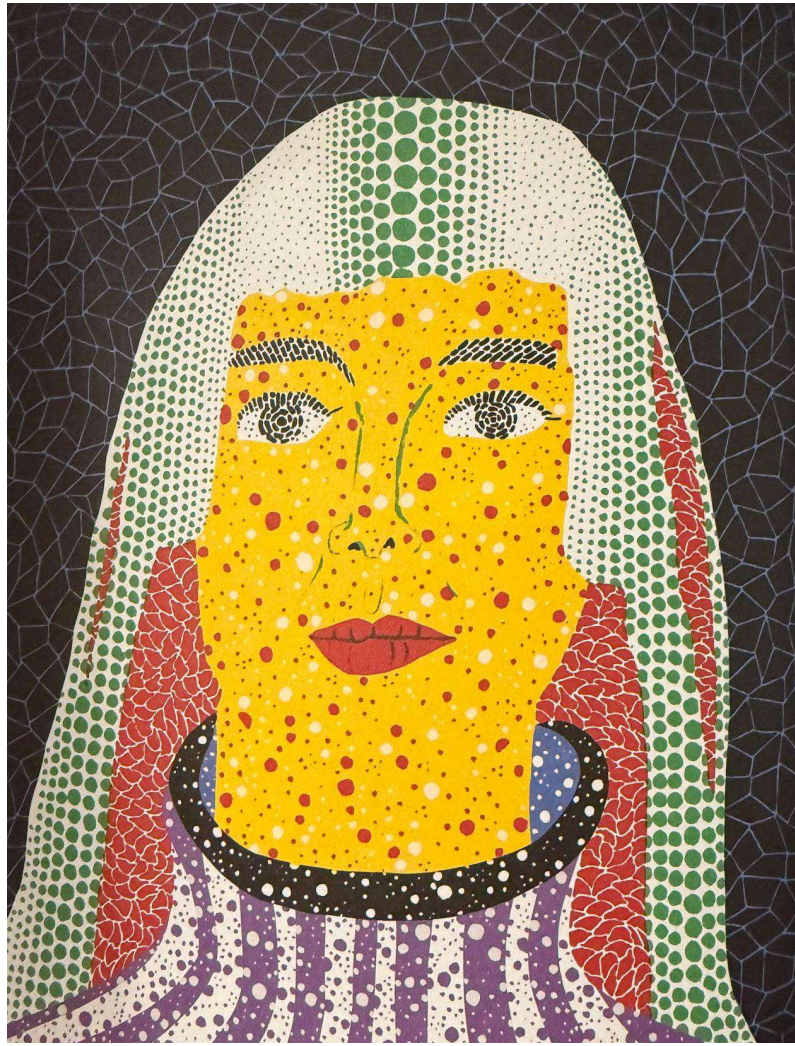


Figure 97. Self portrait of Yayoi Kusama, included at the conclusion of the work.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DIFFERENT VERSION OF *ALICE* STUDIED: INDIGENOUS

#### ***ALITJI IN DREAMLAND***

An Indigenous version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is a unique retelling or adaptation of Carroll's classic, incorporating local original culture, languages, and tradition into the classic Victorian fantasy. This blends the imaginative elements of the original story with the rich storytelling traditions of Indigenous peoples, adding cultural depth and meaning to the story.

The Indigenous version of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* that will be examined in detail in this section of this thesis is *Alitji in Dreamland*, a culturally adapted retelling rooted in Aboriginal Australian traditions. This adaptation reimagines Carroll's classic tale with the Australian Aboriginal languages, landscape, and storytelling practices, offering a unique perspective that both preserves and promotes Aboriginal cultural heritage. By analyzing *Alitji in Dreamland*, and the depiction of clothing worn by the characters within it, this study aims to explore how canonical Western literature can be transformed through Indigenous worldviews, highlighting the interplay between cultural translation, narrative adaptation, and identity.

Written by Nancy Sheppard and published in 1992, *Alitji in Dreamland* is presented in two languages, and each page has text in both Pitjantjatjara, an Indigenous Australian language spoken in central Australia, and English. Dr. Donna Leslie, an art historian who specializes in Australian and Aboriginal art, provided the illustrations for the book. She is an Aboriginal woman belonging to the Gamilaroi people of New South

Wales, with a broad range of interests in Australian art from the pre-colonial period through to the contemporary.<sup>498</sup>

The Gamilaroi people traditionally spoke Gamilaraay, which is a Pama-Nyungan language of the Wiradhuric subgroup. The language is considered endangered, but efforts are underway to revive and revitalize it. The Gamilaroi relied on being a hunter-gatherer society, depending on a variety of foods such as yams, roots, grains, insect larvae, frogs, eggs, birds, kangaroos, emus, and fish. The men typically hunted, cleaned, and prepared game while the women gathered plants, cooked, and fished.

Sheppard's adaptation of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* offers a unique perspective. Alitji, the Aboriginal counterpart to Alice, encounters various animals, landscapes, and challenges that reflect her connection to the land and her cultural identity. The book was created as an effort to introduce young readers, especially Aboriginal children, to the beauty and depth of their culture in a storytelling format that holds cross-cultural appeal. It also serves to encourage a broader understanding and appreciation of Indigenous perspectives. Overall, *Alitji in Dreamland* is a cultural reimagining of a classic work, providing a fresh and educational lens which explores both Aboriginal traditions and the timeless story of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*.

It is also important to discuss terminology surrounding the work. For Aboriginal Australians, the term First Nations is used as a way to describe the original peoples of Australia, as they have the longest continuous cultural history in the world, stretching back at least 65,000 years. Aboriginal Australians are made up of many distinct cultures, each with its own language, traditions, and connection to the land. The First Nations of Australia are often classified into two major groups, the Aboriginal Australians and

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<sup>498</sup> "Dr. Donna Leslie, Profile," accessed 20 July 2025, <https://www.donnaleslie.com.au/bio>.

Torres Strait Islanders. The Aboriginal Australians are Indigenous peoples who lived in mainland Australia and Tasmania for tens of thousands of years. The Torres Strait Islanders are the Indigenous people from the islands situated between the northern tip of Queensland and Papua New Guinea. They have separate and distinct cultural practices and languages from Aboriginal Australians, but share the common experiences of colonization.<sup>499</sup>

In both contexts, the term First Nations emphasizes the original and foundational role the groups played in the history and development of their respective lands long before European settlers arrived. The concept highlights their rights to the land, cultural heritage, and self-determination, especially in the ongoing struggles for recognition, reconciliation, and custodianship of land. First Nations is superior to general terms such as Native, as it highlights the distinctiveness of each group's cultures and histories. It also aligns with the idea of sovereignty and respect for the unique traditions and customs of each nation. First Nations people made and crafted their own clothing, and have been doing so for millennia.<sup>500</sup> This chapter focuses on the Gamilaroi people, an Aboriginal nation of Australia.

Regarding fashion, in early history, “the making and crafting of animal and plant cloaks, skirts, belts, shoes, and accessories were the original fashion designs.”<sup>501</sup> These bodily coverings were dictated by the climate in which they lived and the available

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499 Anita Heiss defines the categorizations quite well in the Glossary of her book, *Am I Black Enough for You?* on page 336. She states, “In the Australian context, ‘Indigenous’ is a collective term used when referring to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ‘Aboriginal’ is another collective term, but is used to specifically refer to those First Peoples within Australia who are not traditionally from the Torres Strait Islands.”

500 Treena Clark, “A Brief Look at the Long History of First Nations Fashion Design in Australia,” *University of Technology Sydney*, 21 December 2023, <https://www.uts.edu.au/news/2023/12/brief-look-long-history-first-nations-fashion-design-australia>.

501 Ibid.

materials. Mostly, these materials were natural and after use would be returned to the environment.<sup>502</sup> For example, footwear could be made from materials such as animal skins, furs and feathers, human hair, and bark.<sup>503</sup> Additionally, “cloaks were made from animal skin and plants, often inscribed with designs that reflected a person’s identity.”<sup>504</sup>

As these garments and accessories were used, they gained attention by non-First Nations people, and “women and girls who lived on reserves, missions, and schools were forced to learn sewing and many produced goods including hats, bags, baskets, jewelry, and rugs. These items were crafted from cultural or Western methods, using both traditional or introduced materials. From the mid-1800s, their work was often produced for various tourist trades and national and international exhibitions.”<sup>505</sup> The cultural appropriation of Aboriginal fashion reflects a broader pattern of dispossession and exploitation. Traditional Aboriginal designs, textiles, and adornments that were deeply connected to identity and spirituality were often taken out of context and commodified, or reproduced without consent. Settlers misunderstood or deliberately reinterpreted these cultural expressions, stripping them of their original meaning and reducing them to exotic curiosities for Western consumption. This appropriation not only marginalized Aboriginal creators but also contributed to the erasure of the cultural and artistic sovereignty of Indigenous communities.

This pattern can be seen through several examples where cultural expressions were misused or exploited. In the 1800s, First Nations people brought their handmade clothing, goods, and accessories to international and national exhibitions, where they

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502 Clark, “A Brief Look at the Long History of First Nations Fashion Design in Australia.”

503 Ibid.

504 Ibid.

505 Ibid.

often were subjected to unpaid labor.<sup>506</sup> Over time, appropriation evolved into a more systematic commercial exploitation of Aboriginal designs: “From the 1930s, non-Indigenous textile artists and fashion designers started producing First Nations-inspired designs using motifs such as boomerangs, shields, and ‘hunting stick figures’, without the permission or input from First Nations artists.”<sup>507</sup> Natural elements such as animals, plants, and landforms held distinct spiritual and cultural meanings, intricately tied to stories of creation and identity; when these elements were appropriated without context, their deeper significance was often lost or distorted: “First Nations people understand the power of connection to cultural clothing and adornment. Items like possum and kangaroo skin cloaks can contribute to healing and cultural practice.”<sup>508</sup>

Aboriginal people in Australia have long faced profound hardships in other areas as well, including discriminatory legislation that enabled forced removal of children from their families. For example;

In 1915 amendments to the Aborigines Protection Act 1909 gave New South Wales (NSW) Aborigines Protection Board the power to remove any Indigenous child at any time and for any reason. The phrasing of one amendment was so broad as to enable any interpretation by the Board’s inspectors, and led to thousands of Indigenous children being taken from their parents on the basis of race alone. This government-sanctioned practice was widespread across Australia, and created tens of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of what are now known as the Stolen Generation.<sup>509</sup>

Ultimately, this discrimination stopped, but remains a powerful example of the systemic injustice and unfair treatment Aboriginal people have endured: “The Aborigines

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506 Clark, “A Brief Look at the Long History of First Nations Fashion Design in Australia.”

507 Ibid.

508 Treena Clark, “How First Nations fashion design can rewrite painful memories and be a powerful method of healing,” *The Conversation*, 23 May 2024, <https://theconversation.com/how-first-nations-fashion-design-can-rewrite-painful-memories-and-be-a-powerful-method-of-healing-227679>.

509 “Aborigines Protection Act,” *National Museum Australia*, 19 September 2022, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/aborigines-protection-act>.

Protection Act was finally repealed in 1969 but the legacy of the legislation and that of other states endures among the thousands of Stolen Generations in Australia. Many remain deeply traumatised by their experience as children. Because this trauma can be trans-generational, these policies continue to affect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait community today.”<sup>510</sup>

The appropriation of Aboriginal culture and the unfair treatment of Aboriginal families by colonizers were deeply interconnected forms of systemic oppression. Just as traditional designs and symbols were taken without consent and stripped of their meaning, the separation of families was another unjust treatment that sought to erase cultural identity. This control extended even to clothing, where Aboriginal people were often restricted to wearing prescribed, European-style garments that symbolized their subjugation and were used as a tool of punishment and assimilation: “First Nations peoples living in controlled reserves, missions and stations were forced to wear plain clothing and expected to keep them well-maintained and clean. Often, garments were forms of payment and punishment.”<sup>511</sup> Through these layers of control, over land, family, and personal expression, colonizers sought to suppress Aboriginal identity at every level.

In response to this history of cultural erasure, research has focused on amplifying Aboriginal voices and preserving their stories, ensuring that the experiences and resilience of Aboriginal people are accurately represented and remembered. The book *Wise Women of the Dreamtime: Aboriginal Tales of the Ancestral Powers*, edited by Johanna Lambert, consists of the myths, ceremonies, and cultural aspects of the Aboriginal people, collected by Katie Langloh Parker in the early twentieth century.

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510 “Aborigines Protection Act.”

511 Clark, “How First Nations fashion design can rewrite painful memories and be a powerful method of healing.”

Parker collected, translated, and published Aboriginal myths along with descriptive accounts of Aboriginal customs.<sup>512</sup> It was valuable and significant that Parker undertook this work, as it helps preserve and share Aboriginal stories and cultural practices with wider audiences: “These renditions breathe life into our experience of Aboriginal legends, which, for the most part, have been handled in the sterile terminology of the androcentric world of British anthropology.”<sup>513</sup>

However, her work was not immediately recognized by all or universally valued, with some critics overlooking its cultural significance or questioning its authenticity. Although received well in America and England, particularly London, the reception was much more muted in Australia. Some anthropologists felt her legends were childish in nature and unimportant to Aboriginal culture.<sup>514</sup> Studying *Alitji in Dreamland* represents a kind of narrative full circle, as an author and illustrator of Aboriginal descent reinterpreted a cornerstone of British literature to emphasize the richness and value of Aboriginal culture and ways of life. This adaptation in turn was received and read by British audiences.

*Alitji in Dreamland* offers another means to preserve and revitalize Aboriginal culture through the familiar framework of a globally recognized narrative. In *Alitji in Dreamland*, the main character, Alitji, replaces Alice as she enters on a quirky journey in the Dreaming, which is a significant concept in Aboriginal cultures. The Dreaming refers to the time when ancestral spirits shaped the world, and it holds cultural and spiritual

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512 Johanna Lambert, editor. *Wise Women of the Dreamtime: Aboriginal Tales of the Ancestral Powers* (Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 1993), xiii.

513 Ibid., xii-xiii.

514 Ibid., xiii.

importance. The story features elements of the Dreaming, also referred to as Dreamtime,<sup>515</sup> integrating Aboriginal mythology, language, and characters.

Johanna Lambert describes the Dreamtime and its significance: “Dreamtime stories are the predecessors of what we have come to call myths. In a sense, they encompass all of the definitions and functions that have been attributed or pinned to the word ‘myth’ throughout history.”<sup>516</sup> She continues, “originally, myths, or Dreamtime stories, were not expressed simply in verbal or written form but were enacted, chanted, painted, costumed, danced, sung, and imagined, sometimes in deep hypnotic and hallucinatory states.”<sup>517</sup> These actions pass down ancestral knowledge, moral lessons, and connections to the land, embodying a living, performative tradition that reinforced communal identity and cultural continuity. Lambert adds: “The Dreamtime, from which all societal law originated, can be described as a vast epoch that occurred, according to the Aborigine, ‘before time began.’ All the Dreamtime stories, or Aboriginal myths, depict events from the Dreamtime, which existed prior to the appearance of the manifest world. This was a period when great mythical powers and beings pervaded infinite space and, with almost incomprehensible intensity and force, lived out their dreams unencumbered by the limits and definitions of embodied existence.”<sup>518</sup>

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515 The terms “Dreamtime” and “The Dreaming” are related, but not exactly the same in meaning or usage. “Dreamtime” is a term popularized by early anthropologists and Western writers in the early twentieth century. It was an attempt to describe the foundational period of creation in Aboriginal culture when ancestral beings shaped the world. “The Dreaming” is a broader, more culturally accurate term used by many Aboriginal people. It refers not just to the creation period, but also to the ongoing spiritual, moral, and social order stemming from those ancestral events. The Dreaming encompasses stories, law, customs, places, and beings, and is ongoing, rather than just being confined to the past. Both of these terms will be used in this dissertation.

516 Lambert, 5.

517 Ibid., 6.

518 Ibid., 7.

An important aspect of Dreamtime stories centers on the coming-of-age journey for young girls, particularly in relation to learning about menstruation, sexuality, and their roles within the community: “In the ancient way of being, the earth not only creates, feeds, and protects life, but like a mother, whispers through natural signs and images the secret knowledge of how body, mind, emotions, and spirit work upon each other in an intricate, invisible weaving. From this weaving, the Aboriginal people were able to blend deep psychic powers with human societal law and with all the energies embedded in the creations and creatures of nature.”<sup>519</sup> These stories often serve as a form of cultural education, guiding girls through the physical and spiritual transitions of womanhood while embedding their experiences within a broader cosmological ancestral framework. Unlike the Western figure of Alice, who represents a child navigating a fantastical world with little reference to bodily or social maturity, young girls in Aboriginal Australia are often subject to different cultural expectations and rites of passage. For a character like Alitji, the Dreamtime stories surrounding female initiation and knowledge would hold deep personal and cultural resonance, offering her not just imaginative adventure, but a path toward understanding identity, representation, and belonging within her community.

In Aboriginal culture, the defloration ceremony is a significant rite of passage for young women, marking their transition into adulthood and the responsibility that comes with womanhood. This ceremony, often conducted within the community by elder women, symbolizes the young woman’s entrance into the sacred realm of feminine knowledge and power. It is important to note that in Aboriginal societies, it is women who are the custodians of Dreamtime stories. These stories are not only passed down through generations, but convey the roles women play in the cultural and social fabric of

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519 Lambert., xv.

their communities. These women, through such rites of passage, maintain and protect the sacred wisdom of the Dreamtime. Lambert describes this event: “The important defloration ceremony begins with the onset of the girl’s first menstruation, during which she leaves the main camp and spends several days in a little secluded hut, some distance away, built by her mother or grandmother. The older women visit her, instructing her about sex and the way she should behave when she is married. During this time the girl observes certain food taboos. In many areas there is prohibition against eating meat because it is believed that the animal species she ingests during her menstruation will suffer reduced procreation in the following season. This taboo holds for every menstrual cycle throughout her entire life.”<sup>520</sup> She continues, stating:

There are variations on the defloration ritual, but like the male initiation, it generally follows a common theme. One day soon after the marriage ceremony a girl may go food collecting as usual with the older women. She is seized by a group of men, sometimes including her future husband and several others who are in the kin category of brother. During the seizure she addresses all these men as ‘husband,’ and they have intercourse with her, often gathering the semen and blood mixture and drinking it. In other cases, the fluid is retained as a powerful medicine. The defloration rite seems severe from a Western perspective; however, from early childhood Aboriginal girls look forward to this initiation, viewing sexuality as a joyous, integrated part of life. Therefore, most are eager to begin their sexual life.<sup>521</sup>

Alitji’s similar journey into womanhood would be intertwined with the responsibilities and wisdom of her culture, shaping her identity within a rich, collective tradition. Alice’s journey in Carroll’s tale is more closely associated with whimsy and exploration of curiosity and imagination. However, in this manner, Alitji could be compared to the character of Alice from Tim Burton’s 2010 film, *Alice in Wonderland*. Author Valerie Estelle Frankel describes this version of Alice: “At nineteen, marriageable

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520 Robert Lawlor, *Voices of the First Day* (Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 1991), 205.

521 Ibid., 205.

Alice attends her family's stifling garden party in her distinctive blue dress, but she has discarded the proper dress of stockings and a corset, like going out without underwear today. Already, Alice follows her father's footsteps, desperate to break society's rules. Her blue dress stands out among the mostly-white gowns, though her Victorian black buttons hint at conformity. The necklace her mother gives her weighs on her like the role she must assume: an engagement to Hamish Ascot, whose very name suggests proper dress."<sup>522</sup>

As noted, a girl's coming of age in Aboriginal culture is traditionally marked by a deepening connection to ancestral knowledge and community roles, so the prospect of marriage may be approached with a sense of excitement, pride, and readiness. This contrasts with the depiction of Alice in Burton's 2010 film, where she is positioned as a hesitant Victorian young woman confronted with the pressures of a socially strategic engagement. Alice's uncertainty and resistance reflect the repressive gender expectations of her era, where marriage often signaled the curtailment of personal freedom rather than a meaningful coming-of-age ritual. Juxtaposing these perspectives allows for a nuanced exploration of how cultural context shapes female agency, particularly in narratives of maturation and identity. Frankel affirms this notion, referring to critic Ethan Alter, who in 2010 stated while referring to Burton's *Alice*, "Alice stands on the precipice of adulthood, torn between becoming the woman 19th-century society expects her to be—namely a dutiful wife and mother—and the woman she wants to be, a free-spirited dreamer."<sup>523</sup>

Although this thesis primarily examines *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its many published book versions, Burton's 2010 film adaptation proves relevant when

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<sup>522</sup> Valerie Estelle Frankel, "Clothes Make the Girl: Fashion and Growing Pains in Wonderland," *Inhabited by Stories: Critical Essays on Tales Retold*, edited by Nancy A. Barta-Smith and Danette DiMarco (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 138-139.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

compared to the Aboriginal retelling *Alitji in Dreamland*, as both center on a young female protagonist navigating the threshold of adulthood. For Carroll's young readers, Alice's journey often symbolizes a broader search for identity amid the chaos of growing up. In contrast, for a young Aboriginal girl like Alitji, coming of age carries more immediate and cultural significance, often aligning with the beginning of sexual maturity and the prospect of marriage, which highlights the diverse ways the narratives of girlhood are shaped by cultural context.

With this comparative context established, the discussion now returns to *Alitji in Dreamland* to examine how its narrative elements relate to cultural values, while also studying the clothing worn by its characters. As Aboriginal culture is deeply rooted in the Dreamtime, profound meanings are found within intricate narratives and symbolism. In *Alitji in Dreamland*, these cultural elements are respectfully woven into the characters, settings, and clothing. Each figure Alitji encounters is reconfigured in ways that reflect Aboriginal knowledge systems, kinship ties, and connections to nature. The clothing worn by these characters draws upon traditional motifs and styles, preserving and celebrating the richness of Aboriginal heritage rather than appropriating it. Through this considerate adaptation, *Alitji in Dreamland* becomes a rare example of how Aboriginal culture can be authentically represented in literature, affirming identity and maintaining cultural integrity. The following sections will explore the significance of some characters and their attire in more detail, highlighting how cultural elements are meaningfully embedded within the story.

## Analysis of the Illustrations by Leslie

### Alitji

The character of Alice from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is universally recognizable, particularly due to her immediately recognizable dress and pinafore, which have become synonymous with her image. As seen in previous chapters, this dissertation examines the various iterations of Alice's clothing across adaptations, concluding that despite her changes in attire, her identity remains unmistakable. In contrast, the Aboriginal adaptation *Alitji in Dreamland* presents a significant departure from the traditional depiction, as Alitji is portrayed without any clothing. (fig. 98) This alteration in appearance not only marks a stark contrast to the conventional representation of Alice but also serves to reflect the cultural and environmental differences in the retelling of her story, suggesting that identity transcends material appearance in both Western and Indigenous narratives.

It is not uncommon for an Aboriginal interpretation to depict Alice without any clothing, as this reflects cultural norms and storytelling traditions. Anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt state, "Over most of Australia the Aborigines wore the very minimum of clothing...It was chiefly a matter of ornament—'take it or leave it': nudity was preferred."<sup>524</sup> Archaeologist Ian Gilligan notes, "Anthropological reviews of the use of clothing by Aboriginal Australians indicate that while a total absence of clothing was usually the case, garments were sometimes worn in Australia prior to white settlement."<sup>525</sup> While the absence of clothing may suggest nakedness in many Western contexts, the two concepts are not inherently synonymous. Nakedness often carries

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524 Ronald Berndt and Catherine Berndt, *The World of First Australians: An introduction to the traditional life of the Australian Aborigines* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 103.

525 Ian Gilligan, "Clothing and Climate in Aboriginal Australia," *Current Anthropology* 49, no. 3, (June 1, 2008), 487.

connotations of vulnerability, shame, or eroticism, whereas being without clothing in many Aboriginal cultures can be a neutral or even normative state, especially within traditional or symbolic storytelling. Gilligan adds, “it is frequently asserted that clothing cannot or should not be distinguished from body decoration or modification, leading to the assertion that there can be no such thing as ‘nakedness’--that the term is a social construct rather than a physical state of being unclad.”<sup>526</sup> In this context, Alice’s lack of clothing does not imply nakedness but rather aligns with cultural expressions of identity, nature, and innocence. In many Aboriginal cultures, body modification practices such as scarification, painting, and ceremonial adornment serve as important expressions of identity, status, and connection to ancestral traditions, distinct from the use of clothing. As such, “clothing cannot be considered synonymous with dress, which includes any form of body modification or alteration, even the use of cosmetics to alter body aroma.”<sup>527</sup> Gilligan continues, “It is in this sense that dressing (rather than clothing) the body is a universal feature of all known human cultures.”<sup>528</sup>

Alitji’s skin also holds important symbolism. In Aboriginal culture, pride in dark skin is tied to identity, ancestry, the land, and cultural belonging. Skin, as a result, is not only a physical attribute, but carries spiritual and social meaning as well. The experience of pride in dark skin has existed despite a long history of colonial racism, discrimination, and attempts to devalue the Aboriginal identity. Despite this, skin color, heritage, and identity can be celebrated as acts of resilience, strength, and cultural pride.

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526 Gilligan, 487.

527 Ibid.

528 Ibid.

The Aboriginal Stockman, depicted with dark skin, is the character equivalent of the Mad Hatter, says to Alitji, “Your skin is very dark. You ought to wash yourself.”<sup>529</sup> “‘My skin is always dark, even after washing,’ Alitji replied with dignity.”<sup>530</sup> Alitji’s proud response to the Stockman’s remark about her dark skin is deliberate and a significant narrative choice. Including pride and dignity in her reaction not only affirms her cultural identity but also models a positive self-image for contemporary young readers, who benefit from seeing their heritage represented with respect and strength in contexts that acknowledge historical and cultural complexity.

Just as Alitji expresses pride in her dark skin, the experiences of activist Anita Heiss highlight that while such pride is vital, skin color alone should never be the sole measure of Aboriginal identity, as true belonging stems from cultural connection, lived experiences, and self-determination. Heiss’ book, *Am I Black Enough for You?*, published in 2012 is a memoir and social commentary that explores the complexities of Aboriginal identity in contemporary Australia. Heiss, a Wiradjuri woman, challenges the stereotypical notions of what it means to be Aboriginal, particularly the idea that identity should be tied to skin color, lifestyle, or location. Through personal anecdotes, the legal battle of *Eatock v. Bolt*,<sup>531</sup> and reflections on her experiences as an academic, author, and public figure, Heiss underscores the damaging impact of racial assumptions and the need for broader, more inclusive understandings of identity.

The book concludes that skin color is not a definitive marker of Aboriginal identity, potentially reflecting the fact that many Aborigines are of mixed racial heritage.

<sup>529</sup> Donna Leslie, *Alitji in Dreamland* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002), 63.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>531</sup> *Eatock v. Bolt* (2011) concerns two newspaper articles by journalist Andrew Bolt, who claimed that fair-skinned individuals identified as Aboriginal for personal gain. Pat Eatock and others sued under Section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. The Court ruled that Bolt breached the Racial Discrimination Act, and ordered an injunction preventing further publication of the offending articles.

Instead, identity is grounded in cultural connection, community, and self-identification. Heiss affirms that being Aboriginal is about shared history, values, and belonging—not appearance—emphasizing that pride in one’s heritage should not be diminished by societal ignorance or prejudice.

Heiss expressed herself in a poem:

*“I am who I am -*

*I am a bicultural Blackfella*<sup>532</sup>

*And I apologise to no-one.*”<sup>533</sup>

It is her way of saying she is a proud Wiradjuri woman, with brown skin. Heiss adds, “I believe that some people think I have failed as a Black woman because I don’t behave the way a Black woman apparently should. I’ve often felt that my life is about making others understand that you can’t prescribe Aboriginality, and you can’t place genetically based stereotypes on individuals.”<sup>534</sup> She is connected to her people, country, and culture not by skin color, but by her own strength. This captures both the pride and the complexity of skin color, as it connects Aboriginal people to their culture, but should not be used as a test of authenticity, which historically has been a damaging notion imposed by outsiders.

Having considered the cultural significance of skin color and Alitji’s proud affirmation of her identity, it is equally important to continue to examine representations of clothing, or the absence thereof, as further expressions of cultural norms. Together,

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532 “Blackfella” is an informal, colloquial term that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use to refer to themselves or other Indigenous Australians. It is often used in contrast to “Whitefella,” which refers to non-Indigenous Australians, particularly people of European descent.

533 Anita Heiss, *Am I Black Enough for You?* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2014), 191.

534 *Ibid.*, 253.

these elements contribute to a fuller understanding of how Aboriginal identity and aesthetics are conveyed in *Alitji in Dreamland*.

Australian historian Peggy Brock wrote about early encounters between Aboriginal people in central Australia with anthropologists and missionaries in the late 1870s and 1930s, noting how Aborigine bodily coverings changed over time.<sup>535</sup> Brock opens her research stating, “the body and how it is covered and decorated is an important signifier within any society. Physical adornments communicated a wide range of information including age, status, gender and relative affluence. Members of a community have no difficulty reading each others appearance, but when members of two different societies come together in close physical proximity, it is not only their languages which are mutually incomprehensible, but their customs, values and morality which are often reflected in what they wear, how they treat their hair and other physical indicators.”<sup>536</sup> The visiting missionaries and anthropologists had their own ideas on “whether Aboriginal bodies should be clothed or naked and tried to impose these views on Aboriginal people without consulting them over their own preferences.”<sup>537</sup>

Sylvia Kleinert, an Australian scholar known for her interdisciplinary work in art history and anthropology notes, “a crucial aspect of colonisation was the emphasis given to clothing as a mark of civilization.”<sup>538</sup> She continues, “dress carries particular resonance in south eastern Australia where two centuries of colonisation have impacted on Aborigines. In the south east Aboriginal Australians were subject to unrelenting

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535 Peggy Brock, “Nakedness and Clothing in Early Encounters Between Aboriginal People of Central Australia, Missionaries and Anthropologists,” *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 8, no. 1, (March 1, 2007), 1.

536 Ibid.

537 Ibid.

538 Sylvia Kleinert, “Clothing the postcolonial body: art, artifacts and action in south eastern Australia,” *Craft + Design Enquiry* (January 1, 2010), 4.

colonisation, devastated by disease and violence, dispossessed from traditional lands and relegated to remote missions and reserves. With colonisation Europeans brought their own understandings of dress as part of the civilizing process of modern society: the adoption of clothing codes was linked to class, gender and social mores which they proceeded to impose on Aboriginal people.”<sup>539</sup> When Aboriginal people were first introduced to Western clothing, they often approached it with curiosity, yet did not necessarily adopt its use according to Western conventions, instead incorporating it in ways that reflect their own cultural perspectives and practical needs. Kleinert notes, “the evidence suggests that Aboriginal people were attracted to clothing and sought it out, but experimented with garments in ways which both missionaries and anthropologists found disconcerting resulting in tensions between Aboriginal people and missionaries over when and how clothes should be worn.”<sup>540</sup> Additionally, “the late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century missionaries believed religious change could only occur among people who had adopted their sense of moral and physical propriety.”<sup>541</sup> The missionaries refused to share their religious teachings with Aboriginal people unless they adhered to Western norms of dress, viewing the lack of ‘proper’ clothing as a barrier to spiritual acceptance and civilization. They expected the Aboriginal people to adapt to Western customs and values as a prerequisite for their spiritual conversion and integration in Western society.

Brock adds, “in the Euro-Australian’s mind clothes were associated with cleanliness, and Aboriginal people were perceived to be dirty.”<sup>542</sup> Materials such as grease, like the fat from an emu, and red ochre, were used to cover the skin, acting as

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539 Kleinert, 4.

540 Brock, 1.

541 Ibid.

542 Ibid., 3.

both a practical and aesthetic purpose.<sup>543</sup> Those materials would keep skin from drying out and cracking in the dry climate.<sup>544</sup> To outsiders, a body coated in these materials was typically seen as unclean and uncivilized.

In the early 1920s, H. Heinrich, a teacher, provided loin cloths to the students, but they did not last long.<sup>545</sup> The experience marked a moment of cultural imposition and overlooked the students' own traditions and understandings of dress and identity.

Additionally, it was noted that once the loin cloth was worn through, the children would then use men's and women's clothes instead as body coverings.<sup>546</sup> Brock states, "clothes were passed on from one individual to another, but there is little indication as to the basis of this sharing or exchange. As clothing was a new commodity, it would have been adapted to established reciprocal relationships...garments might be worn by a man one day, his wife the next, and a friend another day, which suggests clothing did not have gender or status."<sup>547</sup>

By the 1940s, it was preferred that school-aged children did not wear clothing to school, but this did not apply to all children: "Mixed descent children were fully clothed at school"<sup>548</sup> and they were treated differently. Brock states, "This policy of distinguishing between children of full and mixed descent reflected the racial attitudes in Australia at the time: people of full descent were segregated on reserves, while those of mixed descent were to be biologically and culturally assimilated in Australian society."<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> Brock, 3.

<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>546</sup> Ibid.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid.

<sup>548</sup> Brock, 8.

<sup>549</sup> Ibid.

Over time, Aboriginal women wanted to wear clothing while in the presence of whites, and a policy was set into place to provide older female students with clothing.<sup>550</sup>

Brock notes,

Women's sensitivity about appearing naked suggests they felt sexually vulnerable. Neither the missionaries or visitors who approved of the policy explicitly acknowledged that the reason pubescent girls and young women wanted to cover their bodies was because of their sexuality. Requests for clothes could then be explained as vanity or protection against the weather. There were some who believed that making children and adolescents wear clothes made them sexually aware of each other, while in their naked state they were oblivious.<sup>551</sup>

In bringing together these cultural threads, such as Alitji's lack of clothing, the significance of skin color, and the imposition of Western dress on Aboriginal children, a fuller picture emerges on how identity, pride, and cultural understanding intersect in *Alitji in Dreamland*. Alitji's unclothed depiction is not one of vulnerability or shame, but a respectful reflection of traditional Aboriginal norms, where the body is not inherently sexualized or hidden, and where cultural expression may occur through body art, story, and movement rather than garments. Her proud response to comments about her dark skin reinforces a positive, self-assured Aboriginal identity that challenges imposed definitions of authenticity. By retelling *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* through an Aboriginal lens, the narrative opens a powerful space for cultural education, bridging familiarity with cultural specificity, and offering both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers a respectful and meaningful way to engage with Aboriginal perspectives on identity, representation, and dignity.

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550 Brock, 8.

551 Ibid.

## White Kangaroo

In *Alitji in Dreamland*, the White Rabbit from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is recast as a White Kangaroo, a deliberate and layered transformation that not only localizes the narrative within an Australian Aboriginal context but also opens new interpretive possibilities regarding symbolism and cultural meaning. The choice to depict the kangaroo as white (fig. 99), rather than a typical grey or red, may be more than an aesthetic choice. Kangaroos are native, deeply significant animals within Aboriginal Australia, often appearing in Dreaming stories. It potentially signifies rarity, otherness, or spiritual significance. This positions the White Kangaroo not just as a guide, but potentially as a sacred or liminal figure, who ushers Alitji into a Dreaming-like state of transformation and insight. While interpretations vary across nations and communities, the presence of a white animal is rarely seen as neutral.

Importantly, unlike the neatly dressed White Rabbit, the White Kangaroo does not appear burdened by Western clothing. This absence can be read in two key ways. First, this is a rejection of imposed colonial symbols of time, hierarchy, and social constraint. Second, this is a reinforcement of cultural authenticity. In Aboriginal contexts, as noted, the unclothed body is not automatically marked as inappropriate or incomplete. Rather, the absence of clothing aligns with traditional representations where status, identity, and narrative meaning are conveyed through other forms, such as body paint, movement, and content. The White Kangaroo, therefore, represents a figure of cultural navigation. He is visually distinct, spiritually charged, and symbolically freed from the constraints of colonial dress codes. In this way, the White Kangaroo not only guides Alitji into Dreamland but also guides the reader into a deeper understanding of Aboriginal worldviews.

Anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose wrote about the significance of special animals in Aboriginal belief systems, noting that they are often seen as messengers or as beings with spiritual importance. Rose also denotes the importance of animal and human relationships. She states: “The Australian continent is crisscrossed with the tracks of the creator beings, called Dreamings in Aboriginal English. Walking, slithering, crawling, flying, swimming, chasing, hunting, weeping, dying, giving birth, Dreamings were performing rituals, distributing plants and marking the zones of animal and plant distributions, making the landforms and water, and making the relationships between one place and another, one species and another. They were leaving parts or essences of themselves; they would look back in sorrow, and then continue traveling, changing languages, changing songs, changing identity. They shifted their shape from animal to human and back to animal again, and as they acted they were becoming ancestral to life on Earth. Multispecies kin groups are the result of creation, and the term ‘Dreaming’ applies to ancestors of these groups. The kangaroo people and the kangaroo animals, for example, have become a family (clan), and the dingo people and dingoes are the same, as are many others. Family members take care of each other, watch out for each other’s interests, defend against outsiders, and generally seek to sustain both their connections with other families and the internal integrity of their own family. Within these country-based multispecies families, there is a moral proposition that is not so much a rule as a statement of how life works: a country and its living beings take care of their own.”<sup>552</sup>

Aboriginal cosmology is a deeply interconnected worldview in which humans, animals, and the land are bound together ancestral beings and Dreaming stories. Animals such as the kangaroo are not merely fauna but are often considered to be manifestations

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552 Deborah Bird Rose, *Wild Dog Dreaming: Love and Extinction* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 27-28.

or descendants of these ancestral beings, embodying spiritual significance and serving as totems that guide social, ethical, and environmental relationships. In this cosmology, the kangaroo may function as both a kinship marker and a participant in the ongoing creation and maintenance of the world.

Graham Harvey, an English scholar specializing in religious studies states, “The Dreaming’s eternal nature has been referred to as ‘everywhen’ to articulate its timelessness. During the founding drama, the Ancestors arose from beneath the earth, journeyed from place to place, gave shape to an existing, yet amorphous world, imbued all things with their own essence, and laid down the Law for all living Aborigines to follow. A power or energy was a part of the primordial scene, a power both speciated and individuated. For example, a particular species, such as kangaroo, and those men totemically associated with kangaroo, could release from the sacred site (having gained, ritually, the right to do so), the life essence stored and potential in that site. As the Ancestors travelled, they left tangible expressions of themselves in the shape of some site or rocky outcrop, tree or waterhole, metamorphosing an essence of themselves into some feature of the environment or imprinting themselves onto cave walls or into ritual objects. When they had finished their work, they returned back into the earth.”<sup>553</sup> Thus, the White Kangaroo may represent more than a mere substitution of the White Rabbit; it may signal a deeper symbolic resonance within the Dreaming framework of the narrative.

In Aboriginal culture, the kangaroo holds two distinct significant associations. In one way, it is seen as a symbol of strength and sustenance when hunted by the men of the community, representing an animal of prey with connotations of survival and resilience. Alternatively, the kangaroo also serves as a nurturing mother figure, symbolizing care,

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553 Graham Harvey, *Indigenous Religions: A Companion* (London: Cassell, 2000), 126.

protection, and the bond between mother and child. These contrasting roles reflect deeper cultural values, as exemplified in *Alitji in Dreamland*, where the character of the White Rabbit is replaced by a White Kangaroo, blending these two seemingly opposite aspects of the animals symbolism.

Even the distinct roles of men and women finding food carry symbolic meanings within many Aboriginal cultures:

The spontaneous informality of women's foraging is in direct contrast to the male hunter's role. The moment a man kills a kangaroo, a complex formal system of distribution goes into effect. Male polygamy entails multiple in-law relationships over long distances in all directions. Each of these kin ties involves food-sharing obligations. After the kill, the hunter sits unobtrusively to one side as each of his kin relatives steps forward to claim one of the fixed number of pieces into which the kangaroo has been butchered. The Dreamtime stories describe a specific cut of meat for each of the kin categories. The hunter himself eats last, if at all, usually claiming only the entrails. Paradoxically, the prime cut goes to his mother-in-law, with whom he shares a strict avoidance relationship and of whom he only speaks in the most insulting terms.<sup>554</sup>

Additionally, the kangaroo holds other significance in Aboriginal culture. The treatment children receive is tied to Wallaby Dreaming. For example, Aboriginal children exhibit a large amount of joy and independence from a very young age, and although a child's parents are the primary caregivers, other family members and siblings also nurture the child.<sup>555</sup> Robert Lawlor even notes an extreme version of this, stating: "If the birth parents were to disappear, the child would experience no sharp loss."<sup>556</sup> Additionally, "small children are breast-fed on demand, and they continue to suckle for three to five years. In spite of this, breastfeeding is not a burden on the mother, since a number of female relatives often participate in a multiple nursing agreement. In a baby's early months, many women nurse and care for it. Older women, especially the grandmothers,

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554 Lawlor, 309-310.

555 Ibid., 165.

556 Ibid.

often have older infants suck a clear fluid that women can produce even after menopause.”<sup>557</sup> This is closely related to how kangaroos and wallabies, both marsupials, live. When a marsupial is born, it crawls into its mother’s pouch and remains there for a very long time, and can suckle at any time.<sup>558</sup> “In contrast, placental mammals must drop from the womb to the ground in a permanent and abrupt separation from the mother; often they must compete and struggle for the mother’s nipple. A marsupial mother licks the in-pouch infant’s ‘bottom’ when it defecates, and drinks its urine, thus keeping the pouch clean and redigesting the nutrients. The animal’s complete, undisdaining intimacy and the love of the mother for the newborn serve as a Dreamtime archetype for Aboriginal motherhood.”<sup>559</sup> Although Aboriginal children are often cared for by extended family and community members, they also frequently remain close to their parents, participating alongside them in the full rhythm of daily life, spending a lot of time with its mother<sup>560</sup> including being by the mother’s side as she takes part in hunting and gathering activities.<sup>561</sup>

Replacing the White Rabbit in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland with an animal that serves as both food and mother is a fitting adaptation, as both figures function as guides into unfamiliar, transformative realms. The White Rabbit leads Alice down the rabbit hole, triggering her journey of change, much like how a maternal or sustenance-giving animal symbolizes entry into a cycle of life, nourishment, and renewal. Both

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557 Lawlor, 165.

558 Ibid.

559 Ibid.

560 Ibid.

561 Ibid.

characters embody transition; one is through curiosity and time while the other is through survival and care.

## **Stockman**

As noted, in *Alitji in Dreamland*, the Stockman character is the equivalent of the Mad Hatter to the original Carroll story (fig. 100). Just like the Mad Hatter, the Stockman is involved in a quirky gathering, but in the Aboriginal version, this is a tea party turned bush-style. The Stockman embodies similar eccentricity and confusion, adapted through an Aboriginal-cultural distinct perspective.

The Stockman is wearing a jacket that is red and blue checked, with bright blue pants, and red shoes on his feet. The addition of pants and shoes are very important details. When an Aboriginal man is depicted wearing Western clothing, it holds meaning. Australian historian Grace Karskens researched sketches from the early twentieth century of Aboriginal men wearing jackets and coats, but not pants, as they acted as guides to French scientists journeying across the Blue Mountains.<sup>562</sup> Karskens states that this was not an untypical sight, and that many paintings from this era feature pantless Aboriginals.<sup>563</sup> This partial adaptation of European clothing did not reflect a deeper assimilation into settler culture. Instead, the incongruity of their appearance often carried negative connotations, reinforcing perceptions that they remained outsiders in the colonial world. Karskens writes, “most historians have interpreted the garments as sure signs of the low status of Aboriginal people in settler society. The jackets are indicative of a people reduced to beggary and drunkenness, of cultural annihilation, of a people

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<sup>562</sup> Grace Karskens, “Red coat, blue jacket, black skin: Aboriginal men and clothing in early New South Wales,” *Aboriginal History* 35 (2011), 1.

<sup>563</sup> Ibid.

without hope.”<sup>564</sup> Karskens also refers to the text *White On Black*, written by Geoffrey Dutton, who wrote about Bungaree, a leader of the Sydney Tribe: “When he wore the braided jacket and cocked hat given him by various governors, he had only to look down at his bare feet to know where he really stood.”<sup>565</sup> Karskens adds, “Dutton saw the fine red jacket as a sham, a bad joke. The bare feet tell us what is really going on.”<sup>566</sup>

Karskens continues, “does putting on a jacket, or wrapping oneself in a blanket, indicate ‘instant degeneration’ and culture loss, or at best a black sort of humour? If bare feet, and sitting down together on the ground, were customary among Aboriginal people, do they reveal only poverty and deprivation? Is mimicry always meaningless, merely reinforcing the power of the invaders?”<sup>567</sup>

These sentiments continue, as Karskens states, “Clothing was associated with ‘the corruption, the debasement, the brutality and the profligacy which was introduced among them.’ ‘Nakedness’ bespoke savage life: wild and primitive, but at least pure, unspoiled, and ‘genuine.’ Perhaps most disturbing to unaccustomed white eyes was the Aboriginal combination of dress and undress, the tatterdemalion upending of every expectation.”<sup>568</sup>

In the Aboriginal adaptation, the distinctive tea party with the Mad Hatter is replaced by a billy tea and damper party, a change that reflects the cultural context and environment of the story. Rather than using fine china and recalling traditional Victorian English tea customs, Alitji and her new companions gather around the fire to share billy

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564 Karskens, 1.

565 Ibid. 3.

566 Ibid.

567 Ibid.

568 Ibid., 28.

tea and damper.<sup>569</sup> This pairing is emblematic of rural working-class heritage, often associated with stockmen, as travel writer Maria Parenti notes, “If you want an authentic Australian stockman’s tradition, then enjoying billy tea and damper with beef stew is the way to go.”<sup>570</sup> The scene with Alitji and the stockman draws from longstanding Australian bush traditions that have become part of both settler and Aboriginal life, particularly in remote and rural communities, while both honoring and reinterpreting the original narrative.

## **Conclusion**

*Alitji in Dreamland* serves as a powerful reimagining of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, adapted to reflect Aboriginal Australian cultural perspectives. By replacing the original Victorian imagery with elements such as kangaroos, traditional relationships with nature, skin color, and the symbolic role of clothing—or its absence—the story becomes a vehicle for cultural expression and preservation. These adaptations not only localize the narrative but also emphasize the richness and complexity of Aboriginal identity. In doing so, *Alitji in Dreamland* transforms a familiar Western tale into a meaningful representation of Indigenous worldview and storytelling tradition.

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569 Billy tea is black tea boiled over an open flame in a tin can, while damper is a simple bread traditionally baked in the ashes of a campfire.

570 Maria Parenti, “Billy Tea & Damper - Stockman Tradition,” *Big Sister Blogs - Maria Parenti*, 7 October 2016, <https://mariaparenti.com/2016/10/07/billy-tea-damper-stockman-tradition/>.

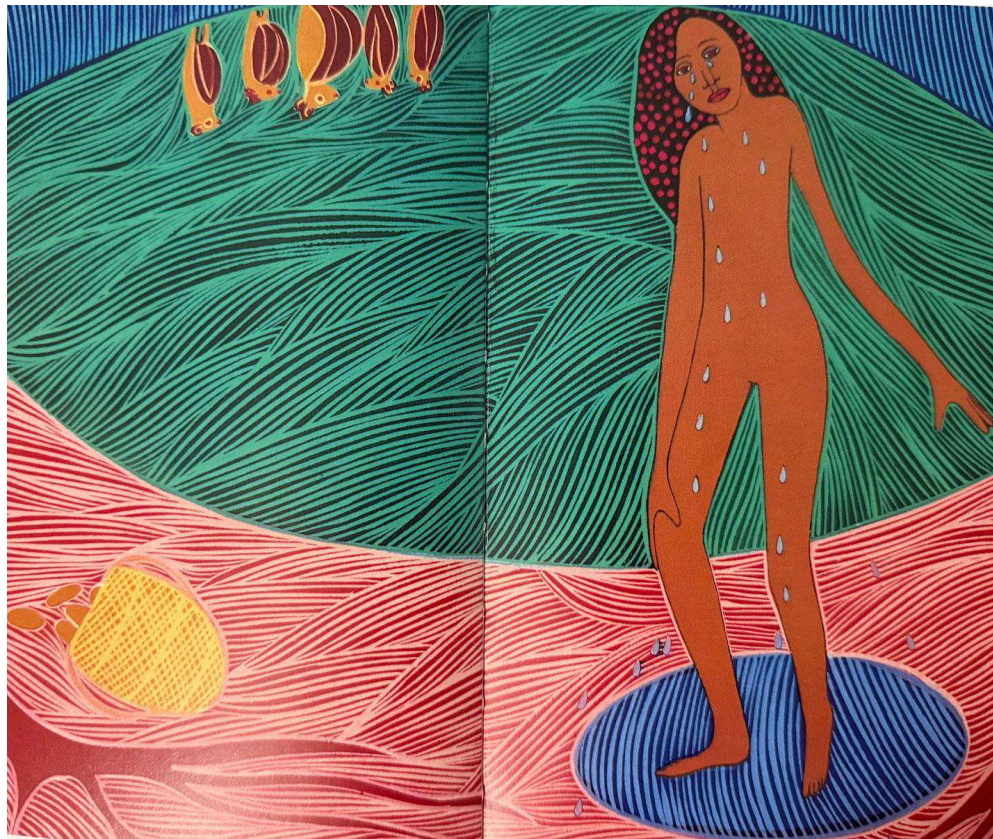


Figure 98. Donna Leslie depicted Alitji, without clothing, in accordance with traditional Aboriginal cultural norms.



Figure 99. Leslie reinterpreted the White Rabbit as a white kangaroo, reflecting the integration of local fauna and cultural context into the narrative.



Figure 100. Leslie's Stockman, seated by a campfire drinking billy tea, replaces the Mad Hatter, drawing on iconic imagery from Australian bush life.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

As Alice's adventures wind to a close, Carroll offers a quiet metaphor for transformation. As editor Laura Miller observes in *Literary Wonderlands: A Journey Through the Greatest Fictional Worlds Ever Created*, "As the queen's playing card entourage falls on her, with decapitation in mind, Alice wakes with dead leaves brushing her face. It was spring, and now is autumn. The little girl is growing up."<sup>571</sup> This shift from spring to autumn captures the story's enduring preoccupation with change, as innocence gives way to experience, wonder shades into knowledge, and childhood moves inevitably toward adulthood. The instability of Alice's size throughout the narrative mirrors this broader process of maturation, reminding readers that growing up is uneven and often beyond one's control. In this way, Carroll's conclusion positions Alice's dream not simply as an enchanted adventure but as a symbolic rehearsal for the passage from childhood into an altered, adult self.

Just as Alice's physical transformations mirror the fluid and unpredictable passage from childhood to adulthood, so too do the visual interpretations of her character shift across time, style, and medium. Each illustrator for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* brings a distinct style to her adventures, emphasizing different aspects of personality, movement, and costume. In doing so, it reflects both the period in which the work was produced and the cultural expectations of childhood at that moment. By examining these illustrations in tandem with the text, we saw how Alice becomes more than a literary figure: she is a visual and material presence, shaped by the interplay of

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<sup>571</sup> Laura Miller, editor, *Literary Wonderlands: A Journey Through the Greatest Fictional Worlds Ever Created*, edited by Laura Miller (New York: Black Dog & Leventhal Publishers, 2016), 87.

narrative, fashion, and artistic interpretation. The following conclusion considers the previously examined illustrators, and how they negotiate identity and dress.

Across the illustrations examined, certain patterns consistently emerged in the ways Alice is depicted. By identifying these recurring motifs, it becomes possible to trace not only the evolution of Alice's visual representation over time, but also how illustrators interpreted the text through the lens of contemporary fashion, cultural ideals of childhood, and personal artistic style. By exploring these patterns, each illustrator is situated within this broader visual and cultural framework.

From its earliest editions, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* has been illustrated in ways that reflect the time and place in which each artist was working. While Carroll's text remains unchanged, the visual interpretations of the story vary widely, shaped by contemporary fashions, cultural expectations, and individual artistic choices. As a result, each set of illustrations offers a distinct version of Alice and her world, grounded in the illustrator's own context and perspective.

First, examining English-language editions of the story across different decades shows the illustrators frequently drew on the fashions of their own era. This can be seen in the shape of Alice's dress, the details of children's everyday clothing, and the accessories and body language of the supporting characters. These choices place the fantastical story within a familiar visual world for contemporary readers.

My research demonstrates how illustrators often aligned Alice's visual representation with the fashions, cultural values, and artistic style of their own time. Across decades and editions, a clear pattern emerges in the visual representation of key characters. Alice often reflects contemporary childhood fashion, her dress and silhouette adapting to the period in which an edition is produced, signaling both cultural legibility

and relatability for readers. Alice's appearance is frequently updated to align with contemporary children's fashion, from silhouettes to fabric details, reflecting the cultural and material realities of her readers. By dressing Alice in style familiar to the period, illustrators create a character that is immediately recognizable and relatable, allowing readers to project themselves onto her and engage more fully with the narrative.

In contrast, the White Rabbit's distinctive costume persists across languages and historical contexts with remarkably little variation, suggesting that visual codes, especially those associated with formal dress, such as respectability, hierarchy, and eccentricity, are readily legible across cultures. While illustrators frequently adapt Alice's appearance to local or contemporary fashions, the White Rabbit often retains attire linked to earlier historical styles, most notably eighteenth-century coats and waistcoats, even in mid- and late-twentieth century publications. This relative constancy positions the White Rabbit less as a reflection of contemporary culture than as a visual archetype, whose identity is anchored in recognizable, formalized clothing. As a shared visual anchor within the narrative world of Wonderland, his appearance provides continuity and stability, conveying authority and punctuality, functioning as a counterpoint to the more flexible and adaptive representations of Alice herself.

Additionally, Alice's clothing emphasizes her relatability, her agency, and her passage through a world that shifts around her. The White Rabbit, by contrast, is less a social mirror and more a narrative device: his consistent, historically coded attire marks him as an authority figure, a harbinger of time, and a guide through Wonderland. His constancy stabilizes the narrative visually and conceptually, providing contrast to Alice's flexibility and reinforcing the interplay between the familiar and the fantastical in Carroll's story.

In the English editions illustrated by Tenniel, Gutmann, Rackham, and Oxenbury, Alice was depicted in contemporary dress and proportions, reflecting prevailing norms of children's clothing, posture, and appearance. These visual choices not only anchored the fantastical narrative in a recognizable cultural moment, but also illustrate how illustrators engaged with current aesthetic trends and material culture when creating their interpretations of Carroll's text.

Additionally, non-English editions similarly positioned Alice within fashion and artistic conventions of their respective periods. Illustrators such as Anglada, Deleuil, and Kállay depicted Alice in contemporary children's garments, reflecting local styles, tailoring practices, and visual tastes. These choices demonstrate that, across cultures, artists frequently used clothing and appearance to situate the narrative in a familiar, culturally legible context, reinforcing the interplay between illustration, material culture, and period-specific visual norms.

However, not all illustrators depicted Alice in garments reflecting the fashion of their own period. In Hudson's 1922 edition, Alice wears clothing with elements reminiscent of the 1860s, rendering her dress historically generic rather than anchored to the publication era. Dalí presents Alice as a silhouette in a long skirt, with few distinct features of her dress visible. Claveloux's 1974 Alice wears a bright, psychedelic outfit consistent with the era's visual aesthetics, yet the dress itself is not a reflection of contemporary children's fashion. Similarly, Jansson's Alice appears in a simple white garment that lacks clear time specificity. In these examples, illustrators prioritized stylistic, narrative, or artistic concerns over adherence to period fashion, resulting in visualizations of Alice that are detached from contemporary material culture.

Did the illustrators interpret Alice, Carroll, and the concept of Wonderland according to their own artistic or psychological viewpoint? Surprisingly, the answer is largely no. Even when Alice's attire reflected contemporary fashion, or in some cases, clothing from a previous period, illustrators consistently rendered Wonderland in ways that remained accessible and culturally legible to readers. The settings, character interactions, and visual cues ensured that the story's fantastical elements, whether slightly dark, eccentric, or imaginative, were always framed within a context that readers could recognize and engage with. In other words, while individual illustrators varied in style and emphasis, the world of Wonderland retained a sense of relatability, anchored through Alice's presence, visual cues, and other familiar material culture.

In examining *Alitji in Dreamland*, this research uncovered a radical departure from Western visual conventions surrounding Alice's dress. This is one that is not a deviation within its cultural context, but rather a reaffirmation of it. Alitji is depicted without clothing, a choice that may appear surprising or even transgressive to Western readers accustomed to Victorian or post-Victorian norms of childhood dress. However, within Aboriginal Australian culture, the unclothed body of a young girl is neither unusual nor inappropriate. Instead, it reflects cultural understandings of childhood, identity, and belonging that do not rely on garments to signify innocence, propriety, or social position. In this adaptation, the absence of clothing becomes meaningful. It resists Western assumptions that dress is necessary to construct identity and instead centers Indigenous ways of seeing and being.

As such, clothing in *Alitji in Dreamland* operates not as a universal marker of status or morality, but as a culturally specific signifier. The figure of the Stockman, who parallels Carroll's Mad Hatter, wears Western clothing, which is a visual choice that

carries negative connotations within the Aboriginal cultural framework of the text. Rather than signaling authority or civility, Western dress marks the Stockman as disconnected from Indigenous knowledge systems and is positioned lower within Aboriginal society. His comment on the color of Alitji's skin further reinforces this outsider status. Alitji's response, which is dismissive yet proud, reverses the power dynamic, asserting her identity without shame and rejecting the imposition of Western judgment. Through this interaction, the familiar disruptive role of the Mad Hatter is preserved, but recontextualized. Instead of embodying eccentricity within a Victorian social order, he becomes a figure through whom colonial attitudes and misunderstandings are subtly critiqued. Ultimately, Alitji in Dreamland demonstrates how dress, or its absence, can function as a powerful narrative and cultural tool.

Across the many editions examined in this dissertation, the clothing of Alice and the surrounding characters emerges as a site of constant reinterpretation. Some illustrators situate Alice firmly within fashions of the past, anchoring her in historical dress that recalls Victorian ideals or earlier visual traditions. Others render her in contemporary or fashionable clothing, allowing Alice to exist within the visual language of their own moment in time. Still others draw upon regional or local garments, embedding the narrative within a specific cultural or geographic context. In many cases, these approaches coexist within a single edition: one character may be depicted in current fashion while another appears in outdated or anachronistic dress. These varied combinations demonstrate that there is no singular or correct way to clothe Alice or her world. Instead, dress functions as a flexible visual tool through which illustrators negotiate time, place, culture, and meaning.

What ultimately unites these diverse interpretations is not the specific garments chosen, but the individuality of the artists themselves. Regardless of whether an illustrator looks to historical fashion, contemporary trends, cultural tradition, or imaginative invention, each depiction of Alice is filtered through a distinct artistic voice. Style, line, color, composition, and visual rhythm remains paramount, and clothing becomes one of many elements through which that style is expressed. In dressing Alice and the other characters, illustrators inevitably reveal something of their own identities, values, and creative priorities. Garments come to signify not only social roles or personality traits within the narrative, but also the illustrator's relationship to the text and to their own cultural moment. Taken together, these images affirm that *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* endures precisely because it invites such personal and stylistic freedom. The many ways Alice is dressed, or undressed across editions do not dilute her character, but instead testify to the richness of artistic interpretation, underscoring that it is the illustrator's unique vision that ultimately brings Wonderland to life.

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VITA

Full name: Alexandra Jordan Thelin Blackowski

Place and date of birth: Paterson, New Jersey. September 12, 1983.

Parents' Names: Ellen Jean Hoving Thelin and Lowell Charles Thelin

Educational Institutions:

School	Place	Degree	Date
Secondary:	Clifton High School	High School Diploma	2001
Collegiate:	Montclair State University	BA	2005
Graduate:	Fashion Institute of Technology	MA	2008
	Montclair State University	MA	2008
	Drew University	MA	2020
	Drew University	PhD	2026