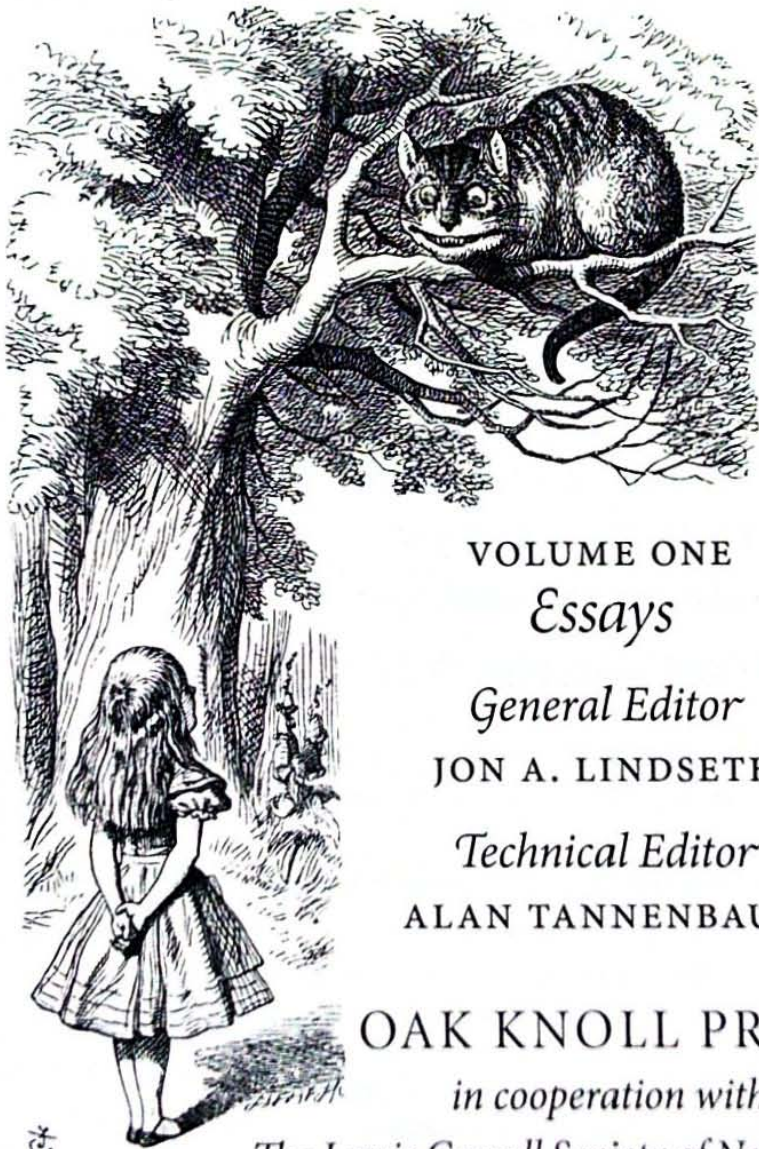


# ALICE

## *In a World of Wonderlands*

THE TRANSLATIONS OF LEWIS CARROLL'S  
MASTERPIECE



VOLUME ONE  
*Essays*

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## Elisa in Bahasa Indonesia

Harry Aveling, Riris K. Toha-Sarumpaet, and Issy Yuliasri



TRANSLATIONS OF the *Alice* books were slow to appear in Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*), the national language of the Republic of Indonesia, which declared its independence from the Netherlands in 1945. The book was perhaps not considered important under the educational policies of the Dutch East Indies. Despite the interest of the Dutch colonial government publisher, Balai Pustaka, in publishing translations of European children's literature in indigenous languages, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* did not attract its attention. Even Dutch language *Alice* translations were not published in Indonesia until 1951, when *Alice's avonturen in wonderland* by M. C. van Oven-van Doorn appeared. The first edition of this work was published in the Netherlands in 1934 and may have circulated in the Indonesian colony. This Dutch translation done in Indonesia was republished in 1952 and 1955, and excerpts from it were included in another local book, *De Toverhoorn (The Magic Horn)*, in 1956.

It is safe to say that this new attention to an English classic derived from the Indonesian interest in the English language. Because of government initiatives to internationalize the quality of secondary education over the past half-century and the increasing interest in English in general as a prestigious international language, English language texts of *Alice* can be found in many school libraries as well as in many bookshops. The National Library of Indonesia holds three English language editions of *Alice*, but none in Dutch.

In general, the post-1960s educated elite has tended to read *Alice* in the original English, both for their own amusement and for the entertainment of their children, and this has only slowly given way to the greater availability of translations and adaptations in the national language. Major Indonesian companies and a number of smaller publishers have continued to publish editions of *Alice* in the original language, generally aimed at schoolchildren learning English.

The first full Indonesian translation of *Alice* did not appear until 1978, and the first complete translation of *Through the Looking-Glass* was published only as recently as 2007. The *Alice* edition, titled *Elisa di Negeri Ajaib*, was translated by Julius Siyaranamual and includes the original illustrations by John Tenniel. After a twenty-seven-year gap, the first of four new translations of the complete *Alice* appeared. Isnadi (many Indonesians have only one name, as in this case) translated *Alice di Negeri Ajaib (Alice in Magic Land)* in 2005, retaining the original Tenniel illustrations. Two years later, in 2007, Sri Haryanto's translation, *Alice in Wonderland: Petualangan di Negeri Ajaib dan Dunia di Balik Cermin (Alice in Wonderland: Adventures in Magic Land and the World Behind the Mirror)*, appeared, combining *Alice* with *Through the Looking-Glass*; it contains no illustrations. Khairi Rumantati's translation was published with the English title *Alice in Wonderland* in 2009 and reprinted in the following year. Finally, an unillustrated edition appeared in 2010, translated by Agustina Reni Eta Sitepoe and titled *Petualangan Alice: Alice di Negeri Ajaib & Alice Menembus Cermin (Alice's Adventures: Alice in Magic Land and Alice Goes Through the Mirror)*.



Since the late 1980s, a major impetus to greater public familiarity with the *Alice* books has come from the Walt Disney Studios in the form of short, colorfully illustrated adaptations into Indonesian, and published by large commercial publishers in the national capital, Jakarta. The first of these adapted texts was the 1986 forty-eight-page “Choose Your Own Adventure” version, *Pilih Sendiri Petualangmu: Elisa di Negeri Ajaib* (*Choose Your Own Adventure: Elisa in Magic Land*), which was regularly republished until 1995. This adaptation was based on the English *Walt Disney’s Choose Your Own Adventure: Alice’s Wonderland Adventure*, published in 1985. A separate book also based on the film version, *Walt Disney: Elisa di Negeri Ajaib*, appeared in 1991. This was an even shorter volume, twenty-four pages, illustrated by the Walt Disney Studios, retold by Jane Werner, adapted by Al Dempster from the film based on Lewis Carroll’s story, and, finally, translated into Indonesian by Listiana. It too has been regularly republished. A third Disney version (1993b), *Alice in Wonderland*, includes the songs “I’m Late” and “The Unbirthday Song”; this bilingual, English-Indonesian text does not carry the name of a translator nor a place of publication, but we know it was printed in Indonesia and distributed under license from the Walt Disney Company by Form Private Ltd., Singapore. Other adaptations that are also related to the Disney cartoon are listed in the Indonesian bibliography in Volume Three. Since there are so many Disney editions, others may still be found.

Most translations and adaptations carry illustrations by either John Tenniel or the Walt Disney Studios. One of the few exceptions is Jenny Vitasari’s (1993a) *Alice di Negeri Ajaib*, which was complemented by extensive illustrations in the Japanese style and based on Shogo Hirata’s *Arisu in Wonderland* (1989). The illustrations for Rumantati’s translation are by the Indonesian artist Ella Elviana; although newly done, they are rather similar to those of John Tenniel.

In Siyaranamual’s (1978) translation the heroine’s name, Alice, has been modified to an Indonesian form, Elisa. “Wonderland” is translated as *negeri ajaib*—the land, *negeri*, that is *ajaib*, an adjective that can be variously rendered as miraculous, wonderful, or astonishing. This combination has since become the standard Indonesian translation for all versions of the text, including the Disney-based adaptations. The cover of this first translation carries the strong influence of Disney’s representation of Alice, but otherwise the illustrations are by an unacknowledged John Tenniel. The translation’s language is formal and easy to understand.

Like many other translated works published in Indonesia over the past decade, the title of Rumantati’s (2009) book remains in English. Although his translation follows the English text closely, Alice’s own words are decidedly influenced by contemporary Indonesian as spoken by teenagers. In this recent translation Alice’s name is retained, and the cover and illustrations show a European girl, with freckles, blue eyes, and long light brown (partially blond) hair.

In both versions “the Hatter” simply becomes the more sensible “Hat Maker,” *Si Pembuat Topi*, following the usual grammatical rules for one way of forming professional titles. (For instance, a composer is a *pembuat lagu*, a maker of songs, and a photographer is a *pembuat foto*, a maker of photographs.) Hares and rabbits are described in Indonesian by the same term, *kelinci*. The Indonesian form of the Western calendar refers to the month of March as *Maret*; in the first text, the March Hare is known as *Kelinci Maret* (a literal translation); in the second, he is *Kelinci*

*Bulan Maret*, the Month of March Rabbit (or Hare). Dormice are unknown in Indonesia. In the 1978 translation the creature becomes a squirrel, *tupai*. More innovatively, Rumantanti makes a pun on the name, rendering it as “the Dormitory Mouse,” *Si Tikus Asrama*. Following the different practices in rendering Alice’s own name, the names of the three sisters who live at the bottom of a treacle well—Elsie, Lacie, and Tillie—are changed to Elsi, Lasi, and Tilli in the 1978 text and remain unchanged from the original in the more recent translation.

The second section of the “Mad Tea-Party” chapter begins with a parody of the English nursery rhyme “Twinkle, twinkle, little star.” The rhyme exists in Indonesian in a loosely translated form, *Bintang Kecil* (Little Star—or “stars,” as Indonesian nouns are not marked for number), as follows:

<i>Bintang Kecil di langit yang tinggi</i>	Little star(s) in the high sky
<i>Amat banyak, menghias angkasa</i>	Very many, decorating the horizon
<i>Aku ingin terbang dan menari</i>	I want to fly and dance
<i>Jauh tinggi, ke tempat kau berada</i>	Far up high, to where you are

This poem is a song known to every Indonesian child and adult. It is different in rhythm from the English “Twinkle, twinkle, little star.” Siyaranamual (1978) used this song to translate the poem, changing only the word *bintang* (stars) into *kalong* (bat), and the phrase *ke tempat kau berada* (to where you are) into *seperti piring teh* (like a tea plate). Thus, Indonesian readers would directly associate the translated *Alice* poem with the familiar children’s song.

Below are the two versions of the translation:

**Siyaranamual’s translation (1978):**

<i>Kalong Kecil di langit yang tinggi</i>	Little bat(s) in the high sky
<i>Amat banyak, menghias angkasa</i>	Very many, decorating the horizon
<i>Aku ingin terbang dan menari</i>	I want to fly and dance
<i>Jauh tinggi, seperti piring teh</i>	Far up high, like a tea plate

**Rumantati’s translation (2009):**

<i>Kelap-kelip kelelawar yang mungil!</i>	Flicker, flicker cute bat
<i>Dimanakah kau menyempil!</i>	From where do you protrude
<i>Di atas bumi kau terbang</i>	Above the earth you fly
<i>Seperti nampan the di awang-awang.</i>	Like a tea tray in the clouds
<i>Kelap-kelip —</i>	Flicker, flicker —

The two translations provide different words for “bat”: *kalong* and *kelelawar*, respectively. The first translation then follows the original faithfully, although in the plural because of the second line (“Little bats, in the high sky”); the recent translation is more daring, the little bat being described as *mungil* (cute) and the reference to sky completely omitted. The second line—“How I wonder what you’re at”—presents more difficulties. Both translations are concerned with “where” rather than “what.” The first reads “Very many, decorating the horizon”; the other forms a rhyme, “From where do you protrude” (*menyempil*, protrude, rhyming with *mungil*, cute). Both translators tend to follow the second couplet more literally: Siyaranamual writes, “I want to fly and dance,” which exactly repeats *Bintang Kecil*, and “Far up high, like a tea plate”;

Khairi's version reads "Above the earth you fly / Like a tea tray in the clouds" (rhyming fly, *terbang*, with clouds, *awang*). In both versions, the reference to a tea plate (or tray) disturbs the natural rhythm of the original poem because of a change in the number of syllables in the line, though deliberately so, no doubt.

The three sisters live "at the bottom of a well." Because Indonesian nouns are also not marked for gender, the first translation only states that they are siblings (*tiga bersaudara*), while the recent translation adds the adjective "female" (*tiga kakak-beradik perempuan*, three female older and younger siblings). The first translation uses the more old-fashioned word for "well" (*perigi*), perhaps in keeping with the formality of the style employed throughout; the second text uses the more modern *sumur*, which is again consistent with the translator's general practice.

At the bottom of the well, the girls eat "treacle," a by-product from the refinement of sugar; this English condiment is unknown in Indonesia, despite its extensive sugar plantations. Siyaranamual's translation suggests that the girls eat algae (*lumut*), which one might expect to find in a well; Khairi, on the other hand, indicates that they eat "sugar syrup" (*sirup-gula*), a more accurate neologism, drawing on the (Dutch) Indonesian word for "cordial" (*seterop*).

Both translators have worked hard to capture the subtle logic of the more/less exchange—"I've had nothing yet . . . so I can't take more," "You mean you can't take less"—which relies on different interpretations of "more" (as referring to time, "one more time," "again," and quantity, "one more helping of tea"). Siyaranamual chooses to emphasize the dimension of time:

"I haven't drunk at all yet," said Elisa. "So I can't add more."

"You mean you can't take more than a little," said the squirrel [*sic*]. "It is much easier to add something than to subtract from something that is not there."

Khairi's Indonesian text plays with the quantity dimension:

"I haven't drunk any tea at all yet . . . So I can't drink any more."

"You mean that you can't drink more," said the Hat Maker. "It is far easier to *add* something than nothing at all."

The joke based on the double meaning of the word "draw" ("drawing a picture" as compared to "drawing water from a well") is also meaningless in Indonesian, so again the translators have had to choose one from a number of alternatives. Siyaranamual uses the word *menimba*, "to fetch with a bucket, to bail or scoop" (water, or, metaphorically, learning from the vast ocean of knowledge). He closes this discussion with the definitive answer that the girls drew "Algae!" from the well. Khairi prefers to use the verb *menggambar*, "draw pictures, depict," and here the link to the remaining conversation is clearer, because it depends on what the girls depicted rather than how they scooped the various objects from the well.

Both translators have greater success in drawing up a list of everything the girls scooped out or of which they drew pictures. Carroll's list begins with the letter *m*: "such as mouse-traps, and the moon, and memory, and muchness." Siyaranamual makes up his own list, beginning with the letter *k*: *kuda* (horse), *kapal* (ship), *kenangan* (memory), and *kebanyakan* (muchness, most). Khairi follows Carroll's list more closely and translates: "That began with the letter S, like *seren-*

*jak* [mouse trap], and *sang bulan* [lady moon], and *sejarah* [history], and *sebanyak-banyaknya* [as much as possible]—you know, don't you, you can say that something is as much as possible—have you ever seen something that is as much as possible?"

Both of these translations—Siyaranamual's *Elisa di Negeri Ajaib* of 1978 and Khairi Rumantati's *Alice in Wonderland* of 2009—are faithful and creative renderings of a highly allusive, and elusive, text. Khairi's language is more colloquial than Siyaranamual's, but both are in tune with the language of their times for literary narratives directed at young people. Literal translations run the risk of making the original texts and their world of reference seem "foreign" to new readers; modern Indonesian readers, living in an international world linked by the various mass media, are well equipped to accept this foreignness. They enjoy Alice's wanderings in the magic land of a foreign fantasy in the many forms to which they now have access.

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