



Knight Letter

THE LEWIS CARROLL SOCIETY OF NORTH AMERICA

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PROFILE: Dr. Morton Cohen

On Morton Cohen's lengthy *Curriculum Vitae*, sent to the editor for this profile, the earliest article written by him concerning Lewis Carroll is dated 1968. It is probable that in the ensuing twenty years, there have not been many days when Dr. Cohen has not been writing or thinking about Carroll.

Books, articles, reviews, introductions, monographs and lectures concerning Carroll have poured forth on almost every aspect of his life and activities. Now at work on what he hopes will be the definitive biography of Carroll, a book Dr. Cohen actually started in 1979, he told an interviewer at the time that he hoped to complete it by 1981. Needless to say, Dr. Cohen's scholarship is such that he tirelessly pursues every avenue, which leads to other avenues — similar to the ten years of work that went into the *Collected Letters of Lewis Carroll*, which he edited with Roger Lancelyn Green, and which is a monument in the Carrollian canon.

Dr. Cohen grew up in western Canada, and came to the United States when he was thirteen. Earning a B.A. at Tufts, he later took his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees at Columbia University. He taught English at various universities before coming to the City University of New York, from which he retired several years ago. Among other activities, he has had a play produced, and is the author of several children's books under one of the pseudonyms he uses for the books he writes for relaxation. As a Fulbright Scholar, he wrote a biography of Rider Haggard.

As one of the original founders of the LCSNA, he has always given unstintingly of his time and energy to the Society.

Philadelphia Free Library is Host to LCSNA Fall Meeting

Somehow, I don't think Dr. Rosenbach would have minded. The LCSNA missed by two weeks the sixtieth anniversary of the first public exhibition of the manuscript of *Alice's Adventures Underground* at the very same Philadelphia Free Library where we assembled on October 15th for the Society's Fall meeting.

In a bright room on the Library's top floor, with Logan Square visible from the edge of the veranda, J. Randall Rosensteel, the Assistant Director of the Library graciously welcomed us. Tables in front of the glass doors opening onto the veranda were spread with the Carroll books, posters and ephemera which were to be sold at auction after the conclusion of the meeting. (See separate article).

The Society's President, Edward Guiliano, thanked Mr. Rosensteel for his warm remarks and the Library for inviting us. Then, at a brief business meeting, all previous officers were re-elected — Ed Guiliano as President, Ellen Luchinsky as Vice-President, Ray Wapner as Treasurer and Maxine Schaefer as Secretary. Janet Jurist was reappointed as Program Coordinator.

Before the scheduled meeting began, however, there were a few brief presentations. August Imholtz displayed a handmade quilt depicting Alice and the flying cards. Then John R. Wilcox-Baker, Secretary of the Lewis



Dr. Donald Rackin



Dr. Eileen Cahill

Carroll Birthplace Trust in England, discussed the possibility of establishing a Lewis Carroll Foundation in the United States, so that tax-deductible contributions may be made by Americans. Finally, Marie Khoury, rare book librarian at the Library, gave us a brief survey of its holdings.

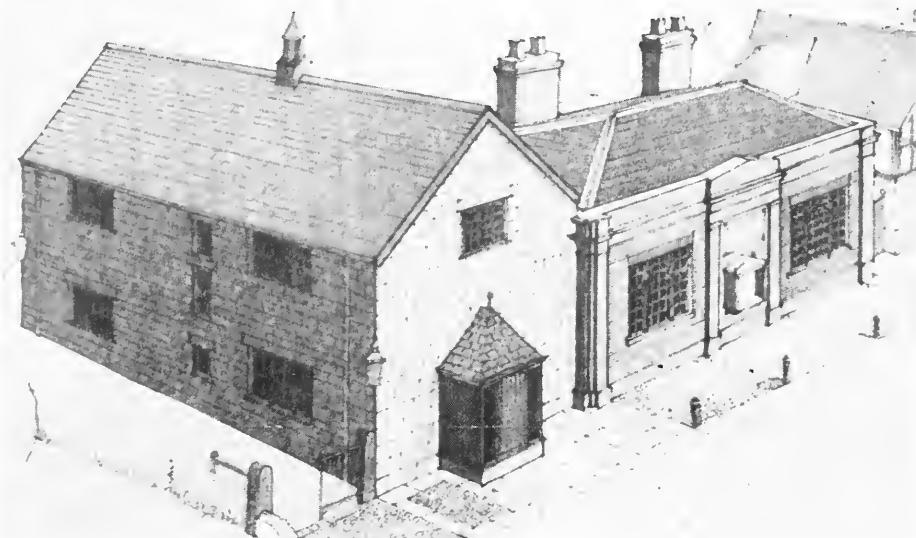
Dr. Donald Rackin, Professor of English at Temple University, then spoke on "Apes, Angels and the *Alices*: Lewis Carroll's Darwinian Dream Visions". Although Dodgson did know Darwin and corresponded with him, their relationship was not the subject of the paper. Darwin's revolutionary thesis was published in 1859 and Dr. Rackin sees several Darwinian themes in the *Alice* books. Alice's alienation, the experiences in an alien environment, is a reflection of the anxiety felt by Carroll and his contemporaries regarding the seemingly ignoble descent of man. Alice's fall represents the Victorian's fall from innocence. Status is overturned in Wonderland. In trying to understand Carroll's mind with regard to several Darwinian themes, Dr. Rackin compared Carroll's drawings with the illustrations of Tenniel.

From the darkness and bypaths of Darwinian theory, our next speaker turned our attention to some of the bright instances of Carroll's books — a slide lecture on the Carroll holdings at the Rosenbach Library. Dr. Eileen Cahill, Assistant Curator of Literature at the Library, reviewed Dr. Rosenbach's career and noted the early influence of an uncle — a publisher and

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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN OXFORD IN 1989



Architect's impression of the proposed Lewis Carroll Birthplace Center.

The first international conference of Carrollians sponsored by the Lewis Carroll Society of England will take place in Oxford on July 27-30, 1989.

Although a previous meeting had been held by the English and America membership in 1985, the conference next year will bring together enthusiasts and scholars from around the world.

Among the topics to be discussed will be the creation of a Lewis Carroll Centre in Daresbury—Carroll's place of birth.

A number of contributors will present talks, films, exhibitions and outings. Further details will follow.

Society Holds its First Auction of Lewis Carroll Material

With the sale of the last listed item, a two-page Tenniel letter—the LCSNA ended its first auction for its publication fund.

Conceived and carried out by VP Ellen Luchinsky, the auction realized a gross of just under \$2000.00. All items were contributed by members of the Society.

Guest auctioneer Justin Schiller did a masterful job in describing the items and

keeping a fair but firm hand on the proceedings. Among the outstanding items and their realized prices were:

The aforementioned Tenniel letter—\$140.00

Pogo Possum Comic Book, with Albert the Alligator reciting Jabberwocky—\$85.00

A trial proof from one of Martin Barooshian's etchings of the Mad Tea Party—\$95.00

6 dinner plates, each with a Tenniel illustration in color. In original carton.—\$260.00

Alice's First Adventures in Wonderland. The first four chapters of *Alice* in wrappers. C. 1910.—\$240.00

Something for Everyone

Other items included several translations, parodies, first editions of the *Sylvie and Bruno* books, 2 copies of the Limited Editions Club TTLG, unsigned, a Barry Moser poster, and several lots of ephemera.

According to plans, the Society will make the auction a regular feature of its meetings, in an effort to build up the publication fund.

David Del Tredici to Compose for the New York Philharmonic



David Del Tredici, long familiar to Lewis Carroll aficionados for his music based on *Alice* themes, which led to a Pulitzer Prize, has been appointed Composer-in-Residence with the New York Philharmonic for this season and next.

Del Tredici announced that he would compose for the Philharmonic pieces "on a grand post-Romantic scale, as is my wont."

The appointment calls for Del Tredici to compose a major work for the orchestra's 1989-90 season. He also has a commission for a piece to be given in 1992, the 150th anniversary of the orchestra, and will also advise the orchestra on contemporary programming.

Czech Alice Film Combines Live Action with Animated Figures

Jan Svankmajer, a Czechoslovak animator, has created a startling *Alice* film combining live action and remarkable stop-motion techniques.

Although the film loosely follows the plot of the book, (or no plot at all), the episodes are surreal images of the original. Seemingly alluring on the outside, the rabbits, flamingos and doll houses in the movie are truly sinister. Doubles of Alice appear in the forms of dolls and animated creations. She switches back and forth in effective dream logic.

When the film opened, it was suggested that it was not appropriate for young children. With its unearthing of fears and nightmares, it's definitely a film for adults.

Meeting *Continued from Page 1*

collector of children's literature. Shown were slides of the *Alice* manuscript that Dr. R. bought at the famous auction in London, along with a sampling of the more than 600 Carroll letters at the Library.

The meeting closed with a highly animated auction of material donated by members. Justin Schiller proved, to no one's surprise, to be a superb auctioneer—learned and professional, but with considerable wit and charm. Credit and thanks for conceiving and carrying out the auction must go to Ellen Luchinsky. A white stone day.

August A. Imholtz, Jr.



Justin Schiller



Two Studies in Nonsense

An Anatomy of Literary Nonsense.

Wim Tigges. *Distributed by Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, NJ 07716. Stiff wrappers. \$75.00*

Explorations in the Field of Nonsense. Edited by Wim Tigges.

As above. Wrappers. \$29.95

Nonsense continues to be explored, explained, defined and illustrated, because like Mercury, it is difficult to keep under your hand. Wim Tigges, as the author of the first book and the editor of the second, struggles valiantly to capture the essence of "true" nonsense, and largely succeeds.

Starting with a critical survey of earlier scholarship on the subject, he then attempts to provide satisfactory answers to the questions of what literary nonsense is, how it works, what it is not, and when, where and why it propagated and developed. Claiming that nonsense deserves the "honest attention" of the literary critic, Tigges states that the intrinsic interest of nonsense depends upon the creativity and intelligence with which these elements are presented. Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear are the main examples used, with side references to Edward Gorey, the Marx Brothers and others.

The "Explorations" volume is an anthology of critical writings on nonsense, mainly by Dutch, English and American authors. Tigges himself is represented, along with Elizabeth Sewell and Anthony Burgess. There is, finally, a selected bibliography of writing on literary nonsense.

Alice's Adventures Underground. Lewis Carroll.

Holt Rinehart and Winston. 1985.

1st American edition thus. \$3.95 remaindered. When Morton Cohen discovered Carroll's drawing of Alice under the photograph in the original manuscript in the British Museum, it called for a new edition which would include the exciting find. We have not seen the original English edition, but the American publishers have done a fine job and at \$3.95, it's a spectacular buy. Bound in glossy boards imitating the original Carroll artwork, it contains the lovely foreword by Alice's granddaughter, photographs, an introduction and a short *Alice* bibliography, along with a tissue page, that when lifted, reveals the Carroll drawing.

Sylvie and Bruno. Lewis Carroll.

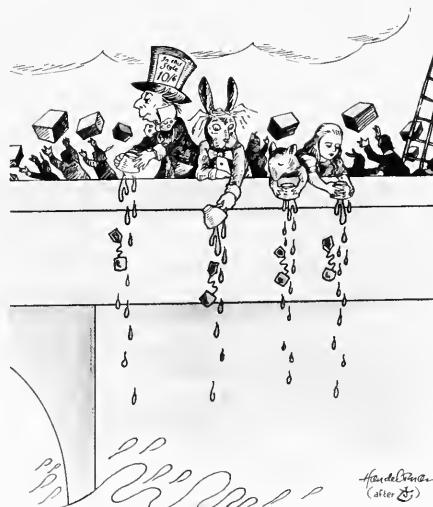
With the 46 original illustrations by Harry Furniss and a new introduction by Martin Gardner. *Dover 1988. Stiff wrappers. \$7.95.*

"How should we finally assess this long, complicated, curious 'novel of ideas', so rich in nonsense, linguistic play and philosophical reflection?" Martin Gardner asks towards the end of the lucid explication of the book in his introduction. After quoting some unfavorable comments from Ruth Berman and Florence Becker Lennon, he cites Derek Hudson's comment that the book is "one of the most interesting failures in English literature." While Gardner doesn't agree or disagree with this estimation, he calls the book "unique", and that no one but Dodgson could have written it.

What Happened to Sir Harold Hartley's Pamphlets?

The search goes on. Readers of past issues of the Knight Letter know that the editors of the forthcoming series of books on the pamphlets of Lewis Carroll are desperately searching for some elusive items – most of which are unique and were at one time in the possession of Sir Harold Hartley.

We've traced some of the pamphlets owned by Sir Harold, but they're not the ones we're looking for. Please consult our previous issue for the hard-to-find pamphlets. Any clues forwarded to the editor of the Knight Letter will be deeply-deeply appreciated!



Unexpected Help for the Colonists at the Boston Tea Party. From the New Yorker

Lovett Collection Checklist Scheduled for January

"Lewis Carroll's Alice", a bibliographical checklist of the Lovett collection, is scheduled for publication in January. According to the advertising flyer, the catalogue is the largest listing of Carrolliana ever published, and will include detailed descriptions of nearly 500 different editions of the *Alice* books, translations, works adapted for stage, screen, concert hall and radio; parodies and imitations; reference works and a list of miscellaneous Carrolliana. All in all, over 2000 items will be included.

The book will contain about 500 pages, with a dust jacket illustrated by Barry Moser. The nearly 100 illustrations will include a full color frontispiece of a recently-discovered watercolor of Alice, Lorina and Edith Liddell, painted by Lewis Carroll.

LCSNA members may order copies directly from Lovett and Lovett, 110 North Hawthorne Road, Winston-Salem NC 27104, for \$65.00 per copy, each one signed. The Lovetts will donate 10% of the sales (\$6.50 per copy) to the LCSNA publication fund.

Here and There . . .

Fran Abeles, currently at work on the mathematical pamphlets of Lewis Carroll, is also involved in a projected series of three mathematical papers on Lewis Carroll's ciphers. The first is entitled "Some Victorian Periodic Polyalphabetic Substitution Ciphers". Another includes a paper to be delivered at Harvard – "Lewis Carroll's Method of Trees: Its Origins in *Studies in Logic*."

From E.L. Cary's biography of the Rosetts, published in 1900, Dante Gabriel's loss of sanity is narrated, including the following: "An even more extravagant fancy ranged Mr. Dodgson with the conspirators who assailed him, the famous verses on the *Hunting of the Snark* constituting a pasquinade against him."

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. By Lewis Carroll. Illustrated by Anthony Browne. Knopf. \$19.95. The Book of the Month Club is offering it at \$17.95. We have not yet received a copy for review.

from our far-flung correspondents



(Editor's Note: We're constantly receiving information from members concerning matters relating to LC. Since we don't have space to print it all, we try to choose those items which seem more significant than others. But thank you all and keep sending items of interest).

Relative to our inquiry "Has AIW ever been performed in Italian?", Alice Berkey replied "Do cats eat bats?" and sent us a Xerox copy of a 1974 program from Italy, where it was performed on TV.

An 8-page illustrated parody "The Jailbird in One-derland" was included with issue #17 of *The Jailbird*, the magazine of Six of One, the Prisoner's Appreciation Society of England.

An original *Alice in Wonderland* ballet was performed in Honolulu in June. Our correspondent, Robert Hornback, reports that it was successfully translated into dance and music by an enormous cast that included many small children as dancing flowers. Mr. Hornback continues: "A series of sixteen short scenes . . . with a bare minimum of props advances the story. An unusual touch

was provided by the Tweedle brothers who performed the parts in softshoe."

Member Richard Boothe sends us a notice of the Sierra Club's April 1, 1989 *Snark Hunt Potluck*, a picnic where *The Hunting of the Snark* will be read aloud. For more information, write to Richard at 555 N. Rossmore Ave., Apt. 105, Los Angeles, CA 90004.

The December 11th issue of the N.Y. Times Book Review had a section "Classics? Bah, Humbug: A Symposium." Among the authors who took it on the chin were Shelley, T.S. Eliot, Melville, Tolstoy—and Lewis Carroll. George Paington had this to say about AAIW: I have ambivalent feelings about Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. This is because the effect of Alice's terrifying fall down the rabbit hole has had on me right through adulthood. The scene has seived up countless nightmares, which is not surprising since a recurrent feature in bad dreams is hurtling down dark shafts. Carroll may have understood this because he has Alice falling down quite slowly, even able to reach out and take a jar of marmalade off a shelf as she passes. No

matter. It still evokes that awful dream sequence of the earth giving way . . .

The defunct Barclay Galleries in Manhattan has been indicted for selling, among others, Dali posters of "The Mad Tea Party" for as much as \$6000; actual value: about \$100.

POTPOURRI . . . Smithsonian Christmas catalog offers an AIW croquet set at \$22.00 . . . In line with that, the Disney catalog (1-800-237-5751) offers a 14" Disney White Rabbit dressed for croquet at \$24.00 . . . At the Mind's Eye (1-800-227-2020), Alan Bennett's AIW and TTLG cassettes at \$14.95 . . . A disappearing Cheshire Cat mug is available from the Wireless catalogue, PO Box 70870, St. Paul, MN 55170. Hot water causes the cat to disappear; it reappears as the mug cools . . . A magnificent AIW chess set is available from Cashs of Ireland, PO Box 47, St. Patrick St., Cork. The 32 pieces are handcolored on ground stone. Also included is an inlaid rosewood chessboard. Price is \$365.00 . . . FAO Schwartz catalog offers a Cheshire Cat chair, handpainted for \$385.00

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