
As I was traveling cross-country in early 2010, the seventeen-year-old sitting next to me in our overbooked coach section leaned over to see what I was reading. I noted that it was a book about Lewis Carroll by the scholar Jan Susina, and shared that I had just learned that Carroll had written 98,721 letters, probably two thousand a year. She gasped and almost pulled the book from my hands in a sincere desire to learn more. The opportunity to learn more—to be startled by facts and surprising pieces of information and perception—is exactly what Susina provides us in this capacious, remarkable book that has broad appeal to nonacademics, scholars, and Carroll specialists. It is a text that generates delight, enthusiasm, and wonder.

A contribution to Routledge’s respected Children’s Literature and Culture series, *The Place of Lewis Carroll in Children’s Literature* situates Carroll in literary and cultural history in a manner and method characterized by Susina’s quoting of Umberto Eco: “Books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has been told.” Susina not only locates Carroll in the books, events, and literary figures that shaped or influenced him during the nineteenth century, but also grounds his discussion in more recent scholarship. In an organic, interconnecting process, Susina links Carroll’s life and work to other artists and scholars and provides an internal bibliography, creating a tapestry of ideas and references. Susina self-consciously structures this study as a “series of interlinking chapters that focuses on Carroll’s adventures as a children’s writer” (2) and “a hypertext, like the Alice books themselves, in that the reader does not need to read it in a linear fashion, but can choose their own adventure by reading the chapters in a sequence of their own inventions” (3). This ethos of invention and playfulness informs Susina’s study. With a nod to his keen awareness of the plethora of Victorian criticism, Susina begins his study with the wish “to find a bit of room and add to the lively discussion of Carroll. Like Alice, I suggest, ‘Come, we shall have some fun now!’” (11).

*The Place of Lewis Carroll in Children’s Literature* consists of twelve pithy chapters that begin with Carroll’s juvenilia and end with a critical examination of contemporary multimedia adaptations. Intervening chapters provide a diverse array of Carrollian issues, including his photography of children, his extraordinary letter writing, class and gender issues, the tradition of the literary fairy tale, and his role as entrepreneur/businessman/marketer and contributor to the publishing industry. These subject areas—some familiarly controversial, some startlingly new—are re-presented through a rich analysis that integrates a prodigious understanding of Carrollian scholarship and cultural history. A core of key ideas presented in the Introduction weaves its way through the majority of these multifarious chapters. These ideas resituate Carroll’s place in children’s literature and present new “places” in which Carroll has been surprisingly influential. Right off (and throughout the essays), Susina takes strong issue with P. J. Harvey Dronon’s pronouncement in *Children’s Books in England* (1932) that Carroll’s Alice books “changed the whole cast of children’s literature” (3). The effect, notes Susina, was to mark Alice’s *Adventures in Wonderland* as the great divide so that prior to its 1865 publication, all children’s books were primarily instructional and afterward primarily “to entertain and delight.” Susina argues that such distinctions are too neat, noting as evidence the publications of Catherine Sinclair’s *Holiday House* in 1839 (a copy of which Carroll gave to Alice Liddell) and Edward Lear’s *A Book of Nonsense* in 1845. With this correction to the record, however, Susina also asserts that the Alice books themselves include “modest social lessons” as well as more explicitly didactic ones. As evidence, he cites paratextual materials included in later editions of the Alice books as well as in the *Sylvie and Bruno* publications. In subsequent chapters, he develops the significance of these paratextual materials (which he relates to Carroll’s compulsive letter writing), and also argues that they as well as Alice’s *Adventures in Wonderland* reflect the values and attitudes of the British upper-middle class during the Victorian period.

According to Susina, Carroll is “very much a proper Victorian” (4). This Victorian propriety and social position provide the cultural context for Susina’s refutation of stubborn misperceptions of Carroll, his relationship with Alice Liddell most certainly being foremost. Such concerns were recently discussed on the *Child_Lit* Listserv after the publication of a new novel about Alice, Melanie Benjamin’s *Alice I Have Been*. Was Carroll or wasn’t Carroll a pedophile? What do we do with those pictures? Susina teaches us about Carroll’s photography, about Victorian photography in general, and about Carroll’s likely influences. Through his engaging scholarly process, he repudiates concerns of Carroll’s having had an unhealthy interest in young girls by encouraging us to see these photographs through Victorian lenses rather than contemporary ones. Chapter 7, “The Beggar-Maid: Alice Liddell as Street Arab” places Carroll’s photography within a Victorian context. Susina cites
The Lion and the Unicorn

256

Book Reviews 255

of our own country on which our literature is so rich: the place of the picture in the history of thought, the place of the book in the history of art, and the place of the library in the history of the world. These are the topics of this book. The main theme of the book is the function of the book in the development of literature. The book is divided into two parts: the first deals with the history of the book, and the second with the history of literature. The first part is divided into two sections: the first deals with the history of the book in the West, and the second with the history of the book in the East. The second part deals with the history of literature, and is divided into two sections: the first deals with the history of literature in the West, and the second with the history of literature in the East. The book is written in a clear and accessible style, and is illustrated with numerous photographs and diagrams. The author is a well-known scholar in the field of literary studies, and his work is highly regarded by scholars and students alike. The book is an excellent resource for anyone interested in the history of literature and the book.
The Place of Lewis Carroll in Children’s Literature may best be described as summary comprehendieve. It is so information-packed and eclectic, so

intelligently—where else have seventy-year-old soldiers next to me on the

imagination—where else have seventy-year-old soldiers next to me on the

imagination—where else have seventy-year-old soldiers next to me on the

imagination—where else have seventy-year-old soldiers next to me on the