Lewis Carroll was a notoriously fastidious author, particularly when it came to negotiating the afterlife of his *Alice* books. From biscuit tins to stage productions, Carroll struggled to divest control of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, and translations of the text were in no way exempt from his anxious scrutiny. Yet as Carroll himself was no linguist, and thus unable to judge the success of a given translation without taking advice from others, one might venture that authorizing non-English versions of his books constituted one of his more speculative ventures. The continued delays in getting early translated editions into press further attest to his anxiety about seeing *Wonderland* refashioned into other tongues.

Although Carroll’s direct influence over the transformations and translations of *Wonderland* has long since past, the spectre of the author’s views is likely to lie heavy on the shoulders of those who take up the mantle. Lindseth and Tannenbaum’s three-volume edition is by far the most significant analysis of the process of translating *Wonderland* (or, so they suspect, any English-language novel). It focuses on translations in 174 languages and includes essays from 188 scholars across more than 9,000 editions. The project is an extraordinary one, and while the scope and pricey nature of the resultant volumes puts it out of the reach of a general readership, it represents a highly significant and valuable work of scholarship.

It is the second volume of *Alice in a World of Wonderlands* that provides the most fascinating material. The conceit for this volume is back-translation, whereby the same eight pages from Chapter Seven, “A Mad Tea-Party,” are translated back into English from their source language. The sample is well chosen, as the scene offers something of a concentration of Carroll’s ludic language, humorous distortions of meaning and nonsensical parody of verse. The range of languages represented is remarkable, and the comparative nature of the enterprise leads to discoveries arguably as playful as Carroll’s text itself. That his twinkling “little bat” could have been reimagined variously as a green parrot (German, 1869), a “Little goat” (Yiddish, 2012), a “Little blinking owl” (Tajiki, 1985), a “Rose Little” or “little clock” (Swedish, 1870 and 2009), a “little cup” (Maltese, 2003), a “little bee” (Korean, 2005), or a “little cricket” (Gujarati, 1991) – as well as being substituted at times for a “soup in a tiny tin pot” (Ukrainian, 2001) or a “wide sofa” (German, 1963) – makes for some curious reimaginings of the tale. My personal favourites have to be “Twinkle, twinkle, flittermouse! /
wonder how you go so pleasantly!” (Scots, Southeast Central dialect, 2011) and “Now you twinkle winged rat, / On what are you so concentrated?” (Spanish, 2002), both of which, in rather opposing ways, seem to convey a measure of Carroll’s play.

In complement to this fascinating documentary of translating practices reverse-engineered, the first volume offers an essay on each of the languages represented in back-translation, alongside preliminary essays concerning broader issues, while the third volume comprises a checklist of both Wonderland and Looking-Glass in every language for which the project team could locate a translation. Contributors seem to have been given a free rein in terms of determining the focus of each essay, with foci ranging from the dialogue of the scene, to folkloric aspects of the texts or the implications of translating the Western, Victorian setting into other cultural contexts. A few of the essays make very little reference to Wonderland, focusing on the source language itself, while others are more directly invested in exploring the cultural and linguistic interplay between Carroll’s text and the dialect. Such variance keeps the essays fresh and distinctive. While the work is clearly likely to function principally as a reference source for those interested in particular languages, it is also eminently readable. The third volume, perhaps unsurprisingly, is a bit of an exception to this rule but is nevertheless an invaluable working source that includes bibliographical information for over 7,600 editions of Wonderland and 1,500 for Looking-Glass.

Alice in a World of Wonderlands is a remarkable achievement and looks the part. While the content is the main prize, it is also beautifully put together, attuned to Lewis Carroll’s fastidious standards of book production. The volumes are handsomely bound in blue cloth, ornamented in gold with Tenniel’s heraldic white rabbit, with the text carefully typeset and printed on high-quality paper throughout. A real treat in the first volume is the inclusion of fifteen pages of colour reproductions of cover images for a number of the translated editions discussed in the essays that follow. These are very well reproduced and give a fascinating visual overview of the transformations of Alice in distinct cultural contexts (or, indeed, her bizarre stasis in some cases). An area of discussion where more might have been done concerns the illustrative practices that are hinted at in these colour spreads. One of the most captivating elements of Wonderland’s publishing history concerns the texts’ illustrative history and some of the most innovative revisualisations have accompanied non-English language editions. Although a section of the first volume does discuss illustration, including four short essays that provide a useful overview of relevant issues here, it is disappointingly
concise at only 11 of the more than 700 overall essay pages. This is, however, a minor criticism of a volume that marks an exceptionally fitting and impressive celebration of Alice in Wonderland’s 150th anniversary and which highlights so readily the text’s reach and appeal not only throughout the years but also across the globe.

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