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Theresa L. Woods
University of South Florida

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University of South Florida

Honors College Thesis

Alice's Adventures and *Bleak House*: Authors, Illustrators, and Victorian Professional
Networking

Theresa L. Woods

Spring 2011

Mentor: Dr. Precious McKenzie-Stearns

Reader: Dr. Laura Head

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The Victorian Age was a time of great change politically, socially, and morally for the nation of England. Reform was rampant in both the government and the social structure as advancing technology changed how people viewed themselves and their legacies. For the first time, photography was able to capture a single event for future generations, and technology allowed for the first mass production of images, leading to a change in the way people considered appearances and reality, both in their own lives and in the fiction they so readily devoured.

A change in literature came about because of the turmoil England endured during the Victorian Era. During the Time of Troubles, between the 1830 and 1840, British people endured a period of economic failings, bad harvests, and unemployment, which led to widespread poverty and riots (Greenblatt 983). Following the First Reform Bill of 1832, which extended voting rights to men owning property worth ten pounds or more in rent a year, the English class system became destabilized, causing a nation-wide identity crisis (Greenblatt 979). Though Queen Victoria inherited these problems when she came to the throne in 1837, she brought England into an age of increased production and economic and technological growth, culminating in the 1851 opening of the Great Exhibition, championed by her husband, Prince Albert. Held in the stylish glass greenhouse called the Crystal Palace – an engineering triumph in itself – this showcase served as a showcase for modern industry and science, and was accessible to the people of London, as it was held in their very own Hyde Park (Greenblatt 985).

At the Great Exhibition stereo daguerreotypes were on display. A great interest in this photography was sparked and in the next three months a quarter of a million photography sets were sold between London and Paris alone. Although the idea of capturing an image and freezing it for all time was not new – Leonardo Da Vinci proposed it in 1515 as the *camera obscura* – its accessibility to the public at large by the 1850s helped to alter the way people considered images and identity, not only concerning themselves, but with the characters they found in literature (Cross).

This call for realism, specifically in sensory detail, was a sharp departure from the introspection and emotion of the Romantic era's literature. Romanticism was “not just a greater freedom and a new technique; these were only the outer manifestations of a complete and deep-seated re-orientation, not to say revolution, in the manners of thought, perception, and consequently of expression too” (Furst 116-117). Romanticism strove to embrace a universal poetry and literature – a movement that spread across Europe. This revolution changed literature into something more accessible to the public, but still separated in theme at times. Many authors called upon classical myths and literature that were not necessarily immediately familiar for some readers. The Victorians changed both style and subject matter, choosing to write about life as they saw it and recording the detail in words. The changes in technology and literature that began to build the visual culture led to the hallmarks that we see in Victorian literature – the increased attention to sensory detail in order to portray their world as accurately as possible (Greenblatt 933).

The demand for visual detail was answered by the Victorian authors with enthusiasm, throwing into sharp relief the differences in narration and description between themselves and

their predecessors. For instance, Percy Bysshe Shelley, regarded as one of the best Romantic poets along with Lord Byron and John Keats, wrote in 1816's "Mutability":

We are the clouds that veil the midnight moon;
 How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
 Streaking the darkness radiantly!--yet soon
 Night closes round, and they are lost for ever:
 Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
 Give various response to each varying blast,
 To whose frail frame no second motion brings
 One mood or modulation like the last. (Shelley 744)

Shelley, in typical Romantic fashion, focuses on the human experience and uses metaphors that conjure visuals for the reader, but never creates a full and precise image.

This method, representative of the Romantic style, is very different from Victorian writing, which called upon images to illustrate and record, not just create metaphorical comparisons. For instance, in "Impression du Matin," Oscar Wilde creates an entire picture of a London street using only words, describing it in detail that would rival that found in a photograph of the scene:

The Thames nocturne of blue and gold
 Changed to a harmony in grey,
 A barge with ochre-colored hay
 Dropped from the wharf: and chill and cold
 The yellow fog came creeping down
 The bridges, till the houses' walls

Seemed changed to shadows, and St. Paul's

Loomed like a bubble o'er the town. (Wilde 1687-1688)

Rather than likening aspects of life – its impermanence, in Shelley's case – to objects or images that the reader can conjure, Wilde verbally illustrates the scene for the audience and allows them to draw their own conclusions based on what they “see.”

Much of Victorian writing is in this realistic tradition, and many scenes seem to echo from one writer to the next. For instance, on the first page of *Bleak House*, Charles Dickens calls upon the London fog as Wilde does, but in this case it serves as a symbol for later events:

Fog everywhere. For up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marches, fog on the Kentish heights. Fog creeping into the cabooses of collier brigs, fog lying out on the yards, and hovering in the rigging of great ships; fog drooping on the gunwales of barges and small boats. (Dickens 5)

This fog, much like Wilde's fog, veils identities and exemplifies the murkiness and unclear nature of the court case that is the driving force of the novel: Jarndyce and Jarndyce.

Fog represents the uncertainty of identity that many Victorian writers were concerned with, including Lewis Carroll. Carroll's Alice is decidedly different from other Victorian protagonists in the sense that Alice's identity is brought into question only by other characters, who are definably nonsensical. Alice does not change – when she reaches Wonderland she is sure of her own likes, dislikes, and identity, and her curiosity defines her and her interactions with others. She is static and certain for the reader, unlike Esther Summerson of *Bleak House*, whose self-definition is different than the character presented in her own narrative. These

differences, as well as other matters of circumstance, lead to Alice and Esther being represented quite differently in the original graphics presented alongside the text.

Though the two texts are drastically different, Charles Dickens' *Bleak House* (1853) and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) serve as excellent examples of how newly established Victorian sensibilities linked to visualization are represented in fiction. The texts of these two novels, so representative of their time period and audience, interact very differently with the images found within the stories.

Bleak House, for all its intricate design in plot, characterization, and narration, is simple in structure as it relates to its corresponding images. Michael Steig comments that "*Bleak House* is generally considered to have taken both novelist and illustrator beyond the caricature tendencies that are so prominent in the early novels" of the Victorian era, giving it a depth of interaction that is unique ("Critic" 58). The text of the novel stands alone with Dickens' descriptive prose giving all the sensory information necessary for the reader to experience the novel. Though the images give a clear reference point – a type of definitive representation of certain scenes – they do not offer new information to be considered within the story, and only draw parallels and offer symbols, for the readers to find. *Bleak House's* illustrator, Hablot Knight Browne (Phiz), offers no character development in his images, and seems instead to strive toward avoiding such confrontation with the text through his haunting darkplates and comic line drawings (Steig, "Critic"). This leaves a question of whether or not the illustrator was "concerned with the same thematic issues as Dickens, and if so, whether it was possible for him as a visual artist to deal with these issues in the same way," and supports what we know historically – that Browne's friendship with Dickens and the structure of their collaboration

allowed for him to interact with the text through his illustrations, not simply depict scenes (Petracca).

In contrast to Browne's sophisticated approach to illustration for *Bleak House*, book reviewers for Athenaeum called Tenniel's illustrations of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* "masterpieces of wise absurdity" and reviewers for Echo observed that both the author and illustrator had created "a jewel rarely to be found nowadays" (8). John Tenniel's illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* offer solid visualizations of Alice's character as well as events and emotions not made clear on the page, but are still present in the narrative. Tenniel's insight is an integral part of the novel's design, as Carroll had built the novel including his own images, many of which served as the design for Tenniel's final artwork. These images cannot be separated from the text, which is not the case with *Bleak House*. Carroll's influence on the images allows the reader to interpret the illustrations as a part of the story (much like today's graphic novels), and readers can draw new or augmented information from them. Alice's appearance in itself, for example, is an interpretation of the text, since her curiosity and intellect are manifested in the form of an exceptionally large head and demure posture.

The illustrations of these Victorian tomes are important in the context of their time. Readers demanded additional visual information in response to changing technology and increased written sensory detail was not enough to sate this craving. Although Browne's and Tenniel's works both stand as representative examples of illustrated Victorian novels, they each interact with the texts in which they belong on several different levels. Not only do the narrators of the novels make different assumptions about the presence of images in the text, the illustrations offer different kinds of interpretations of the characters. Both illustrators also set apart the protagonist from the other characters in the images, but do so in contrasting ways.

These differences, which are so profound and significant, are at least partially explained by the contrasting relationships between the authors and illustrators. In a time when writers were stepping away from the expression of emotions and deep connections with nature and earth as a whole that the Romantics so prized, art became a mode of expression and development of individuality in an industrializing and changing society that sought to make everyone equal. It is thus impossible, specifically for this time period, to separate the artist from the art.

Carroll and Dickens wrote from two different places and lifestyles. Carroll came from a stable home and upbringing with a career in academia – writing was a love of his, and storytelling was simply something he did to entertain children (Leach). Dickens, in contrast, had a troubled childhood during which his father was arrested and young Dickens was put to work at a shoeblacking warehouse. His career as an author grew from his experience as a reporter, later incorporating many of his experiences into his works (Cody). The illustrators were just as diverse in experiences. Hablot Knight Browne was an illegitimate child, adopted by his grandparents, then apprenticed to an engraver. His restlessness with the task of engraving later led him to painting, where his talents were recognized and capitalized upon, though his skills as an engraver would be called upon in his career as an illustrator (Allingham, “Hablot”). Little is known of John Tenniel’s childhood, but we do know that he was raised in a creative environment, as his father was a dance master and fencing teacher. He was self-taught as an artist and established himself early as a master illustrator (Allingham, “Sir John”).

These four men came to their projects with such a vast range of experiences that it is no small wonder that the texts of Carroll and Dickens interact differently with Tenniel and Browne’s illustrations respectively. Tenniel and Carroll, who had a tense but professional

relationship, produced *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* together – a work whose illustrations have far different interpretive qualities than those of Dickens and Browne's *Bleak House*. It is important when comparing the relationship between text and image in these cases to account for the differing relationships between these pairs of men – and their relationships were very different.

Lewis Carroll, born January 27, 1832 as Charles Lutwidge Dodgson at Daresbury in Cheshire, was a man with qualities strikingly similar to those of his later illustrator – qualities that would shape their interactions as well as the volumes they produced together. He lived in a time of great change and development that he would come to embrace. His father, who was a clergyman, was given the position of rector of Croft in Yorkshire in 1843, leading him to move his family away from the home that Carroll knew. As the eldest son and the third of eleven children, Carroll was given a disciplined but happy childhood, and had educational foundations in mathematics, religion and Latin before attending the Richmond School at age twelve, then Rugby. When he moved to Christ Church after Rugby, he elected to remain there until his death (Cohen xvi).

Carroll, who was plagued by handicaps such as deafness in one ear and a stammer, chose not to take up the priesthood despite the offer and his eligibility, and instead devoted his career almost wholly to the study of mathematics. He lectured at Christ Church College for twenty five years and often taught at surrounding institutions, such as Oxford. This profession and profound interest in mathematics and logic clearly influenced *Alice*. Instead of being a typical “quest romance” of the time in which the protagonist “matures, overcomes obstacles, and eventually gains wisdom,” Alice's adventure is one of progression rather than evolution. “When Alice arrives in Wonderland, she is already the most reasonable creature there. She is wiser than any

lesson books are able to teach her to be” (Lin xi). She is a curious child who delights in logic and is only pleased at the Mad Tea Party when the Mad Hatter gives her the impossible riddle of why a raven is like a writing desk (Carroll 70). This departure from the quest (much like the one Dickens’ heroine Esther endures) shows how Carroll, a methodical professor, drew themes from his own life and profession and embedded them in his writing.

Carroll’s exposure to academic life and the advancements in technology led him to a variety of interests in mechanics, medicine, and science. Throughout his life he was a supporter of theater and an enthusiastic photographer who captured the likes of Prince Frederick of Denmark, Prince Leopold, John Ruskin, and Lord Tennyson on film (Cohen xvi-xvii). Photography became a mode of personal expression for him – a way to capture aesthetic beauty and elegance that was seemingly divine (Leach). This is likely why Alice herself is preoccupied with visual information, as any Victorian child would likely have been. On the first page of the novel we find that Alice is entirely unenthused by wordy books when she asks herself “what is the use of a book without pictures or conversations?” (Carroll 11). The fact that Alice asks this at the beginning of the novel shows that Carroll himself recognized the entertaining quality of an illustrated novel, and the first words that Alice speaks dictates that *Alice’s Adventures* must, by nature, include images in its integral design (Carroll 11).

It was, perhaps, these eclectic interests that allowed Carroll to identify with children and weave such interests into his tales. Carroll adored young girls, though there is little evidence to suggest that his interactions with them were anything less than innocent – he maintained correspondence with many of them as they grew, and his fondness, many scholars suggest, was spiritual and appreciative rather than criminal. His interests in Victorian technological developments as well as his storytelling abilities endeared Carroll to children, specifically the

dean of Christ Church's daughter, Miss Alice Liddell. H.G. Liddell, a friend of Carroll's, would allow him to take Alice and her sisters out on the river, where he would tell them stories, eventually weaving the tales that would become *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* (Cohen xvii-xix).

These tales were originally recorded for Alice Liddell herself and not the world at large, so it can be understood that Carroll's decision to publish was not taken lightly, and this justifies his love of the images he drew and later insisted be used to create the final artwork in the book. Since Carroll knew a great deal about book manufacturing, he was able to provide details of where illustrations could be placed and how they should be printed and assumed the lead role in the book production, leaving his publishers, Macmillan & Company, to serve as little more than distributors of *Alice* (Cohen xxiv). He took great control over the illustrations, insisting that the primitive sketches he created for *Alice's Adventures Underground* – the first manuscript written for Alice Liddell herself that would eventually evolve into *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* – be used as the basis for the final artwork for the novel.

When one looks at the portrait of Carroll as a whole – a stammering, partially deaf mathematics professor who had extensive knowledge of bookmaking and publishing as well as an affinity for photography and young girls – it is easy to understand that, when mixed with an illustrator whose temper and talent rivaled his own, the waters were bound to be rough. John Tenniel, who had already established himself as the top cartoonist for *Punch*, was sought out by Carroll himself rather than the publisher, as protocol would dictate. Carroll had clearly decided Tenniel was the best man for the job. Carroll had contacted Tenniel through his friend Tom Taylor, a playwright, and within a month Carroll and Tenniel met in London on January 25, 1864, when arrangements were made for the original *Alice* illustrations to be produced (Cohen

3). He was contracted much like a modern day graphic designer, and was given specific instructions about the dimensions and placement of the images, as well as content and how it would relate to the story.

Carroll presented Tenniel with the original *Alice's Adventures Underground* manuscript when they began their work together, and through their collaboration for the production of the first edition, the tale doubled in length. In the time that Carroll expanded the tale, he grew frustrated with Tenniel's lack of progress on the illustrations. He recorded on May 30th of that same year that Tenniel had not yet begun the pictures, and the entire summer Carroll unsuccessfully tried to meet with Tenniel. In October, Tenniel showed him the beginnings of a woodcut, and Carroll expressed disappointment once more to find that it the sole piece of work that the artist had accomplished for *Alice* (Cohen 3-4).

The collaboration slowed to a near halt after this. Carroll tried to visit Tenniel once more in October, only to find that the artist was out and could not be located. On November 20th Carroll explained to Alexander Macmillan of Macmillan & Company to state that he was not optimistic about the projected release within that year. He writes: "Mr. Tenniel writes that he is hopeless of completing the pictures by Christmas. The cause I do not know." Carroll explains through his frustration with a hint of sympathy, "but he writes in great trouble, having just lost his mother, and I have begged him to put the thing aside for the present." This letter suggests that, despite the tension, Carroll wanted to maintain a strong professional and friendly relationship with Tenniel. He thus suggested a release date around Easter, and in December Macmillan and Carroll agreed that *Alice* would be introduced to the world on April 1st of 1865 (Cohen 5-6).

This date proved to be too optimistic. Tenniel could not complete the illustrations, and on July 19th, when the first prints of the book had been bound, Tenniel deemed the printing of his artwork inferior and a reprint was ordered. Carroll recorded in his journal that Tenniel was “entirely dissatisfied with the printing of the pictures, and I suppose we shall have to do it all again.” To further exacerbate Carroll’s temper, the poor printing job and Tenniel’s demands cost him around £600 – more than his annual salary as a professor (Cohen 6).

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland appeared for the first time to the general public at Christmas 1865 and, despite praise from reviewers, it did not fly off the shelves. Perhaps because of this, and perhaps because some viewed the illustrations as being “better than the story,” Tenniel was reluctant to return to illustrate *Through the Looking-Glass*. His work with *Punch* took precedence, and *Alice’s* sequel proved to be his last novel illustration (Cohen 7). Perhaps the tension that later developed between Carroll and Tenniel was due to their striking similarities. Like Carroll, Tenniel suffered from a handicap – he had been blinded in one eye at a young age by his father in a fencing match – and they both suffered from artistic temperaments mixed with chronic perfectionism (Cohen 1-2). Many question to this day whether or not Tenniel’s recall of the first run of *Alice* books was justified when the second printing was indistinguishable from the first. The recall was entirely out of character for Tenniel who, Carroll wrote, “rarely gave his *Punch* engravings a second glance” (Cohen 7). This exposure of Tenniel’s temper raises the question of whether or not he was simply repaying Carroll for his earlier annoyances with his pace, and perhaps his lack of artistic freedom. In a time of slow communication and strict formality from which few letters remain (specifically of those from Carroll to Tenniel, which were destroyed by Tenniel himself or lost), it is important to glean what we can from the correspondence between Tenniel and Carroll.

The few surviving letters between the pair concerning *Alice* become more curious as the project progressed. The first surviving letter of note (March 8, 1865) is a missive from Tenniel to Carroll discussing the placement of “The Two Footmen” and the selected subjects for the “A Mad Tea-party.” The illustrations described are indeed the images that appeared in the final text, and the letter is friendly enough, explaining that the images “can go anywhere,” and Tenniel requests the updated copy of the chapter to ensure his illustrations are complete. The post-script reads “I am very glad you like the new pictures” (Cohen 12-14). This letter implies a sense of collaboration and professionalism between the pair that would later dissolve with Tenniel’s slow pace and general lack of productivity on the project.

In a later letter from June 1, 1870, Tenniel implores Carroll to cut the chapter concerning the “wasp” scene. Out of concern for the integrity of the work, he begs, “don’t think me brutal, but I am bound to say that the ‘wasp’ chapter doesn’t interest me in the least, and 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” (Cohen 15). Although this does not concern *Alice* directly, and we do not know what Carroll’s direct reply was, it offers insight into the pair’s relationship. Despite Carroll’s attachment to every bit of Alice literature written, the final manuscript of *Through the Looking-Glass* does not contain the “wasp” scene, proving that Carroll respected Tenniel’s opinion and the value of his illustrations. He would have no scene that could not be illustrated, and thus consented to part with it.

This idea that Carroll would only include scenes that could be accompanied by an illustration is one that sets him apart from other Victorian authors and further aligns him with modern graphic novelists or children’s authors who employ pictures to tell their stories. In this respect, Carroll was well ahead of his time. For instance, there are many scenes in *Bleak House*

that are not illustrated, and authors such as George Eliot and Oscar Wilde did not include images in the designs for their work. If they were included, they were added later by the publisher. This reinforces the theory that Tenniel, despite his experience and the skill proven by his status at *Punch*, was not given any real level of artistic freedom. Though Carroll's images are complete and integrated with the text as Tenniel's are, they are inconsistent. For instance, in Carroll's own illustrations for *Alice's Adventures Underground*, he drew an image of Alice (clearly modeled on Alice Liddell herself) swimming in the pool of tears (see Fig. 1). His image is rough, drawn in ink, and

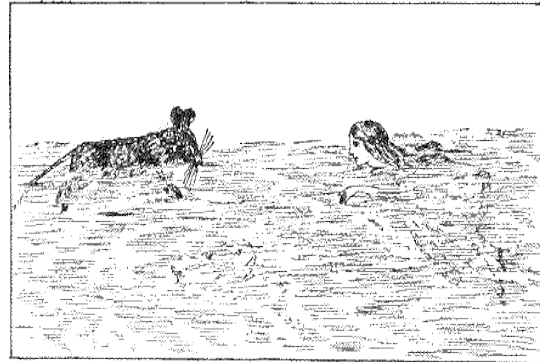


Fig. 1. *Untitled*, illustration from Lewis Carroll. Source: Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures Underground*. London: Macmillan & Co, 1886.

the face of Alice is slightly disproportionate and unlike the Alice on the previous page. The mouse appears to float on the water rather than swim, unlike the mouse in Tenniel's art (Carroll

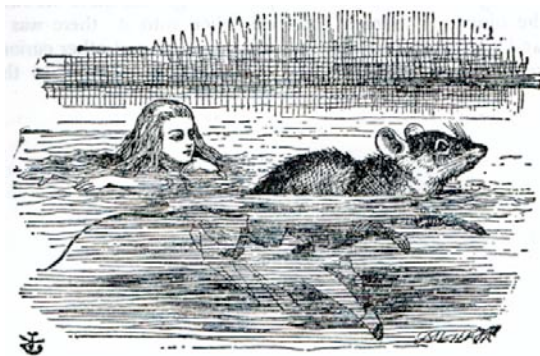


Fig. 2. *Alice in a Sea of Tears*, illustration from John Tenniel. Source: Carroll, Lewis, John Tenniel, Martin Gardner, and Lewis Carroll. *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*. New York: Norton, 2000. Print. 26.

“Underground”). Tenniel's drawing of this same scene has the same characters in comparable positions (see Fig. 2). The images appear to be a first draft and then a final one rather than the work of two different artists (Carroll 26). Similar comparisons can be made with all of the artwork in *Alice's Adventures Underground*, showing that Tenniel clearly used Carroll's illustrations not for inspiration, but to copy and improve upon.

The threads of Carroll and Tenniel's relationship left woven into *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, as well as the history of the tale paint an interesting picture – one of two similar men working together in dissonance to create one of the most beloved stories of all time. Though Tenniel clearly had some form of contempt for Carroll – whether it came from pressure from his other commitments or some animosity towards Carroll himself – he created artwork that integrated perfectly with Carroll's original design for *Alice*, both physically and informatively, working from both Carroll's original art and his own imagination inspired by the tale. This relationship and its product – a novel with this brand of interaction between text and image – throws into sharp contrast the close and friendly collaborative relationship that Charles Dickens shared with Hablot Knight Brown, his illustrator for *Bleak House*.

Dickens' relationship with Hablot Knight Browne lacked the strain and distance that Tenniel's and Carroll's had, which I feel is evident in the relationship between the text and images. Dickens' extended collaboration and friendship with Browne not only exemplifies his dedication to the medium of the illustrated novel, it also helps to explain the interpretive powers of Browne's illustrations as compared to Tenniel's *Alice* art.

Unlike Carroll and Tenniel, Dickens and Browne did not have remarkably similar backgrounds. Dickens, who was born on February 7, 1812, had a rocky childhood that greatly influenced his writing. His father, John, mismanaged the family finances and was jailed in 1824 for debt, leaving Charles to work at Warrens Blackening Factory while his family joined his father in prison. Twelve-year-old Charles was traumatized by this experience. By the time his father was released, Dickens was further disheartened when his mother insisted he continue working for the factory. Salvation came only through his father, who insisted he return to school.

At fifteen Dickens found employment at an attorney's office – a clear influence on the legal aspects of his work, specifically *Bleak House*. His prior job at the Blackening Factory also served as a later influence, as he only spoke of it with those closest to him, and perpetuated his themes of alienation and betrayal (Cody).

Dickens did not find work as a writer until 1829 when he was employed by Doctor's Common Courts as a freelance reporter. In 1833, Dickens was able to publish his first story, followed by several more that were accompanied by his own sketches under the name of "Boz" – like Carroll, Dickens had some artistic talent *and* selected to keep his name from the reader. By 1836, *Sketches by Boz* was being published alongside illustrations by Robert Seymour, whose name was well known in publishing and art. Following the second publication, however, Seymour committed suicide, creating the very void that Hablot Knight Browne was called to fill (Cody).

Browne, born July 10, 1815, was the ninth child in a brood of fifteen. The illegitimate son of a middle-class woman and a captain of Napoleon's Imperial Guard, Browne was adopted by his maternal grandparents. As a young adult, Browne was apprenticed to the Findlen brothers of London, who were engravers, at the recommendation of his brother-in-law, Elhanan Bicknell. Although he showed promise as an etching student and earned the Society of Arts medal for his skills, Browne grew tired of the apprenticeship's stringent guidelines. When Browne stepped in, he adopted the name "N.E.M.O.," a common term meaning "no one," suggesting that he was not to Seymour's standards. When his first sketches for *The Pickwick Papers* were drafted, however, and it was learned that his work was, in some ways, already superior to Seymour's, he adopted the name "Phiz" to compliment Dickens' "Boz" (Steig "Dickens" 24). Phiz and Boz's first serial

collaboration continued to be popular until its November 1837 end, earning Dickens the right to be a full-time author.

That same year, following Dickens' marriage to Catherine Hogarth, Browne accompanied the pair to Belgium, resulting in the production of *Nicholas Nickleby*, which they researched together while traveling (Allingham, "Hablott"). This twenty-three-year collaborative friendship led to the illustration of fifteen of Dickens' novels, and ended only when Dickens, who had collaborated with other artists (though not as consistently) decided that Browne's work was old-fashioned and ended their relationship with, as Browne stated, a "strangely silent manner" (Allingham, "Hablott").

After looking at Tenniel's relationship with Carroll and Dickens' with Browne, one can easily see why text and image interact so differently in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Bleak House*, despite being similarly marked by time period and status as illustrated novels. Through Tenniel, the images for *Alice* manifest sentiments expressed by Carroll, but do not offer considerable plot information or character development. The art interacts with the narration on a very physical level, and since we know historically that the artwork was an integral part of Carroll's design, the reader can regard the images as informative of the tale rather than interpretive, thus throwing into sharp relief the qualities of Browne's *Bleak House* work.

Since Browne served as the first reader and interpreter of Dickens' narration and, unlike Tenniel, was given license to draw connections not made explicit in the text, he was able to offer his own insight through the images rather than simply continuing Dickens'. The illustrations not only depict scenes, but draw parallels and reiterate points across chapters, and indeed a whole novel (likely offering support to the original readers who read the chapters as they were

published serially, not all at once as we read novels today). They illuminate elements of the sprawling narrative through illustrated gestures, positions, and, yes, light.

The main characters of the two novels, Esther and Alice, are very different based solely on the text. Esther is a young woman who is eligible for marriage and is concerned with adult matters such as money, society and her own appearance. In contrast, Alice is a child whose ultimate concern is distracting herself from her sister's boring lecture and finding something entertaining to do. Esther undergoes a typical journey of social interactions and involvement with politics, while Alice's adventure is by no means typical – hers is not a “quest romance” during which she “matures, overcomes obstacles, and eventually gains wisdom” as Esther's is (Lin xi). Alice is a curious child who delights in logic and is only pleased at the Mad Tea Party when the Mad Hatter gives her the impossible riddle of why a raven is like a writing desk (Carroll 70). Esther, in contrast, tries to find answers to the questions that plague her, but does not delight in them. It only makes sense then that the two characters would be represented quite differently in the illustrations, despite the similarities in audience and illustration style.

Let us first consider *Bleak House*. Esther, who is considered by many critics to be “emblematic of the Victorian angel in the house,” is one of two narrators of the tale. Her telling is subjective, and it is mostly in Esther's words that we find references to veils and identity. A great deal of emphasis is put on the symbol of the veil and how it protects and shrouds one's identity (Salotto 339). Throughout the novel, the scars on her face “mark the eruptions of the body's denial of a stable surface,” and the “miraculous disappearance of her scars at the ending of the text underscores the ideological nature of the narrative's subsequent erasure of disfigurement” (Salotto 336-337). *Bleak House* opens with Esther “looking into the face of

representation and seeing her doll; her face is scarred by smallpox, and the narrative ends on her face, on Woodcourt's asking her if she 'ever look(s) in the glass' to see that she is prettier than she ever was" (Salotto 338). Esther's face represents the moral situation of the novel, and the visualization of her countenance is crucial to the reader's understanding of the novel.

Why then does Browne choose to depict Esther with her face averted from the reader in nearly every image in which she is shown? The image "Light" depicts Esther's visit with Ada and Richard when they confess to her that they have been married in secret (see Fig. 3). In the image, Esther does not face the viewer and she is wearing a veil.



Fig. 3. *Light*, illustration from Hablot Knight Browne. Source: Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. London: Bradbury & Evans. Bouverie Street, 1853. Print. 493.

None of Esther's face is visible, not even a slight profile, so the reader does not get an image of her reaction to the marriage of her two best friends. She appears to be reaching for the pair, whose faces are plainly visible to the reader and whose expressions appear rather bored (Dickens 493). The moment that Dickens describes is rather loaded, and one would assume that seeing Esther's reaction would be certain of this scene were to be illustrated:

'Never any more. I am going to stay with my dear husband. We have been married above two months. Go home without me, my own Esther, I shall never go home any more.'

With those words my darling drew his head down on her breast, and held it there. And if ever in my life I saw love that nothing but death could change, I saw it then before me (Dickens 493).

Browne chooses to leave Esther's face a mystery for most of the novel despite its symbolic importance to the text. It is clear that her face is to be left to the reader's imagination, and that this is more important for Browne's purposes of interpretation than describing everything that Dickens offers.

John Tenniel has no qualms about showing Alice from every angle he can in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. We must,



Fig. 5. *Mary Hilton Badcock*. Source: "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." *Biblioteca Graphica Digital*. Web. 6 April 2011.

however, remember that there are four Alices, and the one that we view in Tenniel's illustrations is four times removed from the original. The first, of course, is Alice Liddell herself, the "baby belle dame, it seems, who bewitched Ruskin" in addition to Carroll (see Fig. 4). There are then Carroll's illustrations of Alice, which capture the real Alice Liddell's haunting quality and "pre-Raphaelite languor and ambiguity" (Auerbach 34). The third Alice is the one we read about in the text who is astute, logical and involved in the Wonderland that she visits. She is not girly or overtly proper in the text, but the fourth Alice – Tenniel's Alice, drawn from model Mary Hilton Badcock (see Fig. 5) – has a "demure propriety" that "may have led readers to see her role in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to be more passive than it is" (Auerbach 35).

Despite the question of whether or not this Tenniel's Alice captures Carroll's, it is the one that we are presented with in the original *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. She is shown in



Fig. 4. *Alice Liddell*, photography from Lewis Carroll. Source: Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures Underground*. London: Macmillan & Co, 1886. Front cover.

many different postures with a large head, presumably symbolic of her immense intellect and imagination, and is expressive in many of the images. When Alice is at the Mad Tea Party with the March Hare, Mad Hatter, and Dormouse, she finds herself rather perturbed with the nonsensical banter. “Your hair wants cutting,” are the first words the Hatter speaks at the party, and Alice takes great offense to him immediately. Carroll writes: ““You should learn

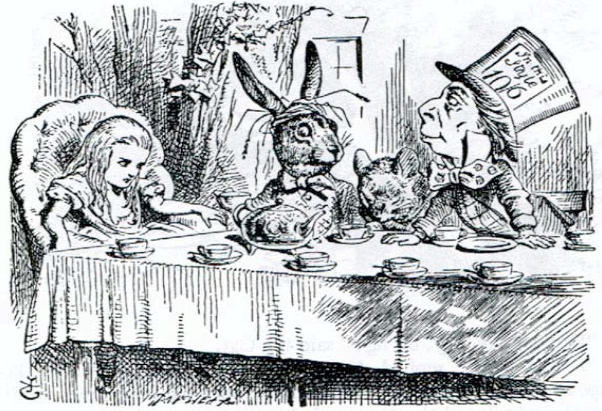


Fig. 6. *Alice at the Mad Hatter's Tea Party*, illustration from John Tenniel, Source: Carroll, Lewis, John Tenniel, Martin Gardner, and Lewis Carroll. *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*. New York: Norton, 2000. Print.70.

not to make personal remarks,' Alice said with some severity: 'it's very rude.'" The image that follows this exchange depicts the table, set for many and occupied by only four. The Hatter is looking straight at Alice while Hare and Dormouse seem distracted (see Fig. 6). Alice is shown with her arm outstretched, though she is not clearly reaching for anything. Her expression is dark and annoyed – Wonderland and its confusing and illogical characters are grating on her by this, the 70th page of the novel. In this illustration, unlike in the others, her posture is poor – she is hunched over as she glares at the Hare, appearing distinctly unhappy.

This image, which is representative of how Tenniel illustrates Alice, shows a great deal of expression and action (Carroll 70). It is a sharp contrast to our representative illustration of Esther, “Light,” where Browne avoids even showing her face, much less the expression on it. Carroll does not comment on Alice’s emotional state or level of annoyance at this point in the novel and gives only her tone of voice as indication, but because it can be easily discerned from the text Tenniel expresses it in the image. The illustrations of the main characters in these two

novels are handled in opposing ways – nothing of Esther’s internal life is shown in the illustrations, though it is explicit in her narration, and there is no indication of Alice’s thoughts and feelings in Carroll’s text, but Tenniel takes the liberty of displaying them in his artwork.

It is clear while comparing several images in *Bleak House* that Browne is making points about the characters that are not abundantly clear in the Dickens’ text. There is a question about whether or not the illustrator



was “concerned with the same thematic issues as Dickens, and if so, whether it was possible for him as a visual artist to deal with these issues in

Fig. 7. *A Model for Parental Deportment*, illustration from Hablot Knight Browne. Source: Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. London: Bradbury & Evans. Bouverie Street, 1853. print. 232.

the same way” (Petracca). Two images, twenty two pages apart, have very clear parallels when placed side by side. “A Model for Parental Deportment” appears first in the text and depicts Mr. Turveydrop speaking to Esther, Caddy Jellyby, and his son, Prince Turveydrop (see Fig. 7). Esther’s face is, as usual, averted from the viewer in the image. Caddy and Prince appear to be watching with great attentiveness as Mr. Turveydrop proves himself to be a model of parental behavior as he blesses his son’s decision to marry.

This conversation is preceded in chapter fourteen, where Turveydrop speaks of the failing deportment in England. He, like a preacher, lectures on the appropriate behavior that young people should display:

‘We have degenerated,’ he returned, shaking his head, which he could do, to a very limited extent, in his cravat. ‘A leveling age is not favorable to Deportment. It develops vulgarity. Perhaps I will speak with some little partiality. It may not be for me to say that

I have been called, for some years now, Gentleman Turveydrop; or that His Royal Highness the Prince Regeant did me the honor to inquire, on my removing my hat as he drove out of the Pavilion at Brighton (that fine building), ‘Who is he? Who the Devil is he? Why don’t I know him? Why hasn’t he thirty thousand a year?’ But these are little matters of anecdote – the general propriety, ma’am, -- still repeated, occasionally, among the upper classes’ (Dickens 137).

It is clear from this speech that Turveydrop is arrogant and takes excessive pride in his own deportment and behavior in society. He adheres to a code which is in decline and clings to it with immoderate gusto, making him grotesque in character. In the later image that Browne uses to tie Turveydrop to Reverend Mr. Chadband, Turveydrop, though seated, has his right arm raised as though preaching from a pulpit. His congregation looks on his immaculate dress and demeanor, both of which are composed carefully for show in both the text and the illustration. Turveydrop’s appearance and deportment are both clearly performative (Dickens 197).



Fig. 8. *Mr. Chadband ‘Improving’ a Difficult Subject*, illustration from Hablot Knight Browne. Source: Dickens, Charles. *Bleak House*. London: Bradbury & Evans. Bouverie Street, 1853. Print. 254.

An image eleven chapters later depicts the Reverend Mr. Chadband preaching in a similar manner to a group of people (see Fig. 8). In the image, the onlookers look rather harassed by his decision to speak at length about the “light of Terewth.” In the text, Chadband begins by addressing Joe, whose small, emaciated

figure is depicted at the bottom of the image, hunched over and dirty. “I say this brother,”

Chadband begins his parlance, “present here among us, is devoid of parents, devoid of relations,

devoid of flocks and herds, devoid of gold, of silver, of precious stones, because he is devoid of the light that shines upon some of us. What is that light? What is it? I ask you, what is that light?” Chadband explores the idea that Joe’s misfortune is tied to his lack of faith when he himself is a Reverend with no specified faith or denomination. He seems to be inventing ideas and twisting them to suit his argument and the moment he speaks, he is seen in the text as a pompous and arrogant figure (Dickens 254-255).

In Browne’s image, Chadband is shown standing above all the other people with his right hand raised and his left elevated, just like Turveydrop’s. Both characters are speaking to crowds about their beliefs on a subject that is somewhat distant and dissociative for their audience, and both express themselves with overconfidence and haughtiness. In the image of Chadband, he is standing above his audience with his arm raised, making him a more dominant presence in the image. Mr. Turveydrop is literally set upon a pedestal, despite his seated position in the image, and his arm, like Chadband’s, is raised, though not as high. Both men are wearing similar black and white outfits with strong lines that create a sharp contrast to the halo of light each has been placed in – Chadband stands in the center of both the image and the light, which seems natural. Turveydrop, however, is off center and out of the central light. Browne makes a choice to give him a halo with a separate focus, further aligning him visually with Chadband (see Figs. 7-8).

“Although no parallel between Turveydrop and Chadband is made explicit in the text,” Michael Steig writes, “such a parallel is obvious in Browne’s depiction of the two men” (Steig, “Critic” 59). Both men “embody the theme of false, quasi religious belief,” and it is this connection between Turveydrop and Chadband that was “undoubtedly in Dickens’ mind, but it is the illustrations, rather than either of the narrators, that make these connections explicit” (Steig, “Critic” 61). Instead of simply depicting the scenes of the novel, Browne acts as “both an

executor of Dickens' directions and an inspired contributor and interpreter of his texts." The illustrations function to "emphasize certain themes and strands of the plot," as seen by the comparison between these two images (Steig "Critic" 57).

Browne's illustrations are far more interpretive of Dickens' text because they can afford to be. The images of *Bleak House* were not a part of Dickens' initial design and they do not uphold the text in any way. They offer an image for the reader to help him or her imagine the events of the novel and draw connections between different characters and events. Should the images of *Bleak House* be extracted from the text, the book would be wholly understandable and complete. The reader would be left with no questions about any scene presented by the text because Dickens' detail makes the images obsolete.

Browne's illustrations offer an excellent interpretation of the novel, but "pictorial presentation" is not an "integral part of the author's design" as it is in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Levin 596).

Carroll's text interacts physically as well as symbolically with Tenniel's illustrations. For instance, when Alice spots the Cheshire-Cat "sitting on a bough of a tree a few yards off" of her own position, she approaches the cat with caution and finds herself standing under his branch and communicating with him (see Fig. 9). The image that Tenniel constructs with this scene acts as a tree itself. It is shaped like an upside-down "L" with Alice at the base on the left and the cat in the tree at the upper right. The

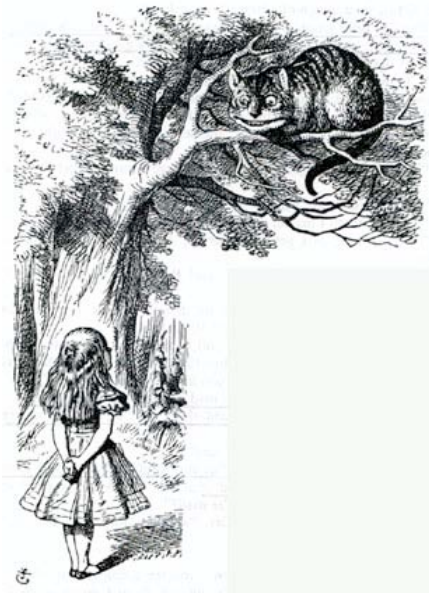


Fig. 9. Alice and the Cheshire Cat, illustration from John Tenniel. Source: Carroll, Lewis, John Tenniel, Martin Gardner, and Lewis Carroll. *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*. New York: Norton, 2000. Print; 65.

illustration and its shape partially frames the text, which is on the same level as Alice on the page, symbolically bringing the reader to Alice's level and aligning the audience with her rather than the Cheshire-Cat and other inhabitants of Wonderland. Alice asks which direction she should walk, as she is in a crossroads in the land, and how to avoid the "mad people." The cat replies, "Oh, you ca'n't help that. We're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad" (Carroll 65). Alice replies that she is not mad, confirming that this far into the novel she has retained her sanity and reasonable disposition among the illogical Wonderlandians and that we as the reader, being on Alice's level, should continue to approach Wonderland with common sense past this junction. The tree and branch shaped image keeps the reader in line with Alice and reaffirms that she is the principal character and that she herself has not been changed by her adventures this far. Throughout the novel and specifically with this image, "Picture and text join forces to align the reader's awareness with that of Alice" (Levin 596). It would not, perhaps, destroy the integrity of the novel if this particular image were removed, but the effect of the Cat being in the tree and the reader being placed in Alice's tiny black shoes would be lost (Carroll 65).

All the images in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are, as Levin observed, a part of Carroll's design. "He started with his own sketches," which we recognize as the second Alice, "chose his illustrator with the utmost concern and worked with Tenniel in the utmost indelible of collaborations" (Levin 596). It is easy to imagine how Carroll shaped the

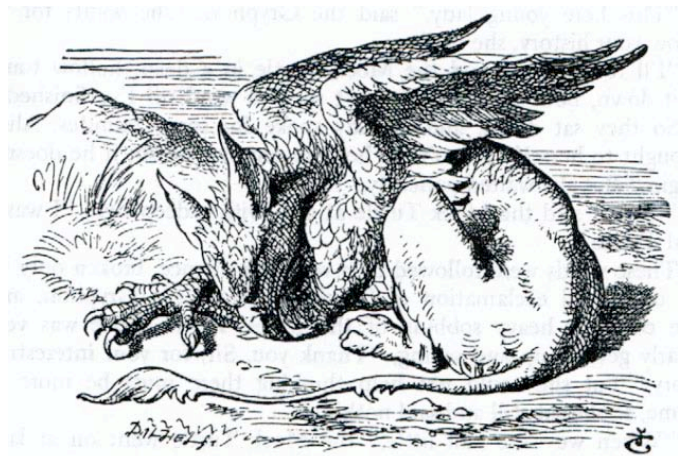


Fig. 10. Gryphon, illustration from John Tenniel. Source: Carroll, Lewis, John Tenniel, Martin Gardner, and Lewis Carroll. *The Annotated Alice: Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass*. New York: Norton, 2000. Print. 94.

text knowing that the images would be present, complete and in line with the action and atmosphere of his writing. This interaction between text and image is best exemplified when Alice, the Queen, and the King move to see the Mock Turtle. On the way they come across a Gryphon “lying fast asleep in the sun” (Carroll 94). Tenniel’s image depicts the Gryphon curled up with one talon outstretched above his head, his wings curled in towards his body (see Fig. 10). His lion’s tail is wrapped around towards his body, lying limp on the ground not far from his beak. His eyes are closed, his posture relaxed and comfortable (Carroll 95).

The reader does not receive any of this information from Carroll. From the text we know only that the Gryphon sleeps until the Queen awakens him and orders him to escort Alice to the Mock Turtle. Carroll does not simply leave out a description of the creature – he instructs the reader parenthetically to “look at the picture” if he or she does not know what a Gryphon is. It is this instruction and reliance on the image rather than description in language that sets Carroll and Tenniel’s collaboration apart. Unlike Browne, who received Dickens’ complete work and interpreted it before creating accompanying illustrations, Carroll worked hand in hand with Tenniel to create a text and set of illustrations that could not be separated, much as they are presented in *Alice’s Adventures Underground*. If the images were extracted from the original, unchanged text of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, the integrity of the entire work would be destroyed because of this simple reference to a picture of a slumbering Gryphon.

All of these observations – the documentations of the relationships between these authors and illustrators, the relationship between the novels and their illustrations and the physical interaction between the texts and images – come together to paint a picture of the Victorian era and the real people working and creating in it. The real people who created these lasting works

poured their creativity, and thus part of themselves, into these works, and the relationships amongst them cannot be separated from the works they produced, nor can the differing modes of interaction between the texts and images be ignored.

As I have shown, Dickens and Browne's relationship was far less tumultuous and tense than that of Carroll and Tenniel, and their real-life friendship bled easily onto their pages. In *Bleak House*, as with many of their other collaborations, the work of 'Boz' and 'Phiz' is intertwined seamlessly despite the reality that the text stands alone. Dickens, whose writing is detailed and verbose enough to render the images unnecessary, traveled with Browne and maintained a close personal relationship with him as a friend and illustrator.

This translates to the page in the sense that Dickens allowed Browne to interpret his writing freely and take his analyses and transform them into elements of art, such as Esther's eternally averted face and the connection between the stance of Mr. Turveydrop and Reverend Mr. Chadband. Documentation of the attitude of control and care with which Dickens published makes it difficult to imagine that he would let any illustrator with whom he did not have a personal and trusting relationship interpret his work on the page and draw such connections. Without the mutual respect for opinion and professional interpretation of literature, the illustrated scenes of *Bleak House* would likely have featured Esther as she describes herself in the text: a plain girl who is not clever and has always known that she was her mother's disgrace (Dickens 17-19). Without Browne's willingness and freedom to interpret, Esther's face would likely have been shown in every image she appears in and there would have been no indication in the illustration that she is the duplicitous and unreliable (though entertaining) narrator that one must analyze, doubt, and unravel. Mr. Turveydrop could have been drawn in a position decidedly unrelated to that of Reverend Chadband, and Victorian audiences would not have been given the

visual connection across hundreds of pages to draw this pair together, for there was no reason other than Browne's desire to liken the two for the pair to have been shown so similarly.

This lack of collaborative spirit and real-life compassion is evident in Tenniel's illustrations for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. His tumultuous relationship with Carroll is documented, specifically through the letters that Carroll kept to himself and the story they left behind outside of *Alice*. Unlike Dickens and Browne, there was no personal connection – no travels across Europe and research for future projects, and thus no reason for Tenniel to devote an exorbitant amount of effort on the project, or on his relationship with the writer.

Dickens and Browne, however, formed a collaborative relationship that is the basis of legend. Their travels and the works that came from it made Dickens one of the most loved writers of his time – a superstar of Victorian literature. The illustrations, similar in style to that of Tenniel's for *Alice*, gave Dickens' novels a comfortable feeling of realism within a fictional world, unlike the interaction between Carroll's writing and Tenniel's images, which create a surreal world whose only realistic component is its main character.

These two teams of illustrators and novelists created works that not only addressed themes and components of the stories and characters in the books, but reflected the professional relationships behind the writing and drawing. Because Tenniel and Carroll were not close friends and maintained only a brief professional relationship, there was no real sense of interpretation or collaboration – it was by and large the work of an illustrator following the instructions of an employer, since Carroll maintained complete control of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Browne's friendship with Dickens allowed for freedom of interpretation in their works, as shown in *Bleak House*.

In an age where the realist movement grew with advancing technology, Charles Dickens and Lewis Carroll's dedication to the medium of the illustrated novel not only shows changes in the tastes of readers, it serves as a starting point of sorts for the rise of the visual culture that we know today and began to change the expectations of audiences concerning modes of storytelling. Their differences in relationships and interpretation on the page aside, these two teams, along with their cohorts in writing with images, helped to advance Victorian culture towards the production of millions of daguerreotypes per year in newspapers, the concept of photography as an everyday part of life, and eventually towards motion pictures as a medium of storytelling (Cross). Images, their interpretive powers and ability to present audiences with a set visual for any scene – real or fictional – cannot be denied when one looks at these two sterling examples of illustrated Victorian novels. The four distinguished men that created these classics can be looked to as the forefathers of our own visual culture, as it was their respect for the graphic imagery and its part in storytelling that helped start it all.

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