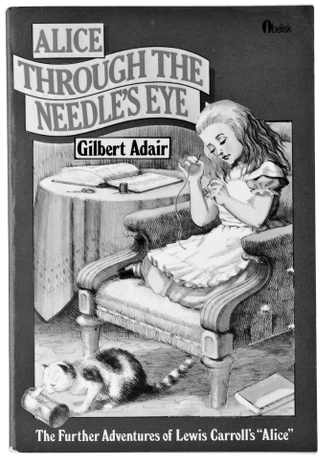
A finished work is exactly that. Requires urgent resuscitation.

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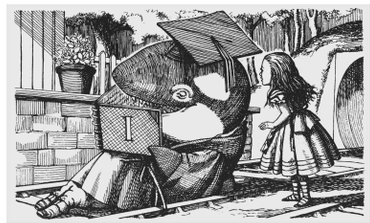
Alice Through the Needle's Eye, The Further Adventures of Lewis Carroll's Alice is Gilbert Adair's first novel, published in 1985. The text is an unauthorised sequel to two classics of Victorian literature for children, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). Adair's text is conceived as an illusion of writing-through-the-voice-of-another, an absolute appropriation of Lewis Carroll's authorial voice.

Carroll's characteristic surrealist tropes, structural devices, riddles, puns and the politics of talking animals are all present in this new version. Alice finds herself transported through the eye of her sewing needle to a world in thrall to the alphabet; from bails of hay that reveal themselves to be composed of tiny letterforms, to the bizarre ritual of the 'queue'.

Adair's characters exemplify the curious duality of their creation. In chapter two Alice meets the Siamese cats Ping and Pang, who are joined at the tail and speak as one being, habitually finishing each other's sentences. "You took the very words out of my mouth!"



In chapter three, a mouse named Anonymouse claims itself as the author of "all the poems signed Anon in the anthologies". Chapter four sees Alice encounter a whale whose hopeless memory has driven it to live life as a performance of a script it wrote many years previously, bound to improvise the situations devised by its former self.



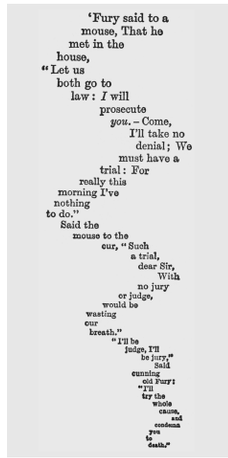
Lastly, in chapter nine a starving rattle-snake consumes itself. "Alice sat there for a moment quite dumbfounded. Then she heard a feeble voice, which seemed to come out of the air … followed by a ghostly rattle."



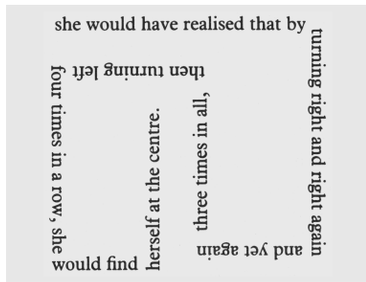
The illustrations in *Through the Needle's Eye* are drawn by Jenny Thorne, in imitation of of Sir John Tenniel's original wood engravings.



Adair's book also follows its parents in several typographic set-pieces. In *Wonderland*, as a mouse recounts his "long and sad tale", Alice's imagining of it is represented thus:


'Fury said to a
mouse, That he
met in the
house,
"Let us
both go to
law: *I* will
prosecute
you. – Come,
I'll take no
denial; We
must have a
trial: For
really this
morning I've
nothing
to do."
Said the
mouse to the
cur, "Such
a trial,
dear Sir,
With
no jury
or judge,
would be
wasting
our
breath."
"I'll be
judge, I'll
be jury,"
Said
cunning
old Fury:
"I'll
try the
whole
cause,
and
condemn
you
to
death."

Adair's narrator echoes this, demonstrating the solution to a maze in which Alice finds herself.


she would have realised that by
turning right and right again
three times in all,
and yet again
then turning left
herself at the centre.
four times in a row, she
would find

Twenty five years after it appeared, Adair's work of virtuoso mimicry can still be read as something of a novelty. It might be considered as forgery, were it not for the fact that its paratexts express its provenance so clearly. But why does the idea of a continuation of another's work seem so novel?

There is a broad history of artists taking existing texts as material for new work. For example, Carl Andre's 'poems', produced by applying sorting processes to the text of E. W. Peirce's *Indian History, Biography and Genealogy*; and John Cage's mesostics written vertically 'through' the pages of James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*. But these works are motivated by a transgression of their sources that is not apparent in Adair's *Alice*.

Georges Perec included fragments of many classic literary texts into the fabric of his novel *La Vie, Mode d'Emploi*. These are announced in the back matter but their locations never identified.

Conversely, consider Richard Hamilton's reproductions of key works of Marcel Duchamp's œuvre; a reconstruction of the *Large Glass* (*The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors Even, Again*) and the *Green Book*, a typographical rendering of Duchamp's *Green Box*. The methodology of these works is a close relative of Adair's authorial doubling, but Hamilton's are direct reconstructions made with Duchamp's consent. They therefore resemble conventional replicas of damaged or absent works of art in museums, albeit with the addition of Hamilton's measured presence as mediator.

A closer parallel exists in the early works of Gilles Deleuze, who described his texts interpreting the history of philosophy through close readings of Nietzsche, Kant, Spinoza and Bergson as forms of buggery: "I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous."

The reproduction of Deleuze's words in English translation suggests perhaps the most useful perspective on Adair's approach. *Through the Needle's Eye* contains several references to processes of translation. Alice meets a hairdresser who speaks in italics, requiring anything uttered in regular type to be translated for him, and the frog-waiter, who reveals to Alice that to translate the French menu into English one must simply turn it upside-down.

In 1995 Adair's English translation of Georges Perec's lipogrammatic novel *La Disparition* was published, again displaying his extraordinary technical virtuosity in translating this essentially untranslatable text. It is revealing that Adair's Perec and Adair's Carroll are such conceptually similar works, but each framed with significantly different emphasis on Adair's role.

What is remarkable about Adair's *Alice* is not the appropriation of another's authorial voice, but the framing of this practice in such close accord with the ethics of translation.

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