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_On the cover: from Sempé’s De L’Autre Coté du Miroir. See p. 39._
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The Fabulous Journeys of Alice and Pinocchio: Exploring Their Parallel Worlds
Laura Tosi with Peter Hunt
McFarland, 2018
ISBN: 978-1-4766-6543-6
Stephanie Lovett

The present volume, intriguingly, is not positioned as children’s lit research, but is number 61 in McFarland’s series Critical Explorations in Science Fiction and Fantasy. It is written almost entirely by Italian scholar Laura Tosi. British professor Peter Hunt has contributed two chapters and a coda, a jeu d’esprit bringing the two characters together. In her Preface, Tosi notes that although Alice and Pinocchio are among the most translated books in world literature and of tremendous influence on literature and culture, they have never been considered together in a book-length study, though she cites her predecessors Anne Lawson Lucas, Emer O’Sullivan, and many others who have in the past considered the works together and separately.

Americans in particular may not have given much thought to this, being probably less likely than Europeans to have actually read Pinocchio, and it is fascinating to see the similarities abound. Both books are known widely through Disney adaptations, both involved literary innovations, both have generated cultural tropes (tea-party chaos, nose-growing lies), both are dominated by themes of metamorphosis, both “transcend their origins and have become transnational classics despite and because of their national characteristics,” and “both books broke new ground with their subversive representation of inquisitive children who were very far from being models of virtue.”

Fabulous Journeys is divided into three sections: The first examines the books in terms of their context, that is, the nations in which they are situated, their status as gendered books, and the lives and intentions of their authors. The second section looks at how they do and don’t fit onto the armatures of fable, folktale, fairy-tale, and fantasy, and the third section covers some of their influence on postmodern literature and national identity.

Many LCSNA members will be particularly interested in the first section, with its focus on a nineteenth-century context. Tosi visits the general perception that Pinocchio, with his impulsiveness and childish passions, represents the Italian character, and Alice is a quintessential Brit, “driven by the quiet inner self-confidence that the rest of the world is simply wrong.” We are given a lot to mull over, including the ways in which the characters both fulfil and undermine such stereotyping and what that might mean to how we think about national character—and about Alice and Pinocchio as both specific and universal. Part One concludes with a chapter on the lives of authors Carlo and Charles, which, when described in broad strokes, are remarkably similar. Carrollians will enjoy learning about Carlo Lorenzini (Collodi, like Carroll, was a pen name). Tosi finds it instructive to situate them in their historical moment, at the height of the Pax Britannica and at the dawn of the unified Italy, and to consider those eras’ differing needs from narratives that told them stories about who they were and could become.

Part Two shifts to more literary considerations of structure, intent, and genre. Tosi discusses aspects such as both books’ being in conflict with their mawkish predecessors and contemporaries; both being quite theatrical in nature; both being picaresque, but also being about their protagonists’ growth and change; and both “beginning with a careful negotiation of the status of books, which turns into a rebellion against the book itself.” (Collodi is as hard on “Once upon a time” as Carroll is on books without pictures and conversations.) Most readers will be intrigued with Tosi’s exploration of the many ways in which Alice and Pinocchio belong to and undermine the folktale and fairytale traditions, riffing on the cautionary tradition and making playful use of tropes such as talking animals, roads, gardens, woods, and food.

The taxonomy of fable, folktale, and fairytale gives us useful ways to understand what the two authors were doing and what kind of expectations we as readers might be bringing to the stories. The examination of the fairytale tradition is particularly profound, dealing as it does with death, violence, and metamorphosis. One has to reflect on the usefulness of the fairytale space for examining the violence and death in our lives (and Pinocchio is far more grisly than Alice), protecting the reader from events that a naturalistic depiction would render unbearable. The metamorphosis themes in both books are also compelling, with flux and hybridity and doubling driving the psychological engines of the stories—and yet both Alice and Pinocchio manage to emerge better able to control themselves and their worlds, and they are seen at the very end in an adult role.

This middle section concludes with considerations of the ways in which the books are also literary fantasies and bildungsromans.

“The hero wonders and wanders: What does this world want/expect
This is an academic book and cannot be skimmed, but it is not jargon-ridden and is suitable for a general reader; anyone who wishes to write about Alice will find fresh insights. For the Carrollian, bringing in Pinocchio breathes an invigorating energy into the endless conversation about what and how Alice means.

[Alice and Pinocchio have a history of intertwining. A translation of Collodi’s fable by the splendidly yclept Hezekiah Butterworth (take that, Dickens!) published by Jordan, Marsh & Co. of Boston in 1898 was titled “Pinocchio’s Adventures in Wonderland,” and the books are sometimes issued together in one volume (e.g., by Ramboro in 1981) and in various compendia and treasuries, Disneyfied and otherwise. – Ed.]

Lewis Carroll: The Worlds of His Alice
Edward Guilian
Edward Everett Root, 2019
ISBN: 9781912224807

Cindy Walter

In one densely informative volume, using both pictures (many of them Carroll’s photographs and drawings) and conversations (in this case references to previous Carroll critics), Edward Guilian makes his case for the imaginative talent of Lewis Carroll, and Carroll’s relevance today. Lewis Carroll: The Worlds of His Alice is heavily researched, gracefully written, and thoroughly enjoyable. Guilian is a founding member of our Society and the author or editor of several books on Lewis Carroll. In this book, Guilian discusses Carroll’s life and times, his writings, and his photography, as well as what he calls Alice’s “afterlife”—the everlasting interest in Under Ground, Wonderland, and what lies beyond the Looking-Glass. [This review assumes the reader has read the write-up of Guilian’s talk at our Spring meeting on p. 4; many details are omitted here to avoid redundancy. – Ed.]

What makes this book particularly valuable is that Guilian has been able to make use of recent research and publications. Since the release of Morton Cohen’s imitable biography of Carroll in 1995, there has been a mass of new scholarship. Works by Edward Wakeling, Gillian Beer, Jenny Woolf, and the latest edition of The Annotated Alice have added to the knowledge base, not to mention other works that appeared, thick and fast, upon the 150th anniversary of Wonderland. Guilian draws upon Wakeling’s catalogue raisoné of Carroll’s photography, for example.

Many readers of Alice are curious about Carroll’s private life, as are, apparently, even more people who have never read the Alice books. Guilian speaks to that. First, Carroll’s life was private, a foreign concept today. Second, he was very much of his times. Guilian quotes Wakeling’s description of Carroll:

. . . a devout Christian, close to his family and friends, loyal to his country and monarch, unwavering in his support for his college and its traditions and yet creative in his thinking and writing, inventive in his ideas, and hugely popular as a storyteller and novelist for children.

As to his friends, most of them were adults, and several of those were female. Guilian calls them a “retinue of women!” Carroll went with them to the theatre, exhibitions, and the like. His social life was certainly more varied than the picture that is so often presented: the nervous stutterer who was only comfortable among children. Guilian states, “In an effort to cement his ‘patron saint of children’ image, his executors may have actually overestimated his preoccupation with children, not anticipating in a post-Freudian milieu it