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Alice Retaught: A Child's Experience of Rule-Making and Rule-Following in Social Space

In the abstract space of calculations, there exists a detached perspective on distance and position. We can, for example, note that New York is 5,567 kilometers from London. Yet in normal action conditions, we do not possess a third-person view on space. Thus, we can never detach ourselves from our own situated, embodied point of view. Space is for us, in our body, in our society. Henri Lefebvre argues for understanding the space of our experience instead of calculated space: "The user's space is lived—not represented (or conceived)" (Lefebvre 362). To understand space, we must investigate our relationship with the environment around us, the world of our action and interactions. Through Lefebvre, we understand that space is not neutral for human beings. Plus, and perhaps as important, lived space is space lived with others: "(Social) space is a (social) product" (Lefebvre 26). It is a space of culture, knowledge, and human bodies; it is an environment where customs emerge. Hence London is no longer just 5,567 kilometers from New York, and neither city is just a point on a map; they are each a social space with different practices that influence the speech, behaviors, and knowledge of the people who live there. For Lefebvre, the starting place for this analysis of our lived, social space is in "childhood, with its hardships, its achievements, and its lacks" (Lefebvre 362). Childhood is not just the ground of our early exploration of space, but also where we learn to navigate the (social) practices of our particular places.

This paper investigates social space as a background for action in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. It will show how the deep divisions in understanding between Alice and the characters she meets make sense given the particular practices that emerge in different social spaces. For Alice, social space means encountering and engaging with these practices as rules for action. When she first enters Wonderland, Alice tries to apply the Victorian-era rules that she has learned from her own spatial home, but quickly learns through experience that accepted practices depend on where we are. At the same time, the nonsensical norms in Wonderland and Looking-Glass world demand that Alice question what

makes practices fair and good. Alice's development is thus an allegorical investigation into a child's experience of space as a place that is already overlaid with action-boundaries.

Social Space: The Emergence of "Should" and "Should Not"

Space as a social product is shaped by the knowledge, labor, and institutions of that era, and reflects the practices of the society living in that space. According to Lefebvre, "social space 'incorporates' social actions," meaning that the "social actions" of the community shape, but are also shaped by, the space (Lefebvre 33). Space is already characterized by certain understandings of place. To speak of a court room, a graveyard, or a dining room is already to express ideas about what is done in those places. There is "a specific use" of space which normalizes the practices that are contained within said space (Lefebvre 16). When we enter spaces, they are overlaid with shared meaning. To visit a cemetery is to grasp social practices of respect, silence, and potentially the fear of confronting mortality itself. The practices and collective understanding in social space normalize "specific use" of places, while also setting boundaries of permissible and impermissible behaviors.

Martina Löw points out that "[i]t is deemed impossible to receive the neighbours in the bedroom. In this case failure to respect the structures would incur negative sanctions" (Löw 39). Individuals navigate space as colored by a set of guiding principles that are sometimes reasonable, but other times arbitrary. The "structures" of social space are strengthened by social sanctions that follow any "failure." Understanding our environments as social space produced by the collective actions and culture within it is helpful, because this demonstrates how a common understanding of social practices emerges to prescribe what we should and should not do: "Customs may be regarded as *social* habits. They are patterns of behaviour for the members of a community" (von Wright 9). In this light social interactions can be viewed as a kind of game for individuals, where they must actualize the right rules of behavior in order to be accepted, or even succeed, in a social space.

According to Georg Henrik von Wright, game rules are a simplified reflection of this relation between individuals and social space. On the board or court, game rules establish norms of action for the players. These rules decide which moves one must make, the order in which they must be made, rewards for success, and penalties for failures. Boundaries are established between permitted and prohibited actions. If in a situation there is only one correct way of

moving, then that move is obligated by the rules, regardless of whether it helps or hurts the player. If a player does not understand the rules, then the game is not being played as designed, and is being played incorrectly; if a player breaks the rules purposefully, then that player is a cheat (von Wright 5-6). Game rules determine what a player can and cannot do, provide a structure for action, and establish a path towards winning. Within the space of the game, players that follow the rules are rewarded.

Reading Wonderland and Looking-Glass world as “gamespace” indicates that Carroll challenges rule-making and rule-following in social space in a way that is easily understood by young readers. Carroll plays with the subtle division between game rules and societal rules, showing that simple moves on a board or croquet field can represent the tapestry of prescriptions and penalties in a society. The adult customs that Alice follows during her adventures are like the rules of the game for her acceptance within society. However, what she should and should not do in Victorian society comes into contrast with an intricate web of practices in Wonderland and Looking-Glass world. In the books, Alice is positioned to learn and act according to the rules of the game that operate in these new worlds. At the same time, encountering characters in these worlds is also a kind of social game, and Alice is a social player who must learn, understand, and actualize the rules that will help her fit in there. Through Alice’s journey across these gamespaces, we gain insight into the relationship all children have to social space.

Victorian Alice / Alice Full of Wonder

Alice falls through the rabbit hole chanting lessons, as if preparing for a recital. She is ashamed of mistakes, but only because she does not want anyone to see the gaps in her knowledge and worries that she has become another young girl, Mabel, who knows “very little” (Carroll, *Wonderland* 20). While retelling a school tale, she realizes, “those are not the right words” and cries from humiliation (Carroll, *Wonderland* 21).

It is unsurprising that Alice is shaped by her Victorian society: “Geographical locations influence our habits, speech patterns, style, and values” (Reynolds 11). Alice has incorporated certain norms into her identity, believing that “she can hardly go wrong if she recalls a set of maxims, poetically expressed, that speak from the heart of her adult culture” (Kincaid 228). “Going wrong” means going against conventions imposed by adults. Children are good if they

are clean, quiet, proper, and can memorize lessons. With this set of maxims ingrained in her speech and behavior, Alice takes pride in following the rules and rote memorization.

The Alice who arrives in Wonderland has been dominated by adults, adapting to the norms that shape the Victorian social space (Rackin 46). Alice believes that she must follow the rules and accept the consequences for mistakes so deeply that she even introduces her kitten to the idea of punishment. She lists Kitty's faults: squeaking as its face was cleaned; pulling the tail of the white kitten; and unwinding Alice's ball of yarn. For these errors, Kitty has to be disciplined, just as Alice is punished by her family (*Looking Glass* 15-16).

Yet Alice is not just a submissive rule-follower. From the beginning of Alice's adventures, she is a girl torn between inner desire and outer constraints, alternating between fiercely upholding Victorian practices and pushing against them. She enjoys making up stories, which frightens her nurse because some of the make-believe is threatening, such as when Alice wants to be "a hungry hyena, and [the nurse] a bone!" (*Looking Glass* 18). In her play-acting, Alice shows a predilection for wild things and lawless animal kingdoms. Alice is frustrated by the lack of imagination shown by others; when Alice's sister argues that they cannot pretend to be the plural "kings and queens," Alice tells her sister to be just one of the royals while Alice can be "all the rest" (*Looking Glass* 18). Unlike her sister, Alice does not believe she must always be constrained by practical understandings of numerical consistency, human bodily action, and animal life.

While Alice's sister is sure that the make-believe world and its inhabitants simply do not exist, Alice is eager to forget the boundary between the real and the magical, always curious about things that do not or cannot fit into her world, such as a White Rabbit with a pocket-watch wearing a waist-coat (*Wonderland* 9). In comparison, Alice's sister believes that Wonderland is just a sweet story that Alice will grow up and tell to children one day (*Wonderland* 127). Alice's older sister already sees Alice as a future-adult and, in particular, a future-mother, whose adventures are just tales to amuse children within a Victorian society that leaves women few alternative opportunities.

In contrast, even if Alice knows that Wonderland and Looking-Glass world are just dreams, she is not certain whose dreams they are. She wonders if she is really the one who dreamed them up, or if her own world is actually the dream of the sleeping Red King (*Looking*

Glass 168). Alice therefore maintains the possibility that the Red King is the *real* being, and that she and Victorian society are in his dream.

Alice showcases the complex position of childhood. Born into a social space overlaid with customs and meaning, her personality must adapt to the practices around her. Yet when she is thrown into Wonderland, and then passes into Looking-Glass world, the legitimacy of these systems of preexisting rule is undermined.

Gamespace: Wonderland and Looking-Glass World

The only collective practices in Wonderland as a social space seem to be a shared lack of rules, illustrated by the inexistence of structure during the Wonderland croquet game. As I noted in my earlier analysis on game rules, a game is fair when there are guidelines for action that give all the players an equal chance at success and explain what to do and when to do it before the game begins. In the Wonderland croquet match, there is no correct way of playing; all the players sabotage each other, and the tools themselves undermine the game.

The Queen of Hearts' croquet game is characterized by a landscape of animated cards bent into hooped goals. The croquet instruments are live flamingo mallets, which have to be kneaded into position, while hedgehog balls unroll and try to escape. The field is in continual flux while the tools of the game are unwieldy and resist play. The players do not have any respect for each other; they do not organize the use of tools, and the Queen of Hearts abuses her power throughout the experience, threatening other players with punishments that were never established by the rules: "The players all played at once without waiting for turns, quarreling all the while, and fighting for the hedgehogs; and in a very short time the Queen was in a furious passion, and went stamping about, and shouting 'Off with his head!' or 'Off with her head!' about once in a minute" (*Wonderland* 84).

There is no order in which players make their moves and there is no prior clarification on what actions will incur penalties. It is even unclear how victory in this game is defined and established. As the croquet game unfolds, it becomes increasingly disorganized. Without any sense of common understanding for how the game should flow, the croquet game highlights the way Wonderland characters do not have guiding rules to shape their action.

In contrast, Looking-Glass world is a chessboard defined by "an extreme form of determinism, as all residents are subject to the authoritative rules of chess, rules that they have

not participated in making, and have no hope of changing” (Liston 47). Whether a character wants to become queen or not, she will be queen when she passes the last brook. Chess rules cannot be overturned in a world where the space itself is a board. Yet within the deterministic structure, the characters continue to coexist in an anarchic society of power struggles. Alice’s own familiarity with rule structures therefore gives her an advantage in Looking-Glass world, where she moves through squares methodically and is the only player to earn the game’s reward.

It is impossible for Alice to apply Victorian knowledge and practices to social interactions outside of her society because Carrollian social space places individual opinions and actions into continual conflict. Alice feels nervous and uncertain because she knows that a clash with the Queen “might happen any minute” (Wonderland 84). It is impossible to avoid disputes with characters that accept no difference of opinion. When the King of Hearts encounters the Cheshire Cat, he demands his execution for refusing to kiss the King’s hand. The “impertinent” Cheshire Cat does not recognize royal authority, and amuses himself by disappearing before the execution (Wonderland 85—86). Each character challenges the other, refusing to negotiate or compromise. Success in Wonderland and Looking-Glass world depends on Alice recognizing that there is no “shared meaning” in Carrollian social space (Liston 48).

Space Without Shared Meaning

In the books Alice continually tries to correct characters, viewing (and judging) their speech and actions through the lens of her own adult society. This failure to comprehend how social space and practices are intertwined means that she is often in conflict with other characters; this perhaps why she is told “[y]ou don’t know much” (*Wonderland* 57). Having been brought up to follow rules and adhere to social conventions, she is uncertain, and even indignant, when others undermine the rules she knows. When Hatter and March Hare tell her that there is no space for her at their tea party, Alice is infuriated because she sees “*plenty* of room” (*Wonderland* 64). For Alice, the table is laid out for many people to have tea. However, Hatter and March Hare actually need all the spaces, because for them “it’s always tea time” (*Wonderland* 70). What looks like extra settings to Alice are really the additional tea cups that Hatter and March Hare will use next. Alice’s application of her own social conventions simply does not apply to this situation. Thus her introduction to the March Hare and Hatter demonstrates that instead of applying a general rule for interactions in Wonderland, she must find out *why* the

particular action or speech makes sense for the character with whom she is engaging in that particular moment.

As Donald Rackin notes, “Alice’s dogged quest for Wonderland’s meaning in terms of her above ground world of secure assumptions and self regulations is doomed to failure” (Rackin 36). She can never thrive in Carrollian space so long as she hangs on to her standard, Victorian-era shared meaning and customs, mainly because there is not one way of living and thinking in Carrollian worlds, but many. Instead of having a shared meaning, everyone lives according to their own individualistic understanding of logic, knowledge, traditions, and language. Each individual creates individual meaning of space. When the Red Queen tells Alice, “I don’t know what you mean by *your* way... all the ways about here belong to me,” she inadvertently offers the only real guiding principle for social space there (*Looking Glass* 35). The Red Queen does not truly control all the ways in Looking-Glass world, but she thinks that she does. Similarly, the Queen of Hearts thinks she has enforced her power through the execution of gardeners, soldiers, and courtiers, while secretly her husband pardons them when she is out of earshot (*Wonderland* 94). Each character believes in her own ability to control meaning, even though that belief is not upheld by other characters and other events in the text.

Alice’s set of best practices are no longer truths, but just one interpretation of action. Thus Carrollian space is defined by deep philosophical uncertainty. Instead of stable and shared meaning, Wonderland and Looking-Glass world show how rules are constantly being recreated in the image of the creatures there. Alice is disturbed by this way of arranging the world to suit each individual, and she complains about it after the croquet match. For Alice, in Wonderland no one plays croquet fairly, they fight each other, and “they don’t seem to have any rules in particular: at least, if there are, nobody attends to them” (*Wonderland* 84). Alice must accustom herself to a social space where there are only conflicting interpretations, and where she is encouraged to think and act independently.

Individualistic Interpretation: Rules of Language and Rule of Law

In these works Carroll emphasizes the arbitrary nature of shared meaning by undermining two bedrocks of Victorian social space: rules of language and rule of law. Alice finds herself in disputes over grammar throughout both books. Similar to the rules of the game, rules of grammar provide linguistic structure for speakers of a language and establish norms of speech. Patterns of

acceptable actions in games are just like “the set forms of correct speech” (von Wright 6). Just as for playing a game, there are correct and incorrect speech “moves.” Alice has a sense of the English language that comes from her Victorian education, but other characters understand the use of words differently:

“Take some more tea,” the March Hare said to Alice, very earnestly.

“I’ve had nothing yet,” Alice replied in an offended tone, “so I can’t take more.”

“You mean you can’t take *less*,” said the Hatter: “it’s very easy to take more than nothing” (*Wonderland* 71).

Alice is accustomed to using the word “more” only when she already has “some.” However, Hatter and the March Hare compare the word “more” with “nothing,” and thus Alice can certainly get more tea than none, and certainly never get less tea than no tea. This use of “more” makes sense from their perspective. A similar situation arises when Alice meets Humpty Dumpty:

“How old did you say you were?”

Alice made a short calculation, and said, “Seven years and six months.”

“Wrong!” Humpty Dumpty exclaimed triumphantly. “You never said a word like it!”

“I thought you meant ‘How old *are* you?’” Alice explained.

“If I’d meant that, I’d have said it,” said Humpty Dumpty (*Looking Glass* 95-96).

Humpty Dumpty chastises Alice for telling him her age, as the correct answer to his question would have been that she never *told* him how old she was. Alice feels tricked. For her, it is the perceived intent of the question’s articulation that is essential, and thus it is normal to make assumptions about what the other speaker *really* means in an instance, such as this, when the structure of the sentence suggests otherwise. For Humpty Dumpty, this moment of interpretation undermines the distinction between speaker and listener. If Alice (as listener) can decide how to understand Humpty Dumpty’s (as speaker) utterance, then Humpty Dumpty is not in control of what he says. Alice’s view of language prioritizes the social experience and space of the listener, not the speaker. In addition, the sense Alice believes she is making of Humpty Dumpty’s sentence clearly does not correspond to the sense that he intends. He is provoking her to come to the logical conclusion that his question is absurd since she never “said a word like it.” Yet Alice comes from a social space characterized by politeness, rather than blunt logic.

Through this conversation, Carroll introduces the idea that a speaker can exert control over the meaning of words. Humpty Dumpty illustrates this point with the word “impenetrability.” He uses it to mean that he wants to change the conversation subject, and would also like Alice to tell him about her plans in Looking-Glass world. Alice simply cannot understand how Humpty Dumpty uses words without regard to their definitions—or, perhaps more precisely, her definitions. Humpty Dumpty explains that it is only a matter of being the “master” of the words (*Looking Glass* 99). Humpty Dumpty voices what might be another guiding principle for characters in Wonderland and Looking-Glass world: they can master language, meaning, games, and maybe even each other. Nothing is outside the realm of interpretation when a character can master everything.

Alice has a particularly difficult time adapting to the rule of law in Wonderland and Looking-Glass world. If rules of the game establish norms for moves within the limits of a competitive match, then laws of state are prescriptive regulations that determine which actions are forbidden within the confines of a political community, with some authority empowered to punish those who disobey (von Wright 2). Rule of law in Wonderland and Looking-Glass world runs counter to the stable law in the Victorian social space that Alice knows. She encounters concepts of evidence, law, and sovereign power, but the terms are twisted in both books, because these worlds are “deficient in all of the generally agreed-upon characteristics of legality that assist in underwriting our obligation to obey the law” (Liston 54). Obeying the law in Carrollian space is impossible because rules are not publicly known, sovereigns have abusive power, and there is no neutral court system.

When the Knave is accused of stealing tarts and writing a letter of verses about it, inaction is taken as proof of guilt. The King of Hearts argues that “[i]f you didn’t sign it... that only makes the matter worse. You must have meant some mischief, or else you’d have signed your name like an honest man” (*Wonderland* 122). In Wonderland, evidence is distorted to lead to any ruling that the sovereign wants. Guilt and innocence are subject to interpretation. Only Alice believes that an unsigned letter proves nothing. Law in these worlds does not have any of the legitimacy that comes from the existence of public laws that apply to all citizens equally, rules that are possible to follow, separation of powers, and a stable system (Liston 54).

The Wonderland trial showcases an arbitrary application of rules; it is easy to imagine the unsigned letter being used as proof of innocence or proof of guilt depending upon the mood of

the King of Hearts. The ideas of evidence and verdict are subverted, illustrated by the Queen of Hearts, who wants the sentence to come before the verdict, suggesting that guilt is less significant than punishment. Alice cannot accept the injustice of the Wonderland courts; it makes no sense to sentence the Knave before the verdict is even read, and she declares the proceedings “[s]tuff and nonsense!” (*Wonderland* 125). Alice’s outburst about the twisting of justice in Carrollian space shows how frustrating these changes are for a child raised with a specific understanding of rules. Yet her understanding of best practices begins to adapt as she spends more time in the new social space.

Exerting Power in an Anarchic Social Space

Mary Liston describes Wonderland and Looking-Glass world as a “Hobbesian state of nature,” where discord reigns and the characters fight against one another for power (Liston 47). For her, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* are both warnings against societies with arbitrary, unjust, and dictatorial rule of law. In their imperfection, they promote the idea of a political community based on rights, equality, just courts, and order. By the end of Alice’s adventures, according to Liston, the young girl prefers to leave Looking-Glass world for the order and stability of her own society (Liston 56, 74).

While it is true that Wonderland and Looking-Glass world are warnings against governance without fairly applied laws, functioning court systems, or political checks and balances, Alice learns how to take advantage of the anarchic social space to gain power. It is Alice herself who claims, “I want to be a Queen” (*Looking Glass* 125). Notably, she is the only character to reach the queen status, perhaps because no one else knows how to play by the rules. Alice, trained in following rules and playing fairly, is ideally prepared to move across Looking-Glass world. *Through the Looking Glass* shows that Alice herself has incorporated the lessons of Carrollian social space, particularly when it comes to asserting power. As soon as she is crowned queen, she asks the frog at her party, “Where’s the servant whose business it is to answer this door?” (*Looking Glass* 154). Becoming queen changes her status in relation to other characters, and she quickly decides that opening doors is not a queen’s job.

Indeed, Alice is not frightened off by the power struggles of Wonderland and Looking-Glass world, but actively participates in them. Her adventures may be a learning journey; although she is in conflict with the seemingly disjointed rules of language and governance in

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, by the time she goes through the mirror in *Through the Looking Glass*, she wants to use the gamespace to move from pawn to queen. As soon as she arrives in Wonderland, she begins to realize that she is not the same Alice anymore (*Wonderland* 19).

Alice's decision to follow the White Rabbit down the hole, and later pass through the mirror, shows a hidden dissatisfaction with the rules that bind her Victorian society. Just being in Wonderland and Looking-Glass world distance her from that adult social space and who she was there. Like many children, Alice is constantly torn between the norms that give her life stability and the liberty she wants to do as she pleases. Tension with adults is present early on, when she voices rebellion in the second chapter in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

It'll be no use their putting their heads down and saying 'Come up again, dear!' I shall only look up and say "Who am I, then? Tell me that first, and then, if I like being that person, I'll come up; and if not, I'll stay down here till I am somebody else. (*Wonderland* 21)

This is a fundamental rejection of both adult authority and assigned identity. First, Alice shows that she is willing to refuse an adult command. Second, Alice shows an advanced recognition of the changeable and constructed nature of her own identity. She wants a say in who she is, and refuses to return to a Victorian society until she likes the person she gets to be there. It is questionable whether she will ever like who she gets to be in her world, though, a reason the two books are an "attack upon the commonsense, pragmatic reasonableness that made the bourgeois Victorian's waking life" (Rackin 36). For a girl whose future as a wife and mother is written in the end of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, the rules of Victorian society do not look particularly more fair or appealing than the anarchy she finds in Carrollian space.

Alice's perspective here is significant because it shows what adult rules look like to any child who grows up told what to do and when to do it, without knowing why it must be so. The nonsensical and sometimes unfair situations that Alice encounters in Carrollian space may be a comical exaggeration of social interactions, but these scenes also illustrate a child's helplessness to change social space. Governance may be more stable in Victorian society, but Alice is born into a system where the status of child means obeying adults regardless of fairness or kindness. Parental authority is asymmetrical power that puts children under the control of adults without giving them the means to shape any of the rules that dominate their lives. Carroll may overtly

mock the secret and impossible rules that the King of Hearts uses in his court, but he also mocks Victorian society, and any other society, that has rules for the sake of having rules, establishing norms to constrain action that are as silly in their effects as any from Wonderland. Alice realizes that, “if you only spoke when you were spoken to, and the other person always waited for you to begin, you see nobody would ever say anything” (*Looking Glass* 144).

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland and *Through the Looking Glass* are both reminders that rules—game rules, societal rules, and rules of grammar and laws—are made by humans and “have no truth-value” (von Wright 2). They can be reshaped, and should not be obeyed just for the sake of obeying somebody. Furthermore, children like Alice are the most vulnerable to the preexisting structures of social space, which they neither choose nor can reject. It is no wonder that while awake, Alice may be a dominated girl, but in her sleeping life, she is Queen.

Conclusion

If social space is a training ground for learning, then both Victorian society and Carrollian space act as educative spaces for Alice (Reynolds 157). She comes to understand the Wonderland and Looking-Glass world as lacking any shared meaning from which collective customs and understanding emerge. In her encounters with variations on rules of the game, rules of society, rules of grammar, and rule of law, Alice decides which ones she wants to follow. The two books are a respite for a child usually caught in an intricate web of customs and maxims.

As the books develop, Alice “seems to be losing sight of her old standards of reference, drifting dangerously toward an unwilling acceptance of Wonderland’s persistent violations of the laws and conventions of her old world” (Rackin 46). Wonderland lays bare both a child’s adaptability to in a new social space and an underlying desire to escape from rule-making and rule-following. Alice always remains appalled by the way characters play croquet without turns, make up the meaning of words, and give out punishments without regard to the verdict, but her frustration is for unfair situations that trick and harm other characters. She accepts the chaos itself, attracted by the possibility of power that enables her own ascension to the throne. Alice cannot be easily defined; she is rule-abiding and rule-breaking, dominated and dominating, powerless and powerful. As a product of a unique, Victorian social space, her past education places her into tension with Wonderland and Looking-Glass world characters, but at the same time, it provides a foundation for taking advantage of Looking-Glass world’s chess structure.

Ultimately, Carroll seems to be asking “big” questions in these texts: who makes rules, how should they be applied, and when should they be followed? These questions do not just apply to chess and croquet, but also to society and states. Appreciating Alice’s perspective means understanding how family prescriptions, social customs, and rule of law look to children. Alice can see the disorganization of the King of Hearts’ court and how constant power battles create uncertainty, but the Wonderland and Looking-Glass world are not the only spaces with arbitrary rule-making. Particularly for a child who is dominated by familial, educational, social, and political institutions in Victorian society, Wonderland and Looking-Glass world just appear like extreme versions of the unequal power distribution Alice already knows. The rules, or lack of, that guide action may be different, but there is still the same man-made boundary between what is prescribed and prohibited.

In the end, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* teach that even children can and should think about the rules—whether they are fair, whether they promote equality, and whether there may exist better options. Not knowing how she is supposed to bow during a royal procession, Alice decides that lying down face first like the gardeners around her makes no sense, because then she would not be able to see (*Wonderland* 79). When Alice does not know a rule for something, and thinks for herself, she is capable of coming up with reasonable solutions to problems on her own. It is unlikely that Alice will have many opportunities to use such freedom of thought and action when she returns to live among adults, but her time in Wonderland has perhaps taught her that the key to navigating space is to understand the rules of that space, even if one has little intention to follow them.

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