

# ALICE'S ADVENTURES AND PROXEMICS – A POSSIBLE APPROACH

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**Abstract:** *In E. T. Hall's theory on proxemics, space is perceived in light of the way in which human beings use it as a specific cultural product. We intend to analyze the way in which Lewis Carroll's Alice engages herself in the discovery of new worlds from this perspective.*

*Two important directions are opened: the different levels of proximity between characters, alluding to different social relationships and categories such as children and parents, children and adults in general, hierarchy; communication on different levels: who addresses to whom and in which context; the objectives of the message – transmitting something or creating connections; differences in our ways of organizing ideas/ arguments and the way in which we communicate them (inductively or deductively); which are, according to cultures, the codes of non verbal communication – paralanguage, gestures, silence... (Sauquet & Vielajus 2014: 355-368).*

*Since in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" these two directions are exploited through sophisticated logic and pure fantasy intermingled with social satire the results of an analysis could be an invitation to re-readings of these most instructive and interesting texts.*

**Keywords:** Proxemics; Social relationships; Levels of communication; Alice's Adventures.

## Preamble

According to E. T. Hall's theory on proxemics, people of different cultures live in different sensitive worlds. There is no universal mechanism in establishing distances (1981: 218), the senses mainly are those which play the important part. In these conditions, the way in which the space is structured is also different (195). Hall had experimented since 1953, with George. L. Trager<sup>1</sup>, a modality of using linguistic models in this approach of

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<sup>1</sup> American linguist, president of the Linguistic Society of America in 1960, Trager worked in the 1950s, at the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State. His mission was to contribute to the training of

space. (196). On the other hand, in order to interact with an organism, one needs to master communication systems (197) which allow to establish personal distances, social distances and critical distances. The content of a conversation, for example, is connected to the distance and the situation as well as to the relationship between the participants, their emotions and activities. This connection – debated by the German linguist Martin Joos in *Five Clocks* (1962) – that linguistic analysis has with distance and situation in a conversation may be applied in proxemics. In this respect, E.T. Hall evokes Martin Joos' five styles – intimate, consultative, casual, formal, frozen – as corresponding to types of distances to be established between persons in certain communicative situations such as intimate, socio-consultative and public (216).

If, according to the same E.T. Hall, space is perceived in light of the way in which human beings use it as a specific cultural product, we should first situate Alice's case – the captivating character in Lewis Carroll's famous creation – in its epoch. First published in 1865, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* is part of the 1850-1870 glorious decades of the Victorian's era. By that time, Charles Lutwidge Dodgson had already had a stable position as lecturer of mathematics at Christ Church, Oxford, thus preparing his career as a mathematician, logician, Anglican deacon and allowing his passion of portrait photography to develop<sup>2</sup>. The third

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diploamats prior to their departure abroad. On this occasion he worked with Edward T. Hall (American anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher) and Ray Birdwhistell (American anthropologist). While Trager's project was the development of paralanguage, Birdwhistell worked on kinesics and Hall on proxemics.

<sup>2</sup> He practically belongs to a family of High Church Anglicans in the Victorian era when the Church of England had the Anglicans in favour and who enjoyed a great popularity. The Church of England also exercised its power in the state of England during the 19<sup>th</sup> and then the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries although the nonconformist churches strived to impose their points of view. Retrieved August 23, 2018, from Lewis Carroll. Retrieved October 12, 2018, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis\\_Carroll](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_Carroll).

His epoch did not lack challenges of all kinds. 1832, the year of his birth, for example, marked the beginning of the second Asiatic Cholera Pandemic but it also was the year of the First Reform Act concerning the augmented number of male voters, the vote still being denied to women. In 1898, the year of his death, a primitive model of electric cars already

of eleven children of first cousins, he leaves home for school at fourteen, he loses his mother at nineteen, he meets the Liddell family including Alice, their youngest daughter, at twenty-three, more exactly in 1855. He is said to have invented *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* in July 4, 1862, during a summer boating trip with the three Liddell sisters. Three years later, in 1865, the book is published.<sup>3</sup> Alice must have been a very intelligent and curious girl, reminding him of his family mostly constituted of sisters, and probably with a deep need for affection. Being part of a numerous family, his mother might not have been as close to him as he wanted; moreover, his rather early departure from home for study also deprived the young boy of an affectionate closeness. In my eyes, this might have influenced his generally solitary life, which made him retire little by little from public positions, even giving up passions like photography. He could probably find in children the lost purity he was longing for.

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exists. By the time *Alice's Adventures* is published, Charles Darwin also writes and publishes his famous *Origin of Species*.

In as far as education is concerned, 19th century reforms expanded education provision and introduced widespread state-funded schools so that, by 1880, education was compulsory for children aged five to ten (with school leaving age progressively raised since then). At the same time, until the government established free, compulsory education, the Church of England sponsored most formal education. "Since the establishment of Bedford College (London), Girton College (Cambridge), and Somerville College (Oxford) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women also can obtain a university degree." Retrieved August 23, 2018, from History of education in England. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_education\\_in\\_England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_education_in_England)

The nonsensical discussion between Alice and the Mock Turtle helps us discover the way elementary schools, with their disciplines, were organized. Thus, in the sea, there were regular classes like "Reeling and Writhing", different branches of Arithmetic ("Ambition, Distraction, Uglification and Derision"), "Mystery, ancient and modern, with Seaography: then [...] Drawling, Stretching and Fainting Coils", the disciplines taught by the Classical master ("Laughing and Grief") and finally extra classes like French, Music and Washing. The schooldays went from ten hours to one hour per day, with theoretically a holiday in the eleventh, passing from "lesson" to "lessen".

<sup>3</sup> In 1867, a sequel to *Alice's Adventures* is published, *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*.

Alice is a girl in primary school, a future woman herself, with a specific type of education.<sup>4</sup> She still fluctuates between two worlds, the imaginary one, still tremendously rich at this age, and the so-called real world, built by adults. Lewis Carroll thus creates a parallel universe, the Underground in the first edition, the deep-rooted world, alluding to our inner world, that of the imagination. Or, according to certain exegetes, the enchanted garden is assimilated with paradise. The passage from the real to the imaginary world is quite natural: in the garden of their house, close to teenagers or adults, the child is getting bored and falling asleep so that she may follow the Rabbit into its hole. The return to reality is still natural, Alice wakes up in her elder sister's lap, she tells her the dream and is sent afterwards for her cup of tea, because it is already tea time.

Once arrived in the strange world, Alice is confronted with weird situations. Distances are created between herself and the strange characters she meets, from all kinds of animals more or less familiar like the cat, the dog, the mouse, the rabbit, but also the Gryphon<sup>5</sup> or the Mock Turtle, birds and fish afterwards, to

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<sup>4</sup>The situation of women slowly started to improve although there still were many disadvantages. During Queen Victoria's reign, women did not have the right to vote, sue, or own property. They were generally "expected to marry and perform household and motherly duties rather than seek formal education. Even women who were not successful in finding husbands were generally expected to remain uneducated, and to take a position in childcare (as governesses or as supporters to other members of their family). The outlook for education-seeking women improved when Queen's College in Harley Street, London was founded in 1848 – the goal of this college was to provide governesses with a marketable education. Later, the Cheltenham Ladies' College and other girls' public schools were founded, increasing educational opportunities for women- and leading eventually to the development of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies in 1897." Women in the Victorian Era. Retrieved August 23, 2018, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_the\\_Victorian\\_era](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_the_Victorian_era).

<sup>5</sup>"As Jerry Maata says in his analysis on the book, Charles Dodgson's academic education shows: "The exotic fantasy creatures who inhabit the worlds of his imagination all have very peculiar names made up from real words in English, French and Latin. For example, the Dormouse is a sleeping mouse. Dormire in Latin means to sleep, while there's no need to explain the rest of the word." (\*\*\*) March 1997). The mythological creature called Gryphon is to be met in Chapter IX. Mythological characters

human beings like the Duchess, the Queen and the King of Hearts, the royal court. If the animals are more or less close to children through their dimensions first of all and to the special type of perception children have for them, the adults, just like in the real world, prove difficult to cope with. We can also speak about the distances a child creates with himself/herself. Alice often remarks she is two persons in one: an impulsive voice and a calculated one. Of great importance are the eleven modifications of her body's dimensions which make her act accordingly, not without certain difficulties.

Up to this moment, references were made to distances in space. Can these distances be perceived through language as well? They certainly can. The dialogues Alice has with herself and the characters she meets on her way help us understand her positioning as an individual. In the course of her adventures Alice asks herself several times who she is. She once comes to the comparison between herself and Ada, the little girl with curly hair, then with Mabel. But she cannot be Ada, her hair is not that curly. She cannot be Mabel either because she knows many more things, although she is not entitled to be so sure about what she knows considering the big amount of changes in the course of one day only. In her conversation with the Caterpillar, she again cannot tell who she is because her dimensions have changed several times already. Henceforth, our perception of the world is favoured by and dependent on dimensions, more specifically on our age. Therefore we may become confused when we lose control on our own dimensions.

What changes in fact with dimensions? Do they modify our way of thinking and the reactions we are having towards the others? Is this change in dimensions restraining or favouring communication? Our existence is influenced not only by dimensions but also by the way in which human beings think

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intermingle in fact with creations of the epoch, such as the mock turtle soup, made of veal instead of a turtle, so the Mock Turtle is a combination between a veal and a turtle and proposes a funny dance where all words are adapted to this type of character's imagined or imaginary life. On the other hand, like in Antoine de Saint Exupéry's *Little Prince*, even if this time they do not belong to the author, the images are very important in helping the reader understand spatiality.

determined by their age, social status and character. To all these, we should evidently add the self-preservation, common both to animals and human beings. Since human beings are endowed with the gift of speech, words may encourage or terrify them.

Henceforth, the way in which we submit to or control our self-preservation instinct through our cultural level and self awareness, the relationship between myself and the other acquires new values, reflected through gestures and language. Hence, the word puns, the homophones, the allusions to habits of the epoch or of the country such as the five o'clock tea with its endless nonsensical repetitions in conversations.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The fact that the Hatter comes to the trial with the bread-and-butter in one hand and the cup of tea in the other shows that his only preoccupation besides making hats is tea time which seems to go on for ever. The funny part about the five o'clock tea, in Chapter VI, "A Mad Tea-Party", is probably the ridiculing of this habit so common to English people and so absurd sometimes through insipid discussions taking place: people half asleep, too common conversations, saying things just for the sake of saying something, etc. and how stupid this may seem to children to see the adults practicing it; they may also feel like tea-time is endless and they cannot have their parents with them. It could be as if a child watches the adults without understanding their way of speaking.

That is why Alice is satisfied when she finally gets in the "beautiful garden, among the bright flower-beds and the cool fountains" (100).

The tea party also underlines this new English fashion. Although introduced in England by the middle of the 17th century, it was during the Victorian era that tea became very popular. It even became the most favourite of all beverages. "The drinking of tea led to the birth of a thing beyond a mere habit or addiction. It became a culture. Tea rooms mushroomed all over the place, private teas and teas in hotels were in demand. Tea dances were held as meeting place for potential match making and also so that young men and women could interact with each other." Now, in our story, one can talk about the Low tea, meaning more conversation and less food, contrasting with the high tea, accompanied by a proper lunch. There also were garden teas, as in *Alice's Adventures*, which allowed "promenades around the estates" and helped bridge the divide between genders, connected the social strata. \*\*\* Victorian Era Tea Tradition and Tea Parties. In *The Victorian Era. England facts about Queen Victoria, Society & Literature*. Retrieved October 2, 2018, from <http://www.victorian-era.org/victorian-era-tea.html>

## **1. Managing distances through communication**

These remarks introduce us to an interpretation of *Alice's Adventures* with some of the instruments used by proxemics. Two important directions are opened: the different levels of proximity between characters, alluding to different social relationships and categories such as children and parents, children and adults in general, hierarchy; for the animals are nothing else but human projections; communication on different levels: who addresses to whom and in which context; the objectives of the message – transmitting something or creating connections; differences in our ways of organizing ideas/arguments and the way in which we communicate them (inductive or deductive); which are, according to this type of culture, the codes of non verbal communication – paralanguage, gestures, silence... (Sauquet & Vielajus 2014: 355-368). Since in day to day existence physical distances go hand in hand with communication, no distinct reference to one or the other will be made during the present analysis.

Let us take into account another very important detail: Alice's age probably goes between six or seven and nine years. Theories sustain that up to a certain age, we are no more able to believe in imaginary worlds, in other words adults teach us that fairy tales are nothing but imaginary. Then, all of a sudden, our little girl "falls" into such a world facing the difficulty to find a "rational" thread, without being particularly frightened.

### **1.1. Politeness and authority**

If we were to judge this imaginary world with the instruments of the real world, the first thing we have to face is *authority*. Human beings – or rather playing cards – or animals must be granted what they ask according to their social status. Thus, the rabbit trying to find his gloves, then the Duchess, the King and the Queen of Hearts. Politeness is one thing, total submission is another. All along the book, we will discover a very polite Alice, but not a very submissive one. Through politeness we do not only express respect, it is also a means allowing us to keep the appropriate distance from the other for self protection.

Alice will be polite with everybody, beginning with the Rabbit to whom she addresses with: "If you please, sir". Sometimes politeness is not enough when you are a giant and your interlocutor a Rabbit with certain fears in mind, namely the ones of being scolded by the Duchess for being late, a Rabbit who does

not expect to see you in that place and at that specific time. In fact, the Rabbit's attitude towards her changes. When she is small, he takes her for Mary Ann, his housemaid, and asks for his gloves and fan, then, on the croquet ground, he will address her in a friendly tone.

On the other hand, it is not easy to be polite in an environment you are not familiar with. During the dialogues following Alice's getting out of the pool of tears from where lots of "birds and animals that had fallen into" (a Duck, a Dodo, a Lory, an Eaglet) also come out, she proves not to have enough knowledge about these creatures' behaviour.

A caucus-race follows the pool event (Chapter III), having as main topic the way in which Alice could get dry. A caucus-race is an electoral committee used in a pejorative sense sometimes, something like a race-course in which all the participants could run and leave when they wanted to so that, half an hour later, "Everybody has won and all must have prizes" (Carroll 1992: 34). The dialogue that ensues is a mere proof of misunderstandings and of the way in which each person perceives words and, subsequently, worlds. The confusion-creating words may invoke naming objects and lively creatures – homophones like "tale" and "tail" as "sad tale" and "long tail", "not" and "knot", etc., – intervene, so that finally Alice's problem of getting dry is solved in the time elapsed and all the company abandons her for not having had the proper discourse, that is for having Alice talk again about her cat who used to eat mice and birds. In fact, as long as a nonsensical dialogue does not affect you personally you can stand it, even if it leads nowhere, but as soon as you feel offended or threatened, you find an excuse to leave.

Similar things will happen in Chapter V when meeting the Pigeon and pronouncing the word "serpent", then admitting that not only the serpent but herself eat eggs. Or in Chapter II, when she is talking about cats in the presence of the mouse: she is choosing the wrong discourse and unwillingly keeps on with it she remembers her favourite cat, Dinah who likes mice. Her discourse cannot avoid animals that mice do not like, because after she finishes talking about her cat, Alice goes on about her dog which also catches mice. Nevertheless, when very small, she will avoid the puppy, consenting a little after, in a kind hearted tone: "And yet, what a dear little puppy it was! [...] I should have liked

teaching him tricks very much, if – if I'd only been the right size to do it!"<sup>7</sup>(Carroll 1992: 51).

In Chapter X, on the occasion of the Lobster's quadrille, Alice says that she knows things about lobsters, she even tasted once some... but then rapidly realizes she could offend them and also the Mock Turtle, so she "checked herself hastily", denying all connection with this kind of sea fruit.

There is also the question of physical distances, like for the puppy, met in the fourth chapter. Being quite small, Alice avoids it. Once arrived in a safe place, she reflects upon the situation:

"And yet, what a dear little puppy it was' said Alice, as she leant against a buttercup to rest herself, and fanned herself with one of the leaves: 'I should have liked teaching it tricks very much, if – if I'd only been the right size to do it!'" (51).

Further on (Chapter IX), when "the two creatures [that is the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon] got so close to her, one on each side, and opened their eyes and mouths so very wide" (128), the feeling of insecurity reinstalls. She may also be an "obstacle to the others". When her coming back to usual dimensions occurs, during the trial (Chapter XI), while staying close to the Dormouse and getting bigger, the latter is disturbed and concludes: "You've no right to grow here!" (182).

To continue talking about reactions, once arrived at the Duchess' house (Chapter VI) Alice meets the two footmen, the Fish-Footman and the Frog-Footman. First she avoids them, then in the same polite tone she uses with strangers, she addresses the first, being confronted with the nonsensical words as an illustration of a nonsensical way of thinking. The servant sees

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<sup>7</sup> Exegetes gave multiple interpretations to Lewis Carroll's book, among which that the dog would be the only animal who behaves in the imaginary world like in the real world, aspect which could express the author's hatred for dogs in real life. Let us say this could also be because of the character's need to have something closer to the usual world, or that the author created a balance in the chapter: if at first she succeeded in frightening so many animals, now Alice sees how the feeling is like. Chapter 4: The Rabbit Sends in a Little Bill. In SparkNotes Editors.(2005). *SparkNote on Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Retrieved October 3, 2018, from <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/alice/>; <https://www.sparknotes.com/lit/alice/section4/>.

nothing else but his obligation and mission to stay for days in front of the door till someone will get out in order to let him announce the invitation addressed by the Queen to be part of a croquet game. The Duchess' answers are absurd as well (appreciations like "You don't know much [...] and that's a fact." (71) expressed on a high tone, a result of the power adults have upon kids merely by virtue of their size and over other adults through their rank. A funny position in fact, since she is being subjected to the cook's great dissatisfaction and to the baby pig's cry silenced with such a rough lullaby one would think the world is upside down. The Duchess does not seem to have much personality after all, since she will reproduce one of the Queen's commands provoked by a new homophone word play talking about axis and axes: "[...] chop off her head!" (71).

In Chapter IX, we discover the Duchess' habit of always finding a moral to no matter what in order to express her wiseness but most of all to underline her position. The Duchess' "lessons" are quite nonsensical sometimes, as, for instance, this one which Alice feels like noting down in order to understand it:

"Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise" (108).

Absurd conversations lead nowhere and are most often interrupted by the arrival of someone else, like the Queen in the case of the Duchess, the one person who could make her cease her nonsensical talk, still in the sense of authority.

In as far as physical distances are concerned, Alice does not enjoy her company "first because the Duchess was *very* ugly; and secondly, because she was exactly the right height to rest her chin upon Alice's shoulder, and it was an uncomfortable sharp chin." (106). We understand Alice's permanent care to be polite in order to avoid this most embarrassing high degree of proximity.

In Chapter VIII, the King and Queen of Hearts dominate the garden and it necessarily needs to look the way their majesties want it to. So, if the rose-trees are not all red, they need to be painted before the arrival of the Royal Household. If the authorities discover the fake, the subjects will be beheaded. This is

a satirical way of expressing authority. At the croquet game<sup>8</sup>, when the Queen orders “Get to your places!”, people run in all directions, “tumbling up against each other” (98). The funny croquet ground, constituted of live hedgehogs for balls, live flamingoes for mallets, soldiers for the arches, made the game quite difficult. In fact, the croquet ground soon became almost empty because of the Queen’s wish of beheading everybody. This “Off with his/her head” may also mark, besides the taste for power, the fear or incapacity of doing the right thing, of choosing what would be best. Therefore, they are put in a really embarrassing situation when ordering that the Cheshire cat be beheaded. This is a croquet game where people should have fun, but no fun is possible since the Queen is in such a changing mood all the time so that “all the party looked grave and anxious” (104).

Alice’s authority changes according to the shifts in her dimensions. While in her case politeness remains the same even when her dimensions would allow her to behave differently, the royal authority is absurdly “authoritarian” and does not change except when fear intervenes. It proves that this roughness in manifesting authority is issued from the fear of being unable to master situations. Chapter XI, “Who stole the tarts?”, may be seen as a satire addressed to the court of justice where the jurors are putting down their names on slates “for fear they should forget them before the end of the trial” (125). The judge, the King himself, seems to be in a hurry and asks the court “Consider your verdict”

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<sup>8</sup>Croquet was a popular lawn game in Britain beginning in the 1860s, so it must have been a novelty for the epoch. The funny thing is that, through his taste for the absurd, the author proposes a rather strange way of playing it. (Badminton and tennis also were popular occasions for parties, with women playing “mixed doubles” alongside male players.)

Another popular occasion of distraction (entertainment) at that time was the quadrille, mentioned and even “explained” in an “adapted” and more than funny way in Chapter X. Its fashion started in late 18th and 19th century Europe and its colonies. “Performed by four couples in a rectangular formation, it is related to the American square dancing. The Lancers, a variant of the quadrille, became popular in the late 19th century and was still danced in the 20th century in folk-dance clubs.” Retrieved September 22, 2018, from Quadrille.<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quadrille>.

before inviting the witnesses to come with their evidence, while the queen says “Sentence first, verdict afterwards!” (145). The King is also inventing on the spot laws and rules like: “All persons more than à mile high to leave the court” (140-141).

### 1.2. Alice versus Alice

As stated above, the story has a rather common beginning: “Alice is sitting by her sister on the bank” and getting bored by the hot day. She is at the age of books with “pictures and conversations”. Then the red eyed talking rabbit appears. Should this be a continuous oscillation? An oscillation between usual rules and reason’s demands or reasonable things and strange ones – probably because she is at the age when the difference between the two worlds in which a child lives becomes troubling? The real world imposed by the adults and subsequently what the society imposes and, on the other hand, the children’s world, based on intuition which also is real but forgotten by the adults are in some kind of confrontation. Alice is about to fall into that rabbit hole with courage, she is careful and always in touch with what her parents might say about it (a feeling of obedience and protection experienced by the child): “Well! [...] after such a fall as this, I shall think nothing of tumbling down stairs!” (13). She calculates distances according to what she had learned, her memory being all the time connected with what could be good or useful to her (the instinct of self-preservation, but also her education). When she gets in the underground, in the “long, low hall” with doors all around, they are all locked (adults forbid children certain things). But Alice’s courage also marks the fact that if you wish something, you just need to be more attentive and you will find what you are looking for or at least you will make a step forward. Children act all the time for the sake of the game. Because they live in the present, they are open to the present. They also use their previous knowledge gained from personal experience, from what they have learned in school or from stories:

“I wonder if I shall fall right *through* the earth! How funny it’ll seem to come out among people that walk with their heads downwards! The Antipathies, I think –’ (she was rather glad there *was* no one listening this time, as it didn’t sound at all the right word)”

and finally decides not to ask where she is for fear of being considered as “an ignorant little girl” so she hopes she could “see it written up somewhere” (14). Feelings of inferiority are testified by children especially when adults make fun of them in “serious situations”. But, in the end, tired of so much nonsense, she starts wondering “if anything would *ever* happen in a natural way again” (125).

In order to get to the small door whose key she discovers on the table, she wishes to “shut up like a telescope” and indeed she succeeds, thus beginning the adventure of changing dimensions. The beginning is a little strange though, unfamiliar, accompanied by a feeling of bewilderment and fear intermingled with curiosity: “Curioser and curioser” (21), she will remark, pretty much aware that there should be a grammar mistake in it.

Quickly passing from her usual, then small and big dimensions, probably close to those of an adult, Alice remarks the existence of distances between parts of her body. She is looking at her own feet with the eyes of a girl – because her way of thinking remains about the same – and following the example of the adults, she imagines what she could do in future to handle the situation – talking about her own feet in the third person, personalizing them, in fact, and she utters: “I’ll give them a new pair of boots every Christmas”. A gesture adults would make, and which gives Alice the allure of an adult, that is having power over her own feet. This sends us to the relationship a child has with his/her own body: it appears that the mind, the soul are detached from the body, form a different part of it, so in the beginning children observe themselves and discover their resemblance with adults.

Later on in the book (Chapter V), her throat will become so long that she will see her shoulders go too far, to say nothing about the hands she cannot see any more. In an attempt to move them she can only observe “a little shaking among the distant green leaves that lay before her” (61).

Sometimes, when she finds herself in difficult situations, she longs for the security waiting for her at home where she is not growing “larger and smaller and being ordered about by mice and rabbits all the time” or “Everybody says ‘come on!’ here, [...] I never was so ordered about in all my life, never!”. Being in such a strange place and with no parents around to stop her or determine her to say something, Alice asks questions more or less timidly, “for she was not quite sure whether it was good manners for her to speak

first" (69). She will also make other decisions by herself like the one of saving the baby by taking it away, till she discovers it is a pig and makes the comparison with ugly children she had already seen. The absurd conversation with the Cheshire Cat, a "cat without a grin" and "a grin without a cat" goes in the same direction. Alice's remark that she does not want to go among mad people is welcomed with the unusual observation: "Oh, you can't help that [...] we're all mad here. I'm mad. You're mad.". Alice must be mad "or you wouldn't have come here". The wrong way in which we are directing our reasoning is illustrated by the Cat: "you see a dog growls when it's angry, and wags its tail when it's pleased. Now I growl when I'm pleased, and wag my tail when I'm angry. Therefore I'm mad"(76).

Finally the girl becomes aware of the importance certain gestures might have so that her intervention in the discussion with the Gryphon and the Mock Turtle is wise: "I could tell you my adventures - beginning from this morning [...], but it is no use going back to yesterday because I was a different person then" (122).

In the end, returning to her usual dimensions, she makes the pack of cards fly away. She is neither bigger, nor smaller than usual. She is smarter in exchange, more courageous also, being able to express her opinions and to make decisions by herself. Her final remark "Stuff and nonsense [...]. Who cares for you? You're nothing but a pack of cards" (145) marks the positive ending of her adventures.

The "voice of reason", of the double, is beside her all the time, supporting her in the so rapid change of dimensions experience. Alice used to pretend to be "two people" quite often, so she is somehow prepared. One may start asking as Alice does: "Who in the world am I?" (24) like in a puzzle: 'I'm sure I'm not Ada (...) for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn't go in ringlets at all", on the contrary, she is not sure not to be Mabel, because all her knowledge acquired in school such as Arithmetic or Geography goes wrong, a poem goes wrong as well, her emotion is too big to let her remember correctly (24-25).

Alice doesn't want to go to the surface, that is in the real world any more unless the others, those around her at the present moment, tell her who she is and she likes "being that person". Then she thinks again:

"I shall never get any older than I am now? That'll be a comfort, one way—never to be an old woman—but then—always to have lessons to learn! Oh, I shouldn't like *that!*"(43)<sup>9</sup>.

But in that world and in that situation, she realized there was no room for books and lessons. So she creates a conversation with herself.<sup>10</sup>

Further on, she gives an embarrassing answer to the Caterpillar to the question "Who are you?" "I—I hardly know, Sir, just at present—at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changing several times since then." [...] I can't explain myself [...], because I am not myself, you see." [...] I can't understand myself, to begin with; and being so many different sizes in one day is very confusing" (54).

Dimensions modify our way of thinking and the reactions we have towards the others. Things become even more confusing when these changes occur in a totally unfamiliar place. Alice knows she would feel "a little queer" being a caterpillar for example, when changing into a chrysalis and then into a butterfly.

## Conclusions

Among the multi-layered meanings of Alice's adventures, we chose the one connected to proxemics and discussed its most striking aspects. This book is about the world of children and the

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<sup>9</sup> An important detail resides in the fact that Lewis Carroll also suggests, through italics, powerful uncertainties, preferences or dislikes of the characters. Sometimes there also are explanations in brackets constituting most useful marks of proxemics for the reader. Another category would include homophones: "hare", from March Hare, and "hair" in Chapter VII, for example, when a rather sensical discussion is interrupted with nonsensical remarks of the kind "Your hair wants cutting".

Word games like: "I say what I mean" vs "I mean what I say" and "I see what I eat" vs "I eat what I see"; "I like what I get" vs "I get what I like" and "I breathe when I sleep" vs "I sleep when I breathe" are connected to logic. We recognize here the British inclination towards puns and limericks.

<sup>10</sup> Let us remember Chapter IV when the Rabbit, the master of the house, gives orders, as in the real world, and the servants are supposed to do the hard work, in this case to free him from the embarrassing situation of having a giant girl in his house.

way in which they may adapt to a world as that of the Victorian era and not only. In helping us discover this peculiar world of Alice's adventures, Lewis Carroll shows to which extent words may be revealing or hiding the truth from us. On a closer look, the reader may observe that the author follows a specific structure in his book: he interrupts the so-called order of things to come up with something weird – word puns usually in order to awaken us.

Our reduced power of concentration which leads us back to mechanisms makes us lose the thread of conversation in general and if we lose an important word, it becomes quite difficult to get reconnected. It is at this moment that the role of such or such culture intervenes through its well established mechanisms which help us react in a way or another. Sometimes these mechanisms may prove useful, some other times...

By an extended reasoning, the globalization phenomenon might direct humanity towards the loss of landmarks, as the American sociologist George Ritzer states when talking about something or nothing. We run the risk of “globalizing nothing”, since in our society dominated by the market economy, something's characteristics (“unique, spatial relations, specific to the age, humanized, bewitched”) are confronted with nothing's characteristics (“untraceable/generic, with no geographical traces, non-specific to the age, dehumanized, not bewitched”). G. Ritzer thus demonstrates how

“the nothing’ ‘the non-human’ non-things and non-places invade everybody's life to a greater and greater extent. The question to be asked is the following: what happens with the individual's system of values, his identity, and his education? Do we risk promoting non-values, non-identities and even certain types of non-education, in Ritzer's view?” (Voinea 2012: 289)<sup>11</sup>.

If *Alice's Adventures* story was initially written for the enjoyment of children, it does not address to them only, as Carroll

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<sup>11</sup> In her assertions, Mihaela Voinea starts from George Ritzer's *Globalizarea nimicului. Cultura consumului și paradoxurile abundenței* (2010. București: Humanitas), p. 64.

himself says: “we, adults, are but older children, dear”<sup>12</sup>. Lewis Carroll is thus creating an alternative or parallel universe, inviting us to open our minds. There certainly is a connection to the age in which the book was written, but its message remains valid even today, both for children and adults.

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<sup>12</sup>\*\*\* White Rabbit Alice Carroll Size (September 6 2017). Retrieved October 23, 2018, from <http://samedaypapers.me/white-rabbit-alice-carroll-size/>.

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