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Spatializing Alice, \textit{en passant}

by

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Abstract

“Spatializing Alice, en passant,” uses Lewis Carroll’s texts, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-glass*, as a resource for developing a speculative theory for reading architecture. Such a reading, called architecture, *en passant*, investigates the way perception of measurement systems impacts the social construction of identity. It looks for evidence of these interactions by analyzing the occupation of space. An *en passant* reading assumes that architecture is generally conceived and perceived as pertaining to an ideal, objective measurement system that has the power to act on the people who occupy it, but can not itself be manipulated by them. Architecture, *en passant*, on the other hand, reveals relative measurement systems that are embedded in architectural forms. It proposes that these traditionally ignored methods of measurement significantly influence the way the built environment is occupied and the cultural impact that architecture has on its occupants.
Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Lewis Carroll’s books Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking-glass\(^1\) envision a built environment that is determined by constantly negotiated interactions between the human body and space. They are parables for the way architects perceive the world: an architect’s Utopia, in the sense that in Wonderland and Looking-glass World space acts directly on society. Many architectural works, from the Renaissance on, have been consciously designed with the intention of modifying the inhabitant’s behavior and, therefore, ideas. Other designs essentialize inhabitants, defining them in terms of the functions that they are expected to perform in the building. Rather than thinking of architecture as a social force that directly influences the behavior of its inhabitants in order to uphold the status quo, architecture and the subject that inhabits it could be understood as forming in tandem. Although Carroll may not have consciously structured the Alice books with architecture in mind, their narrative movement is sufficiently dependent on spatial interaction to be used as a resource in the development of a speculative theory for reading architecture. Architecture is generally conceived and perceived as pertaining to an ideal, objective measurement system that may act on the people who occupy it, but can not be altered by them. A speculative theory called architecture, en passant, reveals relative measurement systems already embedded in architectural forms. It proposes that these traditionally ignored methods of measurement significantly influence the way the built environment is occupied and the cultural impact that architecture has on its occupants. Architecture, en passant, builds on two foundational components: first, a definition of architecture as a cultural production that is susceptible to conscious and unconscious human desire and fears during both its conception and occupation, and, second, the psychological implications of spatially derived identity.

An en passant reading of architecture addresses the problematic of how measurement systems impact the socially-constructed body that occupies the built environment. As a reading strategy, it side-steps the dominant logic system that perceives of absolute measurement systems as unbiased and universal. It proposes, instead, that measurement systems influence the social construction of identity. As a result, it concentrates analysis on the constantly negotiated relationship between architecture and its occupants. The

\(^1\) Alice in Wonderland will be referred to throughout this text as “AW.” Through the Looking-Glass will be referred to as “TLG.” An adjective preceding the name “Alice” will be used in order to distinguish between the various identities attributed to the Alice character in the books — ie. “waking Alice,” “dream Alice,” “textual Alice,” etc. All page number references to the Alice texts refer to the 1960 edition of The Annotated Alice. They will be noted by parentheses in the body of the text. All other citations will adhere to standard footnote formatting guidelines.
occupant perceives this relationship through measuring his/her interaction with the environment. This paper applies the \textit{en passant} strategy – a method of critical analysis proposed by Julian Wolfreys in \textit{The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance: Dissonant Identities from Carroll to Derrida} – to reading architecture. The term “\textit{en passant}” refers to the chess move that allows a Pawn to capture another Pawn indirectly as it passes by, rather than capturing the piece directly. The \textit{en passant} strategy reveals the conscious and unconscious psychological impact of a cultural production. It avoids methods of analysis that depend on a deterministic logic of binary oppositions, because they privilege conscious desires, intentions, and fears over the suppressed unconscious. Wolfreys argues that \textit{en passant} critical analysis remains far enough on the fringes of dominant ideology to reveal dissonant forces effectively. After establishing the methodological roots of the \textit{en passant} strategy of critical analysis in the context of literary theory, the paper will translate it into the architectural discipline.

The next section of the paper introduces the Alice character in Carroll’s books as the symbolic embodiment of the identity side of the identity/measurement problematic that is the thesis’s focus of study. Through specific critical readings of the \textit{Alice} texts, the “Spatial Identity” section demonstrates the influence that measurement systems have on the social construction of identity. The definition of this spatialized identity is based on the Freudian concept that censoring device prevents memories and desires that would cause anxiety from penetrating the conscious mind. The section uses scenes from the \textit{Alice} texts to illustrate how changing from an absolute to a relative measurement system is comparable to changing out one identity for an Other. The next section of the paper establishes a link between the identity/measurement problematic and architecture by defining architecture’s role in and interaction with society.

The final section of the paper executes architectural \textit{en passant} readings of several scenes in AW and TLG. The readings find evidence of situations in which Alice’s perception of space moves from an absolute to a relative measurement system. In the process, it outlines four kinds of spatial manipulations that destabilize Alice’s dominant spatialized identity. It inquires into both \textit{Alice} books because they are structurally similar but manage to illustrate two different spatial manipulations that both lie within the framework of an absolute measurement system: proportional shifts and directional reversals. These architectural \textit{en passant} readings use the term “dimension” as a trope for “a measurement system that allows humans to manipulate the spatial environment through perception.” In this context, “dimension” combines the two sides of the identity/measurement problematic: the psychological (identity) aspect with
the spatial (measurement) aspect. The readings capitalize on the potential psychological impact of applying a relative measurement system to the conception and perception of architecture. All of the readings are framed using one of four dimensional definitions: technical, proportional, geometrical, or figurative.

The conclusion outlines the major architectural and theoretical influences that played a role in developing an architectural en passant reading method. It concludes with a series of guidelines outlining how to read other architectural works, en passant.

In order to use the Alice books as a resource in the construction of a speculative theory of architecture, en passant, the texts must be treated as though they were found objects. A formal analysis allows a dispassionate, forensic study of the text. Carroll uses linguistic games, logic games, the books' dream premise, various literary genres, among other tools, to launch indirect attacks on the status quo. The nature of the status quo that Carroll's text attacks has been discussed by Alice scholars in many disciplines. They have focused on issues ranging from contemporary politics and the Victorian educational system to principles of physics and the nature of the Self, in reference to both Carroll and Alice.\footnote{A good resource for research into the way critics from multiple disciplines have analyzed the Alice books is the anthology Aspects of Alice: Lewis Carroll's Dreamchild as seen through the Critics' Looking-Glasses, 1865-1971, (Ed. Robert Phillips. New York: The Vanguard Press, 1971.)} Instead of considering the social, political, or biographical context in which the work was composed, this analysis looks for evidence of architecture, en passant, in the space of the narrative. Treating the text like an object of evidence, an architectural en passant reading separates Carroll's psychological argument from the measurement system that constructs Alice's perception of space. Its goal is to propose a way of reading architecture that is structurally similar to the way the Alice texts are constructed. In the Alice books, an architectural en passant reading analyses the point at which the fluctuations in Alice's perceived identity are understood to be irresistibly linked to the dimensional shifts that operate on her body.

en passant

In this paper, the term "en passant" refers to a kind of critical analysis, a reading method that Julian Wolfreys first outlined in the context of literary criticism in his book of essays The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance: Dissonant Identities from Carroll to Derrida. The en passant strategy investigates the psychological impact that a cultural production has on the conscious and suppressed unconscious levels
of a user’s mind. It avoids methods of analysis that depend on a deterministic logic of binary oppositions, because they privilege conscious desires, intentions, and fears the suppressed cultural unconscious. It does, on the other hand, challenge cultural productions that uphold the status quo by revealing the dissonant forces embedded in them. The *en passant* strategy is a key player in both AW and TLG in the production of perceived space. Alice’s perceived identity is the material that the *en passant* strategy manipulates in those texts. Constantly rebuffed, criticized, and confounded, she wanders through Wonderland and Looking-glass World from one encounter to the next without ever establishing a stable relationship with her surroundings. Because Alice bases the stability of her identity on her relationship with space, she constantly struggles with Other identities that surface in response to her body’s shifting spatial relationships. The perceived results of Carroll’s *en passant* narrative structure in AW and TLG are the shifting spatial dimensions that drive the plot by throwing Alice’s identity into crisis.
The *en passant* move is rarely used in chess, because it is only possible when several pieces meet specific conditions. However, if everything is correctly positioned, the Pawn has, for a moment, significant powers of movement and capture over another Pawn. Essentially, the *en passant* move combines a Pawn’s first move (two squares straight ahead) with its capture move (one square diagonal). In other words, the aggressor Pawn captures a Pawn lying in the Third Square on either side of it as it passes by during its first movement on the board. A Pawn that moves *en passant* combines seemingly incompatible moves to its advantage. It manages to both capture another piece and take advantage of the uniquely heightened powers of movement granted to it only in its first move.

The *en passant* move spatially characterizes the Pawn’s indirect strategic power in chess. The least valuable piece on the board, the Pawn is also the most multitudinous, the most restricted in movement, the only piece with the potential to transform into another piece (when it reaches the Eighth Square), and,
the only piece that changes name when it moves from one file to the next. A Pawn’s identity is determined by its color and file, because it only changes file when it captures another piece. It is both the most limited piece in terms of movement and the only piece with upward mobility. The value of all chess pieces increases and decreases throughout the game in response to their position on the board. However, the Pawn’s value is unique in the sense that it exerts most of its power indirectly. Rather than capturing *en passant* with the purpose of removing a piece from the board, players on both sides generally use it as part of a larger strategic attack plan. The sacrificing side may actually entice the aggressor Pawn to take its piece in order to open the way for an offensive attack. Because chess games end without consummating the final aggressive act – taking the king – the *en passant* move could be the final move in any given game. It converts a deflection into an act of aggression.

In *The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance*, Julian Wolfreys suggests that the *en passant* strategy of indirect attack could be seen as a metaphor of the way Carroll uses spatial perception to destabilize Alice’s dominant identity in *AW* and *TLG*. The result of this strategy, “the rhetoric of affirmative resistance,”\(^3\) constructs an argument against a certain ideology by moving past it, destabilizing it without confronting it directly. Using Carroll’s texts as an example of this strategy, Wolfreys argues that it is only when Alice’s dominant identity has been sufficiently thrown into crisis that she acknowledges that her identity as a Victorian little girl is a social construction that has been applied to her. “She is able to understand that the great puzzle is her identity, who she is in the world, as she puts it, or who she is for others, the *they* . . . who name Alice as Alice, and who, she supposes, will come to reclaim her.”\(^4\) It is only when Alice realizes that her identity is determined by forces exterior to herself that she acknowledges that she can not control its stability.\(^5\) By “liberating” Alice from the two major forms of identity imposed on her by culture – her stable relationship with space and institutionalized knowledge – Carroll transforms her, *en passant*, into her “Other.” Becoming Other does not move Alice from one stable identity, which we will call “waking Alice,” to another stable identity, “Alice as Other.” Wolfreys writes, “The effect on Alice of becoming

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\(^3\) Julian Wolfreys, *The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance: Dissonant Identities from Carroll to Derrida*, pp. 11-12.


other is that she finds her identity always poised at moments of imminent dissolution into an other identity.\footnote{Julian Wolfreys, *The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance: Dissonant Identities from Carroll to Derrida*, p. 58.}

The *en passant* strategy of affirmative resistance destabilizes any cultural object it affects, from Alice to architecture. In the realm of architecture, the dominant ideology it circumvents is the assumption that architecture can orchestrate the movements of a conscious, unified subject.\footnote{“The rhetoric of affirmative resistance partakes of doubling, paradox, catharsis, projection, semantic torque, all of which challenge and resist indirectly readings which aim to produce the illusion of depth, while affirming textuality as a multiplicity of surfaces. Across these surfaces are projected the traces of innumerable identities.” (Julian Wolfreys, *The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance: Dissonant Identities from Carroll to Derrida*, pp. 17-18.)} Carroll uses humor to make the *en passant* strategy that powers narrative movement in AW and TLG more palatable to his readers. His protagonist, on the other hand, maintains a deadpan demeanor and is often the butt of the joke. She consistently tries to reject the possibility: a) that her identity is composed of a fragmented subjectivity and b) that different subject fragments of her identity might perceive the same space differently in response to different fears and desires.

**Spatial Identity**

A speculative theory of architecture, *en passant*, reveals subversive forces embedded in architecture by analyzing the impact that measurement systems have on identity. It translates the abstract interaction between measurement and identity into the more tangible interaction of the body in space. Textual analyses of specific scenes in AW and TLG will prove that spatial perception largely determines Alice’s identity. This section interprets the Alice character as the symbolic embodiment of the identity side of the identity/measurement problematic. In other words, it attempts to prove that Alice pins her identity on the relationship she expects her body to have with space. The formative impact that Alice’s perception of space has on the construction of her socially constructed body means that her body becomes the visible site of conflict for the larger theoretical problematic of identity and measurement. Whether or not Alice’s identity is a model for real inhabitants of the built environment, architects work under the assumption that the way humans interact with the built environment is filtered through socially determined ideologies. By linking Alice’s identity to her perception of space, Carroll sets up the conditions for a built environment that challenges her cultural assumptions *en passant.*
The concept of identity and subjectivity proposed in this section are based on the Freudian hypothesis that a dominant identity acts like a policeman for the conscious mind, limiting and distorting the memories, desires, and perceptions that pass through the filter from the unconscious to the conscious mind.\footnote{The following passage summarizes Freud’s theory on the structure of mental processes in relation to the formation of dreams. “Our hypothesis is that in our mental apparatus there are two thought-constructing agencies, of which the second enjoys the privilege of having free access to consciousness for its products, whereas the activity of the first is in itself unconscious and can only reach consciousness by way of the second. On the frontier between the two agencies, where the first passes over to the second, there is a censorship, which only allows what is agreeable to it to pass through and holds back everything else. According to our definition, then, what is rejected by the censorship is in a state of repression. Under certain conditions, of which the state of sleep is one, the relation between the strength of the two agencies is modified in such a way that what is repressed can no longer be held back. In the state of sleep this probably occurs owing to a relaxation of the censorship; when this happens it becomes possible for what has hitherto been repressed to make a path for itself to consciousness. Since, however, the censorship is never completely eliminated but merely reduced, the repressed material must submit to certain alterations which mitigate its offensive features. What becomes conscious in such cases is a compromise between the intentions of one agency and the demands of the other. Repression – relaxation of the censorship – the formation of a compromise, this is the fundamental pattern for the generation not only of dreams but of many other psychopathological structures; and in the latter cases, too, we may observe that the formation of compromises is accompanied by processes of condensation and displacement and by the employment of superficial associations, which we have become familiar with in the dream work.” (Sigmund Freud, On Dreams, from Chapter X, pp. 62-63.)} This dominant identity projects an illusory unified subjectivity whose equilibrium is strongly connected to expectations of the way the body should interact with space. When subjectivities that are normally suppressed surface in the conscious mind, they take the form of pathologies. For instance, the protagonist of AW and TLG, Alice, identifies herself most closely with a character type that could be described as a “Victorian little girl.” When she is confronted with unsettling events, her dominant little girl identity tries to suppress perceptions and experiences that subvert the precepts of what it means to be that character type. Architecture, \textit{en passant}, suggests that a built environment that encourages suppressed subjectivities to slip into the conscious mind along with unconventional spatial perception is possible. An \textit{en passant} reading of architecture reveals moments where this kind of interaction is already present in a latent form. It assumes that an ideal inhabitant is conceived in the process of designing every work of architecture. In the case of AW and TLG, the Alice character is the subject who defines and is defined by her surroundings. By remaining palpable in the project, particularly at moments where her expected relationship with space breaks down, the ideal subject offers the real inhabitants of the building insight into opportunities for sidestepping traditional spatial perceptions and social expectations.

In order to visualize how the \textit{en passant} strategy functions in the built environment, it is important first to establish the qualities of the object that registers its impact. Carroll uses Alice’s spatialized identity
as the material that the activated architecture in Wonderland and Looking-glass World transforms. An *en passant* reading of the impact that space has on the socially constructed body drives narrative development in both books. Every time Alice’s perception of space shifts, her dominant identity loses control over her subjectivity and an Other identity momentarily takes over. That Other identity is determined by the spatial relationship that first sparked Alice’s crisis of expectations.

Alice is not the only character in Carroll’s texts whose culturally-constructed body is determined by the measurement system through which she perceives space. The identity (or identities) of all of the characters in AW and TLG are spatially defined. Because Alice is an outsider in Wonderland and Looking-glass World, and because Carroll narrates the story from her perspective, the text describes many perceived spatial manipulations in relation to Alice’s subjectivity rather than that of other characters. Names in the *Alice* texts refer to socially encoded spatial identities. As a result, most of the characters who inhabit Wonderland and Looking-glass World have descriptive names: the Duchess, the Red Queen, the White Rabbit, etc. Alice’s conversation with the Gnat in TLG reveals the reason proper names do not designate identities in Wonderland and Looking-glass World. Alice argues that not only are names assigned by others but that those who do the naming are the ones who benefit from the practice, not those who are named. The Gnat counters by showing her Looking-glass insects whose names describe their makeup and method of movement. The Rocking-horse-fly, for instance, is “made entirely of wood, and gets about by swinging itself from branch to branch.” (222) Alice’s proper name may adequately describe her complex, fragmented identity when she is awake, because her “Victorian little girl” subjectivity suppresses dissonant identity fragments. Once she has entered Wonderland or Looking-glass World, however, her proper name refers to her entire Self, conscious and unconscious. This is, in part, due to Alice’s attachment to her proper name. At that point, the name “Alice” applies to a long list of personalities that seem to refer to the same body but act independently from one another. In fact, Alice moves among so many identities in the stories exactly because of her name’s lack of precision. In order to distinguish between the different Alice’s, they must be named descriptively, in the manner of other

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9 The nature of naming and its connection to identity is a major theme in both books, not only in relation to architecture, *en passant*. The following articles offer a variety of analyses on the role and implications of names in the *Alice* books. Roger W. Holmes, “The Philosopher’s *Alice in Wonderland*;” Patricia Meyer Spacks, “Logic and Language in *Through the Looking-glass*;” Gézér Róheim, “From ‘Further Insights;’” William Empson, “Alice in Wonderland: the Child as Swain;” all in *Aspects of Alice*. 
Wonderland and Looking-glass characters. As a result, different Alice identities will be distinguished throughout this text using descriptors such as “little girl” Alice, tall Alice, etc.

Alice’s proper name links her to a specific Victorian little girl, Alice Liddell, for whom Carroll first composed Alice in Wonderland. Many Carroll scholars have emphasized the significance of Carroll’s infatuation with Alice Liddell in the development of textual Alice’s adventures. The name Lewis Carroll, of course, is itself a play on identity, being the Rev. Charles Dodgson’s pen name. It is curious, to say the least, that Dodgson retains Alice’s name when he publishes Alice in Wonderland, while masking his own identity behind a pen name. The irony, of course, is that the name Lewis Carroll gains depth and complexity by being the author of the Alice books, whereas Alice’s proper name loses much of its meaning as soon as she enters Wonderland or Looking-glass World. From that point forward, the reference to Alice Liddell falls to a level of importance equal to the other subjectivities (such as textual Alice or tall Alice) that continually throw her dominant “little girl” identity off balance.

While Alice Liddell is the “Alice” identity with the closest connection to the real world, it is only referenced tangentially in the stories. One step away from the complexity of the Alice Liddell identity is textual Alice. Textual Alice is a direct reference to Alice Liddell, but Carroll characterizes her in terms of societal expectations for Victorian little girls that then become major themes in each book. Both texts begin and end with short scenes from textual Alice’s waking life. Common identifying characteristics of textual Alice’s character can be traced across the opening and closing scenes from the books, but her role

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10 See The Annotated Alice, footnote 1; and, “Psychoanalytic Remarks on Alice in Wonderland and Lewis Carroll,” by Paul Schilder, 1938 (Aspects of Alice), for an in-depth description of Charles Dodgson’s relationship with Alice Liddell.

11 In both AW and TLG, the bookend sections that introduce textual Alice describe certain environmental stimuli that inspire the creation of many of the characters and situations that Alice encounters in her dreams. The most obvious of these stimuli are related to the time of year. The waking sections of AW are set outside on a warm summer afternoon. Consequently, Alice dreams of a cool domestic interior that is stuck at tea time. The inverse occurs in TLG. Waking Alice sits, bored, in the drawing-room of her house in the middle of winter. The dream world she enters is primarily exterior. Her only experiences with Looking-glass House occur at the beginning and end of the dream. Those scenes act as transition scenes between Looking-glass World and Alice’s waking world. Carroll also refers to some other defining characteristics of textual Alice’s personality during the course of her adventures. For example, in both AW and TLG Carroll mentions that textual Alice often pretends to be two or more people. (32-33, 180) These passing comments offer strong evidence to support the psychoanalytic view that all of the characters in Alice’s dreams personify (sometimes contradictory) aspects of textual Alice’s identity.

In AW, Alice’s older sister hears many of the characters in Alice’s dream when she closes her eyes to think about the dream that textual Alice has related to her. The White Rabbit is the rustling long grass. The Mouse is the nearby splashing pool. The Mad Hatter’s teacups are sheep bells. The Queen of Hearts is the shrill voice of the shepherd boy. The Mock Turtle is the lowing cattle. She hears the other characters in “the confused clamour of the
in AW is reversed in TLG. In AW, textual Alice falls asleep (enters Wonderland) out of boredom, rebelling against institutionalized education – represented by her sister’s reading a book with “no pictures or conversations in it.” (25) That theme becomes a major source of both the book’s humor and Alice’s identity crises. In the opening scene of TLG, on the other hand, textual Alice fills her sister’s role from the previous book by attempting to teach her black kitten how to conform with the rules of her society. In the midst of threatening to throw her kitten through as punishment, she climbs through the looking-glass herself.

Carroll clearly demarcates the border between Alice’s identity in the waking world and in her dreams, including transition scenes in both directions. In fact, her entrance into and exit from Wonderland and Looking-glass World are some of the most dramatic scenes in the books. The transitional scenes and the scenes that immediately follow them introduce the main spatial manipulations that draw out Alice’s “Other” identities in each book.

The transition scene into Wonderland maps Alice’s gradual loss of cognitive control over her surroundings. In other words, by losing interest in her sister’s book, Alice loses the qualities of rational thought and book-learning (institutional education) that the scene with her sister represents. During the considerable time that textual Alice spends falling down the rabbit hole into Wonderland, she exerts cognitive control over the situation through reasoned musings about how far she has fallen, how fast, and where she is headed. She finishes the transition into dream Alice by dozing off towards the end of her fall while muttering, “Do cats eat bats?” and sometimes, “Do bats eat cats?” for, you see, as she couldn’t answer either question, it didn’t much matter which way she put it.” (28) Verbalizing an application of the Law of the Excluded Middle while she is in the process of falling asleep signals Alice’s transition into a busy farm-yard.” (163-164) Environmental stimuli for the TLG dream pepper both the first and last chapter of that book. This time, textual Alice herself points out many of the equivalencies between her dream and her immediate surroundings. She talks to the black kitten about chess just before she falls asleep, comparing the black kitten to the Red Queen. (“Let’s pretend that you’re the Red Queen, Kitty!” (180)) In her dream, the black and white kittens become the Red and White Queens, respectively. Alice spends the greater part of Chapter 1 scolding the black kitten and listing all of its faults. In Alice’s dream, the Red Queen’s identity is almost entirely characterized by scolding Alice. And, the White Queen continues Alice’s musings on the best way of doling out punishments. Alice decides that Dinah (Alice’s pet in AW and the mother cat in TLG) is Humpty Dumpty. She also decides that the reason that the theme of all of the poetry recited to her in her dream was seafood was because the cats had transformed into the chess pieces. This is another example of the inversions that take place across the two texts: Alice has a very hard time at the beginning of her adventures in Wonderland because she continually mentions her cat Dinah to animals that generally fall prey to cats.
world of relative logic and, therefore, a world where absolute assumptions, expectations, and spatially-defined identities are routinely questioned.

Similar to Alice’s entrance into Wonderland, Carroll marks her entrance into Looking-glass World by suggesting that she begins to perceive her surroundings in accordance with an expanded logic system. Alice enters Looking-glass World through a mirror over the mantle piece in her drawing-room. This scene sets the tone for the way that Alice perceives her body’s interaction with Looking-glass World throughout her stay there. Whereas her entrance into Wonderland was totally alien and unfamiliar – a rabbit hole and a hallway with different scaled doors along its length – Alice is already familiar with most of the contents of the Looking-glass drawing-room because they are reflections of the contents on the other side of the mirror. She crosses the looking-glass having already internalized the assumption that actions on her side of the glass hold precedent over desires for movement on the other side. This assumption translates into her comment that Looking-glass World can only look and act differently from the simple mirror reflection of her house once it is outside the panoptic reach of the looking-glass in textual Alice’s drawing room.¹² In the end, dream Alice finds that the farther she travels from the looking-glass, the farther she moves from the logic system of binary oppositions that characterizes Victorian perception. However, following the inverted logic of Looking-glass World, by moving away from the looking-glass and Looking-glass House, she is really returning towards it all along.

Once textual Alice enters her dream adventures, her identity shifts and goes into crisis almost continuously as a result of the dimensional shifts that transform her body, her surrounding environment, and the relationship between the two. Her dominant identity in Wonderland and Looking-glass World, dream Alice, is one more step away from the complexity of a real little girl than textual Alice. In both books, dream Alice is a caricature of the “Victorian little girl.” She is nothing more than the dominant

¹² An example of textual Alice’s reasoned musings: “I wonder how many miles I’ve fallen by this time? . . . . I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousand miles down, I think.” (27)

¹³ Textual Alice’s spatial theory of Looking-glass World: “I’ll tell you all my ideas about Looking-glass House. First, there’s the room you can see through the glass – that’s just the same as our drawing-room, only the things go the other way. I can see all of it when I get upon a chair – all but the bit just behind the fireplace. Oh! I do so wish I could see that bit! I want so much to know whether they’ve a fire in the winter: you never can tell, you know, unless our fire smokes, and then smoke comes up in that room too – but that may be only pretence, just to make it look as if they had a fire. Well then, the books are something like our books, only the words go the wrong way: I know that, because I’ve held up one of our books to the glass, and then they hold up one in the other room.

“…… now we come to the passage. You can just see a little peep of the passage in Looking-glass House, if you leave the door of our drawing-room wide open: and it’s very like our passage as far as you can see, only you know it may be quite different on beyond.” (180-181)
identity that allows a limited amount of information to filter into textual Alice’s conscious mind and suppresses the rest.

Dream Alice’s role in the text is to act as the narrative foil that dramatizes the perceptual conflict between absolute and relative measurement systems. She is the “ideal subject” whose identity is constructed and complexified in tandem with the architecture of Wonderland and Looking-glass World. On rare occasions in the Carroll books dream Alice applies the *en passant* strategy rather than rejecting it, but only momentarily and under great duress. For instance, in *AW* when the Caterpillar tells her that one side of his mushroom will make her grow taller and the other will make her grow smaller, she overcomes the paradox of ascribing sides to a circle by literally applying her body’s differentiation between left and right to the mushroom. By stretching her arms around the mushroom as far as she can and taking a piece with each hand, Alice forces sided-ness onto the mushroom indirectly and only for an instant.\(^{14}\)

Carroll establishes in *AW* that dream Alice bases her “little girl” identity on a combination of precise spatial expectations and cognitive retention of institutionalized education. Textual Alice is seven years old in *AW* and seven and a half in *TLG*. Her age is important, because she has already internalized many of the ideologies that will allow her to function as an adult. However, she is still young enough to question many others. However, her identity as a “little girl” is an identity of transition and bodily growth. As Humpty Dumpty points out in a death joke in *TLG*, the only way she could manage to stay a little girl forever is to stop developing. The body of a seven year old girl is expected to slowly transform over time. At any given moment in the time continuum, it is expected that the little girl’s body will conform to a rough measurement of size and mobility that is pegged to her age. A crisis of expectation – prompting a plot development – occurs in one of the *Alice* texts whenever dream Alice decides that one of her dimensional measurements (size, proportion, movement, etc.) does not correspond to a seven year old little girl’s proper interaction with space. The irony of dream Alice’s adamant interest in stabilizing her identity is that it is a transitory state in her life and will end with a catastrophic event that will permanently transform both her body and her cultural identity. This situation is typical of Carroll’s methodology. His main satiric tactic in

\(^{14}\) In the following passage from *AW*, dream Alice applies a relative measurement system (her body) to an object that appears to be entirely defined by an absolute measurement system (the mushroom). “Alice remained looking thoughtfully at the mushroom for a minute, trying to make out which were the two sides of it; and, as it was perfectly round, she found this a very difficult question. However, at last she stretched her arms round it as far as they would go, and broke off a bit of the edge with each hand.” (73)
both books is juxtaposed inversion. Dream Alice is constantly confronted in Carroll’s texts with both the transitory nature of her dominant identity and the power of relative measurement systems in determining it.

While psychoanalytic readings have a tendency to treat the entire narrative between Alice’s entrance into Wonderland or Looking-glass World as a dream, Alice is not always “in character” as dream Alice during that time. She could be characterized as dream Alice whenever she compares the conditions in the dream world to her waking world. However, when other characters apply an identity to her (Mary Ann, a serpent, etc.) dream Alice ceases to be her dominant identity. One of dream Alice’s main identifying characteristics is a desire to “fit” in her surroundings. Her identity crises are generally sparked by uncertainty regarding the way she, as a Victorian little girl, should react to the events in Wonderland and Looking-glass World. In many cases, she appropriates objects that are scaled to fit a body other than her own to measure her body’s proportional or disproportionate size in relation to her surroundings. Her desire to “fit in” will never be fulfilled, however, because she refuses to relinquish her proper name, which is a construction of the dominant societal forces that Wonderland and Looking-glass World sidestep.

Many of Alice’s Other identities emerge as a result of her interaction with Wonderland and Looking-glass creatures. Dream Alice clings to her “little girl” identity because she assumes that little girls are universally loved and accepted in society. At several points in both books, however, a character who recognizes her “little girl” identity still alienates dream Alice by considering “little girls” to be alien or threatening. In AW, a Pigeon accuses her of being a serpent because eating too much mushroom has elongated Alice’s neck. Alice fails to convince the Pigeon that she is a little girl. First of all, argues the Pigeon, little girls’ necks do not grow to the length of very long snakes. Second, even if Alice is a little girl, as she claims, if she eats eggs, then little girls must be a kind of serpent. In other words, for the

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15 Carroll makes it clear that Alice compares her neck to a serpent before she meets the Pigeon. The entire passage describing her proportional transformation follows: “‘Come, my head’s free at last!’ said Alice in a tone of delight, which changed into alarm in another moment, when she found that her shoulders were nowhere to be found: all she could see, when she looked down, was an immense length of neck, which seemed to rise like a stalk out of a sea of green leaves that lay far below her.

“‘What can all that green stuff be?’ said Alice. ‘And where have my shoulders got to? And oh, my poor hands, how is it I can’t see you?’ She was moving them about, as she spoke, but no result seemed to follow, except a little shaking among the distant green leaves.

“As there seemed to be no chance of getting her hands up to her head, she tried to get her head down to them, and was delighted to find that her neck would bend about easily in any direction, like a serpent. She had just succeeded in curving it down into a graceful zigzag, and was going to dive in among the leaves, which she found to be nothing but the tops of the trees under which she had been wandering, when a sharp hiss made her draw back in a hurry: a large pigeon had flown into her face, and was batting her violently with its wings.
Pigeon, a serpent is any animal with a long neck who eats eggs. The Unicorn (from “The Lion and the Unicorn” nursery rhyme) who dream Alice meets in TLG, projects Alice’s assumption about Unicorns back onto her, remarking, “I always thought [children] were fabulous monsters!” (287) His counterpart, the Lion, calls Alice “Monster” for the rest of the scene, suggesting that “little girl” fits into the more general naming category of “Monster.”16 Earlier on in TLG, a Fawn befriends Alice until it recognizes her “little girl” identity. At the same moment, the Fawn remembers its own name “Fawn” and the proper relationship between a human child and a Fawn.17

Freud hypothesizes that the filter that represses socially unacceptable desires and perceptions in waking life relaxes during sleep. The scene with the Fawn illustrates how in Wonderland and Looking-glass World Alice’s “little girl” identity loses both the depth of her waking subjectivity and the level of

16 “Serpent!” screamed the Pigeon.” (74-75)

17 The entire interaction between dream Alice and the Unicorn places Alice at a disadvantage, because she is an outsider in what is clearly the Unicorn’s world. Luckily for her, the Unicorn chooses to accept her existence without feeling threatened: “he [the Unicorn] was going on, when his eye happened to fall on Alice: he turned round instantly, and stood for some time looking at her with an air of the deepest disgust.

“‘What – is – this?’ he said at last.
“‘This is a child!’ Haigha replied eagerly, coming in front of Alice to introduce her, and spreading out both his hands towards her in an Anglo-Saxon attitude. ‘We only found it to-day. It’s as large as life and twice as natural!’
“‘I always thought they were fabulous monsters!’ said the Unicorn. ‘Is it alive?’
“‘It can talk,’ said Haigha solemnly.
“The Unicorn looked dreamily at Alice, and said ‘Talk, child.’
“Alice could not help her lips curling up into a smile as she began: ‘Do you know, I always thought Unicorns were fabulous monsters, too? I never saw one alive before!’
“‘Well, now that we have seen each other,’ said the Unicorn, ‘if you’ll believe in me, I’ll believe in you. Is that a bargain?’

“Yes, if you like,” said Alice.” (286-287)

“I’ll tell you, if you’ll come a little further on,” the Fawn said. ‘I can’t remember here.’

“So they walked on together through the wood, Alice with her arms clasped lovingly round the soft neck of the Fawn, till they came out into another open field, and here the Fawn gave a sudden bound into the air, and shook itself free from Alice’s arm. ‘I’m a Fawn!’ it cried out in a voice of delight. ‘And, dear me! You’re a human child!’ A sudden look of alarm came into its beautiful brown eyes, and in another moment it had darted away at full speed.

‘Alice stood looking after it, almost ready to cry with vexation at having lost her dear little fellow-traveler so suddenly. ‘However, I know my name now,’ she said: ‘that’s some comfort. Alice – Alice – I won’t forget it again.’” (227)
control that it usually exerts over the filter between her conscious and unconscious mind. In other words, the dream sequence in AW and TLG could be understood as “adventures” in which the dream Alice character, who normally represses any thought or desire that would fissure the apparent unity of her subjectivity, is forced into acknowledging the true, fragmented nature of her overall identity.

In *The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance*, Julian Wolfreys suggests that Alice’s spatially induced identity crises illustrate Michel Foucault’s theory on the disciplinary social construction of identity through power relations. Wolfreys argues that an *en passant* analysis of the *Alice* texts reveals that it is impossible to establish a stable, spatially-based identity because: “the definition of identity is a form of power practice.”18 The power practice at play involves naming as a designation of control. In other words, Alice’s “identity has been formed only through the power of others’ disciplinary acts in the form of lessons – and possible punishment. Wonderland, on the other hand, resists punishment.”19 As soon as Alice realizes that her perception of space is filtering through a relative measurement system, she attempts to fix the referent of measurement in order to re-site her dominant identity in a stable spatial environment. The architecture, *en passant*, of Wonderland, however, passes her by in every attempt. As soon as she fixes her identity on a new relationship between her body and space, a new dimensional shift throws her off balance again.

Dream Alice evaluates the extent to which her identity is stabilized by measuring how closely her body’s interaction with surrounding space is in line with her expectations. She will never succeed in fixing a relative measurement system’s referent because it responds to her movements through space. To make the process of restabilizing her dream identity more complicated, however, Alice links her dream identity to a two-level hierarchy of spatial expectations. She sites her identity first, by comparing her body to surrounding space; and, second, by focusing on the relationship between different parts of her body. If she perceives her body to be too large or too small in relation to the proportions of her surroundings; if she perceives her movement through space as somehow out of line with the way a “little girl” normally moves through space; if her body’s relation to the measurement of time or distance is not in line with her expectations, dream Alice will suffer an identity crisis. Once she perceives her body’s relationship with surrounding space to be out of line with her expectations, dream Alice compares different parts of her body

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to each other. If the relationship between her body and space also results in a change in the way parts of her body work together, she suffers an even more severe identity crisis.

Both AW and TLG manipulate dream Alice’s spatialized identity in several ways. Even though Carroll applies the same strategy, *en passant*, in both books, the resulting architecture (the negotiated interaction between Alice’s Other identities and surrounding space) differs from spatial situation to situation. An analysis of Alice’s first adventure in AW will use two drawings to illustrate the spatial hierarchy that characterizes Alice’s perception of her socially-constructed dominant subjectivity. A textual analysis of Alice’s entrance into Looking-glass World will establish the spatial relationships that drive the plot of TLG by setting up conditions in the hierarchy of Alice’s various subjectivities that ensure eventual conflict and identity crises.

Two drawings by John Tenniel of tall Alice in the hallway with locked doors. (Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland, The Annotated Alice*, pp. 36-7.)

Two drawings by John Tenniel, the artist who illustrated the first publication of the *Alice* books, show the hierarchical nature of Alice’s perceived identity in AW. They both depict the same scene from the beginning of AW. Alice has fallen to the bottom of a rabbit hole and entered a long hallway lined with locked doors. She goes through a series of proportional shifts, alternating between growing small and large. The Tenniel illustrations depict dream Alice after she has grown very large in proportion to her
surroundings for the first time. Illustrating dream Alice twice in the same proportional relationship to the hallway, they are testaments to the power that relative measurement systems have over the construction of identity. In the first drawing, Tenniel does not include an architectural backdrop. With no spatial point of reference, he depicts dream Alice out of proportion with herself – with a disproportionately long neck. In the scene’s text, Alice compares herself to a telescope when she perceives herself to be both disproportionately large and disproportionately small for the space. Her long neck in the drawing also suggests the reason she perceives herself as having lost control over her extremities as a result of her large size. Tenniel’s second drawing of tall Alice draws her in a proportional relationship to the hallway where the dimensional shifts occur. In this case, dream Alice appears in proportion with herself, but too large for the room. Clearly, in Tenniel’s view (and in consultation with Carroll), dream Alice does not perceive proportional irregularities between different parts of her body when she concentrates on her body’s proportional relationship with surrounding space. Both drawings use the relationship between dream Alice’s body and space to illustrate shifts in her perception of identity. They suggest that an *en passant* analysis of the text could extract different Alice identities from the same scene by reconceiving the kind of relative measurement system that constructs it.

The two obvious identities that could be extracted from the scene in the hallway with locked doors are the tall Alice and short Alice identities. Like all architectural *en passant* narratives, the stories of tall and short Alice assume that we use architecture as a measuring device to mediate between our bodies and surrounding space. Both identities alternate between measuring their proportional size against the hallway and against parts of Alice’s body. Tall Alice’s identity is characterized by the perception that her body has exceeded its expected proportional relationship with surrounding space. Hers is a story of alienation from her surroundings that is mainly expressed through a feeling of paralysis. Rather than using her size to exert control over her surroundings, tall Alice loses control over, first, parts of her body and, second, over her interactions with the Wonderland and Looking-glass societies. As a result, she repeatedly experiences the negative side of controlling space due to her size. Starting in the hallway scene in at the beginning of AW, the tall Alice identity is the driving force of the action in several scenes in Wonderland and the first scene in Looking-glass World. Her architectural *en passant* narrative starts out as a story of spatial frustration and near paralysis. Once she learns to control her proportional transformations, tall Alice experiences growing alienation from the characters that inhabit the dimension she has learned to control.
Short Alice experiences the opposite side of power relations from tall Alice. Ironically, many times dream Alice enters into the short Alice identity consciously in order to achieve a goal. For instance, dream Alice’s first transformation in AW is prompted by her desire to fit through a door that is 15-inches tall. Her transformation into tall Alice, on the other hand, is many times an out-of-control attempt to extract herself from the unforeseen consequences of transforming into short Alice. The reason dream Alice focuses on the 15-inch door touches on another ironic reversal between the tall Alice and short Alice identities. As mentioned above, tall Alice never finds a way to reconcile her proportionally large size with her architectural and social surroundings in Wonderland. Short Alice, on the other hand, almost always immediately “fits in” with her surroundings by interacting with similarly-sized creatures in a social setting. In the hallway scene in AW, both the key that opens the 15-inch tall door and the White Rabbit’s fan (which is the implement that transforms her from tall to short Alice the second time) “fit” short Alice’s dimensions. Short Alice also has the freedom of movement through space that tall Alice lacks. However, she is never satisfied with her small size because she assumes that she will have more control over her environment (i.e. her power in society will increase) if she grows larger.

The other major drama in short Alice’s story involves her transformations into the short Alice identity. With every transformation, she comes closer and closer to testing the limits of existence. The last time Alice transforms into her short identity, she comes so close to the limit of existence that she barely has enough space to open her mouth and eat from the piece of mushroom that will make her grow tall again.20

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20 The following passages describe dream Alice’s transformations into short Alice. Notice how the transformations become progressively violent, and how with each transformation Alice brushes closer and closer to the limit of positive space.

The first time she transforms into short Alice, she drinks a potion in the hallway with locked doors: “‘What a curious feeling!’ said Alice, ‘I must be shutting up like a telescope!’ And so it was indeed: she was now only ten inches high . . . . she waited a few minutes to see if she was going to shrink any further: she felt a little nervous about this; ‘for it might end, you know,’ said Alice to herself, ‘in my going out altogether, like a candle. I wonder what I should be like then?’ And then she tried to fancy what the flame of a candle looks like after the candle is blown out, for she could not remember every having seen such a thing.” (31-2)

Dream Alice’s second transformation into short Alice also takes place in the hallway with locked doors. This time, the White Rabbit’s fan makes her grow smaller: “she looked down at her hands, and was surprised to see that she had put on one of the Rabbit’s little white kid gloves while she was talking. ‘How can I have done that?’ she thought. ‘I must be growing small again.’ She got up and went to the table to measure herself by it, and found that, as nearly as she could guess, she was now about two feet high, and was going on shrinking rapidly: she soon found out that the cause of this was the fan she was holding, and she dropped it hastily, just in time to save herself from shrinking away altogether. “That was a narrow escape!” said Alice, a good deal frightened at the sudden change, but very glad to find herself still in existence.” (39)
Even though short Alice’s brush with the low end of her proportional scale of existence is more violently dramatic, she experiences both extremes of a small existence: the vector that curves in the direction of infinitely small and the visible but unattainable that represents infinitely large. For example, dream Alice successfully transforms into short Alice for the first time with the intention of unlocking a 15-inch door that leads out of the hallway in which she is trapped and into a garden. However, she accidentally leaves the key to the door on top of a table that was in proportion to her “little girl” size but is hopelessly out of reach for a 9-inch tall Alice.

As their names imply, the Tall Alice and Short Alice identities are characterized by feeling proportionately out of place. Because the identities are complementary and because they usually appear in the same scene, their narratives touch on the same major theme: the role that control over one’s body in space plays in power relations. The implication in both cases is that dream Alice’s identity will not “fit” absolutely in any situation, because a relative spatial condition of some kind will always take precedence over the relationship between that, her dominant identity, and an absolute measurement system.

Dream Alice’s entrance into Looking-glass World and the scenes in which she explores Looking-glass House and its garden set up the spatial manipulations that drive the plot and determine Alice’s identity in TLG. Once she crosses into Looking-glass World, she finds it just as difficult to manipulate her body’s interaction with space in order to stabilize her identity as she did in Wonderland. Most of the dimensional shifts that dream Alice experiences in Wonderland transform her body’s scale and/or shape, while the spaces she inhabits maintain their size and form. In Looking-glass World, Alice perceives her body as remaining constant while the creatures around her and the space she occupies repeatedly transform. In TLG, spatial manipulations destabilize Alice’s dream identity through inverting socially-constructed measurement systems that involve directional movement such as distance, speed, and time.

Her third transformation into short Alice is less dramatic spatially, but it makes her vulnerable to attack by the White Rabbit and his friends: “she swallowed one of the cakes, and was delighted to find that she began shrinking directly. As soon as she was small enough to get through the door, she ran out of the house, and found quite a crowd of little animals and birds waiting outside. . . . They all made a rush at Alice the moment she appeared; but she ran off as hard as she could, and soon found herself safe in a thick wood.” (63-64)

The last time dream Alice experiences a violent dimensional transformation into short Alice, she is trying to determine which piece of mushroom will make her grow in which direction. “And now which is which?” she said to herself, and nibbled a little of the right-hand bit to try the effect. The next moment she felt a violent blow underneath her chin: it had struck her foot! She was a good deal frightened by this very sudden change, but she felt that there was no time to be lost, as she was shrinking rapidly: so she set to work at once to eat some of the other bit. Her chin was pressed so closely against her foot, that there was hardly room to open her mouth; but she did it at last, and managed to swallow a morsel of the left-hand bit.” (73-74)
Dream Alice’s perception of herself as a unified subject is not challenged as soon as she climbs into Looking-glass World through the mirror in her drawing-room. The forces of reversal and rotation that characterize Looking-glass World do not directly thwart her expectations of bodily control until she has passed out of its sight. Similar to the first scene in AW looking-glass space immediately gives dream Alice the opportunity to recalibrate her spatial expectations. As soon as she moves outside the purvue of the looking-glass, she begins to perceive that her body can not move through space in Looking-glass World in the way in which she is accustomed. She is on her way down the hallway in search of the garden (an allusion to the first scene in AW), when she first perceives the effects of Looking-glass movement: “She just kept the tips of her fingers on the hand-rail, and floated gently down without even touching the stairs with her feet.”21 (197) Dream Alice responds to this opportunity with the same binary logic that characterizes her in AW. In Wonderland, dream Alice asserts her “little girl” identity by attempting to maintain her body’s expected proportional size in relation to her surroundings. In Looking-glass World, she approaches the same goal by trying to maintain her usual method of movement and directionality. When she has floated to the bottom of the stairs in Looking-glass House, she rejects Looking-glass movement by pushing herself back to the ground. In rejecting Looking-glass movement, she brands herself as a perpetual outsider in Looking-glass World. All of its inhabitants are named according to the way their body moves through space – whether it be a flower, a kind of chess piece, a nursery rhyme character, etc. By forcing her feet back to the ground, Alice reasserts her identity as a “little girl” from the other side of the mirror. In the process, she attempts to repress her Looking-glass double – the little girl who glides through the air rather than walking. As in Wonderland, however, mastering her body’s interaction with space is not enough to protect the stability of “little girl” Alice’s identity in Looking-glass World. Simply becoming conscious of the alternative logic system that governs movement and directionality there begins to chip away at dream Alice’s security in the stability of her identity.

Dream Alice soon finds that the penalty she pays for having maintained her “little girl” identity in Looking-glass World is loss of control over her body’s movements through space. Everything she sees in the garden outside of Looking-glass House reveals itself to be sited in the inverse location of where she first perceived it to be. The clearest examples of these inversions are dream Alice’s unsuccessful attempts

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21 The entire passage follows: “She just kept the tips of her fingers on the hand-rail, and floated gently down without even touching the stairs with her feet: then she floated on through the hall, and would have gone straight out at the
to jointly reach the top of a hill that overlooks the garden and approach the Red Queen, who appears to be located on the other side of the garden from Alice. Dream Alice assumes her body is located at a specific coordinate in abstract 3-space. She reasons that all that is required in order to move from point A to point B is to move her body so-many x, y, and z coordinates from one point to the other in a straight line. (In this case, a straight line is defined as the shortest distance from one point to the next. In spite of her perception otherwise, Alice is probably inhabiting a curved 2 dimensional space. In that case, a “straight line” from the door of the Looking-glass House to the top of the hill would most likely be curved.) To her frustration, however, each time dream Alice tries a path through the garden that looks like it is heading directly up the hillside, it immediately transforms into what she describes as a “corkscrew” (199) and leads her back to the front door of Looking-glass House. Similarly, Alice finds that when she walks towards the Red Queen, her body somehow ends up moving away from her goal and back to the door into Looking-glass House. However, when she walks away from the Red Queen and the hill overlooking the garden, she finds her body directly transported to them. In all of her movements described so far – floating down the hallway and walking in the garden – dream Alice reacts as though the space around her were actively moving her, rather than the inverse which is what she would expect in the waking world. The repetitive nature of the scene’s action and the activated space’s violent handling of Alice’s body closely parallel the hallway scene from AW. In these scenes, Carroll sets up the kind of spatial manipulation that will power the narrative movement of the text by sending dream Alice into a series of identity crises.

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22 The entire passage follows: “I should see the garden far better,” said Alice to herself, ‘if I could get to the top of that hill: and here’s a path that leads straight to it – at least, no, it doesn’t do that – ’ (after going a few yards along the path, and turning several sharp corners), ‘but I suppose it will at last. But how curiously it twists! It’s more like a corkscrew than a path! Well, this turn goes to the hill, I suppose – no, it doesn’t! This goes straight back to the house! Well then, I’ll try it the other way.’

23 The passage that describes dream Alice’s movement with the goal of approaching the Red Queen follows. “Alice . . . set off at once towards the Red Queen. To her surprise she lost sight of her in a moment, and found herself walking in at the front-door again.

“A little provoked, she drew back, and, after looking everywhere for the Queen (whom she spied out at last, a long way off), she thought she would try the plan, this time, of walking in the opposite direction.

“It succeeded beautifully. She had not been walking a minute before she found herself face to face with the Red Queen, and full in sight of the hill she had been so long aiming at.” (205-206)
Whether Alice's body changes while the space around her remains constant or whether Alice's body remains constant while the space and characters around her transform, the human body and space interact directly in Carroll's *Alice* texts with a level of clarity rarely seen outside of literature or dreams. By placing Alice's body in direct contact with the activated spaces of Wonderland and Looking-glass World, Carroll forces dream Alice to acknowledge and confront several ways that her body interacts with space in waking life. Their separation into discrete narrative scenes divides these interactions up into specific enough pieces that dream Alice can not ignore or suppress them. One could imagine multiple *Alice* texts that would each bring forward a link between body and space that help construct Alice's dominant identity. Carroll's texts investigate two spatial topics key to the identity/measurement problematic: the role that proportion plays in spatial perception, and the assumption that the space that humans inhabit is static, universal, and objective. In both cases, Carroll uses the literary tool of the dream both to give space an active role in his story and to force dream Alice to confront the fragmentation of her subjectivity, which, in her waking life she assumes is a unified Self. Desires and ideologies that she suppresses in waking life rear their heads authoritatively in her dreams by actively engaging her body with space. They challenge the "little girl" identity that she carries with her down the rabbit hole and across the looking-glass.

**Architecture, en passant**

An *en passant* reading of architecture looks for evidence of the identity/measurement problematic by investigating the way a socially constructed body occupies space. This kind of reading defines architecture as a cultural production. Like Alice's "little girl" identity, architecture is generally conceived and perceived according to the terms of an absolute measurement system. Its permanence and overall formal symbolism tend to uphold the dominant, disciplinary social forces that Foucault proposes shape and, to a large extent, control individuals' subjectivity. As a cultural production, architecture is created to satisfy certain societal intentions and desires. In other words, because it is created by humans for humans, it engages individual and social (group) psychology. Defined this way, architecture is not understood to be a primarily visual discipline. Instead, it refers to an occupied space whose form acts on and is transformed by an implied socially constructed (i.e. gendered and politicized) body. Because this occupant depends on a
certain system of measurement to conceive of the space, it follows that architectural meaning in this context is produced through spatial perception.

When the *en passant* strategy is applied to a critical analysis of *Alice*, it reveals that traces of both dominant culture and social criticism are embedded in all architectural works. According to a logic of binary oppositions, a coherent work should not be able to accommodate both. However, architecture, *en passant*, reveals an ideal subject who is designed in conjunction with the form (either consciously or unconsciously) and whose dominant identity upholds the status quo while her suppressed fragmented subjectivities seek to throw it off balance. In many cases, published documents lack evidence of this ideal subject who develops along with the architectural design. If there is enough evidence from the design process, however, a tentative subject (or subjects) can be reconstructed. By characterizing architecture as the relationship between the form and its ideal occupant(s), architecture, *en passant*, suggests that a gap will always exist between the real inhabitants of a building and its ideal occupant. This disjunct, if made apparent to the occupants, will challenge their perceived identities, just as the dream worlds that Carroll constructs around Alice challenge her dominant cultural identity.

In *The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance*, Wolfreys identifies elements embedded within architectural works that alienate them from themselves. He calls these elements *anarchitecture*: “that which is beyond architecture, which has passed by architecture.”24 Furthermore, he argues that the *en passant* strategy at work in the *Alice* books functions through *anarchitectural* elements. Embedded within them are the forces that resist Alice’s attempt to anchor her own identity in the space around her. Wolfreys’s discussion of *anarchitecture* establishes a link between Alice’s identity crises and architecture, but it stops short of inquiring into the specific spatial conditions that trigger the crises. He does suggest, however, that Alice’s identity crises derive from an inability to adjust her bodily expectations to the dimensional changes that drive the narrative.25 The bones of his argument can be used to develop a more

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25 “In *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* . . ., Alice seeks to sound and site herself, in terms of her knowledge of the world from which she comes. She attempts to understand what she is witness to in Wonderland by drawing on discursive and cultural contexts, citing those contexts and discourses in the effort both to place herself comfortably in this unknown place, to site herself through epistemological citations as it were, and to translate what she is in the midst of by sending out soundings, in order that what she sees — sights — and hears may come back a little more clearly. And the joke is, of course, that she cannot. Alice, of course, did not have the benefit of the words of Jacques Derrida, and so was not aware that meaning and interpretation and identity are dependent on the conflict of a field of forces. . . . this is precisely the difference of identities and the knowledge which comprises identity with which Carroll has so much fun,
comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the spatial aspect of Alice’s perceived identity and her expectations of how her body should interact with the space she inhabits. A close critical analysis of the Alice texts reveals that Alice’s identity crises are the outward manifestation of anarchitecture, which Alice perceives as clashing, or coexisting, spatial dimensions. An en passant reading of any work of architecture, including the Alice texts, investigates the relative measurement system through which the ideal subject perceives anarchitectural elements. Furthermore, it assumes that their power to alienate the subject’s dominant identity is a result of that relative measurement system.

Architecture, en passant, can take as many forms as the ways that dimensional interaction can be perceived. It is most clearly described through specific example, because the Other subjectivity that surfaces in Carroll’s texts as a result of one of dream Alice’s identity crises is always a response to the relative measurement system that triggered the episode. The mode of representation for architecture, en passant, is a narrative whose development is propelled by spatial events that challenge the protagonist’s dominant subjectivity. It questions the protagonist’s sense of belonging and encourages a fluid sense of identity. As long as the architectural work both refers to a strong, type identity and expresses a clear, spatially-determined narrative, at least one architectural en passant reading can be extracted from it.

Architects routinely develop narratives to explain their work; but, the protagonists of these anecdotes often remain caricatures whose role is to justify formal moves. The danger of this kind of architectural narrative is its tendency to reduce discussion of the project to one-liners that depend on shock-effect for their power. An architectural en passant reading, on the other hand, begins with the mutual complexification of the architectural form and the identity of its ideal occupant. Architecture, en passant,

while Alice is always perplexed, never having much fun at all, because she wants so desperately to be certain about her identity.” (Julian Wolfreys, The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance: Dissonant Identities from Carroll to Derrida, p. 9)

Wolfreys’s argument has been foundational in the development of a theory for reading architecture, en passant. However, when his discussion of the relationship between identity and space in the Alice texts is translated from literary theory to architectural discourse, it becomes too narrowly focused. Wolfreys essentializes the relationship between Alice’s perceived identity and space to a question of domesticity: “Alice’s identity in both books is dependent on her knowledge of the architectural space: her sense of selfhood should be confirmed by the house, the home; instead of which, her encounters with architecture and its spatial dimensions are anything but comforting, and might best be described as unheimlich. Her involvement with estranging architectures always renders Alice’s identity as other than it is. We read the event of dissonance in her identity as a result of her Being becoming homeless, as her sense of identity is dislocated in the world. The problem for Alice is that architecture, furniture, the domestic space, just don’t conform to her expectations. The architecture won’t be read as it should be and, consequently, her identity – who she is defined by where she thinks she is – is troubled. Clearly there is available to us a reading of Alice as a being who inhabits, or who desires to inhabit, who seeks to belong, as part of the definition of her identity, to a particular
is sited in the fluctuations of its ideal subject's perception, revealing the influence that unconscious interactions between the body and space have on the conception and perception of architecture.

To review, architecture, *en passant*, is a way of reading architecture. It assumes that architecture is generally conceived and perceived as pertaining to an ideal, objective measurement system that may act on the people who live within it, but is not affected by them. Architecture, *en passant*, on the other hand, is sited at the point of interaction between form and its ideal subject. Broken down into its constituent parts, architecture, *en passant*, is comprised of an operation (the *en passant* strategy), the object of the operation (the ideal occupant's spatial identity), and the perceived result of the operation (relative spatial dimensions). When applied to the *Alice* texts, an architectural *en passant* reading does not focus on the objective reality of whether Alice's body really changes size in proportion to the hallway or whether the hallway changes in proportion to Alice or whether Alice imagines the entire dimensional interaction. Instead, it proposes a way of reading architecture that capitalizes on the potential psychological impact of applying a relative measurement system to the conception and perception of architecture.

Spatial Dimensions

From its dictionary definition,\textsuperscript{27} it appears that the term “dimension” can refer to anything measurable. In the context of an architectural \textit{en passant} reading, however, it refers to a measurement system that allows humans to manipulate the spatial environment through perception. It combines the psychological (identity) side of the reading with the spatial (measurement) side into one term. From the spaces that Alice moves through to the words that she and the other characters use to the dimensions of her own body and those of the other characters, almost everything in the \textit{Alice} texts is obsessively measured. The act of measurement spatializes the measured object. Carroll spatializes the identities of all of the characters in the \textit{Alice} stories through Alice’s perception by narrating AW and TLG from Alice’s point of view. She continually tries to interpret the relationship between herself and her surroundings in terms of a measurement system that assumes that space is universal, static, and objective. Carroll uses her attachment to an absolute measurement system as a point of reference in Wonderland and Looking-glass World. He establishes an \textit{en passant} architectural framework for AW and TLG by defining dimensional measurements exclusively in relation to the human body.

Architecture, \textit{en passant}, assumes that an ideal subject unconsciously interacts with many spatial dimensions, not just three geometrical dimensions. In a dimensional shift, the same kind of operation is

\textsuperscript{27} Excerpt from \textit{Oxford English Dictionary}, Second Edition, 1989. (online version) “\textit{di • men • sion. n. 1. a. The action of measuring, measurement. \textit{Obs.} b. Mus. The division of a longer note into shorter notes, constituting ‘time’ or rhythm; pl. ‘measures’, measured strains. \textit{Obs.} 2. a. Measurable or spatial extent of any kind, as length, breadth, thickness, area, volume; measurement, measure, magnitude, size. (Now commonly in plural: cf. \textit{proportions.}) Also \textit{fig.} Magnitude, extent, degree (of an abstract thing). b. \textit{transf.} Extension in time, duration \textit{c. fig.} Any of the component aspects of a particular situation, etc., esp. one newly discovered; an attribute of, or way of viewing, an abstract entity. . . 3. \textit{Math. a. Geom.} A mode of linear measurement, magnitude, or extension, in a particular direction; usually as co-existing with similar measurements or extensions in other directions. The three dimensions of a body, or of ordinary space, are length, breadth, and thickness (or depth); a surface has only two dimensions (length and breadth); a line only one (length). Here the notion of \textit{measurement or magnitude} is commonly lost, and the word denotes merely a particular mode of spatial extension. Modern mathematicians have speculated as to the possibility of more than three dimensions of space. b. \textit{Alg.} Since the product of two, or of three, quantities, each denoting a length (i.e. a magnitude of one dimension), represents an area or a volume (i.e. a magnitude of two, or of three dimensions), such products themselves are said to be of so many dimensions; and generally, the number of dimensions of a product is the number of the (unknown or variable) quantities contained in it as factors (known or constant quantities being reckoned of no dimensions); any power of a quantity being of the dimensions denoted by its index. (Thus x\textsuperscript{3}, x\textsuperscript{2}y, xyz are each of three dimensions.) The dimensions of an expression or equation are those of the term of highest dimensions in it. . . . 4. Measurable form or frame; \textit{pl.} material parts, as of the human body; ‘proportions’. \textit{Obs.} 5. \textit{Comb.}, as dimension lines, straight lines usually having an arrow at each end, indicating the parts or lines to which the figured dimensions refer in a technical drawing; dimension-lumber, -timber, -stone, i.e. that which is cut to specified dimensions or size; dimension-work, masonry built of ‘dimension-stones’. (Chiefly \textit{U.S.})”
performed repeatedly (on an ideal subject or on her environment) until the subject’s dominant identity experiences a crisis of expectation. The subject responds either by establishing a temporary new stable, dominant identity or by accepting the fluidity of the Other identities that surface as a result of the identity crisis. Dream Alice perceives dimensional interactions in AW and TLG as aberrations from the dimensional relationship between her body and space that stabilizes her perceived “little girl” identity. Dream Alice’s ability to perceive the number of spatial interactions that occur between parts of her body, her conscious and unconscious mind, and her surroundings is very limited. As a result, she experiences coexisting dimensions as a series of fragmented linear narratives. Because dream Alice has founded her identity on an assumption that the space that surrounds her is objective and unchanging, she experiences dimensional shifts in terms of her identity slipping from one subjectivity to the next. In the waking world, these competing subjectivities remain repressed under her dominant, “little girl” identity or surface as pathologies. But, in the course of the dimensional shifts that dream Alice experiences, some of these fragments of her identity are able to emerge and take part in Alice’s life in Wonderland and Looking-glass World.

Alice’s identity crises reveal the effects of the *en passant* dimensional shifts that repeatedly transform either her body, the space she inhabits, or both. In an architectural *en passant* reading, the human body, not an ideal measurement system, is the site where measured spatial dimensions are perceived and gain relevancy. The previous sections of this paper lay the foundation for linking Alice’s perception of her identity to her expectation of how her body will act in space. This section will outline the kinds of dimensional shifts that throw Alice’s identity into crisis by performing architectural *en passant* readings of scenes from the *Alice* texts. These readings highlight the differences between certain dimensional interactions, but they also illustrate examples of the *en passant* operation transforming dream Alice’s spatial identity in reference to her perceived interaction with the built environment.

Carroll’s text “passes by” the Enlightenment notion of “dimension” and “measurement” – terms which are commonly understood to represent cognitive control over space, not bodily interaction with it. Carroll’s spatial descriptions in AW and TLG often contrast absolute measurements with measurements taken relative to Alice’s “little girl” body. The spatial dimensions measured in feet and inches, however, never make an impression on dream Alice until they are placed in a comparative relationship with her standard method of measurement – an ideal spatial relationship between a “little girl” body and the built environment. Like Alice’s competing identities, the different kinds of dimensions that interact in the texts
can be distinguished from each other using descriptive adjectives: technical, proportional, geometrical, and figurative. All four definitions are derived from the OED definition of “dimension.” This section interprets the definition as having been constructed by an absolute measurement system that does not take into account the impact that human perception has on measurement. A textual analysis of the Alice books repositions their reference point on the ideal subject.

In each of the following en passant readings of the text, dream Alice’s dominant identity is thrown into crisis because she perceives apparently impossible spatial relationships. These moments of narrative movement describe the places where the absolute system breaks down and a relative dimension emerges in Alice’s perception that reconciles the apparent spatial paradox. In each case, the nature of the identity crisis reveals a spatial manipulation through which the successful relative measurement system impacts and is impacted by Alice. The goal of this section is to construct an overarching speculative theory of architecture, en passant, by performing a series of critical analyses on scenes in the Alice texts that show evidence of different kinds of dimensional interaction.

- Technical Dimensions

Architects regularly imagine and communicate ideas for buildings using technical dimensions. In a practical sense, this kind of measurement is the mirror reversal of the dimensional measurements that occur in the Alice texts. Dimensional drawings translate an idealized object that exists only in the abstract space of the computer or hand drawing into a framework of conventions within the architectural discipline that allows the object to be conceptualized and imagined by the drawing’s readers. Typical of absolute measurement systems, the project’s ideal occupant is assumed to be manipulated by the space, but does not have the power to influence spatial reception or occupation, much less perception.

Dimensions on technical drawings can take two forms. Dimension lines give the 1:1 scale length of a drawn object. Alternatively, a drawing may simply indicate a scale: $1/4'' = 1'$, $1/16'' = 1'$, etc. Intimately connected to the concept of technical dimensional drawings are orthographic projections: plans, sections, elevations, and axonometrics. These drawing methods use true dimension lines. In other words, the object described by the drawing could be constructed by measuring the drawing’s lines and expanding their lengths to full scale.

The technical definition of “dimension” has been internalized by both the academic and professional wings of the architectural discipline. Carroll’s use of the term, on the other hand, refers to
cognitive control over a world of shifting relationships by mapping measurements onto already existing bodies. The architecture, *en passant*, that results from a relative measurement system begins to uncover the dangers of uncritically using the concept of technical dimensionality as the architect’s primary tool for conceptualizing architecture. Since the materials that architecture, *en passant*, works with are movement and negotiated interactions – not idealized, static space – dream Alice’s attempts to stabilize the dynamic relationship between her identity and space repeatedly end in failure. At this point, normally suppressed identities begin to impact the way her body interacts with space. Carroll uses the dream worlds in the *Alice* books as tools to materialize and exaggerate both sides of this interaction: Alice’s emergent dissonant identities and the multiple dimensions that act on them. By organizing his textual narrative around moments when isolated fragments of Alice’s identity interact with specific conditions of multidimensionality, Carroll constructs a vision, *en passant*, of the dynamic and formative relationship that the body’s interaction with space has on a person’s perceived and unconscious identity.

An architectural *en passant* reading gives precedence to relative dimensional measurements even when they can be directly compared to absolute measurements. Carroll’s spatial descriptions of the Alice’s entrance into Wonderland clearly illustrate this point. Alice enters Wonderland by falling down a rabbit hole in pursuit of a white rabbit who does not conform to her assumptions of animal behavior. When she reaches the bottom of the rabbit hole, having transformed into dream Alice, she enters a long, low hallway lined with locked doors.

Carroll indicates the rabbit hole’s dimensions in relation to Alice’s body: small enough for her to both take a jar of orange marmalade off of one of the shelves that line the hole and put it back after she has inspected it. (27) It is neither claustrophobic nor too large for a seven year old girl’s body. The marmalade example also gauges the speed of Alice’s fall – not terrifyingly fast. Furthermore, Alice has the sensation of moving towards a goal as she falls down the rabbit hole in pursuit of the White Rabbit. Both of these comforting spatial attributes disappear as soon as Alice enters the hallway. All of a sudden, she finds herself in a large hallway lined with locked doors.

Whereas Carroll describes the rabbit hole exclusively in relation to Alice’s “little girl” body, he describes the hallway with both absolute measurements (10 inches, 9 feet, 3 inches) and relative measurements that compare Alice’s body to the dimensions of architectural elements in the hall. The absolute measurements allow a proportional measurement system to be mapped onto both the hallway and
Alice's body in order to evaluate the relationship between them. Alice feels uncomfortably small in relation to the hallway when she first enters it. But, her unease is that of a child in a room that was constructed to house occupants with typical adult dimensions. In other words, it is the unease that “little girl” Alice expects to feel. Once she starts shrinking and growing dramatically over the course of the next few minutes, both her expectations of proportional dimensions relative to her environment and her expectations of the time and direction that bodily scale change should take are thrown into crisis.

Alice’s progression from the waking world to the rabbit hole to the hallway with locked doors maps her transformation (in conjunction with her surroundings) from a Victorian little girl inhabiting a world of rational measurements to a girl in between the waking and dream worlds to a dream identity in constant negotiation with her surroundings. It also marks a transition from the dominance that absolute measurement systems exert over Alice’s spatial perception in the waking world to the influence exerted on Alice’s perception of space by relative measurement systems.

- Proportional Dimensions

The primary dimensional interaction that expresses the architecture, *en passant*, of Wonderland occurs across scales. Both dream Alice and many of the characters she meets define Alice’s identity in terms of her proportional dimensions relative to her surroundings. Proportional dimensional shifts affect the plot of *AW* in two ways. An architectural *en passant* reading of Alice’s interaction with the White Rabbit in *AW* will demonstrate the way Alice’s proportional dimensional shifts transform her identity in the White Rabbit’s eyes. A similar reading of the scene in the hallway with locked doors at the beginning of *AW* will discuss the way the hallway’s architectural identity transforms in Alice’s eyes as a result of her proportional dimensional shifts.

Dream Alice’s relationship with the White Rabbit develops in response to her proportional dimensional shifts. He is the only character in Wonderland whom Alice has seen in her waking world. He is also the reason she enters Wonderland in the first place. As a result, dream Alice looks to him more than other personalities she meets for acceptance in Wonderland. In a sense, it is a one-sided relationship. From

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28 Carroll inserts a crucial description of measurement in this scene, arguing that all measurement is relative. After dream Alice has found that every door in the hallway is locked, she discovers a gold key lying on top of a three-legged, glass table, neither of which she had noticed before. Carroll writes: “Alice’s first idea was that this might belong to one of the doors of the hall; but, alas! either the locks were too large, or the key was too small, but at any rate it would not open any of them.” (29-30) It is clear from this quote that the dimensions of the key and the locks only gain meaning in relation to each other.
dream Alice’s perspective, the White Rabbit is always recognizable as a White Rabbit, but his reactions to Alice depend entirely on her proportional relationship to surrounding space. He never openly identifies Alice as a “little girl.” In fact, he reacts to her as though he did not recognize her from one scene to the next. He reinforces dream Alice’s identity crises by reacting to her size, rather than to the “little girl” identity that she insists is her dominant, unifying subjectivity. The White Rabbit’s reactions to meeting Alice force her to confront the architecture, en passant, of Wonderland — the relationship between Alice’s Other identities and the dimensional transformations that produce them.

The first time dream Alice comes in direct contact with the White Rabbit in AW, she is 9 feet tall and stuck in the hallway with locked doors. At first, he either ignores her or does not see her because she inhabits a different proportional dimension from his. When Alice speaks to him directly, the White Rabbit drops his gloves and fan and runs away in fear.29 His apparent fright at seeing her prompts Alice to investigate whether rapidly shrinking and growing in the hallway has turned her into something other than a “little girl.” Not allowing for the possibility that there might not be a name (a new dominant subjectivity) that defines her, dream Alice begins to consider other little girls whose names might apply to her present situation. However, her normal method of identifying herself and others based on proportional appearance and institutional knowledge does not resolve her identity crisis.

The gloves and fan left behind by the White Rabbit offer a more practical method of integration into Wonderland. The fan answers Alice’s desire for her body to fit the dimensions of at least one of the hallway’s two smaller scales. Both the fan and gloves fit the White Rabbit’s dimensions. By applying an object that comes from a different dimension to her body (fanning herself with the White Rabbit’s fan), Alice succeeds in moving her own dimensions in the direction of the fan and gloves. The gloves themselves act like a measurement system. When Alice’s hand fits into them, she realizes that she has reached the White Rabbit’s proportions. Unfortunately for her, however, the fan works on a delay. By dropping it immediately after putting on the White Rabbit’s gloves, Alice avoids “shrinking away altogether.” (39) So, the gloves mark the point at which dream Alice has reached her desired proportions, but the White Rabbit’s other proportional measuring device (his fan) thwarts her attempt to fit in her environment by stabilizing her proportions.

29 “Alice felt so desperate that she was ready to ask help of any one: so, when the Rabbit came near her, she began, in a low, timid voice, ‘If you please, sir –’ The Rabbit started violently, dropped the white kid gloves and the fan, and scurried away into the darkness as hard as he could go.” (37)
Once the White Rabbit’s fan has caused Alice to shrink to less than four inches tall, the White Rabbit identifies another Alice as Other identity: his housemaid Mary Ann. The power balance between Alice and the White Rabbit in this scene is the inverse of their encounter in the hallway with locked doors. This time, it is Alice who flees the White Rabbit in fear when he orders her to fetch his gloves and fan from his house. Dream Alice identifies herself as an upper class Victorian little girl. Blaming the White Rabbit’s perception of her as a housemaid on her small size, she greedily drinks a potion she finds in the White Rabbit’s house in the hopes that it will return her to her “proper” size, and the White Rabbit will finally recognize the dominance of her “little girl” identity. Instead, the potion makes Alice grow much too large for the White Rabbit’s room. Eventually, she grows so large that she is forced to fold herself up into a semi-fetal position within the room. She grows large enough that her entire body is paralyzed except for two appendages that penetrate the room’s exterior: one of her arms sticks out the window and one of her legs pushes partway up the chimney. When the White Rabbit arrives at his house in search of Mary Ann, he identifies this version of tall Alice, first, as a collection of body parts that protrude out of various apertures in the building, and then, as an invasive monster. For her part, Alice continues to fear the White Rabbit in spite of her large size. He attacks her as a threat and an intruder both when she is stuck in his

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30 One could also argue that dream Alice is acting the part of Mary Ann, because she helps the White Rabbit search for his fan and gloves without being asked: “It was the White Rabbit, trotting slowly back again, and looking anxiously about as it went, as if it had lost something . . . ‘Where can I have dropped them, I wonder?’ Alice guessed in a moment that it was looking for the fan and the pair of white kid gloves, and she very good-naturedly began hunting about for them, but they were nowhere to be seen. . . .”

31 Carroll describes Alice’s changing positions inside the White Rabbit’s bedroom as she tries to conform to a space that appears more and more constricting the larger she grows. Several psychoanalytic interpretations of this scene describe Alice’s growth in terms of a fetus in the mother’s womb. The passage opens with Alice remarking that she hopes that the potion she finds on the White Rabbit’s desk will make her grow “‘large again.’” “It did so indeed, and much sooner than she had expected: before she had drunk half the bottle, she found her head pressing against the ceiling, and had to stoop to save her neck from being broken. She hastily put down the bottle, saying to herself, ‘That’s quite enough – I hope I shan’t grow any more – As it is, I can’t get out at the door – I do wish I hadn’t drunk quite so much!’ Alas! It was too late to wish that! She went on growing and growing, and very soon had to kneel down on the floor: in another minute there was not even room for this, and she tried the effect of lying down with one elbow against the door, and the other arm curled round her head. Still she went on growing, and, as a last resource, she put one arm out of the window, and one foot up the chimney, and said to herself, ‘Now I can do no more, whatever happens. What will become of me?’” (57-58)
room and again once she shrinks back to a height of two inches and escapes out the back door into the woods. (59-64)

Alice and the White Rabbit meet again towards the end of AW as part of the Queen of Hearts's court. In this scene they finally inhabit the same proportional dimension. As soon as the Queen of Hearts identifies Alice as a “child” and invites her to play croquet with the rest of the court, the White Rabbit makes a friendly advance towards her, as though acknowledging her “little girl” identity at last, remarking: “It’s – it’s a very fine day!” (110) He disappears as soon as the croquet game begins, but he continues to accept her as a member of the court when he returns as the herald for the trial that ends the story.

Alice’s relationship with the White Rabbit illustrates that the proportional dimensional shifts she undergoes in AW subvert the “little girl” identity that dominates her subjectivity in waking life. While dream Alice may find it disconcerting to change proportional dimensions so often, discovering that other characters identify her entirely on the basis of her proportions completely undermines the stability of her “little girl” identity.

Not only is Alice incapable of maintaining the stability of her dream identity but she also begins to perceive different functions and meaning in the same architectural space as a result of the proportional dimensional shifts that her body undergoes throughout AW. An architectural en passant reading of dream Alice’s adventures in the hallway with locked doors at the beginning of AW reveals indications that she interprets the same space in opposite ways depending on her body’s proportional relationship to it. A straightforward summary of the scene clearly indicates the formative role that proportional dimensional shifts play in the plot development of AW: When dream Alice enters the hallway, immediately after falling to the bottom of the rabbit hole – her first adventure – she finds that all of the doors in the hallway are locked. She then finds a key that is at a smaller scale than the rest of the hallway. On closer inspection, she discovers a 15-inch tall door behind a curtain. The small key fits the door, revealing an entrance into a garden. Returning to the glass table where she discovered the key, she finds a potion labeled, “Drink Me.” It makes her shrink to the scale of the small door, but she finds that she has left the key on top of the table. A cake labeled, “Eat Me,” appears and makes her grow much too large for the room. She sees the White Rabbit coming down the hallway in her direction and asks him for help in provoking another proportional dimensional shift that will make her grow smaller again. She begins to cry out of frustration after her large size frightens the White Rabbit away, and her large-scale tears create a pool in the hallway at her feet. By fanning herself with the White Rabbit’s fan (which he dropped in fear at seeing her), she manages to shrink
back to the scale of the 15-inch door. But, the key to the door remains on top of the table. The scene ends when she slips into the pool of tears that she produced as tall Alice and the hallway melts away.

Dream Alice suffers an identity crisis in the hallway with locked doors as a result of the series of proportional dimensional shifts that go against her expectations of the way a “little girl’s” body should interact with space. Rather than slowly growing from slightly too small into the correct proportional relationship with her surroundings, dream Alice boomerangs from much too small to much too large in a matter of minutes. Depending on her scale, the hallway with locked doors has an unsettling habit of switching back and forth between the liminal space of a hallway and the sedentary space of a room. When she is tall Alice, she perceives it as a locked room, albeit with many potential exits. The fact that all of the hallway’s doors are locked is not the only evidence of its reversed role. Tall Alice also perceives the hallway as a locked room because she is too large to move about in it and because she has grown too large to control the extremities of her own body. As tall Alice, she has access to the key that opens the 15-inch tall door. It is so small in relation to her proportions, however, that it loses most of the characteristics that define it as a door. When dream Alice transforms into short Alice, the hallway maintains its potential as a transitional space. However, short Alice does not have access to the key that will convert the potential into reality. Dream Alice experiences violent proportional fluctuations in the hallway with locked doors because she does not learn to inhabit more than one proportional dimension at the same time in a space that is both a hallway and a locked room. Instead, she tries to reconcile the opposite potential functions embedded in the hallway’s architecture by applying her body’s proportions to it. It may be impossible to determine whether the hallway or the locked room is the space’s anarchitecture in this scene. An architectural en passant reading would suggest that as each other’s Other, their roles vacillate between dominant and dissonant depending on the ideal subject’s perception.

Proportional dimensional shifts create the conflict that propels movement in AW, en passant, by revealing the dominance of relative measurement systems when they are juxtaposed with an absolute measurement system. Dream Alice experiences the proportional dimensional shifts as acting on her body in the context of a built environment that remains constant. In the eyes of other characters, the proportional shifts completely transform Alice’s identity. From her perspective, even though her surroundings appear to remain constant while her body grows and shrinks, her relative interaction with them changes so dramatically in the course of her proportional transformations that their architectural identities can vacillate from one extreme to the other.
• Geometrical Dimensions

The architecture, *en passant*, of TLG is mainly expressed through geometrical dimensional interactions. Geometrical dimensions refer to the mathematical measurement of spatial extensions in specified directions. Like the proportional dimensions described above, geometrical dimensions can refer to a spatial manipulation performed in accordance with an absolute measurement system or a relative measurement system. Geometrical dimensional shifts drive narrative movement in TLG either by transforming Alice’s identity in the eyes of other characters or by transforming the spatial conditions of Looking-glass World in dream Alice’s eyes. Dream Alice continues in her role of narrative foil in TLG. Her identity is both the focus of the dimensional shifts and the way they become visible. However, the structure of Alice’s subjectivity is more complex in TLG, because one of her situational identities – Pawn Alice – competes for dominance with Alice’s dream identity on almost equal terms.

An architectural *en passant* reading of the scene in which the Red Queen transforms Alice into a White Pawn reveals the way relative geometrical dimensions transform her identity in TLG. In the process of transforming dream Alice into the White Queen’s Pawn, the Red Queen lays out the system of geometrical dimensional shifts that controls spatial interaction in Looking-glass World. Characters in Looking-glass World are divided into two groups. Dream Alice begins the scene with the Red Queen as a character whose movement is restricted to a single square: such as the talking flowers she meets in the garden outside of Looking-glass House or the nursery rhyme characters she meets later on in the book (Humpty Dumpty, etc). The Red Queen transforms dream Alice into the other kind of Looking-glass inhabitant – a chess piece whose movement from one square to another is determined by what kind of piece it is and how it fits into the strategy of the chess game. Taking on the identity of a White Pawn grants Alice mobility across the chessboard, albeit very proscribed. Otherwise, as dream Alice, she would have been forced to continue her adventures within the White Queen’s Pawn square.

Alice does not realize that Looking-glass World is a giant chessboard until she has already begun to perceive the inverted logic of Looking-glass directionality. (207-208) Immediately after making this realization, however, dream Alice expresses a desire to join the game. This brief, liminal moment is the only time in the book when she can survey her surroundings from a perspective outside of the action. It is also the moment in which the Red Queen outlines Alice’s new, Pawn identity. Dream Alice’s conversation with the Red Queen reveals several important spatial reversals that characterize Looking-glass movement.
The Queen “measures” the ground where they are standing in preparation for giving Alice “directions” (the Queen’s term) for being a White Pawn. She marks her measurements by pushing five pegs into the ground at one yard increments: the number of squares that Alice passes through as an active pawn. (She begins the game in the Second Square, but she only becomes active when she crosses the first brook that separates the Second Square from the Third.) Each peg represents a procedural point in the structure of the Queen’s speech.

The Red Queen spatializes Alice’s identity as a White Pawn by pegging her directions on behavior (both movement across the board and social graces) to spatial measurements: “At the end of two yards, . . . I shall give you your directions. . . . At the end of three yards I shall repeat them – for fear of your forgetting them. At the end of four, I shall say good-bye. And at the end of five, I shall go!” (211) The first set of directions the Red Queen gives to Alice is the outline for the remainder of the TLG book. She makes it clear that the narrative logic of the rest of the book is based on a chess strategy that moves Alice

32 The entire scene describing the Red Queen’s instructions for Pawn Alice follows. The Queen begins the scene by giving dream Alice a biscuit to “quench her thirst.”

“While you’re refreshing yourself,” said the Queen, “I’ll just take the measurements.” And she took a ribbon out of her pocket, marked in inches, and began measuring the ground, and sticking little pegs in here and there.

“At the end of two yards,” she said, putting in a peg to mark the distance, “I shall give you your directions – have another biscuit?”

“No, thank you,” said Alice: ‘one’s quite enough!’

“Thirst quenched, I hope?” said the Queen.

Alice did not know what to say to this, but luckily the Queen did not wait for an answer, but went on. ‘At the end of three yards I shall repeat them – for fear of your forgetting them. At the end of four, I shall say good-bye. And at the end of five, I shall go!’

“She had got all the pegs put in by this time, and Alice looked on with great interest as she returned to the tree, and then began slowly walking down the row.

“At the two-yard peg she faced round, and said “A pawn goes two squares in its first move, you know. So you’ll go very quickly through the Third Square – by railway, I should think – and you’ll find yourself in the Fourth Square in no time. Well, that square belongs to Tweedledum and Tweedledee – the Fifth is mostly water – the Sixth belongs to Humpty Dumpty – But you make no remark?”

“I – I didn’t know I had to make one – just then,” Alice faltered out.

“You should have said,” the Queen went on in a tone of grave reproof, “It’s extremely kind of you to tell me all this” – however, we’ll suppose it said – the Seventh Square is all forest – however, one of the knights will show you the way – and in the Eighth Square we shall be Queens together, and it’s all feasting and fun!’ Alice got up and curtsied, and sat down again.

“At the next peg the Queen turned again, and this time she said ‘Speak in French when you can’t think of the English for a thing – turn out your toes as you walk – and remember who you are!’ She did not wait for Alice to curtsy, this time, but walked on quickly to the next peg, where she turned for a moment to say, ‘Good-bye,’ and then hurried on to the last.

“How it happened, Alice never knew, but exactly as she came to the last peg, she was gone.” (211-213)
the White Queen’s Pawn up the chessboard until she is queened. In other words, the narrative structure of the text is based on the strategic spatial logic of chess,\(^\text{33}\) not on a self-contained literary logic of its own.

This first set of directions indirectly defines both types of Looking-glass characters in terms of parallel geometrical spatial dimensions. As a Pawn, Alice is defined by the way she moves across the board – two squares in her first move, one square each subsequent move, always straight ahead. While each type of chess piece is defined by specific moves, all of them live in a world where time and movement is straightforward and clearly directional. The Looking-glass characters that do not travel from one square to the next, on the other hand, are characterized by repetitive movements and circular time. Their actions – and, therefore, their identity – are determined by the nursery rhyme that describes them. The nursery rhyme occupants of Looking-glass World exist in a closed, repetitive system, whereas the chess pieces operate within a network of choreographed movement and strategic spatial positioning. The Red Queen’s directions make clear, however, that none of the Looking-glass characters control their movements, ie. their own identities. Identity is given to them by the geometrical dimensional system they occupy. The chess pieces are only aware of their own movements and those of pieces within striking distance. Because Alice is a Pawn, she can only see the squares that immediately touch her square, and she can not move very quickly – she walks more or less in a straight line for most of the book. The one exception to this rule is her first move as a Pawn, which is an exception from her regular ability to move. Because a Pawn has the option to move forward two squares in its first move but does not have that ability during the rest of the game, Alice takes a train through the Third Square rather than relying on her own ability to move quickly through a square without stopping. Unseen and unfelt chess players determine when and where chess pieces will move during the game. It could be surmised that the longer Alice stays in a square and the more adventures she has there, the more plays are going on in other parts of the board without her knowledge.

The Red Queen’s second set of directions to Alice, and the pegs that frame her speech, spatialize the disciplinary social construction of identity in Looking-glass World by making it subject to interactions

\(^{33}\) A passage from Alexander Taylor’s essay on TLG offers an interesting insight into the logic behind the story’s chess game narrative structure. “He [Carroll] based his story, not on a game of chess, but on a chess lesson or demonstration of the moves such as he gave to Alice Liddell, a carefully worked-out sequence of moves designed to illustrate the queening of a pawn, the relative powers of the pieces – the feeble king, the eccentric knight, and the formidable queen whose powers include those of rook and bishop – and finally a check mate. That is to say, he abstracted from the game exactly what he wanted for his design, and expressed that as a game between a child of seven-and-a-half who was to ‘be’ a White Pawn and an older player (himself) who was to manipulate the other pieces.” (Alexander L. Taylor, “Through the Looking-glass,” in Aspects of Alice, p. 228.)
between geometrical dimensions. She tells Alice that she will repeat her “directions” when she reaches the “end of three yards.” (211) But, in fact, the second set of directions is of a very different nature from the first: “Speak in French when you can’t think of the English for a thing – turn out your toes as you walk – and remember who you are!” (212) This set of directions is addressed to Alice’s “little girl” identity by the Red Queen’s “governess” identity. 34 The two sets of directions introduce dream Alice’s struggle to maintain dominance over Alice’s Other identities. Her Pawn identity is measured (and, therefore, can be influenced) by directional movement from one chess square to the next and by her physical proximity to chess pieces in the squares surrounding her own. As we have seen in AW, her “little girl” identity is largely determined by the way her body relates to the surrounding space within a context of social norms.

Typical of the mirror nature of the AW and TLG texts, Carroll presents dream Alice’s body as the activist force on the built environment of Wonderland, while he describes the built environment in TLG as the activist force on Alice’s body. Along those lines, Alice transforms into the White Queen’s Pawn in TLG by the ground slipping out from under her feet. 35 Carroll describes Alice and the Red Queen as running “so fast that at last they seemed to skim through the air, hardly touching the ground with their feet.” (209) Alice’s “little girl” body is exhausted by the end of this run that transforms her into a Pawn. Furthermore, she is perplexed by the need to continually move forward in order to stay in the same location. (210)

The intricacies of trying to be both a piece in a chess game and actively control the development of a dream lead Alice into a variety of difficulties. Many conflicts between the dream Alice and Pawn Alice identities’ perception of movement and directionality are manifested through the abuse of Alice’s body, which responds to surrounding spatial shifts by growing very tired or thirsty or hungry. In each situation, her attempted deviance from the path proscribed to her as a Pawn opens a space for measurement

34 Martin Gardner introduces the Red Queen in The Annotated Alice by quoting Carroll describing her as a “Fury,” adding himself: “It has been conjectured that the Red Queen was modeled after Miss Prickett, governess for the Liddell children.” (The Annotated Alice, note 5, p. 206.)

35 Carroll inserts several asides in each text to establish a fictional narrator who recounts textual Alice’s dream. Immediately after the Red Queen tells Alice that she can take on the role of the White Queen’s Pawn in the Looking-glass chess game, “somehow or other, they began to run.” At this point, Carroll inserts a comment that both attempts to establish the story’s truthfulness (and, therefore, believability) and reinforces its dream-structure. “Alice never could quite make out, in thinking it over afterwards, how it was that they began: all she remembers is, that they were running hand in hand, and the Queen went so fast that it was all she could do to keep up with her: and still the Queen kept crying ‘Faster! Faster!’ but Alice felt she could not go faster, though she had no breath left to say so.” (208-209)
of the underlying spatial logic structure in Looking-Glass World. Alice’s dream identity and Pawn identity separate several times as a result of the necessity that she move like a Pawn. After all, the two main functions of chess pieces is to move according to the powers granted each piece and to guard other pieces by sitting in strategic squares. Alice’s dream identity protests her Pawn movements by tiring out her legs, making her short of breath, and maintaining the inverse of Looking-Glass rules of consumption. Whenever Alice is hungry or thirsty, the food she eats leaves her worse off than before.

The ultimate result of rejecting Looking-glass movement after she has floated down the stairs in Looking-glass House is that dream Alice never entirely understands the inverted Looking-Glass directional logic for movement and time. In Looking-glass World, the time axis takes precedent over the other three, moving them along with itself. The narrative attached to Pawn Alice shows the difference between understanding the rules of the game and having the power to control them oneself. As soon as the Red Queen gives Alice the identity of White Queen’s Pawn, Alice enters the chess game and promptly forgets everything the Queen has told her. Having internalized the Queen’s guidelines for her new identity, White Pawn Alice does not question her hyper-spatialized identity except at moments when it conflicts with her dream identity’s assumptions regarding movement and spatial perception. Dream Alice perceives her role as a Pawn as a way to explore Looking-Glass World. However, while she accepts the rules of movement afforded by chess, she does not understand that in return she loses much of her conventional control over her own movement.

Looking-glass World is composed of mirror identities that refract through the interactions of parallel geometrical dimensions. The pegs that the Red Queen uses to spatialize Alice’s transformation into a Looking-glass character manifest several levels of the dimensions that coexist in TLG at once. The Red Queen uses the last two pegs to build up momentum for her re-entrance into the chess game. At the fourth peg, she hurriedly turns around to say goodbye, and then rushes on to the fifth yard mark where she disappears. Using one measurement system (the pegs), Carroll indicates that numerous dimensional systems control Looking-glass World simultaneously: the movement/identity of Looking-glass inhabitants, the narrative flow of the story, the relationship between Alice’s “little girl” identity and her Pawn identity, the relationship between the body and logic systems that seek to control it, etc.

If dream Alice’s conversation with the Red Queen establishes the way relative geometrical dimensions can change Alice’s identity, the scene that describes Alice’s first interaction with the White Queen illustrates the other way they influence the plot of TLG: through Alice’s perceiving a
transformation in the space that surrounds her. Alice’s interaction with the White Queen in the Fourth and Fifth Squares of the Looking-Glass chess game explores the impact that a fluid understanding of memory and knowledge can have on an identity that is founded on a rigid understanding of the relationship between space and time.

Like other dimensional shifts in TLG, Alice perceives that her surroundings change but her own body remains constant. The series of dimensional shifts begins when Alice stops the White Queen’s movement across the chessboard by catching her shawl, the pursuit of which is the White Queen’s method of moving from one square to the next. They are both travelling through a forest, which is also the Fourth Square on the chessboard. As two pieces can not inhabit the same square, they occupy neighboring squares (Alice, in Q4 and the White Queen, in B4). The White Queen demonstrates on her own body that Looking-glass time works backwards even though Alice has not perceived it until now. She dresses a wound, then screams and points to a bleeding finger, and finally pricks herself with the brooch that holds her shawl on. Both a relative measurement of time and the way the White Queen travels across the chessboard are examples of the way the interaction of coexisting dimensions (such as the chess game and life on the chessboard) is reconciled in Looking-Glass World.

The second geometrical dimensional shift that dream Alice sees in conjunction with the White Queen occurs just after she jumps over the brook into Q5 (the Queen’s Fifth Square). The dimensional shift first becomes apparent by acting on the White Queen’s body. Alice notices that the White Queen’s voice rises to the bleat of a sheep. She then realizes that she has been transported into a dark store and that a sheep sits behind the counter, knitting.36 The objects for sale in the store reflect Alice’s slippery surroundings: her eyes can not pin down an object enough to identify it. The center of her sight path is always empty, while the periphery is crowded with objects that change appearance, such as “a large bright thing, that looked sometimes like a doll and sometimes like a work-box, and was always in the shelf next above the one she was looking at.” (253) Dream Alice’s attempt to identify and control the objects for sale in the store (through buying them) parallels her perpetual failure in both AW and TLG to stabilize her identity by using a logic of binary oppositions to control her environment.

36 “She looked at the Queen, who seemed to have suddenly wrapped herself up in wool. Alice rubbed her eyes, and looked again. She couldn’t make out what had happened at all. Was she in a shop? And was that really – was it really a sheep that was sitting on the other side of the counter?” (252)
The series of dimensional shifts continues when the Sheep gives Alice one of the fourteen pair of knitting needles that she is using and asks her if she can row. Alice’s response indicates her lack of understanding that she is caught up in a geometrical dimensional shift: “‘Yes, a little – but not on land – and not with needles –’” (254) As she says this, the store around her melts away, and she finds herself rowing a boat down a stream with the Sheep sitting at the other end. Alice manages rowing the boat a little better than she had managed pinpointing the objects in the Sheep’s store. However, she interprets the Sheep’s instructions on rowing (“‘Feather!’” and “‘You’ll be catching a crab directly!’” (254)) as objects that she could buy in the store. In other words, they remain partly in the store even when dream Alice perceives them as physically sitting in a boat floating downstream. Carroll indicates the interiority of the scene (even though it should be considered an exterior scene) by repeatedly mentioning that Alice can not see over the riverbanks.37

Alice finally manages to catch something in this scene when they glide into a patch of scented rushes. However, she is frustrated in her attempt to pin down even these objects. She perceives the most beautiful ones as being those just out of reach. And, the rushes that she picks begin “to lose all their scent and beauty, from the very moment that she picked them.” (257) When Alice finally does “catch a crab” (ie. allows the oar to get stuck in the bottom of the river so that it throws her off-balance inside the boat), she still takes the Sheep’s words literally, peering over the side of the boat in an attempt to see the “crab” she caught. The double meaning of this exchange triggers the shop to re-materialize, disorienting Alice in her surroundings again. She decides of her own accord (not having seen one in the shop or in the boat) to buy an egg, which sends her into the last phase of this series of dimensional shifts. The Sheep places the egg at one end of the shop for Alice to retrieve, but (following the reverse laws of Looking-Glass directionality) the more progress Alice makes in the direction of the egg, the darker and longer and more filled with tables and chairs the shop seems to grow. Moreover, the chairs and tables in the shop transform into trees. Alice jumps over a brook that appears to run through the store, after which, “everything turned into a tree the moment she came up to it.” (259) As the dimensional shift ends, dream Alice ends up more or less in the same place where she began — wandering through a wood — although she has passed from the Fourth Square to the Sixth Square and the egg has transformed into Humpty Dumpty.

37 Carroll describes the boat scene: “the boat glided gently on, sometimes among beds of weeds (which made the oars stick fast in the water, worse than ever), and sometimes under trees, but always with the same tall riverbanks frowning over their heads.” (256)
During her interaction with the White Queen, dream Alice passes through three chess squares, a forest, a town store, and a boat. She moves across several relative geometrical dimensions that are not simultaneously visible, as they would be if they had been relative proportional dimensions. Instead, dream Alice perceives an environment that slips back and forth between interpreting her conversation with the White Queen according to its technical or literal meaning. As always in the Alice texts, the geometrical dimensional shifts are manifested through movements (frustrated or otherwise) connected to Alice. However, the real shifts in dimension are triggered linguistically. Like Alice’s frustration in the store, her inability to comprehend both the phrase and the technique “catch a crab” in the boat illustrate the destructive force of her straightforward attack on all situations beyond her control. The irony of the boat scene, of course, is that “feather” and “catch a crab” are technical terms that, had she understood them, would have given her rudimentary control over the boat’s movement. As it is, she could almost be accused of allowing herself to be overcome by the boat rather than learning to control it, a clear metaphor of her consistent behavior throughout the books. Like the slippery items in the sheep’s store, the term “feathering” could be interpreted as a hint that architecture, en passant’s, indirect nudging could be more effective than direct force in an effort to establish a link between an inhabitant’s identity and her surroundings.

- **Figurative Dimensions**

  Figurative dimensions, which refer to measuring an abstract concept (particularly language), do not dominate the plot development of either Alice book; however, they often surface at points where Alice’s “little girl” subjectivity is already in crisis as a result of another dimensional shift. Figurative dimensional interactions generally result from understanding a word literally, rather than accepting its conventional meaning. They refer to naming, which, in a relative measurement system is a description of the way something interacts in/through space with something else. Figurative dimensions refer to forms of measurement that are more abstract than proportional or geometrical dimensions, but they are also more fundamental to the identity/measurement problematic because they often impact measurement guidelines directly. Like proportional and geometrical dimensions, an architectural en passant reading of the Alice texts can reveal both the way figurative dimensional shifts transform dream Alice’s identity in the eyes of other characters and the way they impact dream Alice’s perception of her body’s interaction with space.
An architectural *en passant* reading of a relative identity that could be termed “Alice with no name” could reveal some of the ways in which figurative dimensions use naming as a major tool to destabilize the absolute measurement systems that construct the status quo. In a sense, Alice with no name is characterized by what she is not: in other words, her feeling of alienation from the way she expects her “little girl” body to interact with space.

The *en passant* story of Alice with no name involves her slow acceptance of the possibility that the proper name “Alice” may not impact her identity in any meaningful way once she has entered Wonderland or Looking-glass World. The first time Alice doubts her name (i.e. the stability of her identity) coincides with the first appearance of tall Alice in the hallway with locked doors (AW). The White Rabbit’s apparent fright when confronted with her large size prompts Alice to investigate whether or not the proportional dimensional transformation has turned her into a different person. She is clearly not accustomed to being large enough to scare anyone, so she measures her new body and institutional knowledge against what she remembers about other little girls whose names (i.e. identities) she might have appropriated. This exercise is not very informative, however, because in spite of the fact that all of her identity crises involve spatial and educational expectations of what it means to be a “little girl,” she only interrogates the implications of switching between one proper name and another.

By the time she meets the Caterpillar later on in AW, however, dream Alice has already gone through several proportional dimensional shifts and the idea that proper names do not affect an identity determined by a relative measurement system seems more possible. Instead of comparing herself with other girls her age when the Caterpillar asks her to identify herself, she says that she does not know who she is. However, she repeats the same criteria that she had used previously to measure her identity in the hallway: “I can’t remember things as I used – and I don’t keep the same size for ten minutes together!” (69) She does not identify herself either as “Alice” or as a “little girl.” By giving dream Alice control to return to her expected proportional dimensions, the Caterpillar gives her the key to harnessing her identity back to her name. It is for this reason that she tries to convince the Pigeon that she is a little girl in spite of her perception that a piece of the left-hand side of the mushroom has made her neck grow completely out of proportion with her body. Now that she has the potential to controls her proportional dimensions, she feels that she can defend her desired identity (little girl) to the Pigeon. And, even though it takes several tries after that scene, she does eventually succeed in returning her body’s dimensions to the proportions that she expects a “little girl” to have in relation to her surroundings.
The last time Alice without a name appears in the Carroll books occurs in TLG when she enters the woods where things have no names. While walking through the woods, she decides that the plants and animals there do not name *themselves* anything. When she tests that theory on herself, she finds that, in fact, she can not remember what she calls herself either. (226) As long as Alice and the Fawn who befriends her walk in the woods where things have no names, the social encoding that is normally applied to their identities by their descriptive names is lifted. As a result, Alice’s body maintains a comfort level in relation to the surrounding space, but her activities are no longer constricted by assumptions about how a little girl should act. It is only during that brief walk with the Fawn that dream Alice perceives of a crisis in identity as a liberation, rather than something to fear and find extremely troubling. The socially-constructed descriptive power of names comes into force, however, when they arrive in a clearing in the woods. The Fawn runs away from Alice in fright as soon as it realizes that she is named a “little girl.” It does not react to her in this way because she threatens to hurt it, but because the terms that define each of them place the Fawn in a threatened power relation with humans.\footnote{Wolffreys links the idea that identity is imposed from without with the concept of the Derridian “written trace.” When discussing the woods where things have no name, Wolffreys writes, “the condition of losing one’s identity is not peculiar to Alice, but a risk involving all naming, all memory, all knowledge and all identity. The wood/chessboard serves as a topographical and spatial reminder of spacing within identity itself: there is always an unnameable space of forgetting, the space where identity cannot resolve itself, where reading cannot complete the circle.” (Julian Wolffreys, *The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance: Dissonant Identities from Carroll to Derrida*, p. 52)} In this scene, Alice’s identity crisis occurs upon returning to her dream Alice identity. She wants to reject the idea that a name – “human child,” in this case – has the power to separate her from her friend the Fawn. She ends up turning to back to the illusion of stability offered by her proper name “Alice,” not one of her descriptive, spatially-determined identities, for comfort.\footnote{Wolffreys links the idea that identity is imposed from without with the concept of the Derridian “written trace.” When discussing the woods where things have no name, Wolffreys writes, “the condition of losing one’s identity is not peculiar to Alice, but a risk involving all naming, all memory, all knowledge and all identity. The wood/chessboard serves as a topographical and spatial reminder of spacing within identity itself: there is always an unnameable space of forgetting, the space where identity cannot resolve itself, where reading cannot complete the circle.” (Julian Wolffreys, *The Rhetoric of Affirmative Resistance: Dissonant Identities from Carroll to Derrida*, p. 52)}

The Fawn’s reaction in the woods when it remembers their names echoes Alice’s musings in the hallway with locked doors the first time she transforms into Alice with no name. At that point, dream Alice declares that she will not go back up the rabbit hole until “they” give her a name that she likes. In both cases, in the hallway and in the woods, dream Alice recognizes that she does not have the power to name herself. When the Caterpillar gives her the ability to return her body to its accustomed size, he gives her the power to reclaim her “little girl” name. The proper name “Alice” is revealed to be inconsequential in a world dominated by spatially-determined identities.
Alice's adventure at the Mad Hatter, March Hare, and Dormouse's tea party demonstrates one way that figurative dimensions influence dream Alice's perception of space in Wonderland. By the time dream Alice participates in the Mad Tea Party, she has already learned from the Caterpillar how to control the proportional dimensional shifts that send her into an almost continuous identity crisis during the first part of her adventures in Wonderland. Before approaching the tea party, dream Alice eats enough mushroom to grow into what she considers an appropriate dimensional relationship with her surroundings. However, the Mad Hatter, March Hare, and Dormouse send her “little girl” subjectivity into another tailspin by claiming that they are stuck in a figural dimensional conflict involving time. The Mad Hatter explains that it is always tea-time (6 o’clock) for him because he “murdered time” while singing a song (“Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Bat”) at one of the Queen of Hearts’ banquets.\(^{39}\) He suggests that an anthropomorphic Time can manipulate the way hours are measured. (98) Many of the jokes in the Mad Tea Party scene refer to time as a repetitive unit of measurement such as the beats that structure a piece of music. For instance, Alice tells the Mad Hatter that her only direct contact with Time has involved musical beats: “‘I know I have to beat time when I learn music.’” (98) The violence associated with trying to control the movement of time by measuring it is comparable to the violence done to Alice’s little girl body by applying a relative proportional dimension system to it.

By anthropomorphizing Time, Carroll pits linguistic conventions against societal measurement – specifically regarding meals. In the case of Time accelerating the hour to dinner-time or halting the hour so that it is always tea-time, the thing being manipulated is the moment of coincidence between an hour and a

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\(^{39}\) The identity crisis and Alice’s alleviation of it: “Alice stood looking after it [the Fawn], almost ready to cry with vexation at having lost her dear little fellow-traveler so suddenly. ‘However, I know my name now,’ she said: ‘that’s some comfort. Alice – Alice – I won’t forget it again.’” (227)

\(^{40}\) The entire quote describing the origins of the Mad Tea Party follow: “‘We [Time and the Mad Hatter] quarreled last March – just before he went mad, you know –’ (pointing with his teaspoon at the March Hare), ‘– it was at the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing: “Twinkle, twinkle, little bat! / How I wonder what you’re at!” You know the song, perhaps?’

“I’ve heard something like it,” said Alice.

“It goes on, you know,” the Hatter continued, ‘in this way: – “Up above the world you fly, / Like a tea-tray in the sky. Twinkle, twinkle –”

“Here the Dormouse shook itself, and began singing in its sleep, ‘Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle, twinkle –’ and went on so long that they had to pinch it to make it stop.

“Well, I’d hardly finished the first verse,” said the Hatter, ‘when the Queen bawled out “He’s murdering the time! Off with his head!”’

“How dreadfully savage!” exclaimed Alice.

“And ever since that,” the Hatter went on in a mournful tone, ‘he won’t do a thing I ask! It’s always six o’clock now.’” (98-99)
social activity involving bodily expectations which is generally pegged to that hour. The Mad Hatter, March Hare, and Dormouse continually eat bread and drink tea because the “hour” they measure is stuck at tea-time. In fact, only their measurement system orchestrating social activities is stuck at 6 o’clock. They are trapped in their own words by only acknowledging one definition of time: repeated units that are all the same length. The hours continue to pass, but they are stuck like a record player at 6 o’clock (tea-time). As soon as one hour has passed, they all move chairs to start Tea all over again because the next one-hour unit of time has begun.

Alice, on the other hand, tries to apply rational logic to a conversation that showcases the irrationality of the Enlightenment’s measurement of time. She points out that if Time were to fast-forward the hours from breakfast to lunch, she would not be hungry. She bases her argument on the opposite logic from the Mad Hatter. She assumes that hours are roughly measured in relation to the human body. In other words, if Time were to speed up the hours, they would lose their relationship to the human body, and, therefore, their meaning. In typical dream Alice form, she pinpoints the point at which an absolute measurement system that constructs the ideal, unchanging perception of Time loses its connection to the human body that it is supposed to regulate. Alice argues that Time is a cyclical measurement system that regulates socially-proscribed bodily actions: eating, sleeping studying, etc. The Mad Hatter, on the other hand, makes the argument that Time is an arbitrary societal construct to which the human body must adhere whether it coincides with biological cycles or not. In either case, they are arguing over the same question: how abstract dimensions such as time and language influence identity through the way they map measurement onto the body.

The architectural en passant readings of the Alice texts in this section distinguish between proportional, geometrical, and figurative dimensions in order to highlight several ways that relative measurement systems undermine attempts by absolute measurement systems to construct spatially-determined identities that do not question the status quo. Alice’s role is critical to an analysis of the architecture of Wonderland and Looking-glass World. As a result, the next section will argue that the major effort in constructing an architectural en passant reading method outside of the Alice texts involves constructing an appropriate ideal subject. This character must be both closely tied to an absolute measurement system and complex enough to allow for identity transformations in response to relative dimensional shifts.
A Few Concluding Remarks, in passing

The psychological impact of socially encoded spaces has been a topic of research and debate in architecture for centuries. The prison reform movements in eighteenth century France and Britain relied heavily on symbolism and social expectations embedded in certain architectural typologies to reform criminals and reintegrate them into society. Whether based on the principles of surveillance, hygiene, or community, these projects relied heavily on the capacity of architecture to rehabilitate criminals by interacting with them. Other eighteenth and early nineteenth century utopian projects such as those developed by Fourier and Ledoux also proposed that new architectural typologies and urban layouts should form in tandem with the project’s revolutionary social structure. In both the prison reform movement and the Enlightenment utopian projects, architecture was understood to be a cultural production with the capacity to both reinforce and revolutionize current social interaction.

Many twentieth century architectural thinkers such as Le Corbusier and Frank Lloyd Wright also proposed urban utopian projects that relied heavily on formal and organizational innovations. They argued that when a traditional populous interacted with (ie. began to inhabit) these new forms, their social stratification and culturally induced inefficiencies would disappear. In the 1970’s, Post-Modern conceptual architecture groups such as Superstudio reinforced the overwhelming power that the built environment has over the cultural unconscious. Their nihilist solution to the utopian desire that architecture exert a subversive, destabilizing role in society, however, was to destroy the entire built environment and start over. More recently, feminist spatial re readings by scholars such as Beatriz Colomina have begun to reveal ways in which social norms are embedded in architecture and how they influence movement and social interaction. Architectural discourses such as these tend to privilege and hypothetically narrate the conscious intentions of either an architect/designer or an idealized inhabitant. In both cases, the subjecthood of this agent is assumed to be unified and determined by a certain set of programmatic, functional, or formal goals in relation to the building. Like the Alice texts, this subject’s identity, as constructed, is inextricably linked to the architecture. The subject and architecture mutually define each other.

Architecture, en passant, also investigates the psychological impact of socially encoded spaces. As the setting in which we spend the majority of our lives, architecture holds enormous power to frame the way we perceive the world. By characterizing architecture as the relationship between the form and its
ideal occupant(s), architecture, *en passant*, proposes that the field of architecture already simultaneously supports the status quo and throws it off balance. It understands the human psyche and its relationship to the built environment in the context of Freudian theory and post-structural cultural criticism. In his essay, “On Dreams,” Freud proposes that a seemingly unified subject dominates the conscious mind and works to suppress dissonant fears and desires that would fissure its coherence. Building on the Freudian hypothesis of fragmented subjectivity, Julian Wolfreys’s post-structuralist literary theory draws from writers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida to establish the cultural relevancy of Alice’s spatially-constructed identity. Wolfreys proposes that the modern human psyche is fundamentally fragmented, unstable, and in a perpetual state of “becoming.” He paraphrases Foucault’s argument that power relations effectively shape dominant Western culture through the highly political process of naming. In other words, who gives you your name and for what reason can determine your path in life. Architecture, *en passant*, fits into the theoretical framework of post-structuralism to the extent that it seeks to reveal the unspoken social influence of architecture: both the forces of social control and the dissonant forces that are embedded in its form, projected use, and symbolism.

Architecture, *en passant*, is a speculative approach to reading the cultural unconscious through architecture. In order to reveal the dissonant forces that are embedded in an architectural project, an *en passant* reading prioritizes spatial perception, measurement systems, and programmatic elements (whether intended or unintended). Furthermore, it prioritizes the body’s interaction with space rather than relying on a visual understanding of it. For architecture, *en passant*, space is not static. It is constantly interacting with its ideal occupant, even if no live occupant inhabits it at any given moment. For instance, when a subject’s perception of space shifts from one dimension to another in the *Alice* books, her interaction with space has the potential to radically transform.

Lewis Carroll’s *Alice* narratives could be interpreted as architectural *en passant* readings of a Victorian domestic environment from the perspective of a little girl. Fundamental to a reading of architecture, *en passant*, and present in both *Alice* texts are two assumptions: first, that a person’s perceived identity is imposed by culture; and, second, that the built environment stabilizes that identity by suggesting that an ideal measurement system can define it. Architectural *en passant* readings reveal that dissonant forces are already present in all works of architecture. They act on our bodies and identities all the time. With those assumptions in mind, this paper has critically analyzed narrative moments in the *Alice* texts that emphasize the identity conflicts that arise when an occupant perceives space through the
framework of an absolute measurement system versus a relative measurement system. Rough principles for how to read architecture, *en passant*, can be extracted from these analyses.

- **Guidelines for Reading Architecture, *en passant***

  An architectural *en passant* reading begins with two assumptions regarding the relationship between society and its members. First, cultural productions (such as architecture) are artificial, man-made structures that have become so embedded in our conscious and unconscious minds that they seem natural. Second, the way humans interact with the built environment is filtered through socially determined ideologies that characterize their identities. The built environment stabilizes that identity by suggesting that an ideal measurement system can define it. Architecture, *en passant*, defines architecture as the relationship between occupants and space. In other words, it is a social endeavor. Form can not be considered without taking into account interaction with its ideal occupant. On the other hand, because the ideal subject relates to the outside would via an absolute measurement system that is permeated with spatially-linked social expectations, crises in these expectations can have direct consequences on the stability of his/her identity.

  An architectural *en passant* reading traces the interaction of an architectural work and its ideal occupant, both of whom operate within a measurement system defined by ideals and absolutes. First, it focuses on the specific ways they are expected to interact with each other. Then, it outlines a relative measurement system that addresses the moments where the conscious, deterministic relationship between the ideal occupant and his/her corresponding architectural work breaks down. The goal of an architectural *en passant* reading is to show instances in which the power of an absolute measurement system is superceded by psychological and perceptual understandings of the body in relation to space.

  This paper has translated the *en passant* strategy of critical analysis from the realm of literary theory to architectural theory by applying it to the *Alice* texts. This section lays out guidelines for translating the *en passant* reading method to a medium other than text (whether drawing, film, or built work). It would avoid concentrating research on an architect’s biographical details – how he/she went about designing the work, his/her political or career goals and aspirations, how the work fits into the larger context of the architect’s body of work, his/her psychological state, etc. Instead, it would look at the body of work that composes the project itself. This might include different representational modes,
correspondence with the client, and research, in addition to the items that are generally accepted as being the “final product.”

An abbreviated outline for constructing an *en passant* reading of an architectural work in a medium other than text precedes a more in depth explanation of the procedure.

1. Establish an ideal subject whose identity is tied to an absolute measurement system.
2. Characterize the subject’s dominant identity in descriptive, spatial terms.
3. Characterize the dominant measurement system in descriptive, spatial terms.
4. Look for evidence of points in which the relationship between the ideal subject and her corresponding architectural work appear to be in crisis.
5. Extract dimensional implications (ie. establish a relative measurement system) that resolve the apparent breakdown in the subject’s identity or perception of space.

The first step in reading an architectural work *en passant* would involve establishing the characteristics of its ideal occupant that site her in an absolute measurement system. When determining these characteristics, it is important to remember that the occupant would always be an ideal, not real, person, even if she refers to a real person (such as the client). She would be associated with a strong building program that orchestrates the movement of a conscious, unified subject. Her primary subjecthood would be characterized in terms of a type (for instance, “little girl”). This subject would be most palpable in the project at moments when the program that orchestrates ideal occupation of the building breaks down—ie. at moments when a relative measurement system supercedes the absolute measurement system in the subject’s perception.

The reading would maintain the hierarchy of spatial identity established earlier in this paper when constructing the protagonist’s identity. In other words, evidence of the relationship between the subject’s body and the environment would take precedence over evidence of the relationship between different parts of her body. Along the same lines, the subject would be characterized by an expected relationship with space (as perceived through an absolute measurement system). Elements embedded in all architectural forms (for instance, the mirror in Alice’s house) catalyze moments of paradox by destabilizing a work’s clear message and alienating it from itself. Depending on the weaknesses in the ideal occupant’s typal identity, evidence of spatial relationships could take the form of unintentional juxtapositions, movements, traces of erasures or conflicting desires, or moments of spatial alienation (such as a feeling of paralysis). Evidence of failed attempts to dominate or manipulate either the occupant’s movement or spatial relationships (via certain systems of measurement) could offer another indication of the kinds of spatial relationships that would characterize the ideal subject’s dominant identity.
After characterizing an ideal occupant through her relationship with space, an architectural *en passant* reading would then establish the characteristics of a relative measurement system (or systems) that emerge when a gap or paradox appears in the relationship between the ideal occupant and her perception of her corresponding architectural work. When searching for the relative measurement system that emerges from its absolute counterpart, a reading would look for evidence of spatial manipulations that produce aberrations from the set of ideal markers that give the absolute measurement system the illusion of being objective and universal. These spatial transformations may take forms such as the following: proportional shifts, movement vectors, reflection, reversal, repetition, pervasive elements that are only seen or felt in the project at certain points, etc. Another type of manipulation might take the form of modules, series, or a grid system that seems uniform at first but is then seen to transform. Another defining characteristic could be evidence of what might constitute the measurement system’s extremes. In many cases, an afterthought or passing comment that undermines the dominant ideology obliquely could be the key to determining the relative measurement system’s point of reference.

An architectural *en passant* reading would take the form of a linear narrative whose plot is spatially driven. It would explore the way the ideal subject’s body and space are mutually transformed by a relative measurement system that derives from her perception of space. That perception can be determined by looking at the paradoxes built into the subject’s identity and extracting from them dimensional implications that resolve the apparent breakdown in the subject’s identity or perception of the space. Both the ideal subject and her corresponding dimension would be identified with spatial adjectives, in the manner employed earlier in this paper. Descriptive adjectives help clarify the analysis of the constantly negotiated relationship between architecture and its occupants by referring to the occupant’s perception. While using the term “dimension” to refer to the ideal subject’s perception of a relative measurement system is not mandatory in an architectural *en passant* reading, it can be a useful term for referring to the Other of a particular absolute measurement system. Once defined, it is clear that the human body is a dimension’s referent, rather than ideal markers. This definition of dimension transforms a measurement system from cognitive control over space to bodily interaction with it.

It is important to remember that the ideal subject’s role in an architectural *en passant* reading would be that of a foil. Her identity would never change permanently when she perceives a relative dimensional shift. The reason for this is two-fold. First, it would be impossible to change her identity permanently unless she lapsed into a perpetual Other subjectivity. However, an ideal occupant as Other
would denote a subject whose identity was perpetually in flux. Second, an ideal occupant’s identity would never change permanently as a result of relative dimensional shifts because evidence of the struggle would give the project meaning and allow its readers/users to relate to it. Like Alice, we perceive space consciously through ideal measurements and unconsciously through relative measurements. The ideal occupant’s role as a foil would create the condition that allows an architectural *en passant* reading to occur.

Any architectural *en passant* reading would constitute only one of many possible readings. The ideal subject and its corresponding measurement system would remain constant, however, throughout a series of readings of the same work in order to provide consistency. An *en passant* reading would both complexify the ideal subject’s identity and activate the space. It would bring unconscious interactions with space to conscious thought by pointing out relative spatial interactions that appear to break the rules of dominant measurement systems and dominant identity. The value of architectural *en passant* readings would be that they bring to light the ways relative measurement systems participate in the conception and perception of architecture. They would show how repressed identities and spatial perceptions compete with a subject’s conscious identity for control over the body’s interaction with space. Through an *en passant* reading of a space, the real occupant could become aware of the gap between her interaction with the building and that of the ideal subject.
Selected Bibliography


