



Alice in Sunderland


By Bryan Talbot

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Sunderland! Thirteen hundred years ago it was the greatest center of learning in the whole of Christendom and the very cradle of English consciousness. In the time of Lewis Carroll it was the greatest shipbuilding port in the world. To this city that gave the world the electric light bulb, the stars and stripes, the millennium, the Liberty Ships and the greatest British dragon legend came Carroll in the years preceding his most famous book, Alice in Wonderland, and here are buried the roots of his surreal masterpiece. Enter the famous Edwardian palace of varieties, The Sunderland Empire, for a unique experience: an entertaining and epic meditation on myth, history and storytelling and decide for yourself - does Sunderland really exist?

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Alice in Sunderland By Bryan Talbot Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Talbot's freewheeling, metafictional magnum opus is a map of the curious and delightful territory of its cartoonist's mind, starring himself in multiple roles. The starting point is the history of his hometown, the northeast English city of Sunderland, along with his lifelong fascination with the myths and realities behind Lewis Carroll and *Alice in Wonderland*—potentially dry material, but Talbot pulls out all the stops to keep it entertaining. He veers off on one fascinating tangent after another. The book encompasses dead-on parodies of EC horror comics, British boys' comics and Hergé's Tintin, walk-ons by local heroes like Sidney James, extensive analysis of a couple of William Hogarth prints, a cameo appearance by the Venerable Scott McComics-Expert and even a song-and-dance number, drawing a three-dimensional web of coincidences and connections between all. It's also a showcase for the explosive verve of Talbot's protean illustrative style, with digital collages of multiple media on almost every page: pen-and-ink drawings in a striking variety of styles, photographs, painting, computer modeling, and all manner of found images. The book's only real weakness is its scattered focus, but Talbot is a remarkable raconteur, even if what he's presenting is more a variety show than a story. (Apr.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1872) have had an immeasurable impact on children's literature and, indeed, the entire spectrum of popular entertainment, with Carroll's absurdist wordplay and surreal scenarios inspiring artistic visionaries from Salvador Dali to John Lennon. Of English writers, only Shakespeare is more frequently quoted. Such interesting literary tidbits as those abound in Talbot's lavishly illustrated graphic "entertainment" tracing the historical and cultural influences behind Carroll's masterpieces. The launching pad for Talbot's alternately fanciful and didactic exposition is the Empire Theatre in Sunderland, a former shipping port in northeastern England and a favorite Carroll haunt. Talbot's chosen stage manager-narrator is his own illustrated doppelganger, who takes the Empire stage for an audience of one and proceeds on a breathtaking tour through Sunderland's colorful history. Along with insights into famous battles, bridges, and ghost-infested castles, Talbot provides updates to Carroll's biography via recent information concerning his controversial relationship to the "real" Alice, Alice Liddell (1852-1934). Talbot's talented team of collaborating illustrators weaves a rich tapestry of artistic styles, ranging from superlative pen-and-ink drawing to colorized faux photography. They make a beautiful coffee-table volume of what may come to stand with Martin Gardner's *The Annotated Alice* (1960; rev. ed., 1990) as an indispensable trove of Wonderland lore. *Carl Hays*
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About the Author

Bryan Talbot was born in 1952. He has worked on underground comics, science fiction and superhero stories such as Judge Dredd and Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight. His books include *Alice in Sunderland*, *Dotter of Her Father's Eyes* (with Mary Talbot), the first graphic novel to win the Costa biography award, and the Grandville series.

Users Review

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