



Lewis Carroll
Through the Looking-Glass

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THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS

LEWIS CARROLL was the pseudonym of the Revd Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, born 27 January 1832 at Daresbury, Cheshire. He went to Christ Church, Oxford, in 1851, where he became a Senior Student, and lived there for the rest of his life. He was Mathematical Lecturer (1855–81) and was admitted as deacon in 1861, although he did not proceed to priest's orders. He was a noted photographer, especially of children, a prolific diarist, letter-writer, and pamphleteer; although in some ways reclusive, he had a wide range of acquaintances in literary and theatrical circles. His many mathematical publications include *Euclid and His Modern Rivals* (1879) and *Symbolic Logic* (1896). His two most famous books, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (1872), were initially inspired by his friendship with Alice Liddell, the daughter of the Dean of Christ Church. He also published a facsimile of the original manuscript of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground* (1886), and an adaptation for young children, *The Nursery Alice* (1890). *The Hunting of the Snark* (1876) is widely regarded as a surreal masterpiece, but his other works of fiction, *Sylvie and Bruno* (1889) and *Sylvie and Bruno Concluded* (1893), were not successful. He died at Guildford on 14 January 1898, and is buried there.

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LEWIS CARROLL

*Through The
Looking-Glass*



Edited with an Introduction and Notes by
ZOE JAQUES

With illustrations by
JOHN TENNIEL

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INTRODUCTION

Creating Alice's New Adventure

LEWIS CARROLL'S *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* is one of the best-loved tales from the golden age of children's literature. The period ushered in the rise of fantastical stories that celebrated childhood freedom, innocence, and play above moral and religious instruction. Lewis Carroll is often considered the herald of this age, especially in his ability to see the world through childhood wonder, empathizing thoroughly with a child's perspective. Although his *Wonderland*, published in 1865, is the iconic beginning of these attributes, *Through the Looking-Glass* not only sustains them, but introduces famous characters like Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Humpty Dumpty, and the Walrus and the Carpenter, alongside the enduring children's nonsense poem 'Jabberwocky'. *Looking-Glass* has never been out of print, and alongside its precursor it is one of the most famous works of British fiction, ranking with Dickens and Shakespeare in global recognition. It holds the rare status of being both canonical English literature and a children's perennial favourite, enjoyed by adults and children alike since its initial publication. This status means that few readers are likely to come to this edition without some knowledge of *Through the Looking-Glass*, whether through pop-cultural references in music or film, or through full-scale adaptations as found in the various Disney versions. This introduction, therefore, assumes familiarity with the text, so new readers should treat the following discussion as an afterword instead of a preface.

When *Through the Looking-Glass* was published late in 1871, Lewis Carroll had already enjoyed phenomenal reputational and sales success with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, which by then had been printed to twenty-eight thousand copies. The second *Alice* was guaranteed to be a top-seller. Carroll's preparations for a follow-up *Alice* story began very soon after *Wonderland* was published in late 1865. On 24 August 1866, Carroll advised Macmillan, his 'Alice' publisher, that he was considering a sequel: 'It will probably be some time before I again indulge in paper and print. I have, however, a floating idea of writing a sort of sequel to *Alice*, and if it ever comes to anything,

I intend to consult you at the very outset, so as to have the thing properly managed from the beginning.¹ Carroll alludes here to the fact that *Wonderland* was subject to extensive delays. Rumours around that time stirred excitement over a potential new adventure: ‘Long before the publication of his second tale people had heard that Lewis Carroll was writing again, and the editor of a well-known magazine had offered him two guineas a page, which was a high rate of pay in those days, for the story, if he would allow it to appear in serial form.’² Carroll was, however, set on a book—one that would match in every way, from cover to illustrations, the style of *Wonderland*.

Carroll had started to write his continuation, still untitled, by early 1868. His diary of 16 January records him producing ‘a few pages to the 2nd. volume of *Alice*’.³ A year later, on 12 January 1869, he sent the first chapter to Macmillan of a story now called ‘*Behind the Looking-Glass, and what Alice saw there*’.⁴ Even at this stage the exact name of the new book was unsettled, but it would be framed by Alice travelling through a mirror. A specimen title page was produced for *Looking-Glass House, and What Alice Saw There* in 1870.⁵ Carroll remained uncertain about the title, writing for advice about it from Macmillan, with the publisher responding on 24 March 1870: ‘as to the main title I decidedly prefer the first form of words: “Behind the Looking-Glass”. “Looking-Glass World” is too specific.’⁶ Later that same day, Carroll must have written to Macmillan about the final choice, with Macmillan responding: ““*Through*” is just the word—you’ll never beat it.”⁷ By 10 August 1870, the periodical press was advertising the new book. The *Derby Mercury* of that day notes that ‘Mr Lewis Carroll, author of that most charming book, “*Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*,” has in the press a new work about the same dear little lady, and called “*Through the Looking Glass, and what Alice found*

¹ M. N. Cohen and A. Gandolfo (eds), *Lewis Carroll and the House of Macmillan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 44.

² S. D. Collingwood, *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1898), 110–11.

³ *Lewis Carroll’s Diaries: The Private Journals of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson*, ed. E. Wakeling, 10 vols, (Luton: Lewis Carroll Society, 1992–2007), v, 379.

⁴ *Diaries*, vi, 76.

⁵ S. H. Williams, F. Madan, and R. L. Green, *The Lewis Carroll Handbook* (1931; London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 59.

⁶ Cohen and Gandolfo (eds), *House of Macmillan*, 85.

⁷ Cohen and Gandolfo (eds) *House of Macmillan*, 85.

there.” It will have forty-two illustrations, by John Tenniel.⁸ The book, however, would not be fully ‘in the press’ for over a year.

Carroll had been meticulous about the production of *Wonderland*. He famously rejected, at enormous personal cost, the entire print run of the first edition. That same carefulness shaped the construction of *Looking-Glass*: ‘As to how many copies we sell I care absolutely nothing: the only thing I *do* care for is, that all the copies that *are* sold shall be artistically first-rate.’⁹ The author scrutinized every aspect of the second book’s production. He, for instance, complained to Macmillan on 15 April 1870 that his ideas for the title page were not being sufficiently accommodated:

the printer doesn’t follow out my directions. I want the large capitals to have *more below the line than above*: nearly twice as much. [. . .] Secondly, the ‘AND’ ought to be half-way between the two lines [. . .]. Thirdly, the 3 lines of title ought to be closer together and not so close to the top of the page. Fourthly, the comma and full-stop ought to be set lower.¹⁰

This quotation is typical of the care Carroll took to make everything just right, and that thorough attention to the details of spacing, typography, and punctuation of the first edition gives weight to the idea that subsequent editions should be based upon it.

Carroll was especially keen to reflect the inversions of the Looking-Glass world typographically. He sought Macmillan’s advice on this matter on 24 January 1868, ‘Have you any means, or can you find any, for printing a page or two, in the next volume of *Alice*, in *reverse*?’¹¹ Not, apparently, having much success from the publisher, he mentioned the idea again exactly a year later: ‘I think I told you that I want to have 2 pages of “reverse” printing in the new volume—such as you must hold up to the looking-glass to read. To cut the whole on wood, like a picture, would be a very expensive process.’¹² It did turn out to be too difficult to manage using letterpress or other techniques, so in the first printed edition only the first stanza of ‘Jabberwocky’ is reversed, having been beautifully carved into a woodblock. Interestingly the confusions over this reversal led to the most famous error in the first

⁸ *Derby Mercury*, 10 Aug. 1870, n.p.

⁹ Cohen and Gandolfo (eds), *House of Macmillan*, 97.

¹⁰ Cohen and Gandolfo (eds), *House of Macmillan*, 84.

¹¹ Cohen and Gandolfo (eds), *House of Macmillan*, 59.

¹² Cohen and Gandolfo (eds), *House of Macmillan*, 76.

edition, a misprinting of ‘wade’ for ‘wabe’ in the ‘Jabberwocky’ poem, with a ‘b’ the woodcarvers have correctly reversed, but the typesetters have mistakenly ‘corrected’. Carroll repeatedly had samples set in galley proofs, negotiated the placement and style of each illustration, and considered all components of the book from binding to title page to individual page design. Carroll records in his diary that ‘The volume has cost me, I think, more trouble than the first, and *ought* to be equal to it in every way.’¹³ Fastidiousness did not eliminate all errors, but it did ensure that the relationship between author and the first published text is unusually close.

As well as struggling with the printer over his textual and page-design wishes, Carroll faced particular problems in securing suitable illustrations. John Tenniel, the celebrated artist behind the forty-two *Wonderland* woodcuts, was not keen to contribute to *Looking-Glass*. Much later Tenniel expressed exasperation over working with Carroll at all: ‘Dodgson is impossible! You will never put up with that conceited Don for more than a week!’¹⁴ Certainly Carroll’s fastidiousness did not suit Tenniel’s considerably more relaxed working methods, and there is evidence that the illustrator refused to be employed by the author several times over the course of 1867 and 1868, when Carroll had to consider other artists, including Richard Doyle, Tenniel’s fellow illustrator for *Punch*, and Sir Noël Paton, illustrator for Charles Kingsley’s *The Water-Babies*. In June 1868, it seems that Tenniel’s services were secured and a loose timetable was agreed: ‘On the 18th I wrote to Tenniel, finally accepting his kind offer to do the pictures (at such spare times as he can find) for the 2nd volume of *Alice*. He thinks it *possible* (though not likely) that we might get it out by Christmas 1869.’¹⁵ But something went awry again later that year, as Carroll in October requested the services of illustrator John Proctor, who worked as ‘Puck’.¹⁶ Finally, in November 1868 an unenthusiastic Tenniel agreed to produce illustrations during spare moments: ‘The 2nd volume of *Alice* will after all be illustrated by Tenniel, who has reluctantly consented, as his hands are full.’¹⁷

¹³ *Diaries*, vi. 140.

¹⁴ Cited in M. P. Hearn, ‘Alice’s Other Parent: John Tenniel as Lewis Carroll’s Illustrator’, *American Book Collector*, 4/3 (1983), 11–20, at 13.

¹⁵ *Diaries*, vi. 37.

¹⁶ *Diaries*, vi. 59 n.

¹⁷ *Diaries*, vi. 59.

Despite this reticence on the illustrator's part, Carroll and Tenniel were able to work closely together. They had carefully reviewed every picture for *Wonderland*, which of course was illustrated after the story had already been drafted. The collaboration on *Looking-Glass* differed from that of *Wonderland* because the text and illustrations were prepared at the same time, influencing one another and therefore existing in continual flux. The 1870 sample title page for *Looking-Glass House* reports only 'forty-two illustrations by John Tenniel', for instance. In 1992, Edward Wakeling discovered an illustration plan for *Through the Looking-Glass* in the archives of Christ Church, Oxford.¹⁸ This plan discloses that the intended illustrations for the second *Alice* changed as author and illustrator worked together. It is also clear that Carroll did not develop a full conception of the contents of *Looking-Glass* himself until well into the period of illustration. The fifty illustrations of *Looking-Glass* would be two years in the making. The first ten or so sketches were completed in January 1870, and the final illustrations were not ready until the very end of 1871. It is difficult to ascribe all the blame for delays to Tenniel, as Carroll was very particular over the development of the illustrations, too. Special care was exercised over the Jabberwock illustration, for instance. It was meant to be the frontispiece, but Carroll was concerned that it would make too terrifying an opening to his story. His nephew, Stuart Dodgson Collingwood, records that 'On this point he sought the advice of about thirty of his married lady friends, whose experiences with their own children would make them trustworthy advisers; and in the end he chose the picture of the White Knight on horseback.'¹⁹ The frightful Jabberwock became safely tucked away later in the first chapter and is replaced with a more romantic frontispiece.

Tenniel's work, or unwillingness to work, also shaped the textual contents of *Looking-Glass*. Carroll had drafted a section on 'The Wasp in the Wig' as a contribution to Chapter 8, but such a character, argued Tenniel, was 'altogether beyond the appliances of art'.²⁰ He wrote to Carroll on 1 June 1870: 'Don't think me brutal, but I am bound to say that the "*wasp*" chapter doesn't interest me in the least,

¹⁸ E. Wakeling, 'The Illustration Plan for *Through the Looking-Glass*', *Jabberwocky*, 21 (1992), 27–35.

¹⁹ Collingwood, *Life and Letters*, 118–19.

²⁰ Collingwood, *Life and Letters*, 123.

& I can't see my way to a picture. If you want to shorten the book, I can't help thinking—with all submission—that *there* is your opportunity.²¹ The episode was removed at a fairly late stage of the book's production, as it made it to galley-proof, and these proofs were rediscovered in 1974.²² Before this discovery, the episode was known only through the Tenniel letters. The scene adopts the typical *Looking-Glass* pattern of Alice encountering a somewhat perplexed and perplexing older character. The Wasp is rendered particularly ill-humoured and peevish, while also having something of the White Knight and White Queen about him in being rather helpless. There has been some debate about the origins of those rediscovered galley-proofs, particularly about when they might have been set and the authenticity of marginal annotations to them.²³ As the provenance before 1974 has not been verified, unscrupulous interference is certainly a possibility. Others have objected to the piece being Carroll's at all on the grounds of its poor quality, but, as Martin Gardner points out, Carroll 'frequently had a book set in type long before he began to work in earnest on revisions', so the wasp episode might be a draft.²⁴ Whatever the status of this fragment, Carroll took up Tenniel's suggestion, and 'The Wasp in the Wig' was kept from the eyes of early readers, and therefore it is not included in this edition.

Tenniel also worked closely with Carroll on more minor shifts to the story and its illustrations. In the same letter that recommends removing the 'Wasp' fragment, Tenniel suggests that in the train carriage Alice should 'lay hold of the Goat's *beard* as being the object nearest to her hand—instead of the old lady's hair'.²⁵ In the final version of the text, the old lady is excised entirely. Several critics have argued that Tenniel also introduces the politician Benjamin Disraeli as the passenger clad in the paper hat in this scene, in keeping with his long-standing history of representing the prime minister for *Punch*

²¹ M. Gardner (ed.), *The Annotated Alice: The Definitive Edition* (New York: Norton, 1999), 297.

²² See Gardner (ed.), *Annotated Alice*, 293–308.

²³ See W. Weaver, 'Ink and Pen used by Lewis Carroll', *Jabberwocky*, 4/1 (1975), 3–4; and S. Goodacre, 'Consideration of Physical Factors', *Jabberwocky*, 7/2 (1978), 71–4, at 73.

²⁴ Gardner (ed.), *Annotated Alice*, 301.

²⁵ Gardner (ed.), *Annotated Alice*, 297.

magazine.²⁶ Tenniel requested that Carroll change ‘The Walrus and the Carpenter | Were walking hand-in-hand’ to ‘close at hand’, and chose the Carpenter for the Walrus’s companion out of Carroll’s proposed ‘carpenter’, ‘baronet’, or ‘butterfly’.²⁷ Tenniel clearly held the power to add, remove, and alter characters, and we must assume that in other, now lost, correspondence and meetings there were further negotiations and changes. The text–image relationships found in *Through the Looking-Glass* therefore emerged slowly, but carefully. Even so, Carroll found cause to complain of the first print run ‘that several of the pictures have [. . .] lost all *brilliance* of effect’ because the ink was hastily dried to facilitate the quick binding required for Christmas sales.²⁸ Given the importance of the gift market, Macmillan did all they could to ensure the second *Alice* was published by December 1971.

The First Edition and Its Reception

The text and carefully placed illustrations were delivered late in 1871 and quickly printed, bound, and published in time for the Christmas 1871 market, with a first print run of 9,000 copies, far outstripping *Wonderland’s* 2,000-copy first edition. One ‘trouble’ with the publication of *Looking-Glass* was the near-simultaneous release of three separate issues in Britain and America: in Boston by Lee and Shepard, and New York by Lee, Shepard and Dillingham; separately by Macmillan’s US office as ‘London and New York’; and in London by Macmillan—which is usually regarded as the ‘first’ edition, but has no primacy over the US releases. These issues have different title pages, all dated 1872 (it was common practice to post-date December publications), but the body of the text is the same. The variant title pages and complete text were printed by Richard Clay in London by electrotype from formes of set type and woodblocks. The first 2,000

²⁶ For a discussion of the history of this identification, first proposed by William Empson in *Some Versions of Pastoral* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1935), see M. Hancher, *The Tenniel Illustrations to the ‘Alice’ Books* (2nd edn, Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2019), 115–16.

²⁷ See M. N. Cohen and E. Wakeling (eds), *Lewis Carroll and His Illustrators: Collaboration and Correspondence, 1865–1898* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003), 170–1.

²⁸ Cohen and Gandolfo (eds), *House of Macmillan*, 97.

sets of sheets were shipped by steamer to Lee and Shepard on 2 December 1871. The US publishers had ordered a total of 3,000 initial copies.²⁹ Carroll received his own copies on 6 December 1871, which can be roughly accounted the UK publication date.³⁰

The book was designed to match the physical format of *Wonderland*. Clay printed it in octavo, measuring 190 mm by 13.5 mm to match the format of *Wonderland*, but, at 224 pages, it is longer than the first 'Alice'. It is also more complex in its make-up, not only with eight additional images, but also with the paratextual components of Dramatis Personæ and chess schema, and tissue paper protecting the frontispiece. UK copies are bound in red cloth and black endpapers by Burn and Company, who also bound *Wonderland*. The stern Red Queen appears on the front cover (replicating Tenniel's 'Live Flowers' illustration) and the bedraggled White Queen (from 'Wool and Water') on the rear in gold inlay, surrounded by triple-lined cartouches. The spine reads 'THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS' in a size slightly larger than the 'ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN WONDERLAND' of the first book, but otherwise they are a matched pair. The US copies were probably bound by Lee and Shepard to imitate the Macmillan bindings, but were offered in red, green, or blue cloth. The format, in keeping with Carroll's wishes, is what we might today consider adult-centric, a formal and restrained aesthetic, but it is very much in keeping with Macmillan's house style, similar to Edwin Abbott's *The Good Voices* (1872) or Charles Kingsley's *Glaucus* (1873), even if competing publishers like Thomas Nelson, Routledge, and Frederick Warne were by 1871 producing books with brighter covers, using more gold or, indeed, full-colour pictures. Most importantly, the cover is modelled on *Wonderland*, which itself imitated the format, but not the green colour, of Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies* of 1863.

While the US edition did not sell particularly well—Lee and Shepard did not request additional copies—UK sales exceeded expectations, outstripping even *Wonderland*, at least in terms of sales in the first month. Six thousand additional copies had to be printed in haste. Carroll's diary records his excitement about early sales: 'Heard

²⁹ H. Bohem, 'The First Edition of Through the Looking-Glass', *Jabberwocky*, 13 (1984), 87–95.

³⁰ Bohem, 'First Edition', 92.

from Macmillan that they already have orders for 7,500 Looking-Glasses (they printed 9,000), and are at once going to print 6,000 more!³¹ (In comparison, the first edition of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was printed in only 5,500 copies.) The first edition of *Looking-Glass* was carefully crafted, and because of its high print run widely read and reviewed, making it an especially important document in children's literature, with a secure textual history. It therefore differs substantially from the rejected first edition of *Wonderland*, which was dispatched to America as faulty goods.

Early reviewers were waiting expectantly, and, owing to Macmillan's expert marketing and distribution channels, a variety of periodicals promoted the book. The *British Quarterly Review* noted that 'no Christmas book this year has been anticipated with anything like the eagerness excited by the announcement of this new story by the author of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland"', calling the sequel 'delicious allegorical nonsense'.³² As Carroll and Macmillan hoped, *Looking-Glass* was singled out as an ideal Christmas gift: 'It is a beautiful little book, illustrated, printed, and bound with extremely good taste, and just the thing for a Christmas present.'³³ Carroll's attention to detail and efforts in securing Tenniel's illustration met wide acclaim.

The Athenaeum was struck by the Jabberwock illustration, and, assuaging Carroll's fears, saw it as especially appropriate for young people: 'Much young blood will run cold with fright—children dearly love to be frightened—at the awe-inspiring portrait of the Apollyon-like Jabberwocky.'³⁴ Many, like the reviewer of *The Athenaeum*, celebrated Tenniel's pencil as much as Carroll's pen:

Mr. Tenniel's designs are masterpieces of wise absurdity. We may refer, for instance, to that in which the Oysters, incarnations of old-womanishness, are listening to the dulcet speech of the Walrus and the Carpenter [. . .] not to speak of some drawings which deserve still higher and more serious praise, such as that in which Alice is rowing the boat along the stream which is half river and half grocer's shop.³⁵

³¹ *Diaries*, vi. 189–90.

³² 'Contemporary Literature', *British Quarterly Review*, 44 (Jan. 1872), 148.

³³ 'Things to Buy', *Judy, or the London Serio-Comic Journal*, 20 Dec. 1871, 79.

³⁴ 'Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There', *The Athenaeum*, 16 Dec. 1871, 787–8, at 787.

³⁵ *The Athenaeum*, 16 Dec. 1871, 787.

On 21 December 1871, *The Standard* writes, ‘here are Mr. Carroll and Mr. Tenniel again in company, in a sequel called *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (Macmillan). We do not know which is the better, that or this.’ Time and again, Tenniel emerges as a champion of Carroll’s style: ‘the delicious refined nonsense of his present illustrations generally comes up to if it does not surpass what he drew in “Alice” aforesaid’.³⁶

Early reviewers were also drawn to the ‘Jabberwocky’ poem, sometimes seeing it as the jewel in Alice’s crown. The *Pall-Mall Gazette* thought it excellent poetry: ‘The vigour of this ballad in some places is as remarkable as its tender gravity in others [. . .] what pleases us most is the stanza with which the ballad begins and ends. Anything more affecting than those lines we rarely meet in the poetry of our day.’³⁷ Since Carroll’s *Phantasmagoria* of 1869—also aimed at children but in verse instead of prose—was poorly reviewed and did not sell well, critics seemed surprised that he had a talent for poetry.

Not all reviewers were convinced that Carroll had quite lived up to the reputation of *Wonderland* in his sequel. The same paper that praised its poetry found *Looking-Glass* ‘not, perhaps, quite so good, as a whole, as “Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland,” but there is not much to choose between them’.³⁸ The *Manchester Guardian* judged that ‘we cannot say that we think Alice’s last adventures by any means equal to her previous ones’, but concluded that ‘the author has surpassed all modern writers of children’s books except himself’.³⁹ The *Saturday Review* thought that Carroll here ‘has fallen but very little short of that most delightful of children’s stories’, at least to an adult ear, but that was not necessarily the case from a child’s perspective: ‘We have tried it by the best of all criticism; for we have had it read aloud to a number of little folk and have heard a dismal outcry raised, as the nurse, like a returning wave on a rising tide, kept sweeping them ruthlessly off one by one’.⁴⁰ This simultaneous agelessness and age-appropriateness had also been found in responses to *Wonderland*, but here it seems mixed with a slight taint of second-rate status, which thus makes it more appropriate for children alone. *The Examiner*

³⁶ *The Standard*, 21 Dec. 1871, 2.

³⁷ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 Dec. 1871, 11.

³⁸ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 Dec. 1871, 11.

³⁹ ‘Literature’, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 Dec. 1871, 3.

⁴⁰ ‘Christmas Books’, *Saturday Review*, 30 Dec. 1871, 859–60, at 860.

thought that *Looking-Glass*, 'though hardly as good as that altogether delightful book [*Wonderland*], is quite good enough to delight every sensible reader of any age [. . .]. And the best of all is that the book has no moral, and is nothing but a capital jumble of fun.'⁴¹ *Turning Over New Leaves* had a similar take: 'The marvels Alice meets with in her rambles are of the utterly illogical and hidden-moral-less kind that delights children, while the interspersed bits of verse are highly ludicrous'.⁴² *The Times* almost protests too much: 'there is literally no sense in it, no lurking moral, no covert satire, no meaning, so far as we read it, of any sort whatever'.⁴³ Just as Carroll's *Wonderland* was seen as a much-needed response to the heavily moralized novels then popular for children, like Charles Kingsley's *The Water-Babies*, *Looking-Glass* satisfied reviewers for being of a similar style. Few, however, perhaps owing to the pressures of reviewing books quickly for Christmas buyers, were able to spot Carroll's novel innovations that emerged in his sequel text.

A New World of Language and Verse

Readers have long debated the relative merits of *Wonderland* versus *Looking-Glass*, but arguably the second book shows signs of a more seasoned author of fantasy. Importantly, this book is conceived as a book (without the oral origins of *Wonderland*), and Carroll was able to devote more attention to its development in that form. A more literary approach is especially signalled by the inclusion of more startlingly original verse. As in *Wonderland*, Carroll mixes parodies of nursery rhymes and famous poems with his own compositions, but *Looking-Glass* takes special care not only to include new and better poetry, but also to discuss its relevance and meaning, as a metacommentary on his own practice.

'Jabberwocky' remains a favourite, memorized by generations of schoolchildren, and it is also Carroll's most original poem. It deploys an 8-8-8-6 structure to give pace and drama to the mortal combat. Carroll generally favoured 8- or 6-syllable lines, and *Looking-Glass*'s other original poems, like 'The Walrus and the Carpenter', alternate

⁴¹ 'Christmas Books', *The Examiner*, 16 Dec. 1871, 1249-50, at 1250.

⁴² *Turning Over New Leaves*, 6 Jan. 1872, 14

⁴³ 'Christmas Books', *The Times*, 25 Dec. 1871, 4.

trimeter and tetrameter lines. Carroll notes of such rhythm: ‘In writing “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” I had no particular poem in my mind. The metre is a common one’.⁴⁴ When the composer William Boyd asked to set music for the *Looking-Glass* poems (he had already done so for *Wonderland*), Carroll responded in a letter of 1 December 1871: ‘You are very welcome to set to music any of the verses in *Through the Looking-Glass*. I’m afraid, however, that you will find the same difficulty in your way as in the case of the former volume—namely, that all the verses at all like songs have well-known tunes already.’⁴⁵ As the author acknowledges, he shows little metrical originality, keeping rhythms straightforward and memorable for child audiences. That being said, the vocabulary and philosophies of some of his *Looking-Glass* poems are far more challenging than their *Wonderland* precursors.

Carroll builds upon the tradition of nonsense poetry, made especially popular by Edward Lear’s *A Book of Nonsense* (1846), through the juxtaposition of made-up words and inconceivable encounters. Alice serves as a test case for how far Carroll can push these boundaries, and she frequently has dubious responses to the verse she hears. When Tweedledee asks, ‘You like poetry?’, Alice ‘doubtfully’ responds: ‘Ye-es, pretty well—*some* poetry’ (p. 43). The word ‘poetry’ appears ten times in *Looking-Glass* (as opposed to zero occurrences in *Wonderland*), providing a running commentary on verse form and contents. On the one hand, Alice’s knowledge of nursery rhymes, and more importantly how they end, offers her some contextual comfort, giving ‘her the self-assurance and predictive powers of a Sybil’ when characters cite well-known rhymes to her.⁴⁶ On the other, Carroll’s nonsense creations and adaptations work to discombobulate the heroine, and no doubt most readers. That feeling of familiarity and unexpected confusion is a deliberate rhythm of Carroll’s overall chess framework, and the poems satisfyingly add to it.

Carroll’s ‘Jabberwocky’ is a work that predates even *Wonderland*, and his keenness to foreground it in the frontispiece shows that he saw it, as did his reviewers, as a particularly important part of *Looking-Glass*. Carroll first ‘published’ the opening of ‘Jabberwocky’ as

⁴⁴ *The Letters of Lewis Carroll*, ed. M. N. Cohen, 2 vols, (London: Macmillan, 1979), i. 168.

⁴⁵ *Letters*, i. 168.

⁴⁶ U. C. Knoepfelmacher, *Ventures into Childhood: Victorians, Fairy Tales, and Femininity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 217.

a ‘Stanza of Anglo-Saxon Poetry’ in the 1855 edition of *Mischmasch*, a journal he produced with his siblings for private circulation. In this early outing Carroll also glossed his portmanteau and invented words, but slightly differently from the meanings given by Humpty Dumpty in *Looking-Glass*. For instance, ‘wabe’ is ‘the side of a hill’ and ‘mome’ is ‘grave’ (i.e. solemn). The origins of the poem, therefore, make light fun of not only the serious canon of English letters, but also philology-driven attempts to parse nonsense. Humpty Dumpty embodies that overdetermined confidence in interpretation: ‘I can explain all the poems that ever were invented—and a good many that haven’t been invented just yet’ (p. 69). He also exposes himself when his reading breaks down: “‘*mome*’ I’m not certain about. I think it’s short for “from home”—meaning that they’d lost their way, you know’ (p. 71). And Alice, too, wryly rejects both more poetry and literary criticism when Humpty Dumpty offers further recitation, and she exclaims: “‘Oh, it needn’t come to that!’ [. . .] hoping to keep him from beginning’ (p. 71). Humpty Dumpty does of course continue, but he manages to strip “meaning” from real words as well as nonsense ones:

‘But “glory” doesn’t mean “a nice knock-down argument,”’ Alice objected. ‘When *I* use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less.’ (p. 68)

Power ultimately shapes discourse here, and Alice’s knowledge of nursery rhymes or difficult words is defeated in favour of absolute rule: “‘The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, “which is to be master—that’s all”’ (p. 68).

Other poetic encounters maintain Alice’s droll stance of tempered enthusiasm and politeness, but she typically ends up disappointed and defeated by them. In the end the rewards of queenship come only through an enforced mastery over discourse, as Humpty Dumpty suggests they should. But Alice must have one final lesson about the meaninglessness of words. When Queen Alice approaches her own royal hall, there are two doorbells, the ‘Visitors’ Bell’ and the ‘Servants’ Bell’. Alice is perplexed by this binary: ‘There *ought* to be one marked “Queen,” you know’ (p. 105), while the nearby Frog explains that she should leave the door alone. Alice’s ‘I don’t know what you mean’ is met with the Frog’s ‘I speaks English, doesn’t I?’ (p. 106). Carroll then completely takes away Alice’s direct powers of

speech and comprehension, when Alice hears a song inside in her own voice.

‘To the Looking-Glass world it was Alice that said,
‘I’ve a sceptre in hand, I’ve a crown on my head; (p. 106)

Alice finally gains queenship not through her own discourse, but through silencing those around her and embracing the non-sensical. When she enters the banquet celebrating her coronation, ‘there was a dead silence the moment she appeared’ (p. 107). The Red and White Queens subsequently try to prompt Alice to speak: ‘Make a remark’ (p. 108) and ‘You ought to return thanks in a neat speech’ (p. 110). But before the speech begins, ‘all sorts of things happened in a moment’ (p. 110) to bring Alice back through the Looking-Glass, with an audience of only her pet kitten. Alice is never given her final say in the Looking-Glass world, returning to a land where she can take comfort in the fact that animals, as far as she perceives them at least, will listen to her but not answer back.

Significantly, the final mention of poetry in the book comes when Alice, back at home, recounts her adventures to Kitty: ‘there was one thing you *would* have enjoyed—I had such a quantity of poetry said to me, all about fishes!’ (p. 116). But this celebration of poetry arises only once Alice has absolute control over the conversation: ‘On this occasion the kitten only purred: and it was impossible to guess whether it meant “yes” or “no”’ (p. 115). Alice becomes the recounter of tales and verse, instead of its resistant recipient.

Playfulness, Games, and Chess

Alice’s narrative and linguistic mastery is shaped by a dream framework of playful nonsense, with the titular theme of a looking-glass as magical gateway quickly subsumed by a world of life-sized chess (albeit one where reflections and inversions will play a crucial part). As a mathematician, Lewis Carroll took a long-standing interest in games and play, including inventing his own board games, like *The Game of Logic* in 1886, and producing mirror-imaged handwriting. As *Wonderland* depends upon anthropomorphized playing cards, *Looking-Glass* deploys chess-piece encounters, to offer, according to Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, ‘a much more purposeful narrative structure