

Half-Dreaming Phantomwise:
Exploring Visual (Re)presentations of the Quixotic “Melancholy Farewell” Moment
in *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*

by
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Abstract

Via practical application, this research explores the possibility of adapting Lewis Carroll's "melancholy farewell" moment in a multimedia fine art context. It is a search for possibilities in extracting an arts-based methodology from the metaphoric-metonymic trope of metamorphosis applied within the specific text to create a series of contemporary visual artworks.

In this episode, from *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), the legacy of Don Quixote not only appears significant in its destabilizing, satirical narrative style but emphasized in the heroic personification of the White Knight whose perpetual farewell haunts multiple dimensions. The purpose of this thesis is to create visual representations of these Quixotic dimensions by enquiring into seemingly disparate discourses such as error, nuclear calamity, virtual reality, and interspecific hybridity.

This dissertation is concerned with making and, also, with considerations of artistic precedents and sources, the drawing of analogies with other disciplines and media. It engages, analyzes, and discusses various aspects of flux, transformations, and transcendence in this *Alice* fragment influenced by a framework of theoretically informed readings. It investigates the implications and consequences of such questioning and the way in which identity is constructed through vision and perception on structuring concepts such as humanity (as opposed to non-human sentient beings), language, faith, time, space, the precariousness of childhood, and the rules of logic. A Quixotic endeavour per se, the path of this cross-media exploration weaves a thread from engagements with these related themes in

contemporary literature and art, back to the first known visual representations found in cave art.

Keywords: absent presence, adaptation, Alice in Wonderland, animality, error, ex-centricity, extimacy, hauntology, heterotopia, identity, interspecific hybridity, jouissance, katabasis, melancholy farewell, metamorphosis, moiré animation, phantom, Quixotism, representation, spectre, the Thing, Through the Looking-Glass, virtual reality, White Knight.

Dedication

To Michael and Nina

whom, like Alice, guided me in exploring
profound affinities with childhood experience anew
withal its hidden and abiding presence.

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Abbreviations

<i>Alice in Wonderland</i>	<i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> (1865)
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
<i>Don Quixote</i>	<i>El ingenioso hidalgo Don Quijote de la Mancha</i> (Published in two parts, in 1605 and 1615)
HMD	Head-mounted display
Op Art	Optical Art
PLA	Polylactic acid or polylactide
PMMA	Polymethyl methacrylate
PVC	Polyvinyl-chloride
<i>Through the Looking-Glass</i>	<i>Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found</i> <i>There</i> (1871)
VR	Digital virtual reality

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Half-Dreaming Phantomwise:

Exploring Visual (Re)presentations of the Quixotic “Melancholy Farewell”

Moment in *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*

Never shall I forget the sensations of awe, horror, and admiration with which I gazed about me. (. . .) [T]he gleaming and ghastly radiance (. . .) streamed in a flood of golden glory along the black walls, and far away down into the inmost recesses of the abyss.

E. A. POE, *A Descent into the Maelström*

[T]he child is both closer to immediate observation and further removed from reality.

J. PIAGET, *The Child's Conception of Physical Causality*

[T]he greatest madness a man can commit in this life is to let himself die, just like that, without anybody killing him or any other hands ending his life except those of melancholy.

M. DE CERVANTES, *Don Quixote*

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Haunted by (re)presentations of human metamorphoses in pictorial spaces

The King of Wonderland who also presides as chief justice of its Supreme Court advises his subjects to “[b]egin at the beginning (. . .) and go on till you come to the end: then stop” (Carroll, 1865/2015a p. 142). As a species, humans tend to think of a translatory natural development in such unidirectional reasoning - from proto-human to human and perhaps to the transhuman. This logic uniformity is also

reflected in how we interpret our transition from childhood to adulthood often hindering the adult's ability to access the fantastical. As an art practitioner, my epistemological and methodological basis of rhetorical concerns continuously questions such discursive certainties.

My art practice is haunted with hesitations, uncertainties, and undecidabilities with regard to any trait which make humans unique or a "thing-in-itself" which, as Kant (trans. 1998) expounds, cannot be known since knowledge is limited to possible experience and thereby exists independently as a phenomena or an "appearance" (p. 178) in space and time. The ghost tense is deliberately deployed as to arguably help in improving my understanding about humanity and adulthood in an incoherent and disjointed way. Several questions are often perpetrated by the singularities that separate the animal from what Haraway (2008) calls "the fantasy of human exceptionalism" (p. 11), and those that separate the child from 'the fantasy of adult exceptionalism.' The phantom context is also rhetorically devised as to also imply the possibility of the immaterial manifesting into the material, and vice versa, bridging the gap between the intelligible physicality of Darwinian evolutionism and (non)sensible (im)possibilities of the metaphysical.

This project-led research deals with the methods, conventions, and debates of research (as a process) that are embodied in my artefacts. My concerns are discussed in theoretical and pragmatic questions - does the human fit within the socio-biologically determined ontology of a Darwinian "Thing theory" where *Things* seem slightly human and humans seem slightly *Thing*-like? Does humanity fit "firmly in the world of other critters, all trying to make an earthly living and so evolving in relation to one another without the sureties of directional signposts that culminate in Man" (Haraway, 2008, p. 11)? Do *Homo sapiens* elicit the tangled bank hypothesis

from a hermeneutic of suspicion that evokes - “the great Tree of Life, which fills with its dead and broken branches the crust of the earth, and covers the surface with its ever branching and beautiful ramifications” (Darwin, 1859/2008, p. 100)? Does the human belong to a *deep time* in which biological evolution becomes natural metamorphosis, and “monstrosities cannot be separated by any clear line of distinction from mere variations” (Darwin, 1859/2008, pp. 9 - 10)?

Does an early stage of childhood abide by an instinct that encapsulates one’s own true nature? How could this instinct be explained? Could we understand this instinct from an adult’s optique often biased that human beings are in a separate, superior category; or from the oneiric point of view of “the enlarging gaze of a child” (Bachelard, 1958/1994, p. 155)? Could we perceive this instinct from another subcategory of the “Three Great Kingdoms” (Beer, 2016, p. 136) proposed in the 1851 Great Exhibition that all life may be classified into animal, vegetable and mineral? Does the animality/vegetability/minerality in the adult human, child human, transhuman, and protohuman coexist as a single haunting hovering from one transitory state to another? Do these wavering states haunt each other to vie for dominance in a continuous struggle? Are such states in our human physiological changes haunted by the anxieties of our chaotic age or spiritual uncertainties? How could an artist (*re*)*present* one of the possible variants of such states but at the same time allow the other possibilities to be hauntingly inferred?

Such inquiry on origins and metamorphoses entails a vital sense of mystery that shrouds upon the perceptual and conceptual nature of the processes of my art making. As a reflective practitioner, my works are haunted by a network of rhizometric roots rather than a monolithic thinking where things have one source,

one nature, and one true or authentic progressive *telos* of history that often emanate from Modernist-Enlightenment theories of a universal, teleological history.

My search is a continuous questioning about crossovers. My works are haunted by (in)determinable borders revolving around a sense of *wrongness* that pervades our reality. As many great writers, thinkers, and artists have taught us, much of our lexicon in such cases of lack and trauma depends on notions of the supernatural - the ghost-tense. For example, one reason for the proliferation of stories where ghost-protagonists do not realize that they are actually ghosts in the twenty-first century such as Amenábar's *The Others* (2001) is accentuated by Newman (2011) who claims that within these ghost stories one anxiously feels that - "[i]n the air is a notion, fostered by global trauma, that we're dead already, or might as well be for all our chances of pulling through" (p. 454).

In my research, I dig up voices that once questioned humanity's transitory state. My works are haunted by visual depictions and source literary texts that narrate critically transformative moments in human metamorphoses. I attempt to recreate modes of (re)presenting transitory states from the human, transhuman, protohuman, and 'animality' via prior visual (re)presentations and literary texts. The imagistic together with a discursive mode of knowledge allows me to explore contradictory differentiations of bodily metamorphoses in my art via hauntings from the past. Like Echo, I turn to the voices of the past. My works are haunted by narrators who capture critically transformative moments that are concerned with restless transformations of human metamorphoses. It is an instantaneous moment of a legendary transformation frozen as a physical object! These fabulae of mythic and literary narratives are reiteratively folded, unfolded, and refolded from their textual source to expose transformations, transfigurations, hybridism, and states of change; all thematic

underpinnings and recurring motifs in the depiction of the paradoxical relation between human appearances and the aporia they veil.

This oblique connection to a past is excogitated in how L.P. Hartley (1953/1997) commences his novel *The Go-Between* with the statement - “The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there” (p. 5). I believe in a constant coalesce with the past; I believe that great artists from the past make our own pasts richer and deeper. When I read Franz Kafka, my past stories become Kafkaesque, when I watch a Terrence Malick movie they become Malickean, when I gaze in front of a J. M. W. Turner painting they become Turneresque. The suffix “esque” is not only a mode of resemblance, a way of being in the style of the text, but also a connection and reconciliation with a haunting of the text. In such a mutable dialectic, my artistic practice tends to venture into imagined realms grounded in myth, fables, and traces of my Catholic roots.

When “the haunting of a life, the “here and now” lose their edge and the future looks closed” as Herbrechter (2017) writes; “the past opens up like a vast territory, inexhaustible and daunting” (p. 55). Berger (1977) tells us that – “fear of the present leads to mystification of the past” (p. 11). In such a heavy weighing of the infinite past, I search for wonder and ambiguity in great works of art that provide me food for research. Perhaps Bataille (1957/1986) is right in claiming that - “[w]e are discontinuous beings, individuals who perish in isolation in the midst of an incomprehensible adventure, but we yearn for our lost continuity” (p. 15).



1. Catania, A. (2005). *Agony of Antlers* [Pastel]. 30 x 21 cm.

In my works, Death manifests like a Herne-centaur (fig. 1) galloping madly untamed, unrestrained in *Agony of Antlers* (2005) in which “the Centaur’s *angst* screams in an achromatic dye, and his sable sprouts instantly wilt into blached buds” (Catania, 2007). This giving into lower instincts is also echoed in funereal seascapes, tumultuous upheavals that upturn at the sight of Charon’s condemned craft about to transport the living to the otherworld (fig. 2) in penumbral spaces of melancholy. It is a search in prolongations of a sense of catastrophe through a paradoxical stilling of time in images that project a visual panorama depicting the uncomfortable *present continuous* of impending doom. In this “guide-less katabasis,” as Schembri Bonaci (2020) writes, we find –

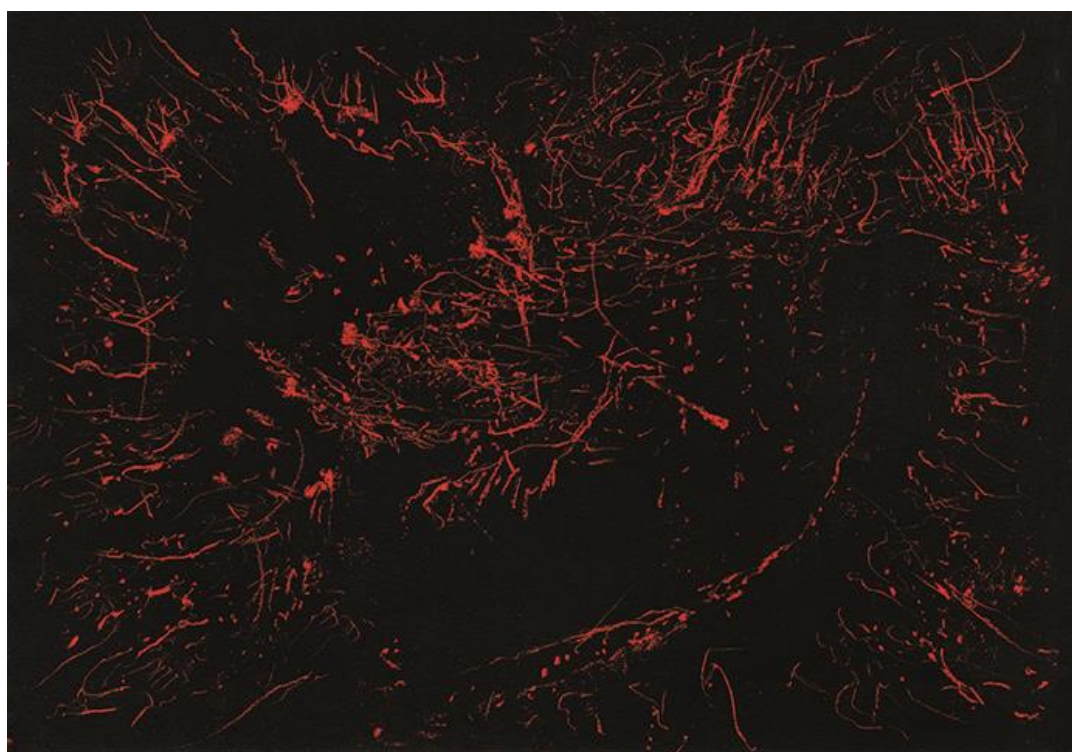
a passing into the realms of the dead without any witness, and without the redemptive returnability granted to Dante, and likewise to Christ

from Hades. What Barceló gives as an upper-thrust showing humankind's still-existing power of action in going against the tumultuous current, is in Catania's Charon craft, on the contrary, a casting-adrift with the force of will-less *abouleia* towards the futility of darkness. (pp. 20 - 21)

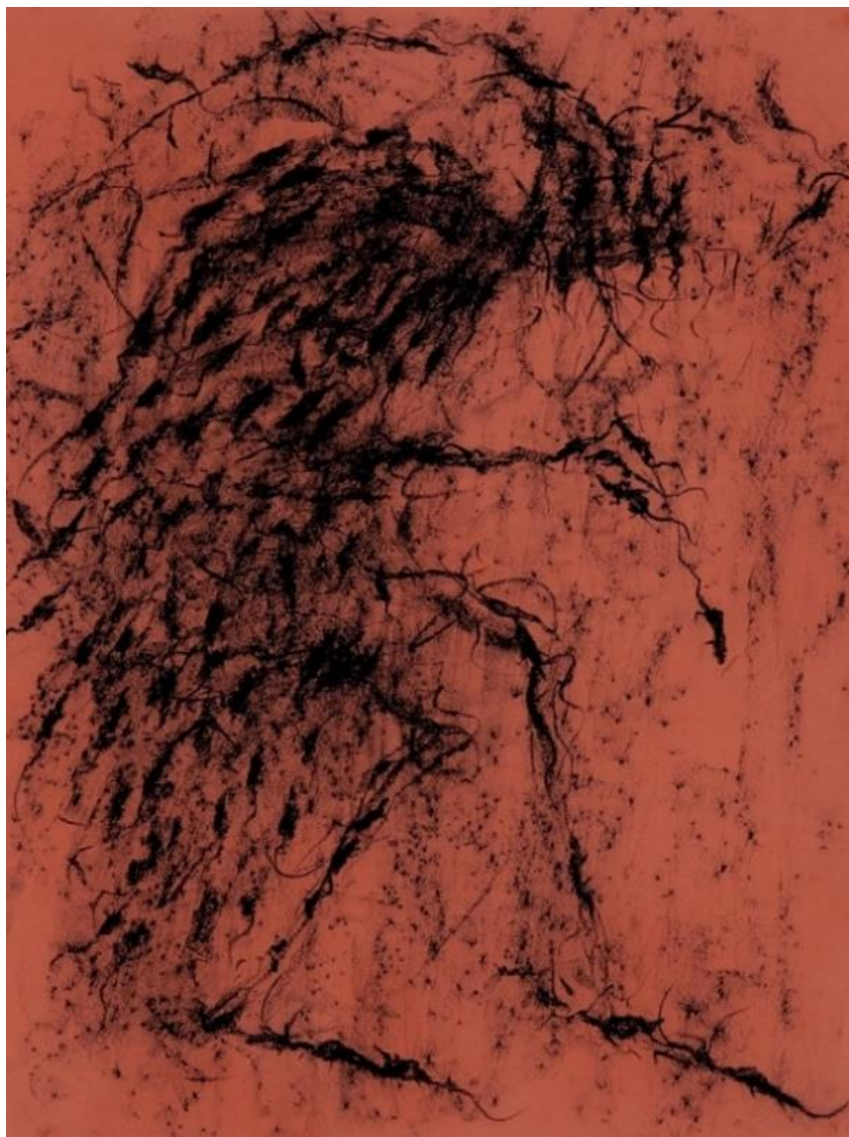


2. Catania, A. (2003). *Charon's Craft 5* [Pastel]. 28.5 x 42 cm.

These are treacherous moments before irrevocable tragedy that attempt to bring “to precarious life the scurrying, verminous urgency of the headlong rush” (Callus, 2009) whereby the Pied Piper (fig. 3) “plays his requiem of summons and anticipation” (Grech, 2008) whilst ferrying to his “Isle’s insubstantial substance” (Catania, 2008). At once both human and rat, the child-enticer soloist (fig. 4) “appropriates the “shrieking and squeaking” of Browning’s rodents to orchestrate their infectious “sharps and flats” into a psalmody of pestilence” (Catania, 2008).



3. Catania, A. (2008). *Charon Piper* [Pastel]. 14 x 42.5 cm.



4. Catania, A. (2005). *Rhythm of the Rats* [Pastel]. 60 x 45 cm.

Apocalyptic undertones reverberate in sailor curses such as those of the *Ancient Mariner* (fig. 5) or *Captain Ahab* (fig. 6). In the Kakemono style diptych entitled *One Fell Swoop* (2004) the “self-reflecting bird/bark static whirligigs intermesh into an x-ray crest of a Coleridgean un-Death’s chest (. . .) embroil[ing] bird and bark into a *totentanz* of coiling primordial slime” (Catania, 2009). *Ahab’s Incubus* (2014) depicts a blending of man and whale in the bloodthirsty obsession of a sea captain who “gazes himself blind at the monumental white shroud that wraps all the prospect around him” (Melville, 1851/2009, p. 276).



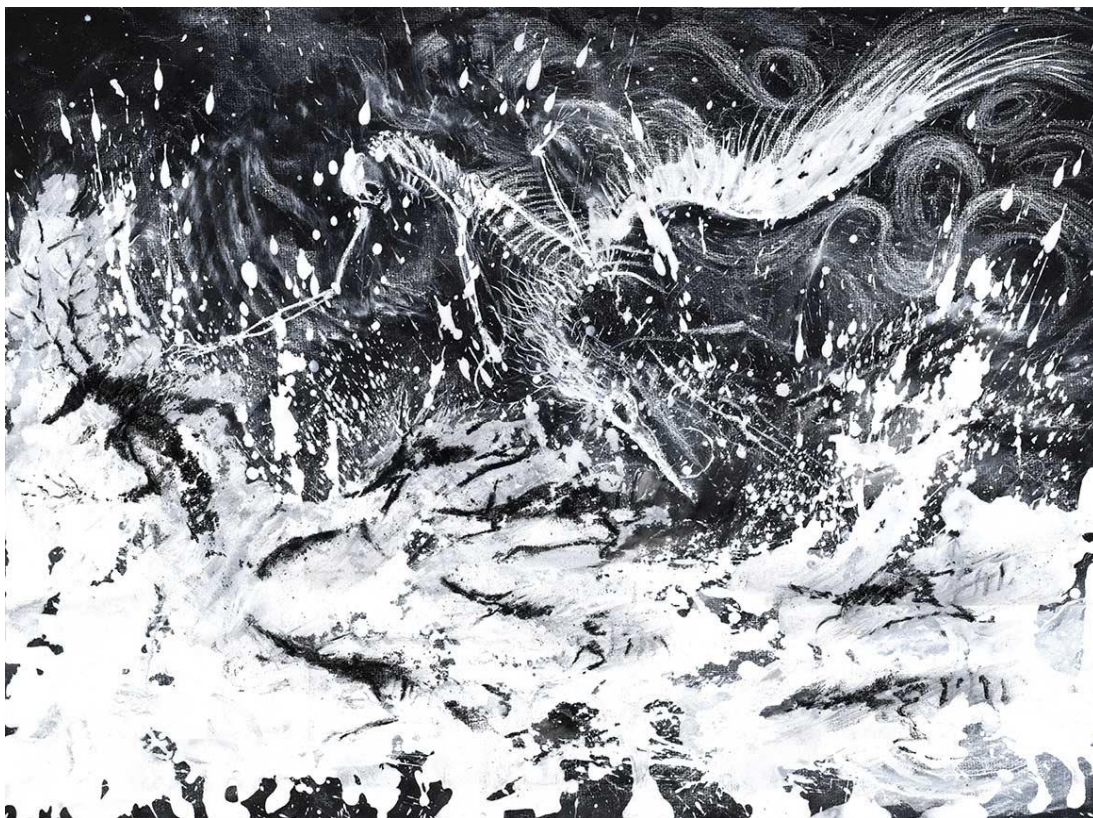
5. Catania, A. (2004). *One Fell Swoop* [Pastel]. Each image; 42 x 14.25 cm.



6. Catania, A. (2014). *Ahab's Incubus* [Pastel]. 14 x 42.5 cm.

The logics concerning translation become conventionally identified through imaginative realization, but at the same time they are also reasonably identified through intuitive propositions. Both text and visual image are construed as a dialogue to fold, unfold, and refold, for as Wolfgang Iser (1972/2000) maintains - “one text is potentially capable of several different realizations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual reader will fill in the gaps in his own way” (p. 193). This rationale may also be applied to the visual image and, thus, unifying both image and text alerts us to the infinite richness and multiplicity of both modes of communication. The mention of a remarkable phrase by Derrida (1993/2006) is germane to the matter of which we are treating – “everyone reads, acts, writes with *his* or *her* ghosts, even when one goes after the ghosts of the other” (p. 174).

In this project-led dissertation my past stories become Carrollesque. Like the pale rider in *An Antithetical Death of Actaeon* (2014), or the echoes of the Paleo-futurist vision in *Spectres of Actaeon* (2014), I venture into labyrinthine terrains chasing a Carrollian “stag too strong to be tackled” (Hughes, 1997, p. 76). The essential openness of the *Alice* texts allows for a rich visual archive of counter-hegemonic animal and nonhuman (re)presentations that can be productively engaged with Carroll’s vision that troubles animal-human and nature-culture binaries. In this intermeshing with the mutating bodies and creatures of a dream-child’s fantasy world, my fabled, mythological, and Biblical past stories are reiteratively (re)visited – folded, unfolded, and refolded.



7. Catania, A. (2014). *An Antithetical Death of Actaeon* [Mixed media on paper]. 55 x 75 cm.



8. Catania, A. (2014). Installation view from *Spectres of Actaeon*.
St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, Valletta.

1.2 A creaturely *otherness* in a Quixotic dream

In many ways *Through the Looking-Glass Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871), hereinafter *Through the Looking-Glass*, reminds me of the science-fiction/horror film *The Fly* (1986). Cronenberg's movie tells of an eccentric scientist Seth Brundle who invents a pair of "telepods" that allows instantaneous matter translocation from one transmission booth to another. Brundle transports himself via his transmitter pods, unaware that a housefly has slipped inside with him, with the consequent horrific result of slowly turning into a man/fly hybrid creature. Brundle becomes literally a human fly driven paradoxically by both primitive and rational impulses. Hence the appropriated name *Brundlefly*. This metamorphosis plunges the subject into the double bind between self and *other*.

Alice is a "mirror gazer" (Atwood, 2002, p. 56), she gazes at a distorted reflection of her image merged with that of her cat in front of a mirror seeing *another* Alice. In her dream teleportation, their DNA is fused together causing her predicament. However, unlike Brundle's computer analysis that memorizes the molecular structure of the object to be teleported, dissolves the thing and reconstitutes its molecules exactly in a different place, Alice's mirror transmits its magical transformation in the same location. Her physical body remains in front of the mirror of her house's drawing-room, it is her *fantasy* that takes flight!

Alice's dream adventures are "a set of extravagant and implausible episodes" (Heffer, 1999, p. 60) whose moments transform presence and contingency into absence and destiny. One of the distinguishing features in their Quixotic¹ structural level is that they are composed in the style of successive "tale after interpolated tale" (Wood, 2005, p. vi). In these fragments of human experience and shattered

¹ In this dissertation, the term 'Quixotic' is capitalized since it is not applied as a 'common adjective' but as a proper one – coming from the archetypal 'proper name' of Don Quixote.

personality traits, as Hansen (2001) explains, “the fantasy is fanciful precisely because of its inversion of the real world; it can only be understood as illogical because logic is both *real* and *absent*” (p. 3). Alice passes through the mirror, as Atwood (2002) explains –

At this one instant, the glass barrier between the doubles dissolves, and Alice is neither here nor there, neither art nor life, neither the one thing nor the other, though at the same time she is all of these at once.

At that moment time itself stops, and also stretches out, and both writer and reader have all the time not in the world. (p. 57)

Alice’s unreal and illusory dream world pertains to the nature of a phantasm hovering in *deep time*. Behind the Looking-Glass, the little pilgrim becomes a phantasmal outcast in the pre-determined paths of an eerie adventure infested with Kafkaesque disorientations and gruesome monstrosities. These paths also pertain to a fusion of sentiment and lighthearted comedy which culminates in her encounter with a blundering knight who valiantly guides her in the last step towards her destiny. This Quixotic gaze derives its eternal power from an acceptance of impossible paradoxes, or what Blanchot (1955/1982) explains as an idea of fascination –

It is the gaze of the incessant and interminable. In it blindness is vision still, vision which is no longer the possibility of seeing, but the impossibility of not seeing, the impossibility which becomes visible and perseveres – always and always – in a vision that never comes to an end: a dead gaze, a gaze become the ghost of an eternal vision. (p. 32)

In her transition through the Looking-Glass, Alice’s *presentness* becomes intrinsic to a tension between fantasy and body, or the ability to play in a dreamworld

haunted by a multitude of spaces and temporalities. The nonsense text returns us to an experience of the wondrous and enigmatic fact of language's own spectral potentiality. The internal *otherness* of Alice emerges as the wildest thing of all and the most fantastic - the Lion asks Alice "Are you an animal – or vegetable – or mineral?" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 269) and the Unicorn exclaims – "It's a fabulous monster!" (p. 269)!

The struggles of the child that mutates between the adult and the animal are all different aspects of Alice's *present* moment of development, but her *deep time* is also haunted by questions surrounding the ontology of nonhuman animals and other entities. Her Looking-Glass mutation results in many hybridizations, erasing categorical distinctions between the human and other species such as plants, seeds, animals, and the creaturely *otherness*.

In this practice-led dissertation, the mythopoetics found within a particular Quixotic moment in *Through the Looking-Glass* are metaphorically and metonymically deployed to explore a creaturely *otherness* in the child that holds a potential for rethinking the human. This fairy-tale entails a critique of a primordial contrapuntal expression that deals with the mysterious means by which our imaginings of humanity and eternal existence begin to converge with animalesque instincts and the medium of the immaterial. This thesis probes into possibilities of creating visual artistic projects that (re)*present*² this Carrollian multifariousness. It is a quest imbued with a Quixotic trait defined by Levi (1956) as an "ontologically disguised hunger for those values which the rational intellect is unable to guarantee" (p. 136).

² The parenthesis in '(re)*present*' not only underlines Alice's *presentness* in her transitory state through the mirror but is also deliberately employed as both a hermeneutic and deconstructionist inquiry into the *presentness* of the genuine encounter with the work of art and its implications in translation and adaptation (as discussed in chapter 2.1).

1.3 The aim of this project-led dissertation

The aim of the dissertation is addressed in the research question - How could the metaphoric-metonymic trope of metamorphosis applied within the “melancholy farewell” moment (from *Through the Looking-Glass*) be represented as a theoretical and productive methodology in a contemporary visual art context?

Creative methods of research are devised to address and answer the research question via “reflection-in-action” (Schön, 1983, p. 21). Carroll’s imaginary textual universe is recreated into four practical research projects that were conducted and designed to allow me to engage with his literary nonsense in an interpretive sense. These projects engage in an analytic reflexivity and intertextual literary dialogue within the experimentation that inhabits their standard of ethics and research. The research projects are not presented as an organic whole of a grand narrative but as a series or multimodal vignettes, similar to jigsaw puzzle pieces or Borgesian fragments, all addressing issues of Carrollian (re)presentation that reflect the paradoxical truths of our own biological and psychological states of transit.

The adverbial function ‘phantomwise’³ in the title of this thesis ends with the suffix ‘wise’ denoting the ghostly manner of direction that this dissertation is referring to. Modes of relevance that inhabit within and outside Carroll’s nonsense text are scrutinized via a spectral discourse of the haunting image. Building on a glossary of hauntopic devices, the creative output explores a range of ghostly aesthetics such as the use of formats that employ chance, ephemeral shadows, and translucency.

Logics of art’s methods that ‘haunt’ are also studied in this thesis as a dialogue with a text source and its mirroring in another art form which may help us

³ The adverb “phantomwise” is quoted from the terminal acrostic of *Through the Looking-Glass*.

to dig into the abyss of a dream child. Both spectral picture and spectral text can be construed as a dialogue to fold, unfold, refold and blindfold the apparition of a moment that once happened and still haunts a shifting visibility and variable presence. This spectral dialogue serves as a critique of contemporary anxieties and may enable to surface invisible, unacknowledged or shadowy aspects of an epistemological unknown in my artistic practice.

Multiple layers are unpacked via an analysis of the *Alice* text in a mutual dialogue with other texts and visual works serving as a continuity to decode the metaphoric-metonymic underlayers within the “melancholy farewell” moment. Both written exegesis and the contextualised creative projects assimilate critical methods of philosophy, psychoanalysis, visual aesthetics, and modern literary theory that haunt the primary and central trope of metamorphosis in the adapted text.

A thorough analysis of how metaphor and metonym haunt the image-text symbiotic relationship is studied via hermeneutic and deconstructionist discourse. Hans-Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutics are conjoined with Jacques Derrida’s concept of *hauntology* as a possibility in a (re)thinking of space/time continuum in translating from text to visual imagery. An analysis of art-historical precedents and further theoretical paradigms that deploy the metaphor and metonym of the absent/presence are explored to illuminate the strange ‘presence’ of metamorphosis in the *Alice* text.

Concepts such as “Thing,” “phantom,” “digitalized spectral apparition,” “spectral analysis,” “heterotopia,” “animalséance,” and “muselmann” including those of Jacques Lacan, Jean-Paul Sartre, Slavoj Žižek, Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Giorgio Agamben are studied. The trope of metamorphosis is also systematically analyzed for the purpose of this dissertation via an exposition of further Lacanian thought. Theories such as those of the “mirror stage,” “extimacy,”

and “jouissance” are also used as a practical element of thinking and expression in this project-led dissertation.

Drawing on the metamorphic-metonymic trope of metamorphosis in a specific Looking-Glass episode, this study is steeped in mythic resonance. It is a moment in which Don Quixote returns as a revenant in the form of the White Knight. This valiant hero of parodic Romance finds a deep affinity with sleepwalkers and shamans. Like Alice, he is an accursed wanderer who finds spiritual death in the most radical action of his existence – the *descent*. Ergo, the underground becomes a running theme within this written thesis and implicitly interwoven into my practical methodologies. Ranging from Plato’s analogy of the cave to Ovidian, Dantesque, Coleridgean, and Cervantine intertextualities of descents in Hell, all are explored in the materiality, process, and design of the four projects discussed in this thesis. These *katabasis* key synergies run through all the transformative engagements of the projects, providing the stage (space, scene, screen, *atopos*) for the haunting of the self/same/possible/present and alterity/other/impossible/future - opposite poles that struggle within the dynamic of transcendence and transformation.

The intertextuality of Carroll’s metamorphic-metonymic trope of change is also analysed by studying different aspects of the “melancholy farewell” moment via similarities with other works of art. Beneath the structure of this dissertation merge ideas from various artists, ranging from cave art to the contemporary art scene. Research is propounded on transformations that occur at the level of the individual (the child Alice), and allegorical transformations that occur in world view or the development of culture and humanity. Diverse related themes such as Blanchot’s and Bataille’s readings of paleolithic art, Derrida’s interpretation of Coypel’s *The Error*, the machinations of Freudian dream analysis, and the Butades myth of marking

shadows are researched amongst other attempts at capturing, transforming, domesticating and escaping aspects of reality and the losses that metamorphosis enforces.

Other theoretically informed readings that are influenced by a Cervantes-Carroll dyad of analogies include thinkers such as de Unamuno, whose Quixotism infers an ethical idea of faith, to the animal question in *Through the Looking-Glass* as propagated by Derrida. Further reference is made to metaphysical, psychological, mythic, and Darwinian *Alice*-criticism as propagated by Gilles Deleuze, Gillian Beer, Rachel Falconer, and Judith Bloomingdale amongst others. Further technology criticism advanced by thinkers such as Virginia Heffernan, Slavoj Žižek, and Jean Baudrillard is also analyzed.

The *Alice*-inspired visual (re)presentations in this dissertation involve digital manipulations in hanging murals, silk fabric, photography, and moiré animated sculpture. The projects are conducted via diverse experimentative approaches such as the aleatory and cast shadows projected on cave walls from immersed bodily antics associated with the attire of a VR headset. The fantastical territory where the “melancholy farewell” episode occurs is not only interspersed throughout different episodes of the Carrollian narrative but metaphorically merged throughout historic centuries coexisting in similar in-between spaces such as the Euroafrican land bridge of Ghar Dalam and the nuclear waste depository at Onkalo.

This dissertation hopes to demonstrate in its experimental discipline of fine art practice (and through its interrelated exegesis) that the work is a substantial and original contribution to the current research of aesthetics in contemporary art. As Smith and Dean (2009) explain, such practice-led research emerges from a dual rationale. One is that the “creative work in itself is a form of research and generates

detectable research outputs” (p. 5) - the four artistic projects that are discussed in the methodology section of this dissertation contribute to both the outcomes of the research process and the answer of the research question. The second idea, which also is demonstrated in this dissertation, is that the creative practice which includes the processes that are involved in art making “can lead to specialised research insights which can then be generalised and written up as research” (p. 5).

The visual artistic interpretations of this dissertation are haunted by a combination of both ambiguity and directness, a paradox which is the driving force of the *Alice* fairy-tale. This study hopes to elicit new questions about this labyrinthine terrain of *nonsense* that redefines the rational.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Re(*presenting*) metaphoric-metonymic hauntologies

The materially realized research of this dissertation involves a transferral of meanings, terms, or paradigms from one art form to another, crossing the boundary of difference in the dichotomous metaphor/metonymy distinction. Both metaphor and metonymy haunt the visual thinking of such a corollary that emphasizes difference not only in an appropriation of the pre-text as a literary procedure, but also in the rhetoric of visual art making. These two fundamental tropes are both basic distinctions applied and allegorized in my work as the two opposing forces that vie for dominance in a continuous struggle for a co-existence.

2.1.1 (Re)*presenting* from the wrong side

Don Quixote exhorts that “translating from one language to another (. . .) is like looking at Flemish tapestries from the wrong side” (de Cervantes, trans. 2003, p. 873). The knight’s tapestry metaphor has a perlocutionary effect since the etymological definition of the word “text,” according to Barthes (1971/1977b), is “a woven fabric” (p. 159). The direction of the metaphoric weave becomes even more awry when dealing with a process that depends upon “the “palimpsestuousness” of the experience, on the oscillation between a past image and a present one” (Hutcheon, 2006, p. 172). According to Lacan (1966/2002a), a word is “a presence made of absence” (p. 228), hence an adaptation, or what Steiner (1975) calls an “interpretative appropriation” (p. 416), works as an embroidery of many absences.

Questions of linguistic transparency and opacity have occupied a vital place in scholarly discourse about the dynamic relations with the original text to a visual

work of art in the intricacies of adaptation. Here lies a tension between visual art making and the text which is “constructed as a mosaic of quotations” (Kristeva, 1977/1982a, p. 66), or as Stam (2006) calls it - “intertextual dialogism”⁴ (p. 4). In his essay *The Task of the Translator*, Walter Benjamin (1923/2007a) claims that; “No poem is intended for the reader, no picture for the beholder, no symphony for the listener” (p. 69). The purpose of a translation is to convey the “essential substance” (p. 70) of the work of art by creating a “harmony, as a supplement to the language in which it expresses itself” (p.79).

Benjamin’s enquiry into the “essential substance” adheres to Bakhtin’s discourse on “*event*” in which the author of the novel stands behind his or her work, but not as a guiding authoritative voice as that of the monologic poetic form in the epic. In his analysis of Dostoevsky’s artistry, Bakhtin (1929/1984a) declares that the author’s original idea “is not a subjective individual-psychological formation with “permanent resident rights” in a person’s head” (p. 88). It is paradigmatic of “a *live event*, played out at the point of dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses” (p. 88). The idea of an event is formed from parodies, reiterations, and other kinds of transformations associated with cultural, social, and ideological characteristics -

The author constructs the hero not out of words foreign to the hero, not out of neutral definitions; he constructs not a character, nor a type, nor a temperament, in fact he constructs no objectified image of the hero at all, but rather the hero’s *discourse* about himself and his world. (p. 53)

⁴ Combining the theoretical framework of Julia Kristeva's ‘intertextuality’ with Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of ‘dialogism.’

The mode of adaptation adopted in this dissertation revolves around these Benjamin/Bakhtin principles - My exploration is in the possibility to (re)present the “essential substance” of a Carrollian *event* dealing with two heroes – Alice and the White Knight.

The very fact that I draw and paint on a support and construct installations in exhibition spaces is a translative effort to create a harmony between practicability and aesthetic theory. My art practice involves what Quine (1959/2004a) postulates as “indeterminacy of correlation” (p. 167) between “deep differences” (p. 167) of languages. It is my personal endeavour to translate particular moments from literary texts into visual artworks (usually resulting in traditional drawing or digital installation). This haunted vagueness in interconnections is imbued within artistic activity since it could be claimed that the artist only ever engages with translation. “[A]rt is always in translation, because it is matter: it is materially realised ideas,” as Macleod and Holdridge (2006) explain –

it could be argued that art’s methods make transparent those obdurate binaries between word and deed; contemplation and action; theory and practice; feeling and cognition; intuition and reason; imagination and logic. What might be taken to be the unalterable dialectics at play in being conscious in the world, are apparently put into high relief as materially realised thought in writing and artwork collides (when the logics of each cease to ‘match up’ as one artist put it). Logic is not conventionally identified through imaginative realisation, nor reasoned argument with intuitive propositions. (p. 8)

My translative processes as an artist descend into the night of metaphoric-metonymic texts to experience the everyday world transformed into a visual collage

that self-reflects this dynamic of opposing forces. In this translative dialogue of matching between two disparate modes of making to capture an “essential substance,” my output is materially realized ideas which attempt to make transparent the dynamic of opposing forces between - logic and imagination - reason and intuition - action and contemplation - practice and theory - cognition and feeling - word and deed. These tenacious binaries haunt my artistic practice via a code-switching of verbal signs into a nonverbal sign system, or what Roman Jakobson (1959/1971) calls “[i]ntersemiotic translation or *transmutation*” (p. 261).

My research involves a transferral of meanings, terms, or paradigms, and the *transmutation* of linguistic into nonlinguistic signs from one art form to another. This code-switching from one discipline to another requires a transmission of the “essential substance” from the source material. However, to translate, one must first experience the source material as a mode of “self-understanding” in terms of its historical continuity -

Self-understanding always occurs through understanding something other than the self, and includes the unity and integrity of the other. Since we meet the artwork in the world and encounter a world in the individual artwork, the work of art is not some alien universe into which we are magically transported for a time. Rather, we learn to understand ourselves in and through it, and this means that we sublimate (aufheben) the discontinuity and atomism of isolated experiences in the continuity of our own existence. (p. 83)

Eco (2003) delineates translation as “a process that takes place between two texts produced at a given historical moment in a given cultural milieu” (pp 25 - 26). In this process, texts are not created from their author’s original minds, but rather

compiled from preexistent texts, in that, as Kristeva (1977/1982a) describes, a text prevails as “a permutation of texts, an intertextuality: in the space of a given text, several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one another” (p. 36). Kristeva’s understanding of intertextuality, which Bakhtin (1929/1984a) erstwhile identifies as the fundamental “polyphony” (p. 6) or “dialogism” (p. 16) of literature, sees that all texts are connected to the entire other texts for as Bassnett (2002) explains – “no text can ever be completely free of those texts that precede and surround it” (p. 85).

Benjamin (1923/2007a) connects the praxeological notion of translation as a “mode” (p. 70). What is called “translatability” (p. 70) or “the law governing the translation” (p. 70) is understood by Bartosch and Stuhlmann (2013) as the “condition of historical and linguistic embedding of any text in a network of texts” (p. 61). Benjamin (1923/2007a) argues that the “original” (p. 78) artwork has its own “life and afterlife” (p. 71) and its translators in years ahead enhance its prosperity -

For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life (. . .). The history of the great works of art tells us about their antecedents, their realization in the age of the artist, their potentially eternal afterlife in succeeding generations. (p. 71)

As a corollary to Benjamin’s concept, Derrida (1980/2002) adduces that the task of the translator is “the mission to which one is destined (always by the other), the commitment, the duty, the debt, the responsibility” (p. 112). The duty is that of one who signs a contract taking “place as trace or as trait” (p. 119) and the debt is that of a survivor from a “metaphoric catastrophe” (p. 113). The responsibility is that

of an agent of survival who is destined, enjoined, or called to ensure the survival beyond the biological life and death of its author by ensuring “the transmission of a family seed” (p. 112) -

If the translator neither restitutes nor copies an original, it is because the original lives on and transforms itself. The translation will truly be a moment in the growth of an original, which will complete itself in enlarging itself. (p. 121)

In translation, what is always lost should be replaced and retained by a gain, whether it is a mode, polyphony or part of an intertextual network - all transmit an “essential substance” echoed by Heidegger (1960/1993b) as “the reproduction of things’ general essence” (p. 162). De Man (1983/1985), believing that Benjamin’s theory is a “combination of nihilistic rigor with sacred revelation” (p. 31), makes a distinction between the translator and the poet -

Translation is a relation from language to language, not a relation to an extralinguistic meaning that could be copied, paraphrased, or imitated. That is not the case for the poet; poetry is certainly not paraphrase, clarification, or interpretation, a copy in that sense. (p. 34)

De Man (1983/1985) underscores that “translation is not the metaphor of the original” (p. 36), and interpreting Benjamin’s “essential substance” as not relating to “the life of the original” (p. 38) but, rather, to its death. The translation is a harbinger of death for it “freezes” (p. 35) the original - it “belongs to the afterlife of the original” (p. 38). Moreover, as Eco (2003) points out, “[a]daptations frequently produce not only variations in expression but also a substantial change in content” (p. 170). Steiner (1975) writes that “Art dies when we lose or ignore the conventions (. . .) by which its semantic statement can be carried over into our own idiom” (p. 30).

Blanchot (1971/1997) blatantly states that “translating is madness” (p. 61) and that the translator is “the enemy of God” seeking “to rebuild the Tower of Babel” (p. 58). However, he subscribes to Benjamin’s notion of the translation as a “supplement” to its new language by describing the translator as -

the secret master of the difference of languages, not in order to abolish the difference but in order to use it to awaken in his own language, through the violent or the subtle changes he brings to it, a presence of what is different, originally, in the original. It is not a question here of resemblance. (p. 59)

Eco’s assertion that translation connects aesthetic consciousness to “a presence” reiterates that of Gadamer (1960/2004) in surveying visual and textual domains of enquiry in which a hermeneutic projection of “the fusion of horizons” (p. 305) engages us to experience our *present* inextricably intermeshed with past and future. This insistence on *presentness* construes the very *otherness* of the artwork that can generate reflexivity. The temporal meaning of the *presentness* in terms of the “contemporaneousness” of works of art is described by Gadamer (1964/1977a) with regards to their properties and the way in which we encounter them as aesthetic consciousness -

an absolute contemporaneousness exists between the work and its present beholder that persists unhampered despite every intensification of the historical consciousness. The reality of the work of art and its expressive power cannot be restricted to its original historical horizon, in which the beholder was actually the contemporary of the creator. It seems instead to belong to the

experience of art that the work of art always has its own present. (p. 95)

My artistic activity is haunted by these ‘horizons’ in terms of the postulation of *presentness* that involves a relationship between conscious and unconscious experience, between one’s individual *present* existence and human history” (p. 86). It is the archaic substance of *presentness* in the unconscious experience that transcends into a Žižekian “abyss” in the registers of an *other* language. This methodology finds an affinity to what Gadamer (1960/2004) calls the “horizon of understanding” (p. 396) in the construction of the hermeneutical conversation in both text and image. The text is understood as that which “cannot be limited either by what the writer originally had in mind or by the horizon of the person to whom the text was originally addressed” (p. 396). Such an interpretative process involves a constantly moving ‘fusion of horizons’ between text and interpreter to let a “strange” message “speak again.”⁵

Perhaps, there are many echoes hidden in the “essential substance” of the Don’s reverted tapestry metaphor. One might be that of a child’s ego-resiliency as accentuated by Deleuze (1968/2001) –

The child who begins to handle a book by imitation, without being able to read, invariably holds it back to front. It is as though the book were being held out to the other, the real end of the activity, even though the child seizing the book back to front is the virtual centre of its passion, of its own contemplation” (p. 99).

⁵ Gadamer (1967/1977b) suggests that hermeneutics focuses attention on what is “met in all human orientation to the world as the *atopon* (the strange), that which does not “fit” into the customary order of our expectation based on experience” (p. 25). Invoking the alien and the distant, Gadamer (1980) defines hermeneutics as – “to let what is alienated by the character of the written word or by the character of being distanced by cultural or historical distances speak again. This is hermeneutics: to let what seems to be far and alienated speak again. (p. 83).

2.1.2 Emotional infectiousness in metaphoric-metonymic tropes

When translating from source literary texts to the visual image, there is a search in the symbiotic logics of both *metaphor* and *metonym* in the imagistic and the discursive mode of knowing. It is via these two rhetorical tropes of correlative autonomy that the “abyss” of language is (re)presented, since what language produces, “in its most fundamental gesture” is, as Slavoj Žižek (2003) explains in *The Puppet and the Dwarf* -

the very opposite of designating reality: it *digs a hole in it*, it opens up visible/present reality toward the dimension of the immaterial/unseen.

When I simply see you, I simply see you – but it is only by naming you that I can indicate the abyss in you beyond what I see. (p. 70)

In a translational process, one digs into “immense anxieties of indebtedness” (Bloom, 1997, p. 5) to (re)present this “abyss.” Through the metaphoric-metonymic trope I attempt to capture a visual image through a methodology that, paradoxically, works in the opposite fashion from that of the narrator whose Aristotelian plot contains an introduction, or incentive moment, a middle, or climax, and a conclusion, or resolution, in order to be a “*whole*” (Aristotle, trans. 1996, p. 13). In my practice, the design of this pattern of events which underlie the construction of verbal artefacts is translated into one single visual artefact. The illustrated image shows a moment from the structure of events of processes (of beginning, middle, and end) all at once. Any chronological order becomes freezed into one still image – the *whole* is *there* all at once. Thus, my methodology aims to condense the Aristotelian plot into one whole poetic mimesis containing the reflexive and symmetrical metaphors within the adapted text. The elements which form the illustrated image are those of the

metonym working in the same manner as how Aristotle (trans. 1996) describes the determinate structure of a narrative plot –

the structure of the various sections of the events must be such that the transposition or removal of any one section dislocates and changes the whole. If the presence or absence of something has no discernible effect, it is not a part of the whole. (p. 15).

Aristotle (trans. 1996) provides us with an early definition of metaphor in the annals of western writing, describing it as “the application of a noun which properly applies to something else” (p. 34). Such “application” is an instance in which the name customarily used to signify one thing is used in reference to a thing that is customarily signified by another name. Lacan (1966/1989) writes that the formula for a metaphor is – “[*o*]ne word for another” (p. 119) and is created as follows -

The creative spark of the metaphor does not spring from the presentation of two images, that is, of two signifiers equally actualized. It flashes between two signifiers one of which has taken the place of the other in the signifying chain, the occulted signifier remaining present through its (metonymic) connexion with the rest of the chain. (p. 119)

Coleridge (1854 version) makes a relevant distinction - “[a]nalogies are used in aid of conviction: metaphors, as means of illustration” (p. 235). The role of the metaphor, as Beardsley (1958) writes, is to “create new contextual meaning by bringing to life new connotations” (p. 43). Ramachandran and Hirstein (1999) place metaphor as one of the pinnacles of aesthetic experience in their neurological theory, defining it as “a mental tunnel between two concepts or precepts that appear grossly dissimilar on the surface” (p. 31). The poetic function of metaphor, as Ricoeur

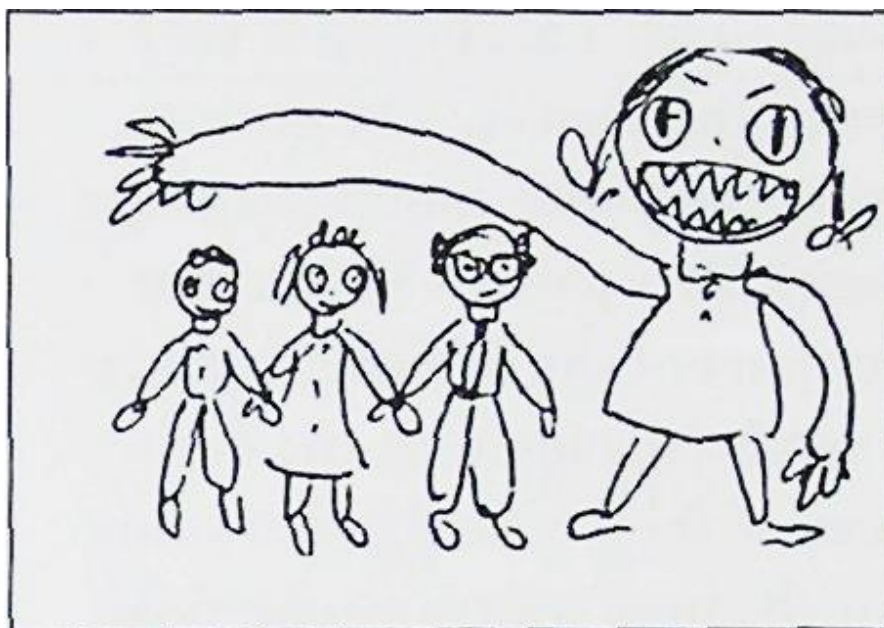
(1975/2003) observes, involves a “transference of feelings” (p. 224), one which “extends the power of double meaning from the cognitive realm to the affective” (p. 224). Borges (2000) concurs when explaining that what is most important about the metaphor; “is the fact of its being felt by the reader or the hearer *as* a metaphor” (p. 23). Thus, metaphors act as a paradigm of crucial, archetypal human psychological or spiritual processes, located in the depths of personal experience, for as Bachelard (1938/2002) claims, they - “seduce reason” (p. 85).

Noël Carroll (1999/2000) explains that “[w]hen we apply a metaphor, we are implicitly mobilizing an entire scheme of contrasting literal terms and projecting them onto alien scheme” (p. 91). The human brain processes these modes or subliminal connections via “structural alignment, inference projection, progressive abstraction, and re-representation” (Gentner et al., 2001, p. 243) to project visual and verbal schemas onto (re)*presentational* target domains, maintaining what Lakoff (1990) terms as “inferential structure” (p. 54). Brown (1982) clarifies that metaphor “is literally preconceptual in that it can generate, through its dual and tensive matrix, new univocal concepts” (p. 47). Yet, it is “just as *post*-conceptual and *post*-critical as it is *pre*-conceptual and *pre*-critical” (p. 48). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) describe how this synthesis could be extended into one of understanding the world -

Metaphors are basically devices for understanding and have little to do with objective reality, if there is such a thing. The fact that our conceptual system is inherently metaphorical, the fact that we understand the world, think, and function in metaphorical terms, and the fact that metaphors can not merely be understood but can be meaningful and true as well - these facts all suggest that an adequate

account of meaning and truth can only be based on understanding. (p. 184)

Ricoeur (1975/2003) plays down the tradition that metaphor substitutes one name for another on the basis of resemblance and proposes instead that metaphor is a “calculated error, a ‘sort-crossing’” (p. 297) in an intuitive world of “seeing the similar in the dissimilar” (p. 5). In metaphor, an “aberrant” word not only interrupts a sign chain but disrupts its logic, attributing predicates to a subject not usually thought to possess them. A metaphor has a “heuristic function” (p. 290) in its illusiveness, it assembles and disassembles categories of thought by endowing familiar objects with unfamiliar qualities, such as reclassifying seemingly lifeless things in the class of living ones, in this aspect it could be considered as Promethean!



9. A family portrait drawn by a five-year-old boy. (Edwards, 1979/1999, p. 73).

During infant and child development, newly acquired knowledge is assimilated to a great extent by building associations with existing knowledge that persist - such patterns or “image schemata” (Johnson, 1987, p. xix) are intrinsically

metaphorical in nature.) In a drawing made by a shy five-year-old boy of his family portrait we see a paradigmatic case of “giving form to formless emotions” (Edwards, 1979/1999, p. 73; fig. 9). Applying the same basic figure symbols, this little child draws himself *au par* with his longer haired mother and bald father. However, the configuration of his older sister in this outsider art changes dramatically exposing the boy’s inhibited fear of her through the scale by which she is depicted and features such as her angry frown, shark-like teeth, and long possessive hand.

Far from irrational, the drawing made by this fearful little boy is showing us that there is a metaphoric meaning lurking in the idea of (re)*presentation* as a distinct component of the reality it depicts. In the translation from experience to image, an “essential substance” needs to be captured in the resulting image which might be called an ‘illustration’ - a term that literally means “to illuminate or cast light on a subject” (Zeegen, 2005, p. 9).⁶ The ‘core idea’ of what his family (re)*presents* to him is captured via something *other* than the actual features of his family – this *other* is something that light was cast upon in the boy’s (re)*presentation*.

The child image-maker constructs by adding meaning and life to an artwork from personal experience through an interconnectedness created between himself, the drawing, and his family, or what Aldrich (1968) calls a “transfiguration” (p. 77) of content by way of a manipulation of material that involves metaphor. As noted by Noël Carroll (1994), the visual artist applies metaphor by “propos[ing] food for thought without stating any determinate proposition” (p. 212). The boy’s (re)*presentation* of his imagination surely attests to this idea. The boy’s family portrait is a set of appearances that correspond to the essence of his sitters captured via the function of synthesis in metaphor. His intuitive rendering concords with how

⁶ Etymologically, the word ‘illustration’ derives from the Latin *illustra'tio* or *illu'stro* meaning ‘to enlighten’ or ‘irradiate.’

Aristotle (trans. 1996) understands metaphor - “a sign of natural talent; for the successful use of metaphor is a matter of perceiving similarities” (p. 37). This instinct for nondiscursive metaphoricity finds common ground in the writings of Immanuel Kant (trans. 1998) from which we learn that we can understand not things in themselves, but rather appearances and phenomena -

The transcendental concept of appearances in space (. . .) is a critical reminder that absolutely nothing that is intuited in space is a thing in itself, and that space is not a form that is proper to anything in itself, but rather that objects in themselves are not known to us at all, and that what we call outer objects are nothing other than mere representations of our sensibility. (pp. 161 - 162)

The existence of a “thing in itself” may only be rationally deduced since it belongs to “the *a priori* realm of consciousness” (Lefebvre, 1974/1991, p. 2). René Magritte’s painting *The Treachery of Images* (1929) with the simple phrase *Ceci n’ est pas une pipe* (This is not a pipe) written under a depiction of a smoking pipe, lays bare this complexity of art, meaning and interpretation. The initial autoreferentiality that is formulated as *deixis*, in this case *Ceci* (This), is part of an indication of circularity that problematizes its own formulation. What is implied is that all art is metaphor and may be explained as a visual trope. Or does it imply a metonym too? All the constituent parts are determined via the metonym, understood as how Lacan (1966/2002a) defines the term - “the part for the whole” (p. 55), the metonym as synecdoche, or the *micro* in the *macro*. All the systematic signs and arbitrary marks that compose the work depict a metonym!

Heidegger (1960/1993b) associates the ontological interplay of revealing and concealment in this painting with the paradoxical “disclosure of beings” (p. 187)

which has temporarily been deferred in its intrinsic tension (see fig. 10). This critique of aesthetic (re)presentation in van Gogh's *Shoes* as a synecdochic detail has the potential to reveal or unfold the whole life-world of the potato eaters to the viewer inhabiting a different world. The work of art can open up a clearing in that world in which we can be received -

Truth happens in van Gogh's painting. This does not mean that something at hand is correctly portrayed, but rather that in the revelation of the equipmental being of the shoes beings as a whole - world and earth in their counterplay - attain to unconcealment. (p. 181)



10. van Gogh, V. (1865). *Shoes* [Oil on canvas].
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. 38.1 x 45.3 cm.

In its trasmogrifications from the micro-paradigmatic to the macro-paradigmatic, and vice versa, this (re)presentation of a pair of shoes exposes a

concealment of an illuminated Being. In effect, Heidegger (1960/1993b) who postulates that “Art is truth setting itself to work” (p. 165) is describing his idiosyncratic method of “worlding” - an entrance to a clearing in order to exemplify a creative disclosure that “preserves” the multiple simultaneous (and thus ontological pluralistic) truths revealed by van Gogh’s painting. The artwork presents a critical view of the conceptually inexhaustible meaning of things revealed in the conjoined existence of both ‘world’ and ‘earth.’ This disclosure of truths implies what Immanuel Kant (trans. 1998) schematises in post-Cartesian dialect the function of transcendental reflection -

Reflection (*reflexio*) does not have to do with objects themselves, in order to acquire concepts directly from them, but is rather the state of mind in which we first prepare ourselves to find out the subjective conditions under which we can arrive at concepts. (p. 366)

The Heideggerian action of *aletheia* or “unconcealment of beings” (p. 161) is a Kantian *reflexio* that conflates with the *presence* of things, this primeval self-manifesting from which any entity may emanate from concealment - it is through the dependability of their connection with hiddenness that confirms Being’s belonging to an origin. Freud (1900/2010) postulates similar concerns on the very act of dreaming which constitutes a regression towards “a revival of childhood” –

Behind this childhood of the individual we are promised a picture of a phylogenetic childhood - a picture of the development of human race, of which the individual’s development is in fact an abbreviated recapitulation influenced by the chance circumstances of life. (p. 550)

The metaphoric and metonymic are rhetorical tendencies that also coexist in the psychoanalytic unravelling of dreams. Lacan (1966/2002a) recognizes a

connection between Freud's differentiation between the primary psychological processes of condensation (*verdichtung*) and displacement (*verschiebung*) in dream analysis.

Condensation is metaphorical in its nature – “the superimposed structure of signifiers in which metaphor finds its field; its name, condensing in itself the word *Dichtung* shows the mechanism's connaturality with poetry, to the extent that it envelops poetry's own properly traditional function” (p. 425). Displacement is metonymic in its nature – “a symbol comes to the place of lack constituted by the “missing from its place” that is necessary for the dimension of displacement, from which the whole play of symbols stems, to arise” (p. 607).

Freud (1900/2010) insists that dreams “think predominantly in visual images” (p. 79). Although dreams may occasionally make use of remnants of speech and other nonvisual material, what is characteristic of the dream “are only those elements of their content which behave like images, which are more like perceptions, that is, than they are like mnemonic presentations” (p. 79). The dream, according to Freud, hallucinates. But why? Why are our hidden desires and lurking animosities given expression through the image? It is Foucault (1954/1993) who asks this question for us, the question that always seems to go begging in discussions of what an image is. “Why,” he asks, “does the psychological meaning take shape in an image, instead of remaining implicit or dissolving into the limpidity of a verbal formulation?” (p. 36).

Foucault, elaborating on Freud, provides two answers to this question. First, the image is “a language which expresses without formulating, an utterance less transparent for meaning than the word itself”; and second, the satisfaction of desire has a “primitively imaginative character,” that is, “desire first finds satisfaction in the narcissistic and unreal mode of fantasy” (p. 36).

2.1.3 (Re)presenting spectral demarcations

My exploration in phantom epistemologies is a search for the illustration that casts a light upon a metaphoric narrative, after all; “the light of art has no other duty but to gleam, just, around what remains” (Callus, 2011). This search in past phantoms as a quality of possessiveness and to its power of stimulating recalls what Barthes (1964/1977a) terms as “spectral analysis” (p. 32) in his essay *Rhetoric of the Image* (1964). Detecting the presence of the phantom is the object of artistic inquiry in this study where interpretation is aimed toward a recognition that allows the unknowable to remain as powerful an analytical figure as the known.

Another fragmented corollary that emphasizes difference in an appropriation of the pre-text as a literary procedure is the concept of “*hauntology*” (p. 63). In *Spectres of Marx*, Hamlet’s ghost is invoked by Derrida (1993/2006) in “the specter as possibility” (p. 13) revealing the spectre as a metaphorical trope to challenging our underlying binary logic. Multiple beings or hauntings are suggested but are never fully instantiated as evidence or presence of the spectral. This involves the breaking from modalized time as devised from Derrida’s discourse - “It is not only time that is “out of joint,” but space in time, spacing” (p. 103). Space is also what spectralizes time giving it body and causing it to appear. Time and space are discerned together as disturbing or spectralizing each other - haunting each other, as it were, as each other’s phantoms.

Lack and trauma depend on notions of the supernatural - the mode of such dialectic reasoning is the fragmented ghost-tense of “*hauntology*” (p. 63) in which Derrida (1993/2006) conjures a “specter-Thing” (p. 26) driven in a deconstructive (re)thinking of space/time continuum. This “element” which is “neither living nor dead, present nor absent” haunts the boundary of difference between the picture and

the narrative. The spectre as a metaphorical and metonymic trope involves an ‘unfreezing’ via a breaking from modalized time as developed from Derrida’s working hypothesis - “As soon as one no longer distinguishes spirit from specter, the former assumes a body, it incarnates itself, as spirit, in the specter” (p. 4). A “specter-Thing” (p. 26) is conjured and driven in a deconstructive (re)thinking of space/time continuum – “this element itself is neither living nor dead, present nor absent: it spectralizes” (p. 63). This concept invokes the metaphor of a spectre, or spectres, haunting the present⁷ to embody those things which are always there - “the specter is the future, it is always to come, it presents itself only as that which could come or come back” (p. 48). We are haunted by the future for what may yet be, depending on iterability and repetition or what Derrida (1992/1995b) calls “*l’arrivant*” (the “to come”) -

the future is necessarily monstrous: the figure of the future, that is, that which can only be surprising, that for which we are not prepared (. . .) is heralded by a species of monsters. A future that would not be monstrous would not be a future; it would be a predictable, calculable and programmable tomorrow. All experience open to the future is prepared or prepares itself to welcome the monstrous *arrivant*. (pp. 386-387)

The difference between ‘tomorrow’ and ‘the future’ is that the former implies what follows today in the conventional flow of time and according to the causal laws of conventional logic. The latter or “the monstrous *arrivant*” is what challenges this

⁷ The haunting of death as an alternative to change and growth is a trope in which the apparition or phantom is always delayed or differed. The idea or image of the existence of something ghostly is established on that which stands over and outside the present. Haunting is always an oscillation between the future and the past. As Odysseus, Aeneas, Dante, and other *katabasis* heroes have shown us through their *nekyia*, dead souls that once lived deliver auguries!

logic or disrupts it – the fact that the future does not always allow us to follow the rules of causality and often “comes out of nowhere” – is disruptive – it is wholly *other*. It haunts the *present* as the intervening space that removes entities from each other, making them differ from, and not be identical to, each other.

The epistemological orientation of ‘temporizing’ and ‘spacing’ in my work denotes *différance* - a space of difference, deferral and differing, hence the absence of ‘the same’ and the allowing of the space for ‘the other’ or alterity. What distinguishes between deferral and difference, delay and nonidentity become an *otherness* solicited by *différance*. The transcendental principle of *différance* generates – “the opposition between language and speech in which language, as a system of differences, has priority over a speaking subject that can no longer be thought of in terms of self-presence” (Harrison, 1994, p. 192). What is questioned or undermined in the process of *différance* is the sameness or integrity and unity between nonwritten and written forms of language that cannot be gestated within the “metaphysics of presence” (Derrida, 1967/1976, p. 22) –

spacing is temporization, the detour and postponement by means of which intuition, perception, consummation – in a word, the relationship to the present, the reference to a present reality, to a being – are always deferred. Deferred by virtue of the very principle of difference which holds that an element functions and signifies, takes on or conveys meaning, only by referring to another past or future element in an economy of traces. (pp. 28 – 29)

Thus, what is being questioned or undermined in the process of ‘difference’ is the sameness of integrity and unity, and therefore also the linearity of the Lacanian ‘subject’ whose uniqueness is constituted by an act of self-affirmation, or “*subjective*

assertion” (Lacan, 1966/1989, p. 170). The “monstrous *arrivant*” is disruptive since it does not pertain to a linear trajectory exposing the risks in the radical critique of humanist certainties. Such ever-shifting configurations are haunted by the “monstrous *arrivant*” and this is the type of future we face with, for example, in developmental stages of our lives or in the development of society and culture. When a child becomes an adult, there are metamorphoses and transformation, but is there growth? Or is there a death or termination of childhood and consequently a re-birth of the fully formed adult? Is there always an oxymoronic life-in-death in a temporal contradiction that is unfathomably *out of joint*?⁸

Perhaps the properties of a “specter-Thing” find similarities with how Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2005) explain those pertaining to a *rhizome* - “assum[ing] very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers” (p. 7). It seems like wherever monolithic structures were chopped down, these made way for rhizometric replacements which seem to pop up anywhere and which are therefore more ghost-like in their unpredictability and randomness since “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other” (p. 7). Hauntology may reiterate a rhizometric ghostly diversification that displays a kind of unpredictable inevitability.

Castricano (2001) explains that the revenant “who, having returned from the dead, haunts the living with unspeakable secrets – unspeakable because they are unconscious” (p. 21). Thus, the Derridean ghost tense enables one to read what lies outside language and perhaps what lurks inside the phantasms of the subconscious – which might reveal a terrifying nature or aspect. As Brown (2001) explains -

⁸ The spectral timing “out of joint” (Shakespeare, 1966 version, p. 878) summons the ethereal hour when Hamlet encounters his phantom father, as Derrida (1993/2006) construes – “A disjointed or disadjusted now, “out of joint,” a disjointed now that always risks maintaining nothing together in the assured conjunction of some context whose border would still be determinable” (p. 1).

Learning to live means living without systematizing, without conceits of coherence, without a consistent and complete picture, and without a clear delineation between past and future. (p. 146)

Through the Looking-Glass, in approaching the power of the “Spectre-Thing” as ghost, seizes on the power of the phantom-errant as a fundamental trope for the inevitable relationship between human meaning and natural meaning. The “Spectre-Thing” derives its power from an approach to and an acceptance of decay, nonsense, and the abject origin of human culture. The haunting discourse is evoked through the juxtaposition of haunting strategies defined by Cavallaro (2002) as; “the natural and the supernatural, the ancient and the modern, the rational and the irrational” (p. 65). Immersed in themes of strangeness, originality, coming of age, sacredness, relationships, symmetry, and moral truth, the *Alice* nonsense books invite us to discover incomprehensible truths, as Christine Berthine (2010) writes –

Haunting is primarily the unconscious transmission of an unsayable, unnameable secret, which, like the secret of an unnameable, unacknowledged child, is passed from generation to generation.
(p. 9)

Alice gazes in front of and through the Looking-Glass as an experience. She sees herself with the sensation of being in virtual spaces which are inexistent in the real world but nevertheless still have the appearance of being *present*. In what follows, I want to trace this phenomenon of a haunted presence that seems indissociable from the eternal wanderer Alice, her White K(night), and their “melancholy farewell.”

2.2 The White Knight's "melancholy farewell" moment

John Hinz (1953/1971) claims that "[p]robably the warmest, most gently affectionate passage in either Alice book" (p. 154) is found in the penultimate chess move of *Through the Looking-Glass*. After many hallucinatory tribulations from all sorts of disagreeable creatures, Alice manages to arrive in the Seventh Square where it is "all forest" (p. 197). Since she moves as a pawn, the little girl has no sense of the squares around her, so the lonely White Knight serves as a guide to lead her safely through. During the crossing, the gentle and foolish usher keeps telling Alice about his queer 'original' inventions whilst his zany of continuously falling off his horse totally perplexes her. When they reach their destination brook, he parts in a kind of poetic epiphany as the little pilgrim experiences it, summing up the whole poignancy of the relationship between them -

the setting sun gleaming through his hair, and shining on his armour
in a blaze of light that quite dazzled her - the horse quietly moving
about, with the reins hanging loose on his neck, cropping the grass at
her feet - and the black shadows of the forest behind - all this she took
in like a picture, as, with one hand shading her eyes, she leant against
a tree, watching the strange pair, and listening, in a half-dream, to the
melancholy music of the song. (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 286)

This "melancholy farewell" (p. 278), as Martin Gardner (1960/2015) calls this moment, is of such special, ethereal, and most tenderly importance to Alice that as Carroll (1871/2015b) particularizes - "[o]f all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly" (p. 286). Additionally, "[y]ears afterwards she could bring the whole scene back again, as if it had been only yesterday" (p. 286). Time frames

are being shifted in this episode, as Shires (1988) explains – “Carroll promises a Wordsworthian spot of time for his dear Alice in the future” (p. 281). The “melancholy farewell” is, thus, the captured memory before Alice leaps to the one remaining and final Square of the chess-board where she will be transformed into a queen; the location where self-hood and power, “identity and death coexist” (Otten, 1982, p. 159).

Alice’s seeking of reclaiming her pastness is “already, in its very present, an act of memory” (Derrida, 1990/1993, p. 68), perhaps an “act” of paradisiacal hope, or of a Proustian “ongoing decay of the present.”⁹ It seems as if this construal is to be her last childhood memory – or the memory of her last act – or step or experience of the pre-adult world. Does she know this? Does she sense it? Is this her sense of being *out of joint* with her own Edenic innocence? Alice remembers the knight of chivalry more effectively than anyone else whom she encountered behind the Looking-Glass. She is so fond of the wise old fool that she captures his empyreal semblance in the last moment of their separation as “like a picture.” Does her picture belong to an adult Alice heeding to reflect back and commemorate her pupated self? Or, is it a picture of a pupated self which is now replaced by a winged adult selfhood?

The little pawn sought to capture a lasting image by tracing a mental shadow of the White Knight’s profile cast by the light of a setting sun, similar to Butades’s daughter from the town of Corinth in ancient Greece.¹⁰ In the lover’s passionate attempt to capture an amorous frozen moment there lies an irony, as Finlay (2002/2004) writes, in “using something that has already burned out to symbolize a

⁹ Alice’s reminiscence seems to work on similar trajectories as Proustian memory which “transform[s] the ongoing “decay” of the present into symbolic and spiritual permanence, a permanence achieved by art, death, and the art of death” (Kuberski, 1989, p. 238).

¹⁰ As the ancient Greek philosopher Pliny the Elder (trans. 2004) writes in *Natural History* (xxxv, 14) – the weeping young woman when faced with the grief of her lover’s departure; “drew a silhouette on the wall round the shadow of his face cast by the lamp” (p. 339). It is a spontaneous gesture made by a piece of burnt charcoal extracted from a fire that becomes metaphorical. This is another myth on the origin of art emanated from epic love, this one accrediting black as the first paint colour!

love you want to last forever” (p. 72). In the “melancholy farewell” moment there is a sense of immanent loss. Alice also draws a picture so that she will still have a ‘remnant’ of the bumbling knight when he is gone. Is it the knight she is losing and trying to hold on to, or is it her own childhood innocence which she is about to lose? Does she remember her hero so fondly because he brings her out of her childhood into the “black shadows” of adulthood? Does his melancholy music herald her future pursuit of the impossible dream? After all, who would not want a ‘remnant’ of an altruistic act - in helping someone else to acquire a new status - without being snub or taunt, as Gardner (1960/2015) observes –

of all the characters Alice meets on her two dream adventures, only the White Knight seems to be genuinely fond of her and to offer her special assistance. He is almost alone in speaking to her with respect and courtesy. (p. 278)

Paradoxically, during the eventful act of the “melancholy farewell,” Alice seems to remain *indifferent*. After singing his ballad, the courteous knight comments on her obdurate behaviour – “you didn’t cry so much as I thought you would” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 289). Perhaps, at the end of her twin-dream adventure, Alice is in fact remembering the moment when a long anticipated and much feared loss actually happens, and that when it does it is not as painful or traumatic as she expects it to be! It is a moment, perhaps, not as traumatic as that experienced at the very start of her adventure in Wonderland where Alice swims in the swirling waters of her own “pool of tears” wondering “Dear, dear! How queer everything is to-day! And yesterday things went on just as usual” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 25). Nor as traumatic as when she exclaims with “two large tears (. . .) rolling down her cheeks” and in “a

melancholy voice” to the Looking-Glass White Queen – “it is so *very* lonely here!” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 235).

Perhaps it is the thought of the Knight that instills within the little heroine a feeling of being-loved, or cared for, or immune from an isolated heart! Perhaps, it is this very thought that distances her to only *see* through the reflected surface of her ‘pool of tears’ rather than swim through it! Is her lost identity or self, that was lost in the Looking-Glass Wood “where things have no names” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 208), just been restored by the en-counter of an-*other*? Beer (2016) asks even more incisively – “Does the wetness of tears prove the presence of Alice?” (p. 134).

The Knight’s comment might also imply if only to *blur* Alice’s eyes over with tears to encourage in proceeding *without seeing, without knowing*. Derrida (1992/1995b) brings about an apt observation on the instinctive act of crying – “the lachrymal glands come to secrete these drops of water which are brought to the eyes rather than elsewhere” (p. 55). To weep without quite knowing why or over whom or whence one weeps, to expect what one cannot possibly envision, is a gesture - “to look forward, through blinding tears, to the unforeseeable” (Caputo, 1997, p. 92). After all the tribulations that Alice has gone through until she arrives at the Seventh Square, is she blithely affirming that she is now immune to queerness? Is her recalcitrant behaviour starting to be subdued and adjusting or getting used to the overbearing behavior of adulthood? Or is she now being paradoxically blinded in seeing “the unforeseeable”?

Tears are usually associated with blindness and sight. In the fairy-tale of Rapunzel, two of the princess’s salty tears washes over her lover’s blinded eyes, curing him; “[t]hen his eyes became clear again, and he could see as usual” (Grimm & Grimm, 1812/2014, p. 39). At times the one shedding the tears is healed, as is

Mary Magdalene who washes Jesus' feet with her tears (Luke 7:38, KJV). Through restored sight, both physical and metaphorical, Rapunzel's lover and Mary Magdalene were made whole again. There is this paradoxical tension in tears that seems in both cases blind when one cannot see through the tears and, at the same time, cure or clarify vision.

Mark Rothko, perhaps one of the major twentieth-century artists who accepted the possibility that people might cry in front of his paintings, says in an interview made in 1957 - "The people who weep before my pictures (. . .) are having the same religious experience I had when I painted them" (Elkins, 2001, p. 9). Is the White Knight's picture also trying to restore Alice's sight as a "religious experience"? Is it inviting "Tears, a liquid embrace" (Elkins, 2001, p. 8) as an entry reads in one of the Rothko chapel's visitor books in Houston? Being at the point of tears – on the crest of a flood of emotions, being carried away – perhaps these are all similar points where the different aspects of alterity take over the self!

The White Knight demands of Alice to - "wait and wave your handkerchief (. . .) I think it'll encourage me, you see" (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 289). Interestingly, in the early fourteenth century, as Roe (2019) writes; "the French called the handkerchief a *pleuvoir*, from the word *pleur*, to rain, tear or cry" (p. 2). The crumpled handkerchief has ever since become a personal fabric ready to catch the overflow of frenzied emotions where tears are concealed and dried away. Alice concedes to the Knight's wish but whilst waiting until he vanishes "out of sight" (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 290), she impatiently says to herself - "It won't take long to see him *off*, (. . .) and now for the last brook, and to be a Queen! How grand it sounds!" (Carroll, 1865/2015a, pp. 289 - 290). In her idealization of both adulthood and the next level of maturity, Alice does not seem to be so innocent after all. She is

playing a game with him, or rather fulfilling his demands in order to speed up the process by which she will become a queen!

Taking the appearance of fantasies, dreams, and obsessions, Alice's act of "shading her eyes" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 286) with one hand whilst waving her handkerchief with the other seems to be an attempt at partial blinding.¹¹ Alice's hand antics during the "melancholy farewell" episode pertain to an influential iconography in the narrative of hands.¹² To what extent is she blinding or blindfolding herself? Is she seeking to capture an image in blindness as Narcissus did? Is Alice half-closing her eyes in front of the White Knight not to be blinded by the "storm-wind's moody madness" of "the frost, the blinding snow" (p. 157) as inscribed in the prefatory poem of this fairy-tale? Perhaps to be restored once again "[w]ithin, the firelight's ruddy glow,/ [a]nd childhood's nest of gladness" (p. 157)? Is it the White Knight's *love* that 'exceeds' Alice's handkerchief to fold, unfold, refold, and blindfold in his Neverland, even "[y]ears afterwards" their Looking-Glass encounter?

The valedictory waving of the handkerchief in front of her eyes and the shading might be attempts in blindfolding herself and keeping out external light. If this is the case, the "melancholy farewell" episode becomes an archetypal representation of *error*, acquiring an 'aura' of concreteness in the imaginary register. Recalling a phrase from Derrida (1990/1993); they "draw in this space" (p. 5). Hence, a weave of connotations is accumulated in their sensuousness and tactility,

¹¹ After the little girl's awakening from Wonderland, one finds an antecedent to this ocular theme in her elder sister's dream of Alice's "wandering-hair that would always get into her eyes" (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 147). Moreover, it is apparent that Carroll (1977/2015d) had the intention to rekindle this ocular motif once more before Alice leaps over to the Eighth Square to become a Queen. In an omitted chapter entitled *The Wasp in a Wig*, which was intended to continue exactly after the "melancholy farewell" episode, Alice hears "a deep sigh, which seemed to come from the wood behind her" (p. 339). The little girl turns and encounters an aged and grumpy wasp who complains about how he lost the yellow curls of his youth and is now mocked for wearing a wig, criticizing her – "your eyes - they're too much in front, no doubt. One would have done as well as two, if you *must* have them so close" (p. 344).

¹² See chapter 3.3.2.

churning up intriguing questions on a pre-eminent concern in existential meaning. Replacing a sight or a vision with a picture of it, as simulation or memory – or some mental image or an image made after a mental image raises questions. What does she actually draw? Is her picture reality or an image of reality? What does one draw out of a blindness of the drawing's subject?



11. Steadman, R. (1972). *Alice: Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There*. London: McGibbon & Kee Ltd.

Light is ironically deprived by a setting sun, however, the blundering knight is being seen through postlapsarian lenses where “light is doubled up with a night” (Lévinas, 1978/1988, p. 22), as in the stark, op-art vision of Ralph Steadman’s vivid illustration depicting the moment as a dissolving chessboard landscape melting into whiteness (fig. 11). The “melancholy farewell” moment churns up many labyrinthine questions. Is the little pilgrim taking one last glimpse outside the Cave of Plato (trans. 2000), or, rather, the Cave of Grown-ups, with “eyes filled with the glare” (p.

221) before being chained “from earliest childhood” (p. 220)? Is it an aporetic apotheosis of the final breaching of the sanctity of childhood; of being inoculated against the pain of saying goodbye to being a child for the last time? Is the adult Alice recalling this moment to work over the pain of separation from a lost childhood in the same way that Wordsworth (1799/1994a) recalls his childhood “spots of time” (p. 737)? In the next book, when the sun will rise again and begin to scorch, what will its transcendental forces induce on the new queen? Will it incite Icarian death as it does to the *indifferent* Meursault in Camus’ *L’Étranger* (1942)? Will it induce eternal melancholy, cursed as that of Adam’s fall?

Considering the prominent framing device of the mirror in which the “melancholy farewell” is set, what kind of narcissistic insight pervades Alice’s *impeded* “dream-vision” through “mirror space” (Meier, 2009, p. 122)? How could Alice’s virtual world be analysed and reinterpreted to explore the nonsense language behind the imaginary third dimension in the flat space of the mirror? How could the White Knight’s “melancholy farewell” moment be metaphorically and metonymically deployed to find possibilities in (re)presenting the penultimate step towards ‘death’ in a visual art context?

In assessing the *Alice* texts, Auden (1962/1971) tells us there are two undeniable questions - “first, what insight do they provide as to how the world appears to a child? And, second, to what extent is the world really like that?” (p. 11). Though, insight is a contradiction in terms, as Paul de Man (1971) discloses; “the one always lay hidden within the other as the sun lies hidden within a shadow, or truth within error” (p. 103). Admittedly, any interpretation of the stories is inevitably doomed to be at best mere grist to Carroll’s mill, and as Bachelard (1958/1994) discloses – “Millers, who are wind thieves, make good flour from storms” (p. 64)!

2.3 Decoding an (ani)metaphoric-metonymic hauntology in Alice's

heterotopic dream-texture

'Lewis Carroll' is not one monolithic author who is a sole creator of the text. Rather, the text itself creates Carroll as an unfixed identity and a haunting of multiple phantasms. The *Alice* texts are truly a multiple hauntology, the text and the "author" haunt each other inextricably. Carroll is the author with diverse interests all haunting the *Alice* texts, which in turn haunt each other. All this multiple hauntology, in one way or another, condenses into a phantom named Alice. Does this diverse hauntology make Carroll or Carroll's ghost the White Knight who guides Alice, his own ghostlike creation, through the haunted Looking-Glass landscape? How could this ghostly diversification take form in a visual art context?

2.3.1 Haunted by a half-fairy-tale

Under the pseudonym of Lewis Carroll, Reverend Charles Lutwidge Dodgson was an Anglican deacon with an everyday occupation of a lecturer in Mathematics at Christ Church, Oxford University. Carroll exploits many of his diverse sides to imbue his *Alice* duology¹³ with an allegorical dimension that inverts and subverts logic, poetry, theology, mathematics, photography, philosophy, and the paranormal into the *Alice* dream. The adventures of one of the most popular heroines of world literature present explicit and implicit references to authors and works from various literary periods, transporting characters out of their original milieus. Carroll also embraces a satire about most of the major literary, political, and social controversies of his day such as idyllic Romanticism, liberal educational reform, Christian socialism, Darwinian evolution, and spiritualism.

¹³ Another similarity between the *Alice* narrative and *Don Quixote* is that both are twin episodic narratives.

Perhaps, one might even claim that Carroll is the fairy godfather of psychoanalysis. The mental burden of delving into the unconscious psyche (with all its dire ramifications in teleology) was a major preoccupation of Carroll. His ‘surrealist’ perspective on psychic life in the symbolic order that permeates Alice’s dreamscapes has been under scrutiny by psychoanalysts ever since their publication. The eccentric Victorian was paid homage by Lacan (1966/2002b) declaring that the *Alice* texts delve around “the most pure network of our condition of being: the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real” (p. 10).

Biographer Morton Cohen (1995) writes that the *Alice* author “remains an enigma, a complex human being who has so far defied comprehension” (p. xxi). As Warner (2011) writes – “Carroll was above all a parodist, who fired in his own kiln a great original work from the rubble of others.” Bloom (2002) adheres to this creative praxis that juxtaposes several counter-positions when writing that the British author “is so original that he transmutes every possible source into an alchemical gold instantly recognizable as unique to him” (p. 742). Carroll even takes characters from nursery rhymes and quotes explicitly from these unknown authors, in others he uses images, characters or even the plots of their poems to reinvent them and create his own nonsense fiction. This recycling, eclecticism, decontextualization, and hybridization fits right into the aesthetic paradigm of postmodernism. It is for these reasons that Wolf (2005) describes the *Alice* texts as a “metafictional, metalinguistic and epistemological frame tale that questions all sorts of received beliefs” (p. 92).

Lewis Carroll’s Alice is a figure of extremes, paradoxically comprehending a world unaffected by modern divisions between the physical and the metaphysical, the imaginative and the real, and so appears to return to an era untrammelled by the ethical neuroses created by Greek rationalism and Christian contempt for the body. A

culture free of the rationalist assumptions made by Cartesian thought that cut reality into mental and physical halves and endowed the machine with the archetypal power once invested in the body. And yet, Alice also belongs to a paradoxical reworking in post-Enlightenment reality, rather than a total rejection of the Cartesian subject, the repressive culture which in turn is being attacked.

Via Carroll's kaleidoscopic diversity in widespread and perpetual topics, the *Alice* dilogy merges the multilateral relations and interactions of the charming and the monstrous, the practical and the spiritual, the iconophile and the iconoclast, the underground and the overground, the present and the absent. These texts belong to the "quixotic phase of satire" of which the central theme, according to Northrop Frye (1957), is "the setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain" (p. 230). Alice's prescient universe is where the human imagination grapples, merges, mutates and is born in a conglomeration of the uncanny, unexpected, irrational, absurd, and fantastical; as Deleuze (1993/1998) explains –

In Lewis Carroll, everything begins with a horrible combat, the combat of depths: things explode or make us explode, boxes are too small for their contents, foods are toxic and poisonous, entrails are stretched, monsters grab at us. A little brother uses his little brother as bait. Bodies intermingle with one another, everything is mixed up in a kind of cannibalism that joins together food and excrement. Even words are eaten. This is the domain of the action and passion of bodies: things welded together into nondecomposable blocks. Everything in depth is horrible, everything is nonsense. (p. 21)

The events and characters in both *Alice* texts are extraordinary in their imaginative mayhem. Take, for example, the White Queen from the grand chessboard of *Through the Looking-Glass*. She, or it, is capable of remembering “things that happened the week after next” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 232) and vanishing “seemingly into thin air” (Greenacre, 1955/1971, p. 322). Her jam exists yesterday and tomorrow, but not today – “It’s jam every other day: to-day isn’t any *other* day” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 232). Such are the anthropomorphic inhabitants living simultaneously in a pre- and post-Enlightenment world, paradoxical hybrid figures unaffected and immersed by oedipal or rationalist repression, all emblemizing the type of a subject existing before and after the Humpty Dumpty sequence of falls leading to the modern age of ‘progress.’ Perhaps one may understand “the combat of depths” (Deleuze, 1993/1998, p. 21) in a reading of Kafka’s work by Blanchot (1949/1995b) describing it as - “a world of hope and a world condemned, a universe forever closed and an infinite universe, one of injustice and one of sin” (p. 6).

Carroll (1871/2015b) is haunted by the past or for that which was or has been; a “tale begun in other days” (p. 157). The nonsense author is also haunted “phantomwise” (p. 319) by the future for what may yet be. The second *Alice* story forms part of an important dyad work in the literary career of the author’s nonsense literature, one of the most relevant pillars of Carroll’s fictional work and one of the referents of nonsense literature in modern and postmodern literature ever since it was published. The dilogy is presented as a collection of two different and, apparently not connected narratives with Alice as their main protagonist. These texts, in their curious manipulation of language and layers of meaning, are both a dream scenario that deals with games, both having their kings and queens. They are about Alice who

sets for brave adventures set in two fantastic imaginary worlds armed only with her own common sense and an all-consuming curiosity.

Riddles and hidden clues are to be found everywhere in the *Alice* fairy-tale inhabited by strange and hostile creatures. On entering the underground labyrinth of Wonderland, Alice is given the choice of golden keys, magic mushrooms, cakes and potions that allow her to change her size or shape or to gain entry into other regions. In her adventure through the Looking-Glass, many symbols such as snow, telescopes, microscopes, pictures, corkscrews, forests, shelves, rushes, and crowns play as important tropes in Alice's transitory state that lets us fly into a realized metaphor of metamorphosis in a likewise virtual, space-expanding world. Like a modern gamer at her computer, Alice must make critical choices to find her way through this infinite maze. In Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land, she must endure adventures and trials before discovering the means of triumphing over tyrannical monarchs until becoming a Queen herself and safely return to her waking life.

Through the Looking-Glass intrinsically reveals a multiplication of double-design within the innards of the mirror surface that Alice passes through, where inversion and duplication are the master tropes. Moreover, the optical reversing effects of the mirror and the seemingly rational plane of the chessboard denote not only *mirror space* but also *chessboard space*. The author makes extensive use of the mirror-image scheme, serving as the *modus operandi* of opposites and time running backwards - "where left is right and everything seems to work exactly contrary to what [Alice] has learned to expect" (Hinz, 1953/1971, p. 147). Here, it is no longer Alice but the Looking-Glass characters, particularly the chess pieces, that do the growing and shrinking.¹⁴

¹⁴ Alice can easily lift the Queen (and King) out of the cinders upon the table as soon as she penetrates the mirror; but when Alice meets her again in the Garden of Live Flowers the Queen has now "grown

The idea of the double in a non-Cartesian understanding of space or place that draws on inversion themes and changes of proportions starts fermenting in Wonderland where the metaphor of metamorphosis figures prominently in the fragmentation and transmutations of bodies, particularly change of proportions and distortions of sizes. Carroll (1865/2015a) makes his main protagonist wonder if “cats eat bats” (p. 14) or “bats eat cats” (p. 14). Changes in size and reversals occur frequently such as the “enormous puppy” (p. 54) whom Alice addresses as “little thing” (p. 54). The Caterpillar warns the little pilgrim on the dual effect of eating his mushroom – “[o]ne side will make you grow taller, and the other side will make you grow shorter” (p. 65).

Although the sequel makes no reference to the events in the former text, the settings and themes of the latter book are in many ways a mirror image of its precursor, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. While Wonderland focuses on physical changes such as Alice growing big and shrinking small again, Looking-Glass Land focuses on changes in time and space, such as the White Queen’s ability to remember events that haven’t happened yet. Like Wonderland, Looking-Glass chessboard is a multi-layered world inhabited by strange characters with multiple identities. Moreover, the pre-determined steps towards the Eight Square, the final destination in her dream of becoming a Queen of the Looking-Glass chess-game, all leave the residual stain of Alice’s animality – traces which revert to Wonderland’s adventures.

The *Alice* textual collage may lead to both despair and faith. “Off with her head!” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 102) screams the dictatorial monarch to any of her Wonderland subjects who do not fit in her whimsical system. This macabre subordination may result in the “big white room” (p. 21) that “hurts” one’s eyes in

a good deal” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 189) and is a “half head taller than Alice herself” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 189) – a size she will keep until the end of the book, until she finally “dwindle[s] down to the size of a little doll” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 313).

the eponymous short story *The Wall* (1939) by existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre (1939/1973). One that a “fool” might ultimately declare in the face of a death sentence - “[e]verything began to spin and I found myself sitting on the ground: I laughed so hard I cried” (p. 33). However, Alice’s musings on the White Knight sheds hope amidst this darkness. Saturated with Neoplatonic and scriptural images of clarity and light, this gallant reverie may be described in the words of Montaigne (trans. 1993) -

No generous spirit stays within itself; it constantly aspires and rises above its own strength. It leaps beyond its attainments. If it does not advance, and push forward, if it does not strengthen itself, and struggle with itself, it is only half alive. Its pursuits have no bounds or rules; its food is wonder, search, and ambiguity. (p. 348)

2.3.2 A space of *elsewhere* in a tangled dream within a dream

It is one of the thorniest and most persistent questions in literature - who is Alice? Is she the dreamer of her own dream, or a bit player in someone else’s? Perhaps, a hint might be driven from Humpty Dumpty’s opinion that names must mean something when proudly telling Alice – “*my* name means the shape I am - and a good handsome shape it is, too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 246). Humpty’s ambiguity leads to equivocation – Alice, the hearer, and us, the readers, are left hesitating between competing interpretations. Perhaps, the name of the peripatetic girl sprouts from the etymological roots of the Classical Greek word *alethea* which has a connection with Lethe, the river of unmindfulness. The Lethe flowed through the underworld of

Hades where any soul who drank from it experienced acute amnesia, as Ahl notes in his translation of Virgil's *Aeneid* -

river Lethe: Virgil's version of Plato's 'River of Indifference' yields a pun on Latin *letum*, 'death.' In Greek *l-eth-e* means 'forgetfulness.' In the Myth of Er, souls about to enter bodies drink of the River of *Indifference*, whose waters induce forgetfulness (*l-eth-e*). Er does not drink, so he is not subject to *l-eth-e*. In Greek, the prefix 'a-' forms a negative, as it can in English: *amoral*, *asexual*. *Al-eth-es*, the adjective translated into English as 'true,' was taken by Plato to mean 'non-forgetful,' and its noun, *al-etheia* ('truth'), to mean 'non-forgetfulness.' *Al-eth-es* also makes a pun with *al-etheis*, 'having wandered,' in the *Odyssey*. And Socrates, in Plato's *Cratylus*, describes truth as a 'divine wandering,' a *theia al-e* (the anagram of *al-etheia*). (Virgil, trans. 2007, pp. 373 - 374)

Any interpretation of the question 'who is Alice?' becomes a deferred end floating on the waters of the River of Indifference, postponed in the Žižekian "abyss" - through the name, mentioned and recounted, the beginning also becomes posterior. Perhaps, it is a question that is inextricably tied to the memory of who she has been and the imagination of what she might become! How should we refer to Things that are changing? Ought we to give names that imply stability to Things that change? I cannot recall how many times the title of this dissertation was modified due to the malleability of the creative process! Perhaps, one might continue asking - If we identify a cat who changes into Wonderland mists, should we now identify the same stuff as a cat? If we do, what happens to any distinction between cat and mist - what name, rather than both, ought to be applied to each?

The egghead's polesemical comment might lead to prevarication but, then, what is truth? Can the human discern objective reality or universal truth? Scientific progress has been a slow revealing of how our perceptions only provide us with intuitions of an inexact and distorted model of reality. Josipovici (1996) claims that – “We are all heirs of the seventeenth century. We all still talk quite naturally of getting down to earth, of clearing away the clouds of confusion, as if the truth lay buried beneath obfuscating material which only needed to be removed in order for it to shine forth” (p. 69). Perhaps, it is this hereditary blindness that caused the tragic faith of Anne Frank (1947/1995), the girl who jots down in her diary on Saturday, February 19, 1944 – “If the truth is disappointing, I won't be able to bear it” (p. 144)!

The substance of truth-as-process is *error*, for *error* is the means by which truth is not only able to renew itself, but also reflect on its own conditions of possibility. As Hegel (trans. 1991) writes – “Otherness or error, as sublated, is itself a necessary moment of the truth, which can only be in that it makes itself into its own result” (p. 286). Truth and *error* may essentially be indivisible and, perhaps, *error* is the metonym of truth. Does universal truth actually exist? Nietzsche (trans. 1988) advances an answer –

What then is truth? A movable army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms - in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are; metaphors which are worn out and without sensuous power, coins which have lost their pictures and now matter only as metal, no longer as coins. (pp. 46 - 47)

Nietzsche (trans. 1996) also observes that the dream is what survives today of an “earlier” mode of human consciousness - “the dream takes us back again to remote stages of human culture and provides us with a means of understanding them better” (p. 18). It is a “piece of primeval humanity” (p. 18) carried on into the present from an earlier, prehistorical human condition – “the conclusions man still draws in dreams to the present day for many millennia mankind also drew *when awake*: the first *causa* that entered the mind as an explanation of anything that required explaining satisfied it and was accounted truth” (p. 18). As Bracken (2007) explains - “[w]hat “we” perceive as representations “they” experienced as reality” (p. 75).

Perhaps the *Alice* texts are fulfilling a curious Nietzschean prophecy – “[a] labyrinthine man never seeks the truth, but only his Ariadne” (Himmelmann, 2009, p. 32). Perhaps Alice is Carroll’s Ariadne, not because she would assist him in discovering a secret thing but because she would illuminate him on what constitutes that (ani)metaphoric-metonymic thread which drew him to Wonderland!

Adopting terminology extracted from *The Poetics of Space* by Bachelard (1958/1994), we could deduce that Alice of the real world is situated in the diegetic framing of the “immediate world” and her dreams in a “space of *elsewhere*” (p. 184). One may also initially assume that as opposed to the Alice of the *immediate world*, the *elsewhere* Alice is a “hypodiegetic character” (Wolf, 2005, p. 93). However, as soon as Alice morphs into her reflected image, the reader is immersed in a labyrinthine vortex with no exit where the dozing Red King is dreaming about a ‘waking’ Alice who dreams about the Red King!¹⁵ The hypodiegetic Alice is thus also “a hypo-hypodiegetic character - namely the object of another hypodiegetic dream world” (Wolf, 2005, p. 93).

¹⁵ The Looking-Glass dream is set in a child’s pretend play where all is being dreamt by the Red King of the grand Looking-Glass chessboard.

In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Carroll presents us with a “dream-vision” within a “dream-vision” (Levin, 1965/1971, p. 188), akin to the Borgesean stranger residing in circular ruins – “In the dreamer’s dream, the dreamed one awoke” (Borges, 1956/1970, p. 76). As Carrollian scholar Martin Gardner (1996) explains; “In both dreams, each dreams of the other, forming a pair of infinite regresses” (p. 3). The same and the other act as two mirrors that face each other and reflect in an infinite reflecting image. In a Quixotic “conversion to ‘reason’ at the end of the book” (Wood, 2005, p. vi), Carroll (1871/2015b) makes his story conclude with Alice asking her cats -

Tell me, Dinah, did you turn to Humpty Dumpty? (. . .) Now, Kitty, let’s consider who it was that dreamed it all. This is a serious question (. . .), it *must* have been either me or the Red King. He was part of my dream, of course – but then I was part of his dream, too! *Was* it the Red King, Kitty? (p. 318).

Within this Borgesian garden of forking paths, one may ask whether the Looking-Glass narrative is a *hypodiegetic space* or a *hypo-hypodiegetic space*? What kind of ubiquitous spatialization is this labyrinthine vortex which Wolf (2005) identifies as – “a question of authorship” (p. 92) in the context of the Red King’s dream? Who is writing? When is this taking place? Where are these events taking place? What do these events mean? Alice’s *elsewhere space* seems to question not only authorship but various other bedrocks of conventional logic such as the flow of time and subjectivity – sameness and alterity. Such spaces, according to Bachelard (1958/1994), bear “the mark of infinity” (p. 184). Alice’s zeal to experience the unknown which exceeds alterity could be interpreted through the words of Levinas (1961/1979) who writes -

The other metaphysically desired is not “other” like the bread I eat, the land in which I dwell, the landscape I contemplate, like sometimes, myself for myself, this “I,” that “other.” I can “feed” on these realities and to a very great extent satisfy myself, as though I had simply been lacking them. Their alterity is thereby reabsorbed into my own identity as a thinker or a possessor. The metaphysical desire tends toward *something else entirely*, toward the *absolutely other*. (p. 33)

If we are all each other’s dreams, then we all depend on each other of our existence – in this way there is a clear preemption of Levinasian thinking that one owes one’s existence to the other – a constitutive alterity rather than the insistence on sameness and subjectivity. Carroll (1871/2015b) draws our attention to the question of make-believe and invention when Alice asks her kitten to help her understand the origin of her dream adventure, saying, “Now, Kitty, let’s consider who it was that dreamed it all” (p. 318). Alice is referring back to a scornful insult made by one of the Looking-Glass incubus characters Tweedledee¹⁶ who scolds her for being “only a sort of thing in [the Red King’s] dream!” (p. 225). The text follows up this idea in a chapter titled “It’s My Own Invention” in which Alice wonders whether “we’re all part of the same dream” (p. 273), adding - “Only I do hope it’s *my* dream, and not the Red King’s! I don’t like belonging to another person’s dream” (p. 273). But Alice’s anthropocentric contemplation of the potential dream owners is “interrupted” (p. 273) by the White Knight - a self-declared “great hand at inventing things” (p. 282). His inventions mainly include “things” that come into being at the intersection of

¹⁶ Through the mirror, we find Tweedledee and his twin Tweedledum, two rotund little men who are identical in speech, attitude, and appearance except that they are left-right reversals of each other.

humans and animals including his song in which “*butterflies*” are turned into “*mutton-pies*” (p. 286) and “haddock’s eyes” into “*waistcoat-buttons*” (p. 288).

Such infinite convolutions are a metaphor for our human adaptability in the light of many possibilities, such as the complexities of the child-adult dichotomy and catastrophe, by way of nonsense literature tinging at a transitory and shadowy body. For the sake of “the survival of subjectivity,” Burt (2009) postulates that we should consider “the full range of possible negotiations the subject makes with an alterity exceeding it” (p. 6). This (un)fold on the possibility of the impossibility of closure may lead to a metaphysical transcendence in the very alterity of death.

Tweedledum’s suspicion might echo a question asked by Lacan (1966/1989) whether the self-affirmation frustration of a subject as a being comes from –

narcissistic embraces that become like a puff of air in animating it - he ends up recognizing that this being has never been anything more than his own construction [*oeuvre*] in the imaginary and that this construction undercuts all certainty in him? (p. 207).

In the lines of the terminal poem of *Through the Looking-Glass* that float along on their own potentially endless metrical pulse, the aging author fondly glances backwards to a summer tale once told to Alice - “A boat, beneath a sunny sky/
Lingering onward dreamily” (p. 319). The last verses end – “Lingering in the golden gleam -/
Life, what is it but a dream?” (p. 319). Is Carroll creating a myth out of the children’s rhyme ‘Row. row, row your boat/ Life is but a dream’? Is there a Shakespearean affinity which, in *The Tempest*, fathoms that – “We are such stuff/
As dreams are made on, and our little life/ Is rounded with a sleep” (Shakespeare, 1966 version, p. 17)?

Perhaps, *Through the Looking-Glass* mirrors the notion of life as perceived by Carroll, “what is it but a dream,” thus implying a conception of time that is no longer linear and memory not belonging only to the past. It also echoes a sentiment expressed by the *Alice* author in one of his letters – “as life slips away (I am over fifty now), and the life on the other side of the great river becomes more and more the reality, of which *this* is only a shadow” (Cohen, 1989, p. 118). The “melancholy farewell” may very well be the valedictory of our own mortality – the mirror showing us the K(night) of death!

2.3.3 Alice’s adventures in *out of joint* incorporeality

Amongst Carroll’s many interests, we find a lifelong fascination in the supernatural and the paranormal. With an insatiable interest in the occult and spiritualism, as Gardner (1998) reports, he was affiliated with the Society for Psychical Research. Carroll did not, withal, seem to give credence to the existence of spectres - “while he believed that the physical phenomena produced by mediums were real, he did not think they were the work of departed souls” (p. 10). In one of his letters, for example, Carroll writes about his conviction of “a natural force, allied to electricity and nerve-force, by which brain can act on brain” (Douglas-Fairhurst, 2015, p. 287). This rationale is conflictingly reflected in Alice’s dreamworld that exposes (in)corporeality, or (dis)appearance as such, as the foundation of the Victorian epistemic-ontological system in which dreams -

belonged as much to the supernatural world as to science. Interpreters were sharply divided on the question of origins: spiritualists argued that dreams were miraculous events that permitted communication with the supernatural world, while scientists insisted they were natural

phenomena that could be assigned governing laws. (Bernard, 1981, p. 197)

At the start of her traversal behind the Looking-Glass, Alice guides the pencil of the terrified White King to make it write “all manner of things that I don’t intend” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 173). This “spirit-writing” (p. 287) ends, as Douglas-Fairhurst (2015) explains; “with strange manifestations around a table that crashes on to the floor, like an out-of-control séance” (p. 287). In *Through the Looking-Glass*, one delves not only into concerns around growth and maturation but also around an assumption that the dead are accessible, if absent, through the appearance of the proper ‘medium.’ The memorial tone articulation in the poesy that preface and conclude this fable seems to testify this proposition.

In the prefatory poem of *Through the Looking-Glass*, Carroll (1871/2015b) conjures a “melancholy maiden” (p. 157) with a “voice of dread” (p. 157) that “[s]hall summon to unwelcome bed” (p. 157). This macabre accentuation is repeated again in the terminal acrostic where the nonsense author develops the idea of “Still she haunts me, phantomwise” (p. 319) into “Alice moving under skies/ Never seen by waking eyes” (p. 319). Such eerie idiom in a frame narrative exudes transcendence in non-existent entities and is responsive in the necromantic life found within the nonsensical text - the presence of an *other* that disturbs. Alice gazes at her own reflection in the mirror and sees ‘another’ Alice, an Alice which is *other* – her own transformation into a phantom fate. Is it an *un-dead* tres-passing into a Looking-Glass portal to the land of the unknown? Is the Looking-Glass a haunted mirror? If yes, to what extent is the haunted mirror itself alive, and to what extent is it inanimate? Is it a phantasmal space that does not exist to those who are “awake” or

whose eyes are open? What would be the conditions required to gain access to this uncanny space? Must one question Logic?

Deleuze (1969/1990) emphatically suggests that the Looking-Glass, in an aporetic way, allows passage into an altered and reflected space, but at the same time, that passage is denied since it remains a two-dimensional plane. An out-of-body experience or *doppelgänger* second-self unfolds from *Through the Looking-Glass* invoking the mirror's functioning as a passage to pass and 'tres-pass' that could only be achieved via "*the incorporeal*." A bodilessness in the mirror's virtual space is attributed within the reflected gaze when arguing that in Wonderland "everything happens at the border" (p. 9), whereas inside the Looking-Glass we find an intensification of this process –

Here events, differing radically from things, are no longer sought in the depths, but at the surface, in the faint incorporeal mist which escapes from bodies, a film without volume which envelops them, a mirror which reflects them, a chessboard on which they are organized accordingly to plan. Alice is no longer able to make her way through to the depths. Instead, she releases her incorporeal double. *It is following the border, by skirting the surface, that one passes from bodies to the incorporeal.* (pp. 9 – 10)

By virtue of the mirror's two-dimensionality, it creates the possibility of skimming the surface. It is at this surface, at this limit where one captures a glimpse or image of a depth which is, paradoxically, denied - where things or logic become altered. The chess board, as other board games in general, follows this dynamic where one enters the game by skimming along its surface to acquire or take on different aspects or powers or attributes from the different locations on the board. In

ludology terms, the player enters the magic circle which is paradoxically “a playground where the customary differences of rank are temporarily abolished” (Huizinga, 1944/1949, p. 77); only to acquire *others*.

The preoccupation of Carroll (1871/2015b) with phantasms might also be detected in Humpty Dumpty’s assertion that the antithetical position of a birthday must exist - “there are three hundred and sixty four days when you might get un-birthday presents” (p. 251). Perhaps, it might be apparent to the egghead that an un-birthday is not a mere utterance but a ghostly dyad of signifier and signified that (re)presents an existent being. Humpty’s explanation augments the perennial philosophical controversy of whether non-beings, like beings, exist. On a similar basis, the White King recognizes Alice’s penetrable eyes when making “Nobody” to become ‘Somebody’ -

“I see nobody on the road,” said Alice.

“I only wish *I* had such eyes (. . .). To be able to see Nobody!” (p. 262)

The King later asks his Messenger –

““Who did you pass on the road?” (. . .)

“Nobody,” said the Messenger.

“Quite right,” said the King: “this young lady saw him too. So of course Nobody walks slower than you.”” (p. 264).

This play on words via hypostatization mirrors Polyphemus’s painful scream “Nobody is killing me” (Homer, trans. 2007, p. 178) after Odysseus’s *mētis* (cunning intelligence) of calling himself *Outis* (Nobody) to trick the Cyclopes giant. One might find a plausible pretext in this succinct wordplay that leads to explorations into the oxymoronic phantom alleys of Alice’s blind labyrinthine spaces. In her

chessboard game, where everything is symmetrical, the trail can be reconstructed since it follows an ordered pattern, nevertheless, her arrival in such an established route is like the White Queen's jam, always delayed or differed.

The text in the *Alice* narrative is simultaneously in and out of context at the same time, as Lecerle (1994/2002) points out – “[n]onsense breaks rules not by forgetting about them, but by following them to the letter, in a deliberately blind fashion, thus illegally extending their scope” (p. 48). The mythical creatures found within are perfect examples of non-existent entities, so, one could continue questioning - How can a mythical figure that does not exist have certain qualities or features? Does our collective reference to mythical creatures such as Polyphemus or the White Queen somehow give it existence, perhaps in our minds, in our culture, or in some other way?

Through the Looking-Glass is a nonsense platform of self-reflection on identity and transience of human life, but also a quest in search of transcendence. As Robert Graves (1925/1971) writes, what we find inside is – “the dead end/ Where empty hearses turn about” (p. 115), intimating that inside the world behind the mirror is an afterlife where a phantom roams in “the timelessness, the placelessness” (de la Mare, 1932, p. 62). The metaphor on mortality emphasized in the two peripheral texts of *Through the Looking-Glass* is again rekindled in one of the White Knight's inventions - “a plan for keeping [hair] from *falling* off” (p. 279) by creeping it onto an “upright stick (. . .) like a fruit-tree” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 279). As the knight explains to Alice – “the reason hair falls off is because it hangs *down* – things never fall *upwards*” (p. 279). Carrollian scholar Donald Rackin (1997) interprets this weird discovery as follows -

One of the White Knight's unworkable gravity-defying schemes to save himself from the dynamics of the corporeal state is a plan to keep his hair from falling off, to release himself, that is, from his mortality. Alice, by contrast, rushes eagerly forward toward her impending queenhood and that by no means necessarily "unwelcome" bed which is the destination of her embodied mortality, she leaves the feckless Knight behind, imprisoned in the chapter of a fantastic book his inventor invented for them both. (p. 178)

In the same way that the aporetic surface offers up the possibility of entry into a realm which follows a distorted or altered logic, this realm also distorts or alters the intuitive linear flow or passage of time. The temporality of this realm challenges the tripartite distinctions of past, present, and future which characterize 'normal' time, throwing these conventional three temporal realms *out of joint*. When reaching for the garden of Looking-Glass House, the girl descends a staircase by "float[ing] gently down without even touching the stairs with her feet" (p. 176). The inhabitants we meet there occupy a state of almost incorporeal static timelessness, frozen and pacified in the fires of listless memory. "Things flow about so here!" (Carroll, 1871/2015b p. 238) exclaims Alice in the Fifth Square as she observes all the elusive things in the Sheep's "little dark shop" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 242) –

The shop seemed to be full of all manner of curious things - but the oddest part of it all was that, whenever she looked hard at any shelf, to make out exactly what it had on it, that particular shelf was always quite empty, though the others round it were crowded as full as they could hold. (Carroll, 1871/2015b, pp. 237 - 238)

The elusiveness of these ephemeral oddities makes one reflect on the way that in our adult life we tend to accumulate things and all sorts of clutter which, in reality, is meaningless and may even reveal a frightening emptiness in its phenomenology or *lack* of essence in our lives. So much so, that when we try to focus on the things that clutter our life we end up staring into emptiness or meaninglessness. The little dark shop's oddities make one reflect also on the indefinite aspect of the 'visual' which is never perfectly conclusive since the visible is essentially infused by an element of invisibility, as Merleau-Ponty (1964/1968) writes –

Meaning is *invisible*, but the invisible is not the contradictory of the visible: the visible itself has an invisible inner framework (*membrure*), and the in-visible is the secret counterpart of the visible, it appears only within it, it is the *Nichturprasentierbar* which is presented to me as such within the world - one cannot see it there and every effort to *see it there* makes it disappear, but it is *in the line* of the visible, it is its virtual focus, it is inscribed within it (in filigree). (p. 215)

Carroll's nonsense writing is concerned, as Parrish Lee (2014) writes, about the "dizzying phantasmagoria" (p. 497) of these metamorphic "in-visible" things which are (im)possible to pin down, refuse to hold a single form or stand still, and "seem uncannily alive precisely in their ability to evade human categorization and use and their consequent ability to render Alice thing-like" (p. 497). Perhaps a straight reference to the way that the shiftiness or the way these things flow may be interpreted as a suggestion that 'things,' 'events,' or even 'logic' may not offer the closure that we so often desire or expect. The very possibility or the suggestion that

closure may elude us, or that we may have to learn to live or cope without closure, may be one of the challenges of entering adulthood. Do preadults actually live without closure? Do we demand closure only as adults? Is it adults that cannot cope with lack of closure?

Phantoms, descents into the netherworlds, and damnations of eternal recurrence resuscitate in a *modus operandi* of metamorphosis and pupation to be perceived, received, gazed at, evaluated, and reassembled in Looking-Glass House. This children's nonsense literature may be a specific *postmortem* writing on alterity, it might be a self-epitaphography, or one that Burt (2009) describes as "*autothanatographical writing*: the writing of the death of the subject" (p. 6). This hypothesis might be a reflection upon an adult Alice trying to look back at her pupated self, albeit the catenated questions that follow. Is Alice's picture of the White Knight depicting a distinctly valedictory air of a *larvae-self* which is now replaced by a post-pupation adult selfhood? Is it a phantom gaze that obliterates any oppressive mnemonic trace? Why should Carroll (re)present his main protagonist of Looking-Glass House as someone already dead, or as someone who must have died in order to be?

Haunting is always an oscillation between the future and the past. The phantom's in-between state is from the past but remaining or waiting to return. Carroll's idea or image of the existence of something ghostly is outside the present, somewhere "where time races, then stands still; where space stretches, then contracts" (Woolf, 1939/1971, p. 48). The temporal flow of the narrator's poesy that opens and closes *Through the Looking-Glass* lingers like a phantom hovering in an *out of joint* space in search of a lost time continuum. As a ghost, it explores an

‘other’ time of dead cultures, which is not necessarily the past, but may imply an imaginable future, as Avery F. Gordon (2008) remarks -

the ghost is primarily a symptom of what is missing. It gives notice not only to itself but also to what it represents. What it represents is usually a loss, sometimes of life, sometimes of a path not taken. From a certain vantage point the ghost also simultaneously represents a future possibility, a hope. (pp. 63 - 64)

Cavallaro (2002) writes that a central rhetoric in the discourse of haunting is “the principle of ambiguity: a blurring of logical distinctions, resulting in the sustained obfuscation of sense” (p. 65). *Through the Looking-Glass* characterizes this dark stylistic device. In fact, the incorporeal attribute of the “atmosphere of haziness” trope is established in the story from the *peripeteia* in the first chapter - Alice’s play entry into “the glass [that] *was* beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 167). Moreover, Carroll typifies the rhetorical strategy in the fairy-tale genre to “posit the living, rather than the dead, as ghostly entities,” which as Cavallaro (2002) describes –

Fairy tales, as points of crystallization for cultural hostilities and phobias, regularly exhibit a tendency to present the familiar and the familial as haunting settings par excellence. By (. . .) presenting the domestic sphere as pervaded by injustice and oppression, those stories defy the aphorisms that associate home with the heart, with loving and with security. (p. 94)

Apart from producing numerous *Bildungsroman* and *doppelgänger* classics,¹⁷ the Victorian era was also a time when many novels lent their names by houses such

¹⁷ In the nineteenth century, the coming-of-age story or the *Bildungsroman* literary genre produced fantastical and eerie masterpieces such as George MacDonald’s fantasy novel *Phantastes* (1858),

as *Mansfield Park* (1814), *Wuthering Heights* (1847), and *Bleak House* (1853). All of these, as Jan B. Gordon (1971) explains –

have a way of being either domesticated into horrible middle-class apartments or degenerated into the whispering, echoing ghosts born from an incest with the past and manifested as the Gothic. If, indeed, this pattern is an inevitable feature of the novel in the nineteenth century, then the shift from Alice’s journey in the *Adventures in Wonderland* to her posture in *Through the Looking-Glass* is more comprehensible: domestication within a veritable mansion of mirrors is the consequence of the search for meaning and identity. And *Looking-Glass House* is as much a part of the nineteenth century as the mirroring portraits that stare out at Dorian Gray and Stephen Daedalus at the conclusion of their respective labyrinthine journeys.

(p. 100)

Looking-Glass House may be the archetypal haunted house story serving as a metaphor about class, about the well-to-do who do not understand the land or the people. Between *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, Carroll (1869/1998) published a collection of verse entitled *Phantasmagoria and Other Poems* (1869). In the satirical poem from which the title of this book takes its name, the ghosts belong to a hierarchical society that parallels the nineteenth century class system in Great Britain. Here, one finds revealed a Dickensian distaste for the “ghost-nobility” (p. 44) of the Spectres who look down “with scorn” (p. 44) upon those in the lower ghost ranks, the Phantom. All ghosts are designated as “the Thing”

Carlo Collodi’s fairy-tale novel *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (1883), and Henry James’s horror novella *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), amongst many others. The *doppelgänger* literature of these times features classical masterpieces such as E. T. A. Hoffmann’s novel *The Devil’s Elixirs* (1815), Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s novel *The Double* (1846), and Robert Louis Stevenson’s novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886).

(p. 20), albeit paradoxically, the nonsense author's cautionary advice not to "address a Ghost as Thing!" or else it will "drop all formal parleying" (p. 33) with the dire consequences that all hell will break loose – "And then you're *sure* to catch it!" (p. 33). Whilst unquestionably not conclusive evidence, this social context on the paranormal may have motivated Carroll's phraseology of "phantomwise" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 319) to address the titular heroine in his last *Alice* book. If we accept this premise then, inevitably, one may term all hideous creatures that the little pilgrim meets in each terrain of the *Alice* narrative as spectres. Alice is frustrated and opposed by "ghost-nobility" at every turn.

The demarcation of opposing poles in an *out of joint* space/time continuum is blurred and joined together resembling the framework of a Moebius surface where "its outside continues its inside" (Lacan, 1973/1988, p. 156). Via this nomenclature, one may attempt to form a mode in describing the haunted topographies of Alice's space in the way in which, as Žižek (1992) describes those of Kafka – "if we progress far enough in our descent to the (. . .) underground, we find ourselves suddenly on the other side, in the middle of" (pp. 147 - 148).

2.3.4 Animetaphors in *Alicecat's animalséance*

Carroll's nonsense language is a wolf in human clothing, perhaps, it is a feral language. It plays upon "the issue of identity as a human construct based in the othering of the animal as the not-human" (Lovell-Smith, 2007, p. 42). Alice cannot articulate her own identity as those other exceptional Looking-Glass beasts, whose *animal rationale* is in fact human. Though having animal or other weird appearance, the anthropomorphic creatures that surround her are endowed with human understanding. These voluble creatures possess *logos*, using the performance of

their reason to become a being of pure language. Humanity is their interiority, their true self!

The animal world folds, refolds, and unfolds behind Alice's dreamwork endowing some type of primal topography haunted by Darwinian evolutionary theories. These influences provide a plethora of fictional reformulations of the competitive struggleness for survival and natural selectivities. The Caucus Race steered by an evolutionary relic, the Dodo, is an illogical reinterpretation of Darwin's tangled bank theories of interspecies relations that turns the inward dream journey of the human heroine into "a jocular reflection on the natural history craze" (Lovell-Smith, 2003, p. 385). Moreover, creatures such as the Bread-and-butter-fly, the Rocking-horse-fly, or the Snap-dragon-fly are clear examples of Carroll's imaginative acumen in blending human traits with the insect world.

Alice's interaction with her kitten in front of the mirror takes us toward something closer to an *Alicecat* mutation, or the Haraway (2008) concept of "becoming with" (p. 16) - a mode of "[s]pecies interdependence" (p. 19) in which "[t]he partners do not precede the meeting; species of all kinds, living and not, are consequent on a subject- and object-shaping dance of encounters" (p. 4). The cat in the Looking-Glass story is a kind of negative mirror, a *not-like* by which Alice can determine what she is. As Parrish Lee (2014) laconically puts this rather complex point -

Carroll brings us tangled interspecies networks assembling and reassembling as humans, objects, and animals exchange, share, and create new positions. Fictional "space" in these texts cannot be dominated by the human or mapped with accuracy by human-centered reading practices. (p. 507)

The mirrored reflection, and the shadow as its complementary image, both permit a transcendence of stereotyped, one-dimensional, single-stranded, linear narrative. The shadow as propagated by Jung (1954/2014c) stems from the self encounter; it is “a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well” (p. 21). What ensues after passing this door is a “boundless expanse full of unprecedented uncertainty, with apparently no inside and no outside, no above and no below, no here and no there, no mine and no thine, no good and no bad. It is a world (. . .) where I am indivisibly this *and* that; where I experience the other in myself and the other-than-myself experiences me” (pp. 21 - 22). The shadow’s disguise in the collective unconsciousness permits the animal to play a specific dominant role in dreams, as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2005) explain

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The animal is inseparable from a *series* exhibiting the double aspect of progression-regression, in which each term plays the role of a possible transformer of the libido (metamorphosis). A whole approach to the dream follows from this; given a troubling image, it becomes a question of integrating it into its archetypal series. That series may include feminine, masculine, or infantile sequences, as well as animal, vegetable, even elementary or molecular sequences. In contrast to natural history, man is now no longer the eminent term of the series; that term may be an animal for man (. . .), in accordance with a given demand of the unconscious. (p. 235)

This idea that all forms of life share a sense of kinship in their non-hierarchical coexistence is also shared in the theoretical insight of Agamben (2002/2004) that believes in an “intimate caesura” (p. 15) created the

“anthropological machine” (p. 29). This concept highlights functions of liminality that superimpose both animal and human to detriment of a Nietzschean killing of divinity and an annihilation of origins - “Paradise calls Eden back into question” (Agamben, 2002/2004, p. 21). This animal/human divide located within humanity is explained as follows -

the machine necessarily functions by means of an exclusion (which is also always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion). Indeed, precisely because the human is already presupposed every time, the machine actually produces a kind of state of exception, a zone of indeterminacy in which the outside is nothing but the exclusion of an inside and the inside is in turn only the inclusion of an outside. (p. 37)

Through the Looking-Glass is about transgression, it is a fairy-tale that violates boundaries between subjective/objective and human/nonhuman. The fading Cheshire Cat might certainly correspond to an “intimate caesura” via the language of nonsense that is both poetically subversive and ideologically manipulative. Alice transports herself and her kitten into another world of Looking-Glass metamorphoses by stepping through the mirror that melts away at her touch. *Alicecat’s peripeteia* is enmeshed with concerns about the “intimate caesura” and other entanglements between humans and the *other* life form.

Derrida (2006/2008) emphatically notes that the entire penultimate chapter of *Through the Looking-Glass* “[e]ntitled “Waking” (. . .) consists in a single sentence: “- and it really *was* a kitten, after all”” (p. 7). The source of the ambivalence of the master-pet dialectics between Alice and Kitty may be addressed in a pertinent question asked by Montaigne (trans. 1993) - “When I play with my cat, who knows

whether she is amusing herself with me, or I with her?” (p. 10). Now awake, Alice says to her kitten - “You woke me out of oh! such a nice dream! And you’ve been along with me, Kitty - all through the Looking-Glass world. Did you know it, dear?” (p. 316). The kitten is, of course, the (re)presentation of that monstrous *otherness* that *Alicecat* opens upon herself in solitude and irrational sublimation. Its status as the emblem of *otherness* is perfectly signalled by its state of catness inspiring a more alienating and revulsive set of instinctive responses in her humanity. Both revelations of the girl’s and the kitten’s identities get through the dream landscape where animal’s genes are fused with human DNA, as Derrida (2006/2008) hints at when explicating the following -

The animal is there before me, there next to me, there in front of me—
I who am (following) after it. And also, therefore, since it is before me, it is behind me. It surrounds me. And from the vantage of this being-there-before-me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also (. . .), perhaps being this calculated forgetting itself – it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other, and nothing will have ever given me more food for thinking through this absolute alterity of the neighbor or of the next(-door) than these moments when I see myself seen naked under the gaze of a cat. (p. 11)

Here nakedness refers to a primal scene beyond a language that is understood in human terms alone. The question of the animal, according to Derrida, is a properly transgressive and transgressal experience of “*animalséance*” (p. 4). It allows us to examine in closer detail the hybrid constructions and messy entanglements that occur at that very border of such multiple and often mutable identities -

the single, incomparable and original experience of the impropriety that would come from appearing in truth naked, in front of the insistent gaze of the animal, a benevolent or pitiless gaze, surprised or cognizant. The gaze of a seer, visionary, or extra-lucid blind person. It is as if I were ashamed, therefore, naked in front of this cat, but also ashamed for being ashamed. A reflected shame, the mirror of a shame ashamed of itself, a shame that is at the same time specular, unjustifiable, and unavowable. (p. 4)

When *Alicecat* departs from the gallant knight in the “melancholy farewell” moment, we learn that, “of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass,” the sight of the Knight singing his song and “the horse quietly moving about, with the reins hanging loose on his neck, cropping the grass” is “the one that she always remembered most clearly.” The adult Alice’s fondest childhood memories are those of the White Knight who appears uncannily human when compared with the other beasts behind the mirror. Nevertheless, in this dream recollection (in which the fictional present is transposed to a future of the *immediate* world) he is not alone but conjoined with his horse. As Parrish Lee (2014) explains –

when it comes to reassembling Looking-Glass networks, it is not just the Knight who invents with and for animals that makes such a memorable impression on Alice, but “the strange pair” of man and horse. The question of who is dreaming the dream thus lodges between a poem about one human-animal alliance and the spectacle of another, and reemerges when Alice offers to repeat the poem to her kitten. In this way, the text hints that we all might be “things” in a

dream, inventions “becoming with” and belonging to one another in an interspecies network. (p. 509)

This quotation evokes the Borgesian vision of an eternity of selves dreaming of selves in a forking (K)nightmare. The eternal mutability in Carroll’s nonsense literature seems to address this human fantasy in both animal *phōnē* and human *logos* in a plot that moves from childhood to adulthood. Paradoxically, *Aliceecat* is not forced to become ‘human’ and leave behind the world of the wild things, but rather, is free to play as a pawn on a great chessboard design where all her fantasies and adventures are set. In other words, the initial promise of the animal *otherness* inherent in the human (as revealed in *Aliceecat*) is banished in order to immunize the human from its creaturely excess. In this context, it is useful to quote Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2005) who also cast a critical eye on the logocentric distinction between the human and the nonhuman -

The becoming-animal of the human being is real, even if the animal the human being becomes is not; and the becoming-other of the animal is real, even if that something other it becomes is not. (. . .) [A] becoming lacks a subject distinct from itself; but also that it has no term, since its term in turn exists only as taken up in another becoming of which it is the subject, and which coexists, forms a block, with the first. (p. 238)

The notion of coexistense allows us to see not only what *Aliceecat* becomes, but why her animality is linked with her becoming-woman or newly found power of Queenhood. Perhaps there lies no *otherness* in the animal! Perhaps, having senses, blood vessels, and a digestive/reproductive system is enough to be called both animal and human! When Aristotle (trans. 1883) investigated the characteristics of being an

animal, he turned to “external naked flesh” (p. 82) to find an answer. Locomotion also forms part to his list of essential animal criteria - “movement of whatever kind - for some animals move by flight, some by swimming, some by walking, and others by other such methods” (Aristotle, trans. 1937, p. 441). *Aliceecat* shares all these attributes in her (non)human exposure or ‘nakedness’ which Derrida (2006/2008) expounds as follows -

Man would be the only one to have invented a garment to cover his sex. He would be a man only to the extent that he was able to be naked, that is to say, to be ashamed, to know himself to be ashamed because he is no longer naked. And knowing *himself* would mean knowing himself to be ashamed. On the other hand, because the animal is naked without consciousness of being naked, it is thought that modesty remains as foreign to it as does immodesty. As does the knowledge of self that is involved in that. (p. 5)

In *Looking-Glass space*, any criteria which determine any distinction between the human or animal is questioned. The work of *animalséance*, in its reified manifestation (human *logos*) may plunge us deeper into the abyss that remains unresolved in its interminable relation to animal skin, flesh, and fur. *Aliceecat* is both human and *other*; she both sees and is blind to her nakedness. In the primordial milieu of her dream-cryptography one might decipher what Lippit (1998) calls an “animetaphor” – “phantastic transversality at work between the animal and the metaphor” (p. 1113) - alternatively, an interspecific relationship between the animal and a “transference of feelings.”

The fundamental ambivalence of *Aliceecat*’s melancholy is indicative of a deep sense of contrast and contradiction, a set of antitheses which Benjamin

(1963/2003) describes as, “the most genuinely creaturely of the contemplative impulses, and it has always been noticed that its power need be no less in the gaze of a dog than in the attitude of a pensive genius” (p. 146). Sancho Panza makes a similar observation to Don Quixote - “Señor, sorrows were made not for animals but for men; but if men feel them too much, they turn into animals” (de Cervantes, trans. 2003, p. 521).

2.3.5 Haunted in the *heterotopia* of Alice’s dream-texture

A theorization of an *out of joint* space that might be deliberately employed so as to imply alterity within Alice’s unconscious dreams is *heterotopia* - a mode of juxtaposition with ‘utopia.’ In his seminal essay *Of Other Spaces*, Foucault (1967/1997) informs us that there exist *heterotopic* spaces/places¹⁸ seemingly in all cultures. Composed from society’s establishing pillars, such a space/place efficaciously enacts a type of utopic counter-site whereupon any other actual site that pertains to the same culture may be concurrently mirrored, questioned, and/or modified. Although it may be conceivable to trace its position in reality, such a space/place is outside of all spaces/places –

It is, after all, a utopia, in that it is a place without a place. In it, I see myself where I am not, in an unreal space that opens up potentially beyond its surface; there I am down there where I am not, a sort of shadow that makes my appearance visible to myself, allowing me to look at myself where I do not exist: utopia of the mirror. At the same

¹⁸ Both terms are conjoined within the *AliceCat* context (discussed in the previous chapter) in accordance with a differentiation made by Yi-Fu Tuan (1977/2001) – “Recent ethological studies show that nonhuman animals also have a sense of territory and of place. Spaces are marked off and defended against intruders. Places are centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation, are satisfied” (p. 4).

time, we are dealing with a heterotopia. The mirror really exists and has a kind of come-back effect on the place that I occupy: starting from it, in fact. (p. 332).

This Foucauldian discourse echoes an axiom made by Lacan (1966/2002a) - “the unconscious, which tells the truth about truth, is structured like a language” (p. 737). The structure behind the Looking-Glass dreamscape is that of *heterotopia* deployed here in the context of how a reader of the *Alice* texts may sketch lines of equivalence between Alice’s interpsychic realm and the haunted fabric of her dreamscape. In the *Alice* texts, one may read dreams as *other* on the grounds that dreaming, as an altered state of consciousness, leads to the *otherness* of one’s cognizant self explored in the subconscious realm of sleep. Such *otherness* is vividly realised as an alternative means of probing solutions to troubling life experiences.

Witchard (2009) explains that a *heterotopia* works “[l]ike a utopia, it holds up a mirror to society, but unlike a utopia it corresponds to a real place on the map” (p. 166). The physical Looking-Glass hanging on Alice’s mantelshelf functions as a *heterotopia* in many ways. It places the drawing-room that Alice occupies in the *immediate world* - the waking Alice of the diegetic framing. However, concurrently, the Looking-Glass also (re)presents this framing as completely *elsewhere* since in order to be perceived one needs to pass via this contrapuntal point of *absent presence*. This liminal zone is a *heterotopia* described as “a social space of otherness, at once physical and interpsychic” (Davis, 2013). As soon as Alice passes through the misty border of the glass -

she began looking about, and noticed that what could be seen from the old room was quite common and uninteresting, but that all the rest was as different as possible. For instance, the pictures on the wall next

the fire seemed to be all alive, and the very clock on the chimney-piece (you know you can only see the back of it in the Looking-glass) had got the face of a little old man, and grinned at her. (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 168)

Foucault (1966/2002) differentiates between the concepts of utopias and *heterotopias* as follows - “*Utopias* afford consolation: although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold, they open up (. . .) superbly planted gardens, (. . .) even though the road to them is chimerical” (p. xix). *Heterotopias*, variously, are “disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language” (p. xix) - they “desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences” (p. xix). The uncanniness that Alice creates in the *other* and experiences in her Looking-Glass *heterotopia* is composed of the vagaries of a dream adventure. Hers is the “interminable” existence as described by Blanchot (1949/1995b) – “an exile in the fullest sense: we are not there, we are elsewhere, and we will never stop being there” (p. 9).

The *Spectre-Thing* in the *Alice* textualized world leaves a trace of this “real” presence in the acrostic poem that appears at the end of *Through the Looking-Glass*, the initial letters of each line reveal her full name - “Alice Pleasance Liddell” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 319). This fun acrostic form addressed to a female spectrally echoes a similar poem in the second part of *Don Quixote* in which the lunatic knight asks the bachelor poet to write the first letters of its lines to spell “*Dulcinea of Toboso*” (de Cervantes, trans. 2003, p. 484). The knight stresses that “if the name is

not there to see, patent and obvious, no woman will believe that the verses were written for her” (de Cervantes, trans. 2003, pp. 484 - 485).

Is the *Alice* fable haunted by yet another ‘waking’ Alice? We know that this historical girl actually existed and was so important to the making of the *Alice* stories that Dodgson made her a hand-made manuscript (fully illustrated also by his own hand), containing the genesis of the *Alice* story, for a Christmas present on the 26th of November 1864. Which ‘Alice’ is the ‘waking’ protagonist that haunts Looking-Glass House? Is it Alice Liddell of Dodgson’s *immediate world*, or Carroll’s mythical Alice!¹⁹ How many Alices haunt the dream-texture of the *Alice* text?

In his theatrical play *Orphée*, Jean Cocteau (1927/1997) writes that “[m]irrors are the doors through which Death comes and goes” (p. 33). These Foucauldian *heterotopias* manifest as physical objects but are also virtual spaces that open behind an ephemeral surface reminding us that Plato’s light is not only associated with utopic knowledge but also with the deep-seated sense of dread evoked by darkness. Behind every reflected surface, whether it is a glass mirror or a painting, is a story of distress, terrible need, physical deprivation, and other human conflicts which revolve on how “I find myself absent from the place where I am, in that I see myself in there” (Foucault, 1967/1997, p. 332). The polished surface might also be a wraithlike *heterotopic* space of spectrality much in the vein of how Adorno (1970/2002) defines Art - “the semblance of what is beyond death’s reach” (p. 27).

¹⁹ It might be worth noting that within the allure of mythology Campbell (1949/2004) makes the following distinction – “Dream is the personalized myth, myth the depersonalized dream; both myth and dream are symbolic in the same general way of the dynamics of the psyche. But in the dream the forms are quirked by the peculiar troubles of the dreamer, whereas in myth the problems and solutions shown are directly valid for all mankind” (p. 18). Alice’s dreams are truly “quirked by the peculiar troubles of the dreamer” but, nevertheless, are still “directly valid for all mankind” and thus attain the status of a myth.

2.3.6 Untangling a portmanteau

In *Through the Looking-Glass* everything is spoken to us in a double, obscure, and oblique sense, not satisfying us but keeping us puzzled and busy. One of the Looking-Glass eerie creatures, Humpty Dumpty, instructs the reader that one of the main strategies of decoding a Looking-Glass text is to untangle its “portmanteau” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 253) words in which “there are two meanings packed up into one word” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 253), just “like a suitcase” (Gardner, 2015, p. 253). The meanings of the words uttered from the inhabitants of the Looking-Glass are ambiguous due to Carroll’s metasystematic mill.

By adopting the egghead’s optical reversal strategy, the strange spaces of the Looking-Glass text could be analyzed and deciphered via portmanteau nomenclatures. As we have seen throughout this chapter, to speak of ‘welding’ in the *Alice* texts is to speak of *hauntology*, *animalséance*, *heterotopia*, and any other concepts that imply sameness within difference. The force and objective that ‘welds’ the portmanteaux in the Looking-Glass narrative stem from the constellation of metaleptic threads that form the fantastical *Alice* tapestry. These nonsense stories are stud with typical features of narratological metalepsis, namely the “intrusion by the extradiegetic narrator or narratee into the diegetic universe (or by diegetic characters into a metadiegetic universe, etc.), or the inverse (. . .) produc[ing] an effect of strangeness that is either comical (. . .) or fantastic” (Genette, 1972/1983, pp. 234 - 235). Another definition of metalepsis is given by Wolf (2005) -

a usually intentional paradoxical transgression of, or confusion between, (onto)-logically distinct (sub)worlds and / or levels that

exist, or are referred to, within representations of possible worlds. (p. 91)

Ricoeur (1975/2003) refers to this paradoxical confusion of distinct worlds as “polysemy,” a term “signif[ying] that there is more than one sense for one name” (p. 132). Lecerle (1994/2002) calls this phenomenon “hypostatization” pointing out that it is a key characteristic of “the rule of inversion” (p. 208) in Carrollian nonsense since it serves as - “the literalisation of abstractions, set phrases or metaphors” (p. 39). Deleuze (1969/1990) explains the paradoxical fictional construct of hypostatization in nonsense literature as follows -

The paradoxical element is at once word and thing (. . .). It is a word that denotes exactly what it expresses and expresses what it denotes. It expresses its *denotatum* and designates its own sense. It says something but at the same time, it says the sense of what it says: it says its own sense. It is therefore completely abnormal. (p. 67)

It is in the first chapter that Carroll (1871/2015b) establishes the diegetic framing in which all the adventures of the main protagonist Alice are endured. This beginning is meditated on by its title “Looking-Glass House” - It is here where Alice, on the threshold between imagining and acting out, plays a game of “Let’s pretend” (p. 165) with her kitten – “How would you like to live in Looking-Glass House, Kitty?” (p. 167). Both the nonsense author (in his title of the first chapter) and his main protagonist (in her pretend play) are hypostatizing the proper noun ‘House’ to describe the crossing of the mirror interior from the abstract to the concrete. The hypostatizing of Looking-Glass House indicates a duality in its nomenclature - the ‘House’ where the mirror hangs, and the ‘House’ made of mirror. Which Looking-Glass House is haunted? Is it the “House” of the *immediate world* haunted by the

elsewhere space of the *other* “House”? Or, is it haunted by the “hypodiegetic” Alice since her dream wanderings behind the window-frame could also be termed as *elsewhere spaces*?

The metaleptic logicality of Alice’s underlying desire that drives her toward the Eighth Square is paradoxically the double. The thespian’s tragedy in *Through the Looking-Glass* allows us to sense the “Primordial Unity” which revives our Dionysian nature. Alice, like Hamlet, struggles to make order, in the Apollonian sense, of her possessed and Dionysian chaotic fate. In front of her mirror she acquires knowledge and finds it “laughable or shameful that [she] should be expected to set to rights a world so out of joint” (Nietzsche, trans. 1999, p. 40).

The Apollonian/Dionysian conflict in Alice may be interpreted in Freudian psychoanalytical terms in which her ego is in a combat with the ‘id’ - “a primitive and instinctive element of personality, (. . .) driven by the pleasure principle and operates wholly subconsciously and unaffected by reality” (Young, 2017). Freud (1923/1986) describes the relationship between these opposite poles as follows - “the ego represents what may be called reason and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions” (p. 25). Both Alice’s ego and id are embodied in her White Knight conjoined with his steed, analogous of the Freudian horseman -

in its relation to the id, [the ego] is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with this difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength, while the ego uses borrowed forces. The analogy may be carried a little further. Often, a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide [the horse] where it wants to go; so, in the same way, the ego is

in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own (p. 25)

One might interpret the primitive forces found within the “melancholy farewell” moment as stronger than the ego, hence the White Knight's falling continuously from his steed. This moment takes place in the heart of Looking-Glass House just as Don Quixote's descent into the underworld takes place in the Cave of Montesinos, the heart of La Mancha. The Knight and his steed lead Alice's unguided passions surrounded by folly, melancholy, and spiritual malaise. The pair rise above the abandonment of reason fueled by narcissistic troubled consciousness. Their quasi-religious element of Quixotic transcendence conjures up a ghostly world of sacrifice and martyrdom.

2.4 The metonymic half-dream according to Lewis Carroll's Logic

Alice's adventures certainly have the qualities of picaresque fiction. Their structure contains a less than casual closure since they seem to resist the linearity of the *Bildungsroman* with the impediments provided by fantasy. Nevertheless, in their endeavour to emphasize flaws in the Victorian society, they are on the road, as it were, and the manner in which the story resembles beads on a string is also a metonymic aspect of the plot. During the “melancholy farewell” episode, we find a metonym that, perhaps, not only delays the whole process of a definite denouement but also describes all the opposing forces that reside within the story. The nonsense author places the hyphenated compound “half-dream” specifically as a *pars pro toto* when Alice leans against a tree and watches “the strange pair” of the White Knight and his horse whilst also listening to his “melancholy music.”

What is a half-dream? Is it a marginal space between the human senses? Is it a shadowy area between the human senses and melancholy? Is it a rapture of the “dream” that Alice “saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass”? Is it fraction of the “dream” that Carroll (1896/1977) the logician defines as - “an aggregate of ideas, and exists only in the *mind of a dreamer*” (Carroll, 1896/1977, p. 233)? If so, whose dreamer’s mind does this dream pertain to? Is it that of the young Alice who is the main protagonist of the story? Is it that of the nonsense author’s who is narrating the story? Or, is it that of the adult Alice who recalls - “of all the strange things that Alice saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass, this was the one that she always remembered most clearly”? Is the Looking-Glass dream split between two dreamers? To which logical²⁰, philosophical, or psychological “*Thing* theory” does the half-dream belong to? To what extent is “the strange pair” in the half-dream affected by the text’s multiple hauntology?

Let us try to find meanings that could be derived from the *strange* term *half-dream* by analyzing it through a treatise on logic entitled *Symbolic Logic*, published under the pseudonym of Lewis Carroll two years before his death. Let us examine this *metonymy* from the author’s own geometry in which he formulates valid formal rules and trees of syllogism for making inferences.

Carroll (1896/1977) instructs the reader that - “[t]he universe contains Things” (p. 59). The word *Thing* in itself “conveys the idea of a Thing” (p. 64) and these *Things* have “Attributes” also called “Adjunct” which attribute the *Thing* such as “old” or “which I received yesterday” (p. 59). Without any *Attribute*, a *Thing* will

²⁰ The classification of “Things” by Carroll the logician is challenging the trend, later developed by the logical positivists to ‘naturalize Logic’ – that is, to try and reduce all of what exists to logical postulates which are backed by empirical evidence. As Quine (1969/2004c) materially advances - the logical positivists “pressed the term “metaphysics” into pejorative use, as connoting meaninglessness; and the term “epistemology” was next” (p. 268). However, Carroll’s *Alice* texts do not seem to be aiming at annihilating metaphysics or epistemology. They do not fall within the main premise of these philosophers that anything, or any statement, that does not follow the logic of the empirical concept of reality is meaningless – on the contrary, they translate them into nonsense.

only remain “*without* any idea of an Adjunct, represent[ing] *any* single Thing” (p. 64). With an *Attribute*, a Thing will have a “Name” which is defined as - “any Member of the Class to which that Adjunct is *peculiar*” (p. 64). Each *Thing* could be categorized into a “Class” which is defined as “a Mental Process, in which we imagine that we have put together, in a group, certain Things” (p. 60). One of these is the *Class* of the impossible, or the “Imaginary Class” which Carroll gives as an example – “Things that weigh a ton and are easily lifted by a baby” (p. 60).

One may logically postulate on such premises that the “dream” that Alice experiences “in her journey Through The Looking-Glass” is a *Name* that corresponds to the *Imaginary Class*. Moreover, the *Adjunct* “strange” is *peculiar* to any *Thing* that Alice “saw” in these experiences. So far so good! Could we deduce that a *half-dream* is also a *Name* since the *Adjunct* “strange” is *peculiar* to it too? Is “half” an *Attribute* to a “dream” in a half-dream? Is “strange” *peculiar* to the *other* half of the *half-dream*? Where does this *other* belong to? Are they both halves of the same dream or of *another* dream? Which “idea of a Thing” does Carroll’s *half-dream* convey? We know exactly where the symbolic term “half-dream” is placed in Carroll’s *Alice* text but where does it fall in the universe of Carroll’s Logic?

If one half belongs to Alice’s “journey Through The Looking-Glass” does the *other* belong to the first dream journey down the rabbit-hole, which is also described as “curious” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 145) by Alice herself. Both dream games fall under the *Imaginary Class* category but the rules of both differ and there are no *half-dreams* mentioned in *Imaginary Class* ‘Wonderland.’ Is this because Alice is now playing inside her new game of chess at the age of “seven and a half” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 235) and not seven as when played in the playing-cards area of Wonderland? Is this because the *half-dream* is now conflating both “dream” and

other attributes to the Looking-Glass, such as “self-consciousness” (Empson, 1935, p. 257), the “subconscious mind” (Fowler, 1973, p. 69), a *voyage imaginaire* that merges “the fairy tale with science fiction” (Levin, 1965/1971, p. 188), or a spectral dimension? Is it *half* a threshold consciousness? Is it *half* a hypnagogic state? Is it *half* a haunting?

If we continue following the rules applied in *Symbolic Logic*, we also find that the contrary of the *Imaginary Class* is the “Real Class” (Carroll, 1896/1977, p. 60). The logician does not specify what kind of reality the *Adjunct* “Real” refers to. If *Imaginary Class* “strange dream” refers to that which “Alice saw in her journey Through The Looking-Glass,” what follows is that all that Alice did not see in this “journey” belongs to either a *Real Class* or another *Imaginary Class*. Let us take two examples from separate moments in Alice’s living-room before her “journey” began. When Alice “hear[s] the snow against the window-panes” (p. 165) we could categorize the *Things* as *Real Class* ‘Alice,’ *Real Class* ‘snow,’ and *Real Class* ‘window-panes’ since there is empirical evidence that falling snow makes a sound when falling on glass. When Alice wonders “if the snow *loves* the trees and fields” (p. 165), one may postulate an *Imaginary Class* ‘loving snow’ since there is no empirical evidence that snowflakes have affections. Where do these postulates belong to in a *Looking-Glass* half-dream scenario?

Does this *other* Thing from the half-dream emanate from one of the many occupations and interests Carroll had during his lifetime? Is it possible that the half-*Thing* emanates, for example, from Carroll’s work on logic and geometry, especially, in the enigmatic measurements of voidness and infinitude? Are the symbols of *alpha* and *omega* linked to the author’s intuition of *nonsense* and *emptiness* as the basis of language and subject?

Is this *Thing* coerced with an epistemology founded in Christian monotheism and practiced by Dodgson, the member of the Anglican clergy? Is it reflecting his theological and ethical understanding of a Looking-Glass that metaphorically illustrates the imperfection of mortal understanding as understood in St. Paul's passage "through the glass, darkly" (1 Corinthians 13:12 KJV)?



12. Anonymous French Gothic artist (ca. 1208-15). *French Bible moralisée*, Frontispiece: *Codex Vindobonensis 2554*. Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna.

Is the aged Carroll taking the position of the supreme Architect, Builder, Geometer, and/or Craftsman as that depicted by the anonymous medieval artist in the full-page miniature serving as frontispiece to the old French *Bible moralise* (fig. 12)?

Or is he trying, as a logician writing under the pseudonym, to organize the primordial chaos unleashed by his *Alice* texts by applying geometric and harmonic principles to seek and worship his belief system? This hypothesis may be substantiated by one of Carroll's letters sent to an unidentified recipient in 1882 in which he acknowledges Christ as "I owe all to Him who loved me, and died on the Cross of Calvary" (Cohen, 1989, p. 118). Moreover, the first edition of *Through the Looking-Glass* included a four-page leaflet in which Carroll (1871/2015c) addressed "To all child-readers of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland" (p. xli) and concludes with an earnest homily in a seemingly ballasting of nonsense with a moral weight -

May God bless you, dear children, and make each Christmas-tide, as it comes round to you, more bright and beautiful than the last – bright with the presence of that unseen Friend, Who once on earth blessed little children – and beautiful with memories of a loving life, which has sought and found the truest kind of happiness, the only kind that is really worth the having, the happiness of making others happy too! (pp. xli - xlii)

One may only conclude here that, paradoxically, Carroll's *half-dream* could not be classified precisely in Carroll's own Logic but could be given an infinite number of interpretations! In this context we could refer to an academic adaptation of Zeno of Elea's paradox *The Tortoise and Achilles*, in which Carroll publishes a playful dialogue that takes place in a racecourse consisting of "an infinite series of distances" (Carroll, 1895, p. 278). The Grecian hero Achilles manages to overtake an arrogant Tortoise in the physical race but lost out in the logical race that he had caught up with. Specifically, Carroll didactically demonstrates that merely having syllogisms, even those deduced from "several millions" (p. 280) of accurate axioms,

isn't enough to determine contingent truth in a logical structure, even in any "valid" (p. 278) choice of rules or in any "sequence" (p. 278) of inference. As Quine (1960 /2004b) explains -

logical truths, being infinite in number, must be given by general conventions rather than singly; and logic is needed then to begin with, in the metatheory, in order to apply the general conventions to individual cases. (p. 71)

There are no descriptions of a *half-dream* in Carroll's universe so we could not postulate any possibilities of compatibility. The *strange half-dream* seems to be questioning all sorts of received beliefs inside the metafictional, metalinguistic and epistemological frame tale of *Through the Looking-Glass*. Perhaps, in her *half-dream*, the Knight has guided Alice beyond the Logical realm of her shadow!

2.5 Growing-up (K)nightmares in a Garden of Erring Delights

The prefatory and terminal poems that frame *Through the Looking-Glass* are tinged with nostalgia and an ostensible serenity that gently teases the reader in believing that they were written by the White Knight himself! In the former, Carroll (1871/2015b) establishes not only the genre of literature in which the author is about to write his narrative, "The love-gift of a fairy-tale" (p. 157), but also nostalgically affirms a tone of lyrical reverie about the delightful bliss of children. The "Child of the pure unclouded brow/ And dreaming eyes of wonder!" (p. 157) is the clear eye still unclouded over by ideas and opinions, preconceptions and abstractions. The simple free being that still possesses a "loving smile" (p. 157) has not become encrusted yet with the burdensome armour of the ego.

In the terminal poem, Carroll (1871/2015b) recalls the “rhythm of our rowing” (p. 157) on the fourth July 1862 expedition up the Thames where Charles Dodgson first narrated the genesis of the *Alice* story to the three young daughters of Henry Liddell, the dean of Christ Church, on a boating trip up the River Isis for a picnic. The glowing “summer suns” (p. 157) that filled the light of the tale that started on a river is held like a memory of paradise to be refolded on the dazzling “blaze of light” emitted from the White Knight’s shining armour. The “melancholy farewell” episode represents the pivotal moment when this “childhood’s nest of gladness” (p. 157) ends and another road begins “down the hill” (p. 289) towards a hollow place that is filled with longing, a longing to return to this dream adventure.

Alice becomes a seeker for queenhood, without knowing what this new state entails, longing for something ‘greater’ than herself, something apart and far away. Carroll poeticizes this journey as the “storm-wind’s moody madness” of “the frost, the blinding snow” (p. 157). Like Critias the elder,²¹ he tells his tale from an age distance - “Though time be fleet, and I and thou/Are half a life asunder” (p. 157). Is Carroll’s “fairy-tale” a re-telling of the *logos* to Alice? As Gardner (1960/2015) notes, the terminal poem –

echoes the themes of winter and death that run through the prefatory poem of *Through the Looking-Glass*. It is the song of the White Knight, remembering Alice as she was before she turned away, with

²¹ Plato’s Critias recounts how the “great and remarkable dynasty” (p. 13) of Atlantis was devastated and sank by “appalling earthquakes and floods [that] occurred, and in the course of a single, terrible day and night” (p. 13) - “That is why the sea there cannot now be navigated or explored; the mud which the island left behind as it settled lies a little below the surface and gets in the way” (pp. 13 - 14). This inexorable absence elicits a *logos* as comprehension for the absent one. This *logos* was told to the Critias of the dialogue when the latter was ten years old by the elder Critias, who was ninety years old at the time of the telling. The problem of distance in time, according to Critias, can be solved by faithful retelling and by effort of memory - “There’s a saying, as you know, that lessons learnt young endure amazingly well” (Plato, trans. 2008, p. 14).

tearless and eager eyes, to run down the hill and leap the last brook
into womanhood. (p. 319)

Many literary critics and biographers subscribe to the myth of the White Knight being Dodgson's self-portrait - "the brilliant mathematician who revealed his heart only to little children" (Taylor, 1952, p. v). Harold Bloom (2002) writes that "Alice Liddell was more Carroll's Dulcinea than his Beatrice" (p. 743). Alexander L. Taylor's biography on Dodgson is entitled *The White Knight* (1952). Stern (1990) finds a dedication made by Dodgson on a game he made for a child - "Olive Butler, from the White Knight, Nov. 21, 1892" (p. 18). The observation made by Gardner (1960/2015) that the White Knight's "melancholy farewell may be Carroll's farewell to Alice when she grew up (became a queen) and abandoned him" (p. 278) is further substantiated by an actual game Dodgson enjoyed playing with Alice before writing *Through the Looking-Glass*, as Taylor (1952) documents –

One game they actually played was the queening of a pawn, Alice taking the pawn and he the rest of the pieces. He showed her the powers of the knight and the queen and began to think about these powers in relation to the powers of a pawn. (p. 72)

In *Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (1807), the Romantic poet William Wordsworth (1807/1994b) contemplates both contiguity and alienation in the rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. An adult narrator laments - "The things which I have seen I now can see no more" (p. 587). Nevertheless, he imagines a "Child of Joy" (p. 588) who provides the means to "hear, I hear, with joy I hear!" (p. 588). Yet, when this reverie ceases, the narrator queries - "[w]hither is fled the visionary gleam?/ [w]here is it now, the glory and the dream?" (p. 588). Does Alice's crown entail a paradoxical price in that the child is

still present within her, but now simultaneously unreachable for her? Such stories as the *Alice* texts give expression to an obdurate mythos of “lost innocence” that is, as Torrance (1998/2002) argues -

both Romantic and Platonic: what is lost in growing up is an inborn remembrance of oneness with the surrounding world which we gradually, almost inexorably relinquish - all but the childlike few who are madmen, lovers or poets. (p. 3)

The *Alice* paired fairy-tale is written by someone “intrigued by the idea that children were much closer to the invisible world than adults” (Douglas-Fairhurst, 2015, p. 288). Carroll writes in a letter dated May 31, 1880 – “Their innocent unconsciousness is very beautiful, and gives one a feeling of reverence, as at the presence of something sacred” (Cohen, 1989, p. 97). Most certainly before Alice enters through her mirror there lies a connection with a loss of childhood, the Romantic child who, as Wordsworth (1807/1994b) says, comes “trailing clouds of glory” (p. 588) and, as Coleridge (1817/1997) says, can read in nature the “eternal language” of divinity, before adulthood regretfully sets in. Dylan Thomas (1945/1959) would later echo these sentiments in his poem *Fern Hill* -

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
In the moon that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying

Though I sang in my chains like the sea. (pp. 160- 161)

Wonderland is the place where Alice stumbles upon in her “lamb white days” and Looking-Glass Land where she is held “green and dying.” Throughout the *Alice* books, the little pilgrim resides in antagonistic realities, a peculiar type of split personality. This anxiety propels her from a humiliated state to one of asserted sovereignty at a juncture of metamorphosis, as Terry Otten (1982) explains in *After Innocence: Visions of the Fall in Modern Literature* -

It is precisely Alice’s comfortable faith in the pure light of reason and guaranteed existence that renders her deficient in Wonderland and dooms her to destroy it – and concomitantly to pay undue allegiance to a fallen adulthood. Alice’s fall in reverse, her return to the innocence of the garden, can prove redemptive only to the degree she can recover from the “autumn frosts” of time. (p. 162)

Must one be a child to penetrate the Looking-Glass and overcome the “autumn frosts” of time? In Wonderland, Alice’s body experiences dramatic changes; from shrinking into a Lilliputian size to shooting upwards and reaching a Brobdingnagian height. According to Falconer (2008), this shape-changing transfiguration not only represents “the sign of a child whose identity is unfixed” (p. 100), but also a speculum for the crossover adult reader who pines out a way to enter “the miniature gate into the child’s magic garden” (p. 100). Her dreamland is a place where “you may come in, but you will have to stoop to get through the entrance” (p. 101).

The ability of ‘grown-ups’ to access the fantastic often depends upon their connections with childhood. The “fairy literature of our childhood,” as Charles Dickens (1853/2017) writes in his journal essay *Frauds on the Fairies*, “preserv[e]

through our worldly ways one slender track not overgrown with weeds, where we may walk with children, sharing their delights.” Adults tend to lurk in dark and weedy “worldly ways” ignoring their childhood self with dire consequences²², as Lacan (1986/1997) states - “[i]f one does not go to the root of the childish, one is inevitably precipitated into stupidity” (p. 209). One is reminded here of the words of Christ - “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3, KJV). What Bachelard (1958/1994) evokes when he writes in secular terms, “the minuscule, a narrow gate, opens up an entire world” (p. 155), is what Blake (1863/2002) implies in his Romantic verse –

To see the world in a grain of sand,
And a heaven in a wild flower;
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour” (p. 88).

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton (2005 version) provides another illuminating gloss on the notion of a transformation in size leading to a shift in perception. The English poet describes the fallen angels, in all their numbers, being obliged in shrinking to insect size to get access through the gateway of the palace they erected in Hell. Their reduction of stature at the entrance to the inner court of Pandemonium is underlined by correlating the demons clustering with “bees/ In springtime” (p. 39). Here we might link this metaphor with the beehive “fastened to the saddle” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 277) found over the White Knight’s horse’s rump - ““one of the best kind” he describes “But not a single bee has come near it yet”” (p. 278). Perhaps there might lie a Christian message within the knight’s empty beehive, one that John

²² Tuan (1977/2001) writes from a similar perspective - “Children relate to people and objects with a directness and intimacy that are the envy of adults bruised by life. Children know they are frail; they seek security and yet remain open to the world” (p. 137).

Chrysostom (trans. 2017) describes as – “The bee is more honoured than the other animals; not because she labours, but because she labours for others” (p. 349)!

Is Carroll’s notion of childhood a religious epitome, a romantic ideal or an unspoiled proto-human exemplar? Or is this understanding of childhood a non-human paradigm? Perhaps one that Jean-François Lyotard (1988/1991) embodies as follows -

What shall we call human in humans, the initial misery of their childhood, or their capacity to acquire a “second” nature which, thanks to language, makes them fit to share in communal life, adult consciousness and reason? That the second depends on and presupposes the first is agreed by everyone. The question is only that of knowing whether this dialectic, whatever name we grace it with, leaves no remainder. (p. 3)

Childhood as *remainder* is not only informed by a child’s “enlarging gaze” that remains, but also the kernel of creaturely *otherness* in the child that holds a potential for rethinking the human, suggesting a thinking of the human in terms of multiplicity and plurality held in the fragile figure of the child. The becoming does not go into its concept without *remainder* thus implying a desire to make clear, humanist distinctions between the human and the animal as Cary Wolfe (2003) argues –

the animal is that Kantian outside that reveals our traditional pictures of the ontological fullness of the human to have been fantasies all along, built on the sands of disavowal of our own contingency, our own materiality, our own “spokenness.” But once the work is done, the animal is returned to its exile, its facelessness, as the human now

retains a privileged relationship – indeed a constitutive one – not to its own success but to its hard-won failure, from which the animal remains excluded” (p. 62).

Alice sways in the cradling origins of Being that “holds to its truths and keeps to itself” (Heidegger, 1950/1984, p. 26). Humpty Dumpty’s pejorative remark that she has “no more sense than a baby!” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 245) and his advice to unfold a Looking-Glass text as a “portmanteau” instigates a retrogression to infantilism or, rather, into the devious and enchanted Wonderland. From a psychoanalytic point of view, the “incisive, dictatorial critic of language” (Rackin, 1966/1971, p. 399) is inducing Alice in a discursive relationship to an earlier phase of childhood where “children’s word segmentation cannot be perfect, and so it is to be expected that a substantial number of partial words and non-lexical portmanteaux would be included among the forms infants treat as familiar” (Swingley, 2009, p. 3622). An inducement in such a state may be postulated in the following question made by Lacan (1975/1988a) -

This child, we see that he is prodigiously open to everything concerning the way of the world that the adult brings to him. Doesn’t anyone ever reflect on what this prodigious porosity to everything in myth, legend, fairy tales, history, the ease with which he lets himself be invaded by these stories, signifies, as to his sense of the other? (p. 49)

As a child, Alice is easily “invaded” implying, as Coats (2004) explains, “an as yet unformed or unfixed relation to the Other that will not in the future remain so open, but that indicates that the child is formed in large part by the representations provided by and of that Other” (p. 4). The existence of the double is provoked by the

“uncanny”²³ in a psychological break in Alice’s childhood and this might be the reason of the protagonist’s (K)nightmares that she experiences through the Looking-Glass. The *Other*²⁴ becomes a psychological projection of the central character as Lacan (1966/2002a) demonstrates in his theories of the formation of identity in the “mirror stage” (p. 77) and its implications for the entry into language. This *Other* element of the imaginary and impossible realm in *Through the Looking-Glass* offers the possibility for a child to imagine that this game could actually happen. Or maybe as a child, that distinction between the imaginary and the real is not fully formed but remains just the traumatic element of developmental transformative stages.

In his theory of the “mirror stage,” Lacan claims that the Other allows the subject a sense of wholeness via the imaginary register. In her “*infans* stage” (p. 76), Alice’s identity shatters through her mirror location “at the crux of ego formation” (p. 565) as propagated in this “Looking-glass phase” (p. 864). Hartman (1981) calls this mirror location the “Marienbad complex” (p. 100), recalling the actual place where the hypothesis was made public but also, after Resnais/Robbe-Grillet’s film *L’Année dernière à Marienbad* (1961) which expresses the “Lacanian mirror domain as a fact of the imagination” (p. 100). The protagonist in the film’s maze of endless mirrored corridors “seems to quest for a specular yet totally elusive identity, for some unique reduction to one place, one time, one bed, one fixative spectral event” (p. 100). Here we find a prolongation of a “shifting balance of forces” (Reader, 2008, p. 152) or a “preponderance of the anxiety factor and the tendency to prolong the suspense” (Reik, 1941, p. 59) before entering the Orphic realm where “everything

²³ Freud (1919/2004) refers to Schelling when repurposing the term “uncanny” from the realm of the supernatural - “everything is uncanny that ought to have remained hidden and secret, and yet comes to light” (p. 79).

²⁴ The term *Other* is upper cased since it designates the Lacanian French *Autre* – “a radical alterity on which an other-ness transcends the illusory otherness of the imaginary because it cannot be assimilated through identification” (Evans, 2006, p. 136).

sinks into the certainty of failure” (Blanchot, 1955/1999, p. 440). These shifting mirrors are where “[d]reams, thoughts and memories weave a single fabric” (Bachelard, 1958/1994, p. 175). In front of the reflection, as Webb (2009) explains -

There is no way of achieving that initial sense of oneness once we move under the logic of representation. Instead, we slide, back and forth, between the experienced and the represented self, between the self and the world, between the body and the image. Just as the meaning of language is based on difference and is endlessly deferred, so too the individual subject of and in representation is based on difference, and can never achieve fullness: the ‘me’ is always deferred. (p. 69)

The manifestation of a “spatial capture” (p.77) in this mirror stage, as Lacan (1966/2002a) construes, can be understood as an “*identification*” (p.76) thus involving - “the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes [*assume*] an image - an image that is seemingly predestined to have an effect at this phase” (p. 76). This “*infans* stage” (p. 76) appears to unfold in “the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject” (p. 76). This primordial form is called the “ideal-I” (p. 76). The body forms in its totality and conjectures an unfolding of “a mirage” which is bestowed upon the person only as -

a gestalt, that is, in an exteriority in which, to be sure, this form is more constitutive than constituted, but in which, above all, it appears to him as the contour of his stature that freezes it and in a symmetry that reverses it, in opposition to the turbulent movements with which

the subject feels he animates it. (p. 76)

Via this binary aspect of its appearance, this “gestalt” is “replete with the correspondences that unite the *I* with the statue onto which man projects himself, the phantoms that dominate him, and the automaton with which the world of his own making tends to achieve fruition in an ambiguous relation” (p. 76 – 77). The myriad shards of Alice’s identity shatterings become the “imagos of the fragmented body” (p. 85), archaic dream imagery of “castration, emasculation, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring and bursting open of the body” (p. 85), reminiscent of Bosch’s nightmarish vision –

Even the ogee of the angustiae of birth can be found in the gates to the abyss through which they thrust the damned; and even narcissistic structure may be glimpsed in the glass spheres in which the exhausted partners of the “Garden of Earthly Delights” are held captive” (p. 85 – 86).

Alice is repeatedly exposed “to a darkness pervaded by harrowing images of haunting, excess and mutilation” (Cavallaro, 2002, p. 151). The anthropomorphic creatures and peculiar beasts/spectres that Alice meets are exceedingly hostile and “forever seeking to trick and destroy” (Hinz, 1953/1971, p. 148); they are indeed redolent of those found inside Bosch’s *Garden of Earthly Delights* (ca.1500 – 1505). The nightmarish adventures of the *Alice* narrative are indeed early psychological delvings into Boschian terrors that follow the whimsical experiences of a little child quandering inside her own *Garden of Erring Delights*.²⁵

²⁵ Interestingly, McLuhan (1964/1994) depicts Carroll as the heir of Bosch in applying Einsteinian relativity and topology to the universe of human experience – “Bosch had provided his era a foretaste of the new continuous time-and-space of uniform perspective. Bosch looked ahead to the modern world with horror, as Shakespeare did in *King Lear*, and as Pope did in *The Dunciad*. But Lewis Carroll greeted the electronic age of space-time with a cheer” (p. 162). Paradoxically, there lies an



13. Bosch, H. (ca.1500 – 1505). *The garden of earthly delights: Exterior panels* [Oil, grisaille on wooden panel]. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. 220 x 200 cm.

As Cavallaro (2002) explains – “Alice’s otherness is corroborated by her association with alien forms, more or less explicitly monstrous, grotesque or hybrid” (p. 151). In the dawn of consciousness, a shroud of darkness envelops the “pure unclouded brow” with an *otherness* that Dickinson (1929/1965) poetizes as “pretty estimates/ Of Prickly Things” (p. 489), for the ‘grown-up’ child “finally apprehends the creative, distorting power of sight” (Lundin, 1998/2004, p. 24). Perhaps, one could understand Kafka’s senescence when he confides to his friend Max Brod

undefined form of comedic expression in the structure of Carroll’s linguistic nonsense, a language which is untrustworthy, changeable, and slippery.

(1960) - “I shall never grow up to be a man, from being a child I shall immediately become a white-haired ancient” (p. 37).

Alice’s superiority attitude in her *otherness* is established from the start of *Through the Looking-Glass*. Carroll (1871/2015b) commences the first chapter with Alice playing a game of “Let’s pretend” (p. 165) with Kitty, her uncooperative kitten. The little girl’s didactic game consists of her becoming the domineering grown-up vis-à-vis her disobedient kitten. As Reichertz (1992) explains “[i]mitation is the center of this game” (p. 23). In her behaviour’s mirroring of adult treatment, the youngster adopts “a positive model” (p. 23) to incite Kitty in becoming the Red Queen of her imaginary chessboard game; and, when the mischievous kitten resists, Alice tries to rectify its sulky comportment by holding it up against the Looking-Glass that hangs on the mantelshelf of her drawing-room’s fireplace as “a negative model” (p. 23). This fantasy frame-play works to establish the (il)logic inside the subsequent fantastic adventures from the physical reversals that result from Alice’s pretend play entry into her *Garden of Erring Delights*.

Perhaps the analogy with Bosch may be further revised in the carnival grotesqueries of the Late Middle Ages. These festivities, which as Bakhtin (1965/1984b) chronicles, originate from “ancient comic ritual, including the primitive Saturnalias” (p. 10), offer an alternative social space that recalls the Looking-Glass arena. In the impieties and free thinking of the medieval cultural habits we find -

the peculiar logic of the ‘inside out’ (*à l’envers*), of the “turnabout,” of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear, of numerous parodies and travesties, humiliations, profanations, comic crownings and uncrownings. A second life, a second world of folk

culture is thus constructed; it is to a certain extent a parody of the extracarnival life, a ‘world inside out.’ (pp. 10 - 11)

Behind the mutability of the mirror, which also has a penchant for turning the world into disarray, Alice’s confidence and superiority show “inside out” signs of a craving to fulfil her ‘crowning’ ambition. The girl’s “childhood’s nest of gladness” is now being infested by tarnished spectres, or what Coleridge (1798/1970) calls “fiends, that plague” (p. 16). Her Lacanian *ideal-I* is infected by contagious bacilli that cause illnesses resulting in frailties usually associated with the adult world. Alice is combating her status of forming part in the madness of Looking-Glass Land made of aggregate hallucinations in the sense described by de Unamuno (1914/1984) –

Any madness whatsoever ceases to be as soon as it becomes collective, as soon as it is the madness of an entire people, even perhaps of the entire human race. As soon as an hallucination becomes collective, as soon as it becomes popular, it becomes “social,” it ceases to be an hallucination and is converted into a reality, into something outside of every one of those who share it. (p. 14)

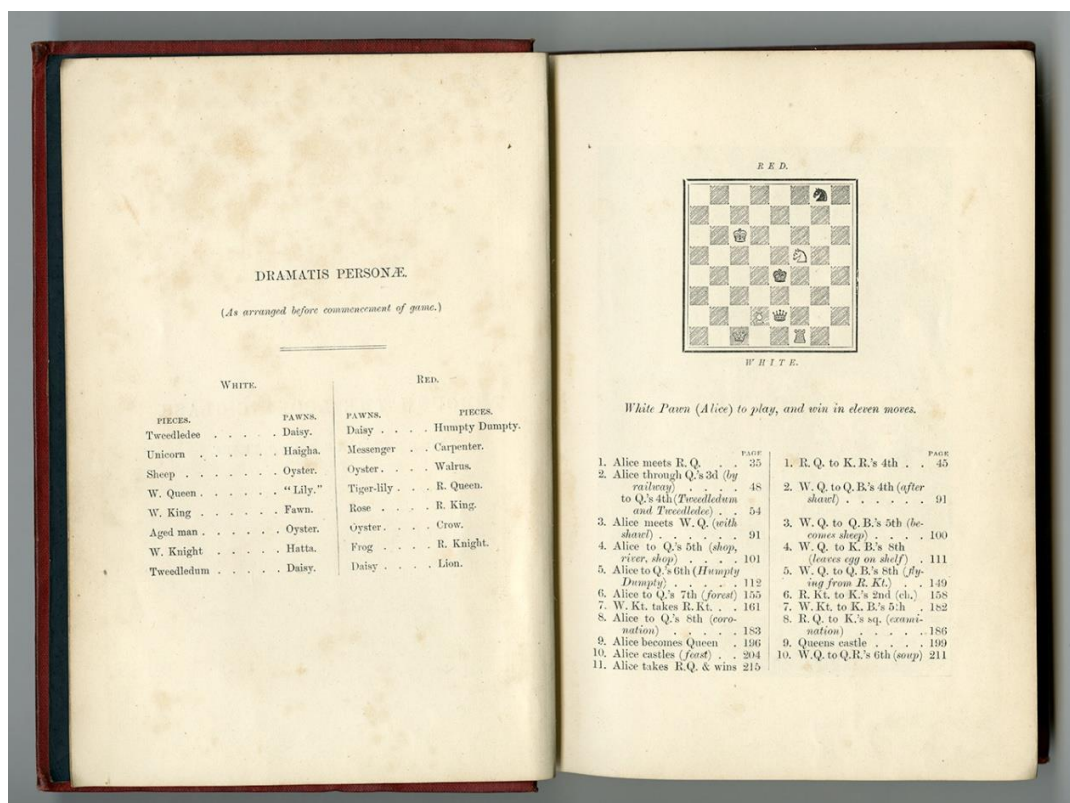
The image of Alice as the lonely ghost wandering around the arabesque paths of her *Garden of Erring Delights* reiterates the presence of the *flâneur* wandering the streets of the metropolis. Benjamin (1938/2006) contrasts the urban horde in Poe’s *The Man in the Crowd* as unknowable, which makes it compelling and menacing, investing it at once with a sense of alienation, anonymity and fascination - the *flâneur* being, “above all, someone who does not feel comfortable in his own company. This is why he seeks out the crowd” (p. 27). Perhaps, it is these pedestrians that Alice first sees when making her “grand survey of the country she was going to

travel through” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 199) behind the Looking-Glass which she perceives as “Principle towns” confused with “creatures, making honey.” Her transition through the mirror is her portal to a chaotic social or political community or what Aristotle (trans. 1998a) names as a *polis* (the highest form of community) where “the community that has the most AUTHORITY of all and encompasses all the others aims highest” (p. 1).

Carroll (1871/2015b) creates a “Garden of Live Flowers” (p. 184) where Alice is soon introduced to as soon as she enters the Looking-Glass *polis*. Here, she identifies with the Tiger-lily that terrorizes the other flowers. In defence of the tyrant, Alice whispers ominously to the daisies, “[i]f you don’t hold your tongues, I’ll pick you!” (p. 188). Finally, impatient with the flowers, the little girl resolves to go meet the Red Queen, “for, though the flowers were interesting enough, she felt it would be far grander to have a talk with a real Queen” (p. 189). Impressed by the power of adulthood, she sets out on the grand chess board, admitting, “I wouldn’t mind being a Pawn (. . .) though of course I should *like* to be a Queen, best” (p. 192). This regal status has the acquired power of moving in any direction she desires on a thoroughly ritualistic and formalized game that emphasizes strict hierarchies, strategic moves, and dominance of rules.

The “curious country” that Alice travels through is “a great huge game of chess that’s being played – all over the world – if this *is* the world at all” (p. 192). In this *chessboard space*, Alice dreams of becoming a Queen of a monarchic system where all the pieces on the board are reflections of one another, and with the unique ability to promote. In the game of chess, ‘promotion’ is a rule that demands a pawn reaching the opposite side of the chessboard (its eighth rank) to be immediately replaced by any chess piece of the same colour. The fact that the

Looking-Glass “fairy-tale” was conceived around the structured grid design of a game of chess is made explicit by Carroll (1871/2015b) from the diagram appearing in the preface to the book (fig. 14) together with its caption - “*White Pawn (Alice) to play, and win in eleven moves*” (p. 154). This opening salvo immediately places Alice in a defined position with predetermined steps creating a further paradox to the location of her meandering itinerary in the “melancholy farewell” moment.



14. Carroll, L (1872b). *Chess diagram - Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*. London: Macmillan and Co.

In his analogy between legislator and craftsman, Aristotle (trans. 1998a) believes that humans, who possess *logos* (speech/reason), naturally develop the existence of the *polis* out of *eudaimonia* - happiness, the human good, that which “consists in realizing to a high degree the properties that are definitive of humanity” (p. xxvi). However, history continues to prove that *hubris* (arrogance) is the

dominant force behind the human polity - “The cause of pleasure to those committing arrogance is that they think they become superior to others by ill-treating them” (p. 244). *Hubris* is behind mankind’s contrivance to subjugate *eudaimonia* out of *praxis* (action, deliberate choice).

The human community is ruled by the “single Commandment” inscribed in another ‘fairy story’ – “ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL/ BUT SOME ANIMALS ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS” (Orwell, 1945/1987, p. 83; emphasis in original).’ Aristotle (trans. 1998a) himself claims that “a human being is more of a political animal than a bee or any other gregarious animal” (p. 4). Unlike other “political animals,” humans create their Animal Farm *polis* via hypothetical contracts in which alone a rational order of right comes into existence, one which may be summed up by de Montaigne (trans. 1993) -

Our opinions are grafted one on another. The first serves as a stock for the second, the second for the third. We thus climb the ladder, step by step; and hence it is that the man who has mounted highest has often more honour than he deserves; for he has only raised himself by the height of one inch on the shoulders of the last but one. (p. 349)

In the climbing-ladder system of the Looking-Glass *polis* we find Humpty Dumpty, an irritating character whose very name has a duplicate structure. This *strange Thing* assumes of having a vantage point to comment on others since he sits “on top of a high wall – such a narrow one that Alice quite wondered how he could keep his balance” (p. 244). When this pedantic egghead proclaims to Alice that his use of a word “means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less” (p. 251); he expresses a reasonable nominalist stance, in which universals are no more than names assigned to them. However, when Alice impertinently questions whether he is

able in making words mean different things, the cantankerous egghead takes the gloves off, anticipating George Orwell's dictatorial dystopia of *1984* (1949) - "'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master - that's all'" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 251). The justification of this brusque, hectoring 'answer' could be interpreted as Darwinian or "the image of a laissez-faire system in which the strongest predators compete for their natural prey" (Lacan, 1966/2002a, p. 98). It could also be Hegelian in which a "slave" is not privy to "his essence, his infinity and freedom; he does not know himself as an essence - he does not know himself as such, for he does not *think* himself" (Hegel, trans. 2003, p. 22).

All the hybrid creatures behind the mirror (with the exception of the White Knight) make it emphatically clear to Alice that she is an intruder - an outsider! Once inside the Looking-Glass dreamscape, Alice discovers not only that these weird denizens do not share her assumptions, but that all these macabre creatures behold her as a foolish non-entity. When, for example, Alice explains to the Looking-Glass Red Queen that "she had lost her way" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 190), the Queen retaliates; "I don't know what you mean by *your* way (. . .) all the ways about here belong to *me*" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 191). This impression of Alice being a stranger in fantastical landscapes that are seeped in a deep-seated animosity towards her is embellished by Tenniel's "mimicking natural history illustrations" since, as Paolozzi (2015) explains, the "original scientific images of animals in their own natural environment normally do not include the presence of a human, especially a well-dressed little girl" (fig. 96).

One finds a reiteration between these fastidious creatures' rhetorical intensities and the treacherous dimension of language throughout Biblical exegesis, philosophy, literature, and history. In the second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul

writes that “the letter kills” (2 Corinthians 3:4-6, NKJV). In his posthumous fragments dating from 1882 till 1884 Nietzsche writes – “*To communicate oneself*” is ‘originally’ (. . .) ‘*to extend one’s power over the other.*’ Thus, a sign is ‘the (often painful) imprint of a will on another will’” (Han, 2005/2019, p. 23). As Blanchot (1949/1995b) writes – “The messenger is not master of his words (. . .) they are beyond his control” (p. 15). Byung-Chul Han (2005/2019) gives an example of synesthesia in the Nietzschean interpretation of language that strives for the “*conquest of the other*” (p. 23) and where “[u]nderstanding means obeying” (p. 23) -

The well-known story of the ‘muselmann,’ the inmate of a camp, demonstrates in frightening fashion the possibility of a language that is reduced to a *pure*, even *absolute*, giving of orders. The ‘muselmann,’ it is said, was unable to distinguish between the biting cold and the order of the concentration camp guards. The word of the other, in this case, is experienced by the body literally as a sting or a painful bite. This proximity between physical pain and the word forcefully points to the *possibility of a language that hurts*. (p. 102)

Primo Levi (1958/59) witnessed the Holocaust and after returning home he never tired to recount his grief-stricken experiences of the atrocities that occurred in the extermination camps to everyone. His memory simultaneously torments and inspires, his writings lend impressive moral authority witnessing the words received by the ‘muselmann’ - those who “suffer and drag themselves along in an opaque intimate solitude, and in solitude they die or disappear, without leaving a trace in anyone’s memory” (p. 102). Levi re-visits this agony upon the Ancient Mariner²⁶,

²⁶ Levi chooses the following epigraph to commence his final book *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986) – “Since then, at an uncertain hour,/ That agony returns,/ And till my ghastly tale is told/ This heart within me burns” (Coleridge, 1798/1970, p. 68).

one who is also restored to the company of the living. A phantom of the mind plunges Levi into physical searing pain, not only in true Romantic form but also in the harsh reality of trauma – “a crisis of representation. An extreme event is perceived as radically out of joint with one’s mental representation of the world” (Hirsch, 2004, p. 15).

The Ancient Mariner finds himself the vehicle for the “crisis of representation” in his confessions, a mere medium of agonizing revelation. Kearney (2002) sustains that “only when haphazard happenings are transformed into story, and thus made *memorable* over time, that we become full agents of our history” (p. 3). This “becoming historical” (p. 3) involves the anthropological claim that we are “a *narrative* identity” (p. 4) -

Without [the] transition from nature to narrative, from time suffered to time enacted and enunciated, it is debatable whether a merely biological life (*zoe*) could ever be considered a truly human one (*bios*). (p. 3)

In *Remnants of Auschwitz*, a philosophico-political study on the testimony of Auschwitz survivors, Giorgio Agamben (1998/1999) makes a deep analysis of the ‘muselmann’ referring to the notion of “biopower.”²⁷ Agamben describes how the Nazi “biopower” managed to reduce *bio* to *zoe*, by emptying their captives from human form. Once these prisoners are reduced to *zoe*, in the eyes of the “biopower,” they are without any human will or rights – “like the body of the overcomatose person and the neomort attached to life-support” (p. 156). In this way they made the claim that no one (or no human person) was murdered in the extermination camps, because the ones they killed had already let go of their humanity, they were “the

²⁷ “Biopower” is a term coined by Foucault (1976/1978) - “to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life” (p. 143).

absolutely unwitnessable” (p. 156). To what extent is the ‘muselmann’ a “Thing”? As the human who has been robbed of all human will or spirit or hope, one may say that the ‘muselmann’ is like a ghost, neither living (not as human) nor dead. In their oxymoronic life-in-death, they become like Actaeon, they are beyond killing. The ‘muselmann’ haunts us in their functioning as a mirror which shows us the level of extreme violence and degradation that we humans are capable of.

Perhaps the *Alice* plot is about the final achievement of the anthropological machine – human *logos* separated from the contamination of a monstrous imagination that continually returns to where wild things are. Alice’s sense of alienation and struggle to recognise herself throughout her dream adventures is perceived both subjectively and objectively. Her fantastical landscapes are pits of Victorian condemnation, where the *other* is implacably plunged. This attitude of rejection is, for itself, expressed socially by all the condescending creatures Alice encounters during her pilgrimage towards queenhood.

The little pilgrim’s “unheroic, accidental tumble” (Falconer, 2009, p. 7) into the White Rabbit’s hole and her “willfulness” (Falconer, 2009, p. 5) to the pretend play entry into the Looking-Glass *polis*, all stem from what Judith Bloomingdale (1971) calls – “the harrowing of the Victorian Hell” (p. 378). They emanate, as Sarah Gilead (1991) writes, from – “a child’s uncomprehending but lucid view of mad adult reality” (p. 282), or Alice’s trauma of tormenting vices, commandments and arbitrary rules from the damnation of the grown-up ‘world of progress.’

2.6 Speculating on melancholic *warmth* and a *remaindered K(night)* behind an *extimate window-pain*

The drawing-room where all the adventures through the Looking-Glass are set becomes a metonymy which is pervasive to that between a child and a haunted anchorhold that encloses her – *the thing in between*. Alice is seen in this haunted architectural setting as both *withdrawn* and *withdrawing*, as both closed off from the world and welcoming it via the *homely* that is being emptied out of its true function. Alice’s *withdrawal* in her drawing-room is cave- and womb-like, enclosed though it is within the physical restraints, as that of the damsel’s chamber in medieval literature, or a Foucauldian panopticon. This *withdrawing* is also haunted by the “withdrawing room” (Muthesius, 1982, p. 46) that denotes the area to which ladies retire after dinner with connotations of individuality, isolation, and patriarchalism. Let us henceforth call the interior space of Alice’s *immediate world* (her *Real Class* ‘Victorian family drawing-room’) - a *withdrawing space*.

Alice, like Kafka’s Gregor Samsa, is entrapped both physically and psychologically. Alice is entrapped by her body – the anxieties of growing up; the metamorphoses that the human and the protohuman, and the animal and the transhuman, continue to coexist and to vie for dominance in a continuous struggle - the struggle of the child, the adult, the animal. The coming of age girl is also entrapped by her social commitments - the maltreatment from a dreary Victorian sensibility. Carroll (1871/2015b) makes this entrapment clear as soon as his titular heroine penetrates the mirror and finds herself inside the “warmer” space of a “Looking-glass room” –

“So I shall be as warm here as I was in the old room,” thought Alice:

“warmer, in fact, because there’ll be no one here to scold me away

from the fire. Oh, what fun it'll be, when they see me through the glass in here, and ca'n't get at me!" (pp. 167 - 168)

The *warmth* seems always to be on the outside! Such trauma in identity crisis is realized in Alice's fantastical bestiary of haunting imagination which constantly reminds her of *lack*, or that which mirrors the abject - where one is drawn "to the place where meaning collapses" (Kristeva, 1980/1982b, p. 2). Her trauma is literally inscribed in the *heterotopia* of Looking-Glass House.

Curiously, the metaphor of *warmth* starts unfolding in a subtle manner even before Alice's *peripeteia* that led her through Looking-Glass Land. In her *withdrawing space*, Alice wonders with her black kitten, on a threshold between imagining and acting out, both in front and behind the reflective qualities of glass. She is privy to two distinct dreamlands. Behind the shiny surface of a windowpane, the little girl wonders if snow "*loves* the trees and fields" (p. 165) and wraps them cozily with a "white quilt" (p. 165). A paradox is immediately set! Alice feels warmth when gazing at the icy cold snow that kisses the warm glass of her house "all over outside" (p. 165), rather than the inside where a fire is set in a house associated with shelter and security. Alice is hyperbolizing the effect of a window-glass reflection and its dependence on her own amalgam of repressed perceptions.²⁸

Perhaps, one might say that Alice is *speculating*²⁹ in wonder how the snow "kisses (. . .) so gently" (p. 165) outside her *withdrawing space*. The window stands for a mirror that offers Alice an image of herself. From this point of view, Alice glances at her own reflection as she *speculates* whether non-human entities could

²⁸ These repressed perceptions include the phenomenology that transpires from analytical experiences of "primal repression" that demonstrates - "the paradoxical, deviant, erratic, eccentric, and even scandalous nature of desire that distinguishes it from need" (Lacan, 1966/2002a, p. 579).

²⁹ From the Latin *speculum* meaning 'mirror' but may also refer to "guess," "suppose," or "think" - concepts that can be applied to express the idea of "invention" (Kroesch, 1911).

have human passions. In glimpsing at herself she may wonder about things that are occurring outside, as though Alice were gazing at a mirror, and instead of merely gazing at *another*, she finds herself also gazing at *herself*. Alice's gaze is on the windowpane and seeing 'another' Alice, an Alice which is 'Other.' In contrast to the total opacity of a mirror, Alice's frosted window glass is translucent but not totally transparent. Light is seeping from the outside making it possible for the girl to perceive what is outside. Behind the window glass with the world as it were removed from her, with nothing much to see but the whiteness of the snow, she finds herself wondering about anthropomorphisms! In a way, Alice's glass is a dichroic one since what is gazed through is the outside colour of snow whiteness and the inside colour of a reflected amalgam of her flesh-tone pinkness combined with the puissant blackness of Kitty's fur coat.

The natural scene and the glass barrier both reflect and contrast with Alice's human emotions. The window glass of the heroine's *withdrawing space* and later the mirror of her *elsewhere space* both act as a barrier and also a passage - both offering or suggesting passage to a different realm but at the same time denying it - hence their aporetic nature. Both reflecting surfaces function as both passage and non-passage - or pass and *tres-pass*. One must remember that Victorian windows would not seal hermetically, thus snowflakes trespass into the house as they melt and seep through the window frame serving as a metaphor for Alice who is about to trespass into the Looking-Glass portal of the adult world/house. The snowflakes kiss the glass which melts them into dew with its inner *warmth*. In their transformed, melted, liquid form, the flakes may be allowed passage as water or droplets leaking through the window. Perhaps, in the snowflake metaphor there might also be some subliminal references to desire and the erotic associated with the themes of fluidity/*warmth* and

barred or allowed penetration. Is Carroll also hinting at a *coition space* in his *Alice* text?

The theme of liquidity and transformation is then carried over to the Looking-Glass. The mirror becomes liquid or glass, and the barrier becomes a passage. In parallel, Alice's subjectivity and individuality also become fluid - she is transformed by this passage and what lies beyond it. The snowflakes are 'kissing' the warm glass and trying to get into a space which is denied to them and in doing so they metamorphose by melting and transforming to water. Thus, the intimacy of the *withdrawing space* has become penetrable. The snowflake *tres-passes* from the outside into the window by its melting metamorphosis, transforming into dew until it finally infiltrates the House fluidly. It is, paradoxically, the exteriority of its outer coldness condensing into thin air that adjoins the interiority of the *warmth* of the outside snow via the misted window. Logically speaking, the water condensation in the air on the window-pane should have been propitiated by the heat of the fire, but in the nonsense text, it is the other way around!

The window offers or suggests passage to a *warmer* realm to an 'Other' outside. Here, *love* is in-visible, it is an internal exclusion occurring both from the inside of the 'House' and outside – the snowflake intruding inside the privacy of Alice's *withdrawing space*. In order to enter that strange alluring world of adulthood, Alice must be transformed, she must take on or accept the fluidity of both the mirror and the snowflake and then passage may be allowed but not for the child Alice, but rather for an Alice in transformation - A world full of new strange new dangers and promises as depicted on the metaphorical window-*pain*.

The metaphoricity of Alice's window-mirror, in its capacity to view from inside to outside, and vice versa, may be analyzed via "*extimité*" (p. 139)³⁰ which Lacan (1986/1997) describes as a medially conditioned state where opposites coincide. Translated into "intimate exteriority" (p. 139) or "extimacy" (p. 139), this term is a neologism of both foreign (*exterieur*, 'exterior') and familiar (*intimaté*, 'intimacy'). Is Alice, as a subject, glimpsing at *extimate* hints of her own transformation into the threshold of adulthood? Is she noticing subtle changes in her body? She is on the point of entering the adult world, she can see it and maybe or probably has these conflicting feelings; both wanting to belong to that world and, perhaps, also possibly sensing that it will be a different world which she will also regret having entered into.

In a fairy-tale, as Bettelheim (1976/77) writes, "internal processes are externalized and become comprehensible as represented by the figures of the story" (p. 25). This *extimacy* is very evident in how *Through the Looking-Glass* questions and repositions the notion of *withdrawal*. *Withdrawal*, as Carroll fictionalizes it, is both proximity to and distance from an object. Such internal exclusion in the fairy-tale fragment of the "melancholy farewell" moment appears both - in the relationship between Alice and the White Knight behind the mirror (in *elsewhere space*) - and in the paradoxical constructions of *warmth* in the window-*pain* metaphor (in *withdrawing space*).

The *extimacy* that once occurred keeps being reiterated even in the *withdrawing space* of the grown-up Alice. She continues to recall her non-sensical (K)nightmare which was once absorbed "like a picture" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 286) in her *half-dream*. In terms of the logic of *extimacy*, one can ask or wonder -

³⁰ Lacan (1986/1997) also refers to *extimité* as "the Thing" (p. 139).

Who did this event happen to? Did it happen to the child Alice, or to the adult Alice? Is the adult Alice remembering the last moment of a childhood which is now lost to her, or the first moment of adulthood which she now inhabits? Obviously, both these are true and hence the structure of “extimacy.’ At this moment Alice is unhinged – or the ‘her(non)self’ hinges between the child Alice and the adult Alice. Again, here we have the structure or movement of wavering or waving between two *selves*, or two spaces – belonging to none and to both at the same time.

The question, which in part is that of the unnarratable, arises - Why is the adult Alice *going back* there (through the Looking-Glass) again? We know that during the story Alice is on her way to becoming a Queen, but we do not know where the adult Alice will lead to, though there is a premonition of this in being stuck in the same traumatic dream – as Falconer (2008) sustains – “Abjection, as we have understood it, can be experienced at any stage of life, and not once but many times” (p. 128).

It is the “melancholy farewell” episode that Alice keeps “always remember[ing] most clearly” even “[y]ears afterwards she could bring the whole scene back again, as if it had been only yesterday.” This is her most intimate moment from all her Looking-Glass dream-thoughts, recollected from fond memories “as if it had been only yesterday.” It is a critical moment in the event of passage and (trans)formation – both transformative and formative in its metaphorical condensation and metonymical displacement. Alice “remains faithful” to the K(night) of her lost “childhood’s nest of gladness” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 157) “refusing to renounce her attachment” to him. The knight represents, or stands in for, the last step or the last Square of her childhood. Once she loses sight of the knight, her childhood self is lost. But can one ever let go of one’s childhood self? Do we

mourn our childhood successfully or do we remain melancholic? Melancholy is unlike mourning, in which the lost object is known, identified in order to be grieved for, as Žižek (2000) explains -

In the process of the loss, there is always a remainder that cannot be integrated through the work of mourning, and the ultimate fidelity is the fidelity to this remainder. Mourning is a kind of betrayal, the second killing of the (lost) object, while the melancholic subject remains faithful to the lost object, refusing to renounce his or her attachment to it. (p. 658)

In contradiction to mourning, “the lost object” is withdrawn from the conscious and resides in the unconscious maze. Freud (1915/2009) tells us that both mourning and melancholy are generated by loss and “narcissistic identification” (p. 26). Notwithstanding this similitude, mourning manifests after the death of a loved one while the *remainder* of love in melancholy is not irrevocably lost. Melancholy is about a loss that is sometimes retrievable, it is “related to an object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness, in contradiction to mourning, in which there is nothing about the loss that is unconscious” (p. 21). Thus, the adult Alice’s haunting by her Knight makes her a perennial melancholic since their melancholy farewell never comes to an end. She is a perennial melancholic because she never overcomes her childhood dreams epitomized by her *remaindered* hero.

The melancholy of the grown-up Alice lies at the heart of a division within her ego – in Freudian terms, “[a] part of the ego opposes the other, criticizing and belittling it” (Han, 2011/2018, p. 21).³¹ As an adult, Alice remains faithful to her

³¹ Freud (1915/2009) gives an interpretation of both pathological and aesthetical qualities that are ultimately characterised by an expression of grief for an unnameable, unknowable loss where; “countless separate struggles are carried on over the object, in which hate and love contend with each

White Knight. She is *going back* there on her own terms, not as a narcissist who gazes at herself in front of a mirror, because she cannot just be an autonomous hero. On her journey she needs the gallant blunderer as a helper. She encounters an *other* hero in the White Knight, and via that melancholic hero, coming across the *other* heart as helper, is what obviates the tendency, even in a seven-and-a-half-year-old girl, toward the pretensions of the adult world. Paradoxically, the smiling face on this knight might leave us perplexed as to whether it suggests the most complete simplicity or extreme perversity. Or, perhaps, the *absent presence* of an Orphic paradigm in the finiteness of Alice as a human animal, human vegetable, and/or human mineral?

What is this *other* that Alice longs for in the *extimacy* of her *withdrawing space*? Is it the fear that one day she might become what Volkan (2009) terms as a “perennial mourner” (p. 90) - burying the the *remainder* of her beloved K(night) “through many burials, reincarnations, and reburials” until his image becomes “cold and futureless” (p. 94)? Is it the *warmth* of a *betrothal space*? Or, is it a haunting of this *warmth* doomed to be frozen by the eternal coldness of a “melancholy maiden” summoned “to unwelcome bed”?

A further paradox that arises in *Through the Looking-Glass* is the temporal difference between Alice’s musings behind the window-*pain* and her travels through the Looking-Glass. In the nonsense narrative the latter seems to exceed the former to much greater extent, however, in his discourse on the central mechanisms of dreamwork, Freud (1900/2010) points out that -

Dreams are brief, meagre and laconic in comparison with the range
and wealth of the dream-thoughts. If a dream is written out it may

other” (p. 32). This sense of loss, or the presence of a lack, is that which applies to the loss of potential, the loss of something that may not have existed, and yet could have.

perhaps fill half a page. The analysis setting out the dream-thoughts underlying it may occupy six, eight or a dozen times as much space.
(p. 296)

2.7 (In)fringing in-between two mirrors: A comparative study in the heterotopic and extimate spaces of *Through the Looking-Glass*, Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, and Johannes Vermeer's *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window*

In comparative terms, *Through the Looking-Glass* finds close analogies with two old master paintings - Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656) and Johannes Vermeer's *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* (1657 - 1659). All three works of art appropriate the mirror to concurrently reveal and distort perspective, creating optical traps that weld visibility with invisibility. In addition to the (re)presented mirror, all three teasingly imply an *(un)represented* one! They continuously make the viewer wonder what is outside of the frame than can be perceived. Moreover, all three artists place a small girl in the centre of their 'composition' as a pivotal "subjective condition of sensibility."³² An entwining of several coming-of-age arcs are triggered in the notion of the protagonist's space as a detachable constituent of the reality it (re)presents. Imbued with a dense network of meanings, each meta-portrait continues to perplex scholars and allow multiple interpretations and varied theories ever since their creation.

Alice and the *Infanta* are placed in a central position of a space in-between two mirrors - in the case of Alice this position is in front of the mirror and behind the window-glass, the *Infanta* is behind Velazquez's 'real' canvas and in front of the

³² One could detect these portraitists' instinct in visual metaphor and metonym in the writings of Kant (trans. 1998) – "Space is nothing other than merely the form of appearances of outer sense, i.e., the subjective condition of sensibility, under which alone outer intuition is possible for us" (p. 177).

hanging mirror at the back of the room. Amongst his complex strategic tools in composition, Velázquez adopts a similar *mise-en-scène* technique as that produced in van Eyck's *The Arnolfini Portrait* (1434; fig. 16).³³ A “silvered” (Miller, 1998, p. 78) reflection on a mirror at the back of the Spanish palace room reveals an intriguing viewer's perspective - that of King Philip IV together with his wife Queen Mariana. As Perez (1998) explains – “That mirror could be said to represent the painting's reverse angle, or better, the painting could be said to represent the reverse angle of that mirror, the point of view of the king and queen of Spain, the field of vision lying before their eyes” (p. 301). In Velázquez's (un)represented (re)presentation,³⁴ the beholder gazes at *royal sovereign space*.

The eyes of their daughter Margaret are riveted to those directly outward at whoever is standing behind Velázquez's easel. Apart from the spectator's eyes, is her gaze falling on those of her parents' or Velázquez's who is the “eye-witness” of the picture? Is this latter hypothesis perhaps showing the monarchy's strong personal rapport with the court painter? Let us postulate similar questions on Carroll's Looking-Glass scenario where Alice is inside the diegetic framing portrait of her *withdrawing space*. Are we seeing the whole setting reiterated, once again, as a musing on art? Is the mirror hanging on the fireplace in Alice's *withdrawing space* revealing another viewer's perspective - that of Alice Liddell or Dodgson himself perhaps? Is this hypothesis perhaps showing a strong personal rapport between the Looking-Glass princess and the ‘court writer’? Akin to the *Meninas*, *Through the*

³³ The International Gothic style painting (fig. 16) depicts a small wall mirror at the backside of a room subtly reflecting the space behind a couple's betrothal. On the reflected surface of the mirror, the onlooker may observe the artist amidst his act of creation. Gombrich (1950) tells us that “[f]or the first time in history the artist became the perfect eye-witness in the truest sense of the term” (p. 175).

³⁴ In the essay on *Las Meninas* that opens *The Order of Things*, Foucault (1966/2002) discloses - “In the depth that traverses the picture, hollowing it into a fictitious recess and projecting it forward in front of itself, it is not possible for the pure felicity of the image ever to present in a full light both the master who is representing and the sovereign who is being represented” (p. 17).

Looking-Glass gives importance to the girl who is on the *fringe* of becoming a Queen!



15. Velázquez, D. (1656). *Las Meninas* [Oil on canvas].

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. 318 x 276 cm.



16. Van Eyck, J. (1434). *The Arnolfini Portrait* [Oil on oak panel].
National Gallery, London. 82.2 cm x 60 cm.

Behind the surface of their mirrors, both Alice and Margaret see themselves where they are not. The virtual unreal *heterotopia* of their *royal sovereign space* is a mirror land where they are neither in one place nor another, but where they have the potential to experience multiple places at once inside the same physical space. Both girls trespass through the threshold of their mirror and enter in what Foucault

(1967/1997) calls - the “depths of that virtual space which is on the other side of the mirror” (p. 332).

In each *royal sovereign space*, Alice and the *Infanta* dwell in a mirror-world as the basis of a duality of centres in the infant world and where neither one of these centres is the ego. Their human identity exists as a malleable (re)presentation in a *heterotopic* construct. The mirror-world in which both belong metaphorizes them as a plate of glass-sheet in the in-between space they are depicting in - a kind of third space or, as Derrida (1993/1995a) would interpret it – a “half-way place” or “something that is only half place, “*mi-lieu*”” (p. 116). These girls are fragile vessels easily broken, but yet draw their strength from the passing through, from the becoming, from movement, from the micro. What denotes a girl is not regression, pathology, or abnormality, but rather a dissolving of the binaries of man/woman and adult/child as Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2005) explain -

She is an abstract line, or a line of flight. Thus girls do not belong to an age group, sex, order, or kingdom: they slip in everywhere, between orders, acts, ages, sexes (. . .). The only way to get outside the dualisms is to be-between, to pass between, the intermezzo (. . .). The girl is like the block of becoming that remains contemporaneous to each opposable term, man, woman, child, adult. It is not the girl who becomes a woman; it is becoming-woman that produces the universal girl. (p. 582)

The girl resides in a shadowy and marginal area in which opposite forces reside within. She is always a “becoming-woman” constantly traversing the confines between childhood and adulthood, naivety and wisdom, innocence and disenchantment. There are many names ascribed to the *genius loci* of her in-between

state. Literary theorist Kenneth Burke (1945/1969) calls it “consubstantiality” (p. 29). Anthropologist Victor W. Turner (1974) terms this in-between and in-between positioning as “liminal” (p. 53) and “liminoid” (p. 53) in a tribal ritual context. In his autobiographical reflections on survival in the Nazi concentration camps, Primo Levi (1986/1989) calls this liminal zone the “grey zone” (p. 21) recalling the greyish marginal portion of a sunspot; the penumbra. Swiss-German artist Paul Klee describes his ‘semi-abstract’³⁵ paintings as – “a ‘region-between (*Zwischen-Reich*),’ a region between ‘representational (*gegenständlich*)’ and non-representational art” (Young, 2001, p. 161).

Children are “outside” - they are ““other” (. . .) sheathed in their alien status” (Belanza et al., 2015). They are the bearers of the “cherubim throne” (Anonymous, 1976 edition, p. 322) in Christ’s descent in Hell. They are transgendered winged cherubs visually conceived from the iconography of “Graeco-Roman “loves” or *Erotas*” (Albright, 1938, p. 1), uncovered from the excavations of Pompeii such as the one, from the Villa of the Mysteries, that captures the bride’s gaze in a reflection (fig. 54). However, unlike the *Erotas*’s obsidian mirror, glass is continuously reflecting the dual nature of both Carroll’s and Velázquez’s main protagonists where their coming to be, coming of age, or *self* is located – they are “no longer a mass of undifferentiated signs, but not yet the organized and knowable world of the full symbolic subject” (Webb, 2009, p. 67).

³⁵ In his notes on Klee, Heidegger writes about that which is permanently captured by the work of art in a state of ambiguous vacillation or a phenomenological “tension of emerging and not emerging” (Thomson, 2011, p. 89). Heidegger (1960/1993b) refers to this dynamic union of “clearing and concealing” (p. 187) whereby being becomes intelligible in time as “the movement of the clearing of self-concealment as such” (p. 209).



17. Anonymous Second Style Pompeian artist. (ca. 60 – 50 BCE). *Bride, Attendant, and Eros* (Detail) [Mural]. Villa of Mysteries, Pompeii.

Both Alice and Margaret are about to be unlodged from the period of latency. They reside in an in-between state of developing understandings, for they are both - at once child and no longer child; amorphous solid and extremely fragile - “skilled and honed by the struggle with language and still rebellious against its constraints” (Beer, 2016, p. 3). Carroll’s heroine plays a children’s game of let’s pretend with her kitten but at the same time admonishes it like an *ideal adult*. The Spanish princess is trying her best to impart a hint of breath to the stiff, farthingale attire designed to extend and shape her like an *ideal adult*. These children are shadows of adults, they are children shadowed by adults. Both are adapting to their “adult community” for as Lyotard (1988/1991) writes -

the child is eminently the human because its distress heralds and promises things possible. Its initial delay in humanity, which makes it the hostage of the adult community, is also what manifests to this community the lack of humanity it is suffering from, and which calls on it to become more human. (p. 4)

Notwithstanding all these very close analogies, there are some crucial differences between Alice and Margaret. Both children possess *omnipotence* which Beer (2016) describes as “a sense that often grows doubtful by eight years old” (p. 8). Nevertheless, Margaret’s class status entails an indulgence of privileges which prolongs this sense of power, after all she is about to become the Empress of the Holy Roman Empire. In this sense, Alice is less socially human than the *Infanta*, as Webb (2009) explains, she is “not yet admitted to the community of human beings; for instance, she is not considered capable enough to be allowed to vote or enter into commercial contracts” (p. 67). The *Real Class* ‘Alice Liddle’ who belonged to Victorian times was bereft of the ballot even as an adult and, moreover, was forced to sell her personalized Christmas present that Carroll gave her. This hand-illustrated manuscript, entitled *Alice’s Adventures Under Ground* (the first draft of *Alice in Wonderland*), was auctioned “to pay death duties after the death of her husband” (Rothman, 2015)!

Another difference between Alice and Margaret is *isolation* which is exemplified in their portrayals. Alice plays alone with her pet cats in her *withdrawing space*, unlike the *Infanta* who interacts and plays with an entourage of maids of honour, chaperones, a dog, her parents, the artist himself, and other courtiers. There are no physical presences of *other humans* around Alice. Carroll’s girl seems to be quarantined in her isolation as though protecting herself from a

pandemical coronation! In this respect her spatialization partakes of a different kind from that of Margaret who enjoys access to grander and safer spaces like that wealthiest class in Chaucer's plague tales.



18. Vermeer, J. (1657 - 1659). *A Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* [Oil on canvas].
Gemäldegalerie, Dresden. 83 x 64.5 cm.

Vermeer's *A Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* (1657 – 1659; fig. 18) also portrays a girl caught in-between two mirrors and isolated in her privacy of body and thought. The Dutch master shares van Eyck's and Velázquez's profound feeling for mirror themes conveyed through visual allusions in a painting style of great subtlety, this time adopting a window-frame at the back of the room. In Vermeer's masterpiece, as most probably also in that of Velázquez³⁶, it is the mirror of a *camera obscura* that is placed in front of the centralized subject. The crucial difference with his Spanish counterpart is that rather than having the back 'mirror' facing the spectator, Vermeer tilts it towards the subject herself.

Vermeer portrays his anonymous girl inside a curiously intimate setting bathed in incandescent light streaming inside from an open window. This work's penchant for metaphoric *fringes* is shown in its *mise en scène*. It is conspicuous in the pale green curtain drooping from a horizontal rod stretching across the upper part of the composition. Placed in the foreground, this curtain is pulled back to let the viewer spy upon a confidential moment. The master's fascination with *fringes* is also subtly nuanced in another tilted object - the charger with the toppling "sensuous fruit" (Snyder, 2015, p. 10) which also stands between the onlooker and the girl. Perhaps, this metaphor is most disturbingly implied in the distorted macabre reflection of the girl's face on the glass panes of the widely open window's lower right quadrant (fig. 19) – another hyperbolic effect of a window-glass reflection exaggerated to spectral grotesqueness!

³⁶ In *Secret Knowledge*, David Hockney (2001) claims that Velázquez started a "collection of mirrors" (p. 269) as a tool for a lens-based painting technique since at least 1618. This theory is further substantiated by an investigation conducted by Miguel Usandizaga, professor of art at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia, with the aid of computer-aided drawing (CAD) techniques and a recently discovered smaller replica of *Las Meninas* that functioned as "a negative or slide" (Wilkinson, 2020).



19. Vermeer, J. (1657 - 1659). *A Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* (Detail) [Oil on canvas].
Gemäldegalerie, Dresden. 83 x 64.5 cm.

Like Princess Margaret, Vermeer's girl and Alice have their gaze riveted - one to a letter, the other at the outside scenery filtered by her own distorted reflection on the windowpane. Both Carroll and Vermeer manage to convey, in a subtle and eerie manner, an 'alien' schematic mirror of a girl immersed in thoughts or dreams. Alice dreams with her kitten whilst the Flemish girl immerses herself within the eponymous letter's content - both are dialectically sustaining a pictorial

(re)presentation of the outward-facing ego and the shadowy phantoms of the inward *imago*. In these glass metaphors, the physicality of glass functions to (re)present its very absence by exhausting the question of pictorial and textual temporality and their *extimate* (re)presentations. *Extimacy*, which un-does the binary between the foreign body and the intimate kernel, locates itself in the girls' window-*pain* where the exterior coexists with the most intimate interiority, or, where the horror of their dream spatialization is being gauged.

In both Vermeeresque and Carrollesque *extimacies*, one is enticed to read a birdcage metaphor symbolizing the protagonist's sense of confinement. Both damsels in distress are associated with a caged bird longing for freedom in their oppressive environment. Although Vermeer's window is wide open, his letter-reader's anima is phantasmatically imprisoned in the window's reflective glass. In both works, there seems to be an affinity with the twelfth century old French poem *Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart* by Chrétien de Troyes (trans. 1997) where Queen Guinièvre reaches out to Lancelot through her window to touch and kiss him. The queen expresses her feelings for her lover through the "great iron bars" (p. 145) that visibly protect her chastity. Are both Carroll and Vermeer asking for a similar liaison? Are they breaching boundaries to make their intermediate *withdrawing space* accessible?

Both haunted girls and their askew portraits of the *other* on a windowpane are inextricably interlaced behind the *extimate* spacing around them just as Echo, Narcissus and his *imago* are inextricably intertwined in a *love* entanglement behind that of Mount Cithaeron in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. It is this *love* that imbues and gives new life to Narcissus's own effigy. It is via this *love* that Echo³⁷ is caught

³⁷ Echo's divine retribution is "to wait for sounds which she might re-echo with her own voice" (Ovid, trans. 1955, p. 84). Out of love, she haunts Narcissus; "Like a starving wolf/ Following a stag too

inexorably within an aporetic veil through the appropriation and ex-appropriation of the *other's* words. Is it this *love* that exceeds – a snowflake invitation to be covered comfortably with a “white quilt”; or, a tormenting revocation from a melancholic betrothal by an afflicting memorandum?³⁸ Perhaps, the answer to this conundrum might explain the designation Carroll gives to his Looking-Glass fairy-tale - a “love-gift” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 157)!

Perhaps, even *Las Meninas* recalls attributes from Mount Cithaeron - an in-between dipolar field source having both a north and south magnetic pole. The way in which Velázquez's spatialization becomes non-place and non-thing is reminiscent not only of the Lacanian real and the Gnostic tradition of the Abyss, but also of what Plato (trans. 2008) calls the *Khōra* or “third kind” (p. 40), that original void from which all beings emerge. It is an *extimate* space where self-negation, or altruism in loving support, and narcissistic egocentrism coexist.

Velázquez's and Vermeer's girl portraits belong to a certain contemporaneous moment in the history of Western thought. The former belongs to the Golden Age of Spanish Art, whilst the latter pertains to that of Dutch Art. Similar to the Victorian age, both golden ages were times of *omnipotence* and fascinations with *fringes*, whether that *fringe* was located in the country's own natural preserve or in their “Other” colonies - the “far distant and often threatening Otherness” (Said, 1978/1979, p. 21).

strong to be tackled” (Hughes, 1997, p. 76) - to speak after the other, “for the other will have spoken first” (Derrida, 1988/1989, p. 37). *Love* is the ultimate transgression that transforms Echo's utterances from reiteration into a transcendent response to finally unite both dreamers together. Such spectral transcendence in repetition takes the reader on a dream adventure “as a process of iteration and ex-appropriation, which must always take the form of, and gain its force from, a loving affirmation” (DeArmitt, 2013, p. 126). The haunted *imago* can capture uncertainty and contradiction in a loving affirmation without having to resolve it - remaining suggestive rather than to be fully decoded.

³⁸ The term ‘memorandum’ has a double reference in this chapter's context – the letter in Vermeer's painting and the White Queen's cry at the start of Alice's adventure through the Looking-Glass - “[t]hat's not a memorandum of *your* feelings!” (p. 174), scolding her for guiding the White King's pencil to write involuntarily on his “enormous memorandum-book” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 173).

Alice, Margaret, and the anonymous letter-reader haunt the *fringes* - they cross a threshold that is beyond its borders.

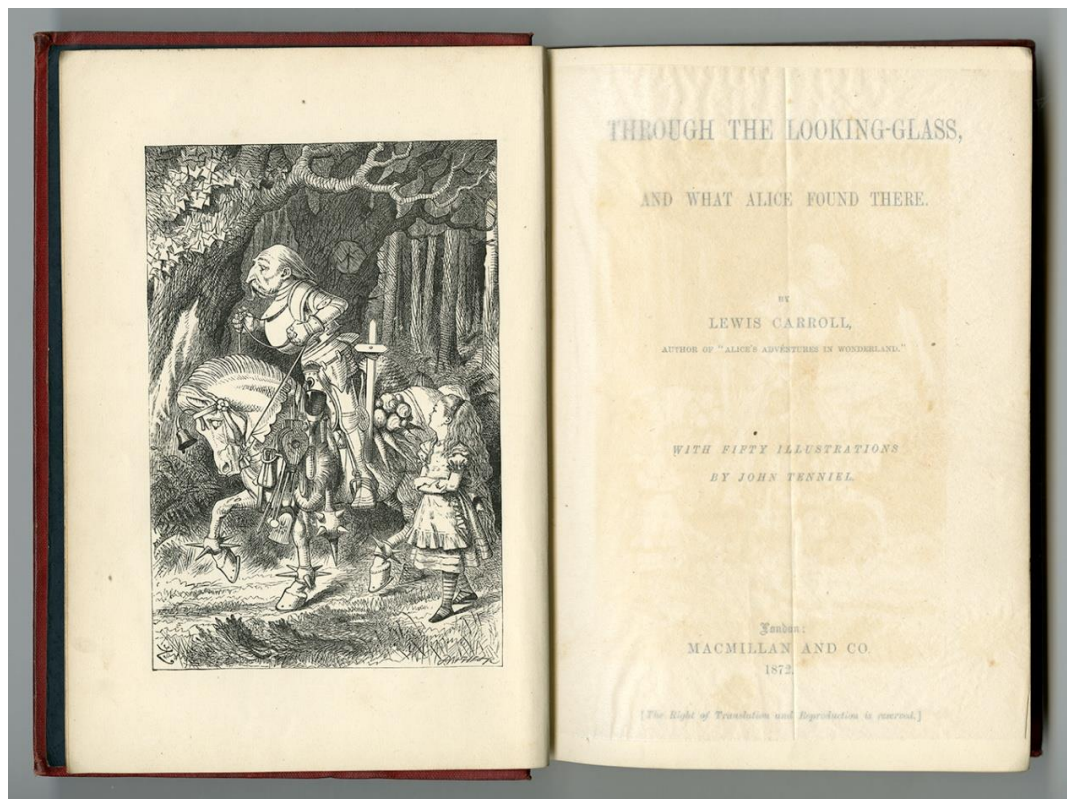
2.8 Anagogic *ex-centricity* in the Quixotic *heterotopia* of the Seventh Square: Picturing a melancholic (K)nightmare of Faith with Alice's *sudarium*

All the *strange Things* that Alice meets in her journey from the reckless fall in the rabbit-hole up through the Looking-Glass are all a metaphor about metamorphosis that amounts illogically to a critique of naming. Her adventures from the start takes her into the Platonic depths of a dark hole in the ground to a terrain where she can whet her curiosity on who Alice is. Thus, loss of names may indicate not only a crisis in the definition of the Self but also a cognitive chaos leading to a *regressus ad uterum*. In the dream logic of Alice's other worlds there is involved a process of *other-ing*, which occurs by way of an identity crisis, hence the frequent danger of forgetting names; in Wonderland, the jurors even write down their own names at the start of the hearing "for fear they should forget them before the end of the trial" (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 129). Carroll (1871/2015b) constantly questions historical or semantic links between alphabet, object and identity. In the wood "where things have no names" (p. 208), the little pilgrim ponders -

I wonder what'll become of *my* name when I go in? I shouldn't like to lose it at all - because they'd have to give me another, and it would be almost certain to be an ugly one. But then the fun would be, trying to find the creature that had got my old name! (p. 208)

In this enchanted place, Alice and the Fawn with "large, gentle eyes" (p. 209) are not afraid of one making both temporarily free of all vestiges of social and species-exclusion. In as systematic an inversion as can be imagined, cerebration,

abstraction, and finally ego-identity itself are lost in a cauldron of overwhelming logical instabilities. This idyll terminates when they remember their names, and when they do, the Fawn runs away in a “sudden look of alarm” (p. 210).



20. Carroll, L (1872a). *Frontispiece - Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* [Illustration by John Tenniel, wood-engraving by George and Edward Dalziel].
London: Macmillan and Co.

It is the White Knight who saves Alice from the Red Knight and guides her to her final destination - he is her intimate aspect. Withal the traumatic experience of her dream adventures, Alice will never stop reminiscing on her bumbling hero and the brief moment of tenderness between them. It is he who guides her from the turmoils of all the demeaning characters behind the Looking-Glass. It is he who leads her away from the wood “where things have no names” (p. 208) singing his melancholy song whose name proliferates with the linguistic expression of multiple call-names – “*Haddocks’ Eyes*,” “*The Aged Aged Man*,” “*Ways and Means*,” and

“*A-sitting on a Gate.*” In such a display of uncommon valour we might need alternative models for posthuman virtue, and here we can profitably draw on resources from the doctrinal tradition of Christology, another critical aspect that Carroll devoutly professed during his lifetime and evoked in his nonsense multiverse.

Alice’s encounter with the White Knight is given central prominence in *Through the Looking-Glass* by being illustrated on the frontispiece of the text (fig. 20). Designed by John Tenniel and wood-engraved by George and Edward Dalziel, this image shows Alice being guided by the mock-heroic resplendent knight in the Seventh Square. The knight carries all sorts of weird contraptions, from a carrying-case “to keep clothes and sandwiches in” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 277) that only opens at the bottom intended to keep out the rain, to a set of spiked anklets to “guard against the bites of sharks” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 278).

Withal his burlesque features, this rider bears close resemblances with Albrecht Dürer’s etching entitled *Knight, Death, and the Devil* (fig. 21). In both illustrations, the central upright figure of the armoured knight astride its horse is seen in profile riding through a narrow gorge. Both riders and steeds gaze doggedly straight ahead, not allowing their gaze to be distracted or disrupted. Tenniel places a dangling bell in front of the White Knight’s horse to accentuate this line of vision. Both horsemen ride against the darkness of a shadowy crag surrounded by a tangled mass of harness and branches contrasting vividly with their rocklike appearance.

In Dürer’s illustration, the grim reaper holds an hourglass to escort the knight towards his doomed destiny. Its gaze is steered fixedly at those of the resilient horseman whilst riding a steed that gazes at a skull placed directly in their path. The horned goat-like countenance of the pale rider echoes that of the devil seen lurking behind. The condescending knight towers in size over these bestial creatures - his

shining armour is symbolic of the resilience of faith, as are the flanking dog and the fortress on the distant hilltop. The specific target of his obstinate endeavour is specified directly in one of Dürer's diaries recording that the engraving was conceived intentionally in a reaction of a grievance –

O Erasme Roderodame, where wilt thou take thy stand? Look, of what avail is the unjust tyranny of worldly might and the powers of darkness? Hark, though Knight of Christ [*du Ritter Christi*], ride forth at the side of Christ our Lord, protect the truth, obtain the crown of the Martyrs! (Panofsky, 1943/1995, p. 151)



21: Dürer, A. (1513). *Knight, Death, and the Devil* [Engraving].

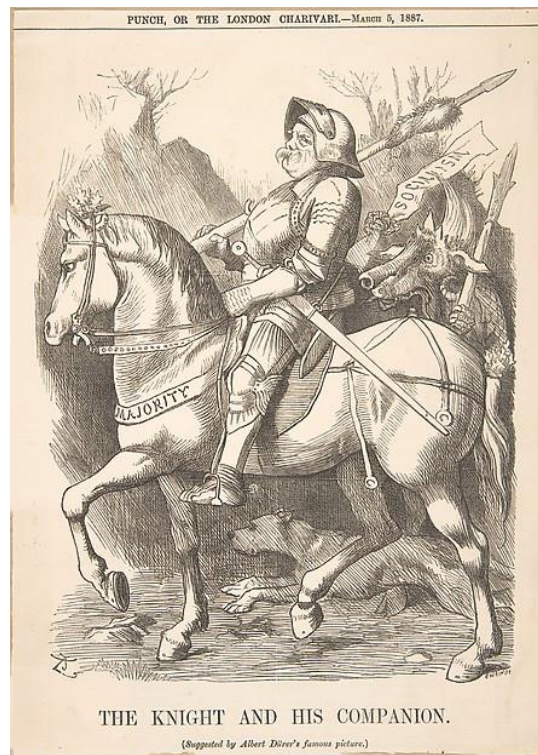
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Sheet: 25 x 19.6 cm. Plate: 24.3 x 18.8 cm.

There are no existing documents that state whether the Dürer parody was intentional or not. However, we do know that “Tenniel had a copy of the Dürer” (Gardner, 1960/2015, p. 275) which he directly parodied for the satire *The Knight and His Companion* (1887) published in the periodical *Punch*, using the old master’s copy to comment on contemporary debates about socialism, elections, and majority rule (fig. 22). We also know that Carroll oversaw his collaborator’s progress with a fastidiousness that Tenniel would eventually find maddening. Carroll the author, working as an impresario to the *Alice* texts, had made certain that in image and text Alice would be all of a piece. Thus, the parody of Dürer’s illustration by both “busy perfectionists” (Douglas-Fairhurst, 2015, p. 143), whether deliberate or not, must furnish us a clue to an anagogic interpretation of the White Knight’s iconography. Is the figurative and literal armour of the White Knight’s faith serving as a protection from the threatening surrounding forces skulking amongst the straggly tree roots cropping from under the *heterotopia* of *Looking-Glass Spectre-House*?

Perhaps, Alice’s half-dream also finds its metonym in Carroll’s beliefs as a devout Anglican clergyman seeing “the invisible world as complementary rather than antagonistic to Christianity” (Douglas-Fairhurst, 2015, p. 288). Both *Alice* books, as Douglas-Fairhurst (2015) writes, “had carefully avoided religious impropriety: when Carroll was told that the passion flower he wanted to use in ‘The Garden of Live Flowers’ might be interpreted as a reference to the Passion of Christ, he quickly changed it to a tiger lily” (p. 216). Is Carroll projecting his Christian beliefs in the *eccentric* White Knight? Is the knight’s act of guiding Alice recalling the Christian Gospel where Peter protests to Jesus who is about to wash his feet?³⁹

³⁹ In Christ’s act, performed at a time when it was customary that the person of lowest rank washes the guest’s feet, a novel sense of what it means to be a helper is ushered - “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me (. . .). I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly

Hybridity is essential to the White Knight's participation in the human, much similar to Christ who is both a human person embodied in a living history and also a divine trans-historical entity. The stumbling subject is decentered, his center is outside of himself, he is *ex-centric*. Lacan (1966/2002a) unfolds the neologism "existence" (p. 6) to express the idea that the heart of our being *Kern unseres Wesen* "the self's radical *ex-centricity*" (Lacan, 1966/1989, p. 130) is also radically Other, strange, outside - the "eccentric place" (p. 6). The Other is "something strange to me, although it is at the heart of me" (Lacan, 1986/1997, p. 71).⁴⁰



22. Tenniel, J. (1887). *The Knight and His Companion*. Illustration for *Punch*
[Wood-engraving by George and Edward Dalziel].

I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them" (John 13:1-15, NIV).

⁴⁰ The Other is quite distinct from how Karl Marx (1932/1988) applies the term *entfremdete* in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844), usually translated as 'alienated' to describe an undesirable condition he calls "*estranged, alienated labor*" (p. 82). As Bonfiglio (2017) explains – "*Entfremden* contains the root *fremd*, which means strange or foreign, and the prefix *ent*, which corresponds to the English "out of," as well as to the Latin *ex*. Thus, the meaning would be something like "to make strange, to extract into strangeness," as in the English "estrange"" (p. 37).

The White Knight exists through *ex-sistence*. He depends on human approbation - “as the effect of men’s referring to him” (Žižek, 2015, p. 29). Empson (1935/1971) claims that the White Knight, dressed in ill-fitted armour, is “an important figure for whom Dodgson is willing to break the language of humor into the language of sentiment” (p. 351). This gentle buffoon who treats Carroll’s heroine with uncharacteristic courtesy (for someone behind the mirror) is the *ex-centric* knight in chess-board land that leaps over the intervening squares, as Alexander Taylor (1952) explains –

This is the symbolism of chess, the horseman’s leap expressed by allowing the Knight to move two squares in any direction and one at right angles to that direction – a cross-section of a leap. Nevertheless, it makes no difference to the Knight if the intervening squares are packed with friends or foes. He can leap to a vacant square, take an enemy piece or deliver check over their heads. It is this third dimension which enables him to perform his little miracles, his sudden, unlooked-for interventions in the game. (p. 112)

Through this “third dimension,” this clumsy gentleman is the only character of Looking-Glass House that has some sort of understanding in the rules of the strange chess game that organize their existence. It is in this *ex-centric* leaping course that he loses contact with the surface and “briefly, glimpse[s] our world” (p. 115). The *ex-centric* knight that sings of “*madly squeez[ing] a right-hand foot/ Into a left-hand shoe*” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 288) is a phantom who is perfectly *out of joint*. The White Knight is an *ex-centric* outsider and recognizes solitariness as his condition, he is the solitary prisoner who escapes from the Cave of Plato (trans. 2000) only to return and become “swamped by the darkness” (p. 222). He has the

passion of life, as Camus (1942/1955) recognizes in an existential model based around “the illusions of *freedom*” (p. 53) -

The divine availability of the condemned man before whom the prison doors open in a certain early dawn, that unbelievable disinterestedness with regard to everything except for the pure flame of life – it is clear that death and the absurd are here the principles of the only reasonable freedom: that which a human heart can experience and live. (p. 52)

The “black shadows” emitted from the White Knight’s *ex-centricity* are fragments that are omitted when entering Neverland. Peter Pan’s passionate insistence - “I don’t want ever to be a man (. . .) I want always to be a little boy and to have fun” (Barrie, 1911/2005, p. 51) - is a proclamation of his inability to reach adulthood and a refusal to renounce his *jouissance* which “implies precisely the acceptance of death” (Lacan, 1986/1997, p. 189). Peter Pan’s and his lost boys’ refrain from growing-up is *ex-centrally* distressing because it indicates that they have already passed away, without any shadows. Likewise, the White Knight prefers to inhabit the *other* side of the Alice’s mirror and abandon “the black shadows of the forest behind” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 286), rather than existing in the Symbolic.

Unlike the mirror stage which engages essentially with the “*identification*” of “the *I*” (Lacan, 1966/2002a, p. 76), the shadow stage “involves mainly the identification of the *other*” (Stoichita, 1997, p. 31). In this perspective one might understand why Narcissus is enamoured of his own specular image rather than his shadow; or why, to Butades, the object of his daughter’s love is the *other*’s shadow. Or, perhaps, why my two-year old son Michael, when gazing at his own shadow cast by the sun and realizing that it somehow belonged to him, pointed to its head and

exclaimed – “no face”!⁴¹ The shadowless White Knight is always there to assist the *other's* shadow.

In terms of *extimacy*, Alice's intimate or most interior aspect is her White Knight and her catoptric encounter with him. As Bloomingdale (1971) writes - “This is the mystical moment for Alice. Not her own coronation, but that of the true King of the Looking-Glass World (. . .) the risen Christ radiant with scars - Christ as Clown” (p. 388). He is the spectral chronotope⁴² to the mythical paradigm of “my Lord Don Quixote” (de Unamuno, 1914/1984, p. 124) - “a holy fool associated with religious paradox” (Ziolkowski, 2008, p. 213).⁴³ As Cox (1969/1998) explains - “The clown is constantly defeated, tricked, humiliated, and tromped upon. He is infinitely vulnerable, but never finally defeated” (pp. 530 - 531). Alice's hero is endowed with the grave courteous mien of Cervantes's tireless hero – idealistic and dignified, yet also absurd and isolated - “the makings of a true Romantic, a just and virtuous hero, persecuted by an uncomprehending age” (Wood, 2005, p. 9). He is the Hegelian hero of submission⁴⁴ exemplifying the core of Quixotism in which its key ideologeme or “Quixotegeme” (p. 30) is described by Iffland (1987) as –

⁴¹ One is tempted here to mention another child's response to a similar situation. Through studying children's reactions to the origins of the shadow, Jean Piaget (1927/1930) discovered the existence of four stages. Examining five-year old Gall demonstrates, according to the Swiss psychologist, that around this age (the average age of the first stage) a child can already comprehend that the shadow emanates from an object and that this is attributable to the object's opaqueness – “Why is there a shadow there? [We make a shadow with the hand.] - *Because there is a hand.* - Why is this shadow black? - *Because . . . because we have bones*” (pp. 181 – 182).

⁴² Bakhtin (1937/1981) defines the dialogic discourse of the chronotope as “the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that is artistically expressed in literature” (p. 84).

⁴³ Within the context of this Christology, the blindness aspect of the “melancholy farewell” moment certainly recalls the figure of the persecutor, Saul of Tarsus who “fell to the ground” (Acts 9:4, NIV) many times depicted visually as falling from his horse, one representing “the human being in need of a greater light” (da Luca et al., 2013, p. 12). As Saul draws near the ancient city of Damascus, girded against Christian forms of belief; “a light from heaven flashed around him” (Acts 9:3, NIV). The place where Saul was blinded by conversion becomes allegorically “where a blindness of spirit is healed” (Steinberg, 1975, p. 39).

⁴⁴ Hegel (trans. 1975) lectures about Romantic art's aspirations to convey the Idea as “truth and all truth” (p. 110), intimating a question about “a heroism of submission” (525) to the “absolute world of

the efforts of an “idealistic,” “good-hearted,” “altruistic” individual striving to carry out (. . .) his “inner project” in a predominantly hostile, “uncomprehending” world. The project itself, whatever its anachronistic peculiarities might be, involves a kind of substantial, “utopian” rearranging of that world. (p. 26)

Don Quixote’s utopia belongs to a golden era - “called golden by the ancients (. . .) because those who lived in that time did not know the two words thine and mine” (de Cervantes, trans. 2003, p. 76). The White Knight’s utopia is a world without shadows - his departure is a source of *melancholy* since the substitute will never be able to take the place of that which may always already have been lost. When the *ex-centric* Knight departs from Alice in his usual clownish antics of thumbing down his horse, the youngling observes - “However, he gets on pretty easily – that comes of having so many things hung round his horse” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 289). Mirroring his forerunner Quixote, Carroll’s blundering knight carries his burden as a symbol of his transcendent madness, “a taking up of his cross” (Auden, 1949/2001, p. 77).

When Alice waves her handkerchief during the White Knight’s departure, what kind of blind image of her hero’s (re)presentation does she capture imprinted on her imaginary cloth? Does her handkerchief become the sweat-cloth or *sudarium* that captures divinity, a metaphor for *the veil of Veronica*?⁴⁵ Does this piece of cloth become an *acheiropoieton* symbol of the Christian relic, commemorated by the Sixth Station of the Cross? Does Alice encounter the White Knight along a *Via Dolorosa*

spirit” (p. 524). In the romantic outlook, “death is only a perishing of the *natural* soul and *finite* subjectivity” (p. 523). In its cancellation of nullity, this inherently negative “perishing” is the spirit-liberating mechanism that spiritually reconciles humanity with the infinite – “death has the significance of negativity, in the sense of the negation of the negative, and therefore changes all the same into the affirmative as the resurrection of the spirit out of its mere natural embodiment and the finitude which is inadequate to it” (p. 523).

⁴⁵ Like ‘Alice,’ the name Veronica also means ‘truth’ deriving from the Latin word ‘vera.’

on the way to a Looking-Glass Calvary? Does the handkerchief now acquire the properties to cure blindness?



23. Theotokópoulos, D. (1586 - 1595). *The Veil of Saint Veronica* [Oil on canvas].
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. 71 x 54 cm.

One might imagine Alice's handkerchief as haunting reiteration of the *sudarium* depicted on El Greco's canvas in the Museo del Prado (fig. 23), which derives from another painting executed for the central altarpiece of the church of Santo Domingo el Antiguo in Toledo. In both paintings, Christ does not wear a crown of thorns, though traces of blood are visible. His facial features have a serene expression with an intense gaze that recalls Byzantine models. In remembering the ethereal image of the "kindly smile" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 286) of her *ex-centric*

White Knight, does Alice experience an *as-of-yet unseen* faith as that depicted by El Greco? Alice's experience, recollected from early childhood, occurs in the vicariously atoning farewell of the White Knight. In leaving "the black shadows of the forest behind," the gallant knight becomes the *ex-centric* being and Alice joins his *ex-centricity* not only in their brief encounter, but also in her faith of recalling her half-dream.

In an enraptured paean to his hero, de Unamuno (1914/1984) states that - "Don Quixote must be painted with the faith which creates the unseen, in the firm belief that Don Quixote exists and lives and acts, in the same way those marvellous "primitive" painters believed in the life of the saints and angels they painted" (p.353). The "Knight of Faith" (p. 45) inhered by "divinity and monomania" (Lukács, 1920/1971, p. 78) reveals his presence by what is specifically and peculiarly his, modalities described by Eliade (1957/1987) as - "the majesty (*majestas*) of the celestial immensity, the terror (*tremendum*) of the storm" (p.121). His cosmos is a whole "organism at once real, living, and sacred" (p.117). In his presence we feel a "*horror religiosus*" (Kierkegaard, trans. 1983, p. 61) as that felt amidst the raising of Abraham's knife over Isaac. It is this *ex-centric* knight who conveys possibilities of beliefs in transcendence through his sense of empathy.

In the "melancholy farewell" moment we find a transition in terms of death to life similar to those found in the New Testament, such as the account of Christ's interaction with Nicodemus - "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:7, KJV). Justification by faith is neither the starting place as a pawn *nor* the destination as a Queen, but Alice's confession of being brought to 'new life' out of a 'farewell.' The blind Alice is created anew and has her identity permanently outside herself, in *another*, an *ex-centric* stranger. She finds an affinity in one who

has replaced her as the wondrous ex-change of human sin and ‘divine’ justice as we find in The Epistle to the Galatians – “For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God” (Gal 2:19, KJV).

The *ex-centric* nature of Alice’s faith necessitates a nonsense writing other than those surrounding ontology since Alice is created anew in such a way that defies all philosophical rationalization. She rests on a metamorphosis in fundamental self-awareness that discloses an eschatological reality which haunts the *present* – “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor 13:12, KJV). It is a faith in the *as-of-yet unseen* – “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11.1, KJV).

In many ways, Alice’s ‘pilgrimage’ in her (K)nightmare terrain finds similarities with Bunyan’s Puritan allegory of *error*, manifested as a hill in the first part of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678). A group of shepherds lead Christian and Hopeful to this hill, “which was very steep on the farthest side, and bid them look down to the bottom” (p. 154). This was their first glimpse of hell. The shepherds lead Christian and Hopeful to another hill named Clear where they are able to use a telescope to gaze at the Celestial City way off in the distance yet the recent glimpse of hell has so affected them that their hands shake, allowing them only a shaky, dim view of heaven. It is the symbolic sin that keeps Bunyan’s pilgrims from seeing heaven with a clear focus.

Alice also commences her adventures on the top of “the hill” (p. 184), or the “Principle Mountain” (Carroll, 1871/1995b, p. 199), to descend into the Looking-Glass chessboard hell. She too is blinded during the “melancholy farewell” moment, not seeing clearly the ‘Celestial’ light shining on her hero’s armour. Warner

(2002/2007) even documents that among Dodgson's whimsical items; “[a]t the end of one telescope he owned, he glued a tiny picture of Alice Liddell” (p. 189). Is there a symbolic sin in Looking Glass Land? If yes, whose is it? What does it (re)present?

Perhaps Alice's *sudarium* reveals a tension within a spatial metaphor that resides in the definite chess-board path and her straying inside this Quixotic *heterotopia* - “[i]t's more like a corkscrew than a path!” (Carroll, 1871/1995b, p. 184). This blurred trajectory may very well be called a “progression” (p. 331), a contradictory portmanteau word termed by Cummings (1931/1991) in sonnet XXI of *W ViVa* (1931).

2.9 Proregressing through the *whiteness* of a (K)nightmare in the labyrinthine folds of an enlightened revenant: A comparative study of Alice's handkerchief and the blindfold in Antoine Coypel's *The Error*

The ushering of the White Knight mirrors that of the Orphic myth interpreted most eloquently by Blanchot (1955/1999) in *The Gaze of Orpheus* (1955). Orpheus's impossible task in the space of death, that is beyond language and history, is to possess Eurydice – “the instant in which the essence of the night approaches as the *other* night” (p. 437). The aim of the Orphic Knight is to return his beloved to the “light” of his world - “to bring it back into the daylight and in the daylight give it form, figure and reality” (p. 437). In his search for absolute exteriority in the “light” and yearning to invest it with form and substance –

Orpheus is guilty of impatience. His error is that he wants to exhaust the infinite, that he puts an end to what is unending, that he does not endlessly sustain the very impulse of his error. Impatience is the mistake made by the person who wishes to escape the absence of

time; patience is the trick that tries to master this absence of time by turning it into another kind of time, measured in a different way. (p. 439)

Alice's ephemeral gaze in front of her mirror is an invocation to an Orphic *katabasis* distinguished by Blanchot (1955/1982) as "the absence one sees because it is blinding" (p. 107). Alice shades her eyes in front of both the Quixotic madness of "reasonable unreason" (Axelrod, 1999, p. 14) and the Enlightened madness of 'unreasonable reason.' The latter is where "[p]ure reason became unreason, a procedure as immune to errors as it was devoid of content" (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/2002, p. 71). The unleashing horror that is revealed by this dehumanized blind gaze at the (un)known is the Goyesque madness that "tied on masks truer than the truth of faces" (Foucault, 1961/2004, p. 267). This chapter analyses this paradoxical toll on Alice's act of blindfolding itself via an ekphrasis of a disconcerting and enigmatic (re)presentation which comes back as a Derridean revenant in our post-Enlightenment age.

Our age's tenet that "[s]eeing is the origin of knowing" (Scott, 1991, p. 776), propounded from a post-Enlightenment empiricism, could be reversed to 'non-seeing is the origin of *error*' to describe *The Error* by *premier peintre du roi* Antoine Coypel (ca. 1702; fig.24). This preparatory work was produced in the French Enlightenment hailed as "the century of philosophy par excellence" (p. 70) by Jean d'Alembert. In the scientific and intellectual exaltation of the age "everything has been discussed and analyzed, or at least mentioned" (p. 70). It is the age where "the bearers of light, the classicists" (Hankins, 1970/1990, p. 71) set order and 'truth.'

Anything which deprived them from illuminated and revealed knowledge was considered as *erroneous*.⁴⁶



24. Coypel, A. (ca. 1702). *The Error* [Black, red, and white chalks on blue paper].

Louvre, Paris. 20.6 x 21.3cm.

⁴⁶ By the seventeenth century, as Bates (1996) explains, the definition of ‘error’ expanded to include a “vagabondage of the imagination, of the mind which is not subject to any rules” (p. 312). Both René Descartes and Benedict de Spinoza defined the concept of *error* according to their philosophical ideologies. Descartes (trans. 2008) associated *error* with the schism between reason and will - “not something real dependent on God, but purely and simply a deficiency (. . .) [f]or error is not a pure negation but a privation, a lack of some knowledge [*cognitio*] that ought to be in me in some way” (p. 39). De Spinoza (trans. 1994), on the other hand, advocates a doctrine where *error* is associated with imagination - “The mind does not err from the fact that it imagines, but only insofar as it is considered to lack an idea which excludes the existence of those things which it imagines to be present to it” (p. 130). It is noteworthy that although Descartes and Spinoza advanced diametrically opposed philosophical systems, the definition of *error* which they advocated is extremely similar, primarily, the privation of knowledge.

Composed in black, red, and white chalks on prepared blue paper, Antoine Coypel's study depicts a solitary blindfolded wanderer honed with anatomical draughtsmanship. The network of uniformly placed horizontal and vertical lines that build up this drawing locate the proportions of an anatomical figure by means of coordinates. His frozen bearing is imprisoned in the marks of the grid lines that once scaled this sketch for an allegorical painting entitled *Truth Unveiled by Time* (ca. 1702). Typical of the era, the movement of the human form depicted in the delineation of *The Error* is highlighted with a muscular body, captured in a moment of bending and twisting. His robe is caught in a gust of flowing draperies, bearing the Baroque trait that according to Deleuze (1993) - "twists and turns its folds, pushing them to infinity, fold over fold, one upon the other" (p. 3) –

A fold is always folded within a fold, like a cavern in a cavern. The unit of matter, the smallest element of the labyrinth, is the fold, not the point which is never a part, but a simple extremity of the line. That is why parts of matter are masses or aggregates, as a correlative to elastic compressive force. Unfolding is thus not the contrary of folding, but follows the fold up to the following fold. (p. 6)

Analogous to Plato's bound cave-dwellers, Coypel's 'cave explorer' condemns himself or is condemned, to remain in the terrain of speleological shadows searching eternally for lost perfection in a labyrinth - seeking for insight through *error*. He acts like Narcissus who beholds his reflected image in a pool - "like a blind man feeling his way in the dark, he will ceaselessly attempt to sketch his own portrait, to trace his own image" (DeArmitt, 2009, p. 90). Derrida (1990/1993) ruminates on *The Error*'s search in the void of Platonic caverns with "groping, wandering hands; they draw in this space in a way that is at once cautious and bold;

they calculate, they count on the invisible” (p. 5). One may pose the question; whose is the mysterious hand that blindfolded the struggler, and for what reason? It is certainly an unnatural catalyst –

Naturally his eyes *would be able* to see. But they are *blindfolded* (. . . .) not naturally but by the hand of the other, or by his own hand, obeying a law that is not natural or physical since the knot behind the head remains within a hand’s reach of the subject who could undo it: it is as if the subject of the error had consented to having got it up, over his eyes, as if he got off [*jouissait*] on his suffering and his wandering, as if he chose it, at the risk of a fall, as if he were playing at seeking the other during a sublime and deadly game of blind man’s buff. (p. 13)

Derrida implicates that the vagabond’s synthetic action, whether self-imposed or not, may allude to sadism or masochism. In the standard game of blind man’s buff, the blindfolded player is first disoriented by being spun around several times and then taunted, struck and poked with sticks, for the general amusement. Theodor Reik (1941) in *Masochism in Modern Man*, writes – “[m]asochistic practices are but an acting out of preceding phantasies, daydreams that are transferred into reality” (p. 49), in which “what the person at first imagined has to be put into action in mirror scenes” (p. 51). *The Error* may very well hold “the preponderance of the anxiety factor and the tendency to prolong the suspense” (p. 59). In an analogous fashion, Alice is a straggler inside the phantasmagorical rooms of her *extimate* Looking-Glass straying into infinitely mapped territories. Paradoxically both Alice and *The Error* are simultaneously still inside their mirrored

homes but, at the same time, outside this home which has now been lost by the blind gaze.

Bates (2002) claims that the concept of *error* could be adapted as “a critique of those powerful historical and cultural narratives that look back to the eighteenth century as a way of explaining the incredible triumphs as well as the horrendous disasters of our modern, enlightened world” (p. vii). Perhaps rightly so, since the nonsensical blindfold of Coypel’s *Error* may act effectively as a protection against the cruelty that we repeatedly find ourselves surrounded with. As Bachelard (1958/1994) perceptibly writes - “Sight says too many things at one time” (p. 215). *The Error* haunts us as a nonsensical blindfold to the Mediterranean migrant crisis, controversial environmental issues, and other present disasters. It is also that of a forecasted disaster in our incipient nonexistent future such as Onkalo, a deep geological repository for the final disposal of spent nuclear fuel being excavated on the west coast of Finland. Those who look will have the same dramatic fate as the victims in “the hills of ashes” - “black holes where the eyes had been burned out” (Nagai, 1964, p. 42).⁴⁷

The Error haunts us as a screen against the smoke of the Holocaust fires. In *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, Hannah Arendt (1963/1965) ponders on the defence of following blind orders from authorities made infamous in the Nuremberg trials held after the Second World War. This “willful blindness” (Heffernan, 2011, p. 7) featured massively in the court hearings of Adolf Eichmann whose evil intentions were committed legally and without conscious

⁴⁷ Soon after the nuclear bombing in Nagasaki, Fujie Urata Matsumoto tells her macabre story when visiting her hometown which became “a hill of ashes” (p. 42) – “The pumpkin field in front of the house was blown clean. Nothing was left of the whole thick crop, except that in place of the pumpkins there was a woman’s head (. . .). A handful of singed hair hung down from the left temple over her cheek, dangling in her mouth. Her eyelids were drawn up, showing black holes where the eyes had been burned out (. . .). She had probably looked square into the flash and gotten her eyeballs burned” (Nagai, 1964, p. 42).

activity. These are “the virtues and the vices of blind obedience, or the “obedience of corpses,” *Kadavergehorsam*, as he himself called it” (p. 135). Mirroring Master Dumpty, the Holocaust organizer justified his actions in court by claiming that he had always tried to abide by Kant’s categorical imperative where Hitler was both legislator and moral self. Once arraigned for carrying out the ‘Final Solution,’ Eichmann “had ceased to live according to Kantian principles, that he had known it, and that he had consoled himself with the thoughts that he no longer ‘was master of his own deeds,’ that he was unable ‘to change anything’” (p. 136).

The Error’s iridescent *white* blindfold is a nonsensical one on which people willingly forge their own egoistic appearances, appearances in which they conceal their sheer vulnerability behind imagined effigies of power. The ‘freest’ societies in the world are still brimming with blinkered individuals, awed by ‘the Party’ from a Huxleyan fanaticism that is causing them to acquiesce, and remain blind to laugh at all the naked emperors wandering the streets. Unfortunately, they are blind in their denial of bitter truths that crave acceptance, action, argumentation, and diversification. Blind to the most dangerous threats, not because they are invisible or secret, but because they are meted out to be compulsively repeated endlessly, to revive the curse of Sisyphus. History’s disappointments and aberrations correlate to what Horkheimer and Adorno (1947/2002) write - “Enlightenment is mythical fear radicalized” (p. 11)!

Great literary authors have contemplated on the human condition of blindness and endorsed it as an intransigent trope in their writings. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare (1966 version) adopts the metaphoric weight of blindness and disillusion to foreshadow and heighten the development of a tragic destiny in which insanity escalates with the storm’s intensity on the heath. The king is blind to the blatant

hypocrisy of his two oldest daughters and absurdly entrusts them with all his wealth. Even more preposterous, he disinherits Cordelia and banishes his zealous supporter the Earl of Kent crying out at him; “[o]ut of my sight!” Kent retorts by pleading to continue aiding the King’s focalization - “[s]ee better, Lear, and let me still remain/ [t]he true blank of thine eye” (p. 909). Yet no one can alter the course that the crowned head has commenced and to which he bemoans as a self-reproachment; “[w]here are his eyes?” (p. 915).

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton (2005 version) laments on a light emitted from “the void and formless infinite” (p. 80) and “universal blank” (p. 81), invoking a source of wisdom absolutely cut away from the author - “[b]ut hard be hardened, blind be blinded more/ That they may stumble on, and deeper fall” (p. 85). Oedipus’ symbolic decision to blind himself is elicited from his refusal to ‘see’ or the hubris that deterred him from being cognizant of all warning signs about the ill-fated path he was travelling. Once he ‘sees’ and envisions his own tragic destiny he sacrifices his own sight, thus, reiterating what Derrida (1990/1993) calls the “too-much of sight at the heart of blindness itself” (p. 16). Actaeon transgresses *The Error*’s blindfold to gaze at Artemis’s “whiteness” (Hughes, 1997, p. 107). The most notorious chronicler of the seas, Herman Melville (1851/2009), ponders on the fond delusion of targeting “the centre and circumference” (p. 186) of this *whiteness* in *Moby Dick, or, The Whale* -

all deified Nature absolutely paints like the harlot, whose allurements cover nothing but the charnel-house within; and when we proceed further, and consider that the mystical cosmetic which produces every one of her hues, the great principle of light, forever remains white or colourless in itself, and if operating without medium upon matter,

would touch all objects, even tulips and roses, with its own blank tinge - pondering all this, the palsied universe lies before us a leper; and (. . .) the wretched infidel gazes himself blind at the monumental white shroud that wraps all the prospect around him. And of all these things the Albino whale was the symbol. Wonder ye then at the fiery hunt? (p. 276)

The achievement of discoveries that have benefited humanity has stealthily come to be conjoined with what Weiss (1990) calls a “Faustian striving for knowledge” (p. 90). The formulaic expression for this *mētis*, as Horkheimer & Adorno (1947/2002) observe, “is that the detached, instrumental mind, by submissively embracing nature, renders to nature what is hers and thereby cheats her” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/2002, p. 45). The inevitable futility of Odysseus’s blinding of Polyphemus is undeniable for even the hero “is a sacrificial victim, the self which incessantly suppresses its impulses, and thus (. . .) lets slip his own life, that he saves only to recall it as a path of error” (p. 43). To what extent is *mētis* involved in Alice’s blindfolding to the rules which make for creativity, or escape?

Alice, the child, errs and wanders off diverse paths which abound with that of *The Error*. The straggler who strays into unmapped territory may have once had a home, but it has now been lost, and the trail cannot be reconstructed since it follows no ordered pattern, no established route due to the delaying or differing of the arrival. To *err* is to wander off the right path, taking a different path, replacing one path, the path of truth, with the path of *error* – the imagined path where literal blindness constitutes enlightened sight. The elimination of human *error*, in this framework, is no longer a simple matter of correction, a return to a ‘true’ line. Blanchot (1969/1993) captures eloquently this nature of the transitional locus by

characterizing *error* as an inquiry which rides out the restrictions of a centralising nexus –

Searching and error, then would be akin. To err is to turn and to return, to give oneself up to the magic of detour. One who goes astray, who has left the protection of the center, turns about, himself adrift and subject to the center, and no longer guarded by it. More accurately, he turns about – a verb without compliment; he does not turn around some thing or even around nothing; the center is no longer the immobile spur, the point of opening that secretly clears the space of advance. (p. 26)

On similar lines, Nietzsche (trans. 1996) claims that *error* is the sinew that drives mankind into “profound, tender, inventive as to produce such a flower as the arts and religions” (p. 27).⁴⁸ Unless one does not believe like the White Queen in “six impossible things before breakfast” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 236), logical assumptions in an infinite context ought to be explicitly enhanced by the precise agencies from which one is to deduce consequences from such hypotheses, which is impossible and obviously prone to mistake rather than *error*. Mistake, as Hon (1995) explains, is “avoidable ignorance” (p. 6), and thus differentiates from *error* -

A mistake can be avoided since checking procedures are known and available. By contrast, error is associated with unavoidable ignorance, when one applies techniques to novel phenomena, when one does not have the security of a well studied, agreed standard procedure - when one gropes, so to speak, in the dark. Metaphorically, a mistake occurs

⁴⁸ This is quite a paradoxical claim for Nietzsche (trans. 1996) who is arguably most notoriously known for his criticisms of Christian moral commitments.

when one goes on *terra firma*, but going astray in one's exploration of *terra incognita* amounts to an error. (p. 6)

The human predicament of *error* is the kernel of the phantom-errant trope in Alice's twin odyssey. It lies in a little pilgrim's wandering through absurd worlds filled with chimerical creatures. The spectral *flâneur* weaves inside her vertiginous Looking-Glass House, leaving paths that the reader must retrace and reformulate in order to grasp where they intersect. In this interminable maze, Carroll seeks to ground his "melancholy maiden" in a fantastical theme of exile and erring - in a dream setting which is, perhaps, also a search for origins, a way of thinking about Being that has been 'forgotten' in the course of Western history, literature, and philosophy. As Heidegger (1950/1984) writes –

Being sets beings adrift in errancy. Beings come to pass in that errancy by which they circumvent Being and establish the realm of error (in the sense of a prince's realm or the realm of poetry). (p. 26)

In the *Alice* realm, Ariadne's thread cannot save *The Error* from escaping. The *Alice* dream-texture is of the *erring* kind in view of a correlation that exists with the origin of the term *error* in which, as Bates (1996) explains - "there is a confusion between the idea of separation from something (the voyage) and an essentially random, unpredictable movement which is not subject to any formal rules" (p. 312). The *Alice* 'dream-vision' is, invariably, in kindred spirit to the ambiguous etymology of the word 'error' –

From the beginning, the concept of error was linked to images of wandering. The Latin root of the verb *errer* (*errare*) could mean both "to go this way and that, to walk at random," and "to go off the track, to go astray, to deceive one-self." The noun form of this verb, *erreur*,

in the early modern period could denote the “action of erring this way and that,” but could also be used to mean “an excursion, a voyage involving adventures.” (Bates, 1996, p. 312)

This etiological explanation may shed some light upon the conception of the *Alice* dream adventure. The original title of Carroll’s first *Alice* book *Alice’s Adventures Underground* reveals, as Marina Warner (2011) writes; “his first idea of an underworld” and thus, the affiliation of the *Alice* texts to forebears amongst virtuoso dream-visionaries of sylvan descents into the nether regions. In Classical mythology, many archetypal heroes initiate their *errings* from the threshold of the dark wood where *hubris* and *hamaratia* are held as the *sine qua non*. Alice’s solitary wanderings in the forest of no names are akin to those of Actaeon who meanders through a pathless vale “[d]ark with matted pine and spiky cypress” (Hughes, 1997, p. 105). In the *Aeneid*, Virgil (trans. 2007) describes how Aeneas finds the entrance in the “ancient forest” (p. 133) leading to the “land for the shades, and for sleep, and for night that brings numbness” (p. 140). Such shadows are reiterated by Dante (trans. 1984) whose errant steps into the Wood of *Error* leading to a “bureaucratic hell” (Green, 1980, p. 187) are the necessary prelude to his ascent into Paradise –

Midway along the journey of our life
I woke to find myself in a dark wood,
for I had wandered off from the straight path. (p. 67)

The *katabasis* model of the Woods of *Error* found in Wonderland and Looking-Glass *polis* emanates from Alice’s aimless roaming in the devious and winding course of her *heterotopia*. Wonderland, as Auden (1962/1971) coherently points out, is “a place of complete anarchy where everybody says and does whatever comes into his head” (p. 9) whilst Looking-Glass House; “a completely determined

world without choice” (p. 9). Mirroring the horrors into which she has strayed, or what Kipling (1904) might have called the “confusing veils of the woods” (p. 304), the (non)linear progression of the *Alice* twin narrative is constantly cut across by a cumulative burden of *errancy*. In each terrain, the titular heroine is frustrated and opposed at every turn. Fortuitously, the little pilgrim finds her Virgil in the dark forests, albeit virtually at the end of her Inferno!

The Seventh Square becomes a Purgatory where Alice finally encounters someone who genuinely offers kind and gentle support after all the tribulations in her dream journey which start in Wonderland at the age of seven and continues along the reflected surface of a mirror at the age of seven and a half. The White Knight is the youngling’s Virgil serving as a guide behind her imaginary world of the mirror where, as Beer (2016) writes - “death is the haunting alternative to change and growth” (p. 5). He guides the little pilgrim in an uncanny space driven by “[g]rowing – growing up, growing old, growing apart – (. . .) a generative dread” (p. 6).

Perhaps, what the *The Error* stages for us is an allegory of the aporetic qualities of life, art, and interpretation. It depicts our inability to liberate ourselves from the endless enlightened folds and repetitious nonsense situations in which we find ourselves, echoing an observation made by Proust (1921/2006) – “[t]his perpetual error which is precisely ‘life’” (p. 918). Parallel to Carroll’s *Alice* texts, steered to lay bare humanity’s turmoils in inescapable labyrinths, the French dramatist and poet Antonin Artaud (1938/1958) writes - “there are too many signs that everything that used to sustain our lives no longer does so, that we are all mad, desperate, and sick” (p. 77). Perversion in the theatre of cruelty is “not in an episodic, accessory sense, out of a taste for sadism and perversion of mind” (p. 113) but quite the opposite –

a pure and detached feeling, a veritable movement of the mind based on the gestures of life itself; the idea being that life, metaphysically speaking, because it admits extension, thickness, heaviness, and matter, admits, as a direct consequence, evil and all that is inherent in evil, space, extension and matter. All this culminates in consciousness and torment, and in consciousness *in* torment. Life cannot help exercising some blind rigor that carries with it all its conditions, otherwise it would not be life. (p. 114)



25. del Toro, G. (Director). (2006). Still image from *Pan's Labyrinth* [Motion picture]. Mexico/Spain/USA: Estudios Picasso/Wild Bunch/Tequila Gang.

One of Guillermo del Toro's darkest creatures in *Pan's Labyrinth* (2006) is the Pale Man whose paleness is derived from drinking the blood of the innocent. His sinister features include dangling skin⁴⁹, long arms, blood-stained sharp nails on his hands, and missing eyes that are replaced by tiny holes. In a perfunctory act with horrific consequences, Ofelia places his eyes on a plate in front of the humanoid

⁴⁹ Perhaps suggesting that the Pale Man was once much larger.

monster that eventually wakes up and puts them surreally into the palms of his hand. Alice is like Ofelia in many ways, both are coming of age girls, and both in their own blindness give eyes to the horrific creatures that inhabit their fantastic landscapes.

2.10 The *jouissance* of a K(nightmare)

Cavallaro (2002) writes within the context of the haunting rhetoric – “The ‘other side’ is unquestionably a source of fear and yet, like fear itself, it is capable of yielding its own peculiar rewards” (p. 65). In *Looking-Glass House* one finds fused together both pain and pleasure. Similar to Derrida’s reading of Coypel’s *the Error*, the Looking-Glass terrain is at once both the site of *jouissance* and a place of horror, abjection, and aberration. Alice subjugates her agony in the *extimacy* of her oxymoronic land of blindness which, as a result, opens the path of *jouissance*. The outcome of this transgression is a conflicting satisfaction that the subject acquires from suffering. Beyond that limit, as Lacan (1986/1997) expounds, pleasure becomes “the satisfaction of a drive” (p. 209), or, a “superabundant vitality” (237) conjoined with *suffering* - “because it involves suffering for my neighbour” (p. 184). The White Knight’s realm is the abode of *jouissance*.

In *The Logic of Sense* (1969), a prolegomenon on the *Alice* texts, Deleuze (1969/1990) writes about the specificity of the artist being “not only the patient and doctor of civilization, but also its pervert” (p. 237). The singular artist may very well be envisioned as a Carrollian physician of culture, as Bogue (2003) explains - “both a symptomatologist who reads culture’s signs of sickness and health, and a therapist whose remedies promote new possibilities for life” (p. 2). Sergei Eisenstein (1987) concurs when claiming that “Art - is the most sensitive seismograph” (p. 289). Artists may doubtlessly be attunement vehicles of all that surrounds them, remote

sensors in the midst of humanity. Thus, they may register the climatological and geological forces that might otherwise exceed one's restricted sensory and perceptual grasp. An artist's endeavor is to create modes of re(presenting) the responsiveness of our world to our impacts, changing her/his own colour as John Keats (2002) describes in a letter dated 27th October 1818 -

What shocks the virtuous philosopher, delights the chameleon Poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A Poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence; because he has no Identity; he is continually in for and filling some other Body. The Sun, the Moon, the Sea and Men and Women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute. The poet has none; no identity. (p. 195)

The Keatsian ideal propounds that the artist is a kind of identity-less cipher - a weird gender-neutral and anonymous *Thing* - "the absolutely unwitnessable" that aims to transmit 'the unwitnessable absolute' through Art's looking-glass. The identity-less artist abides by the laws of the fluid thresholds of the oxymoronic 'painful pleasure' where, as Lacan (1986/ 1997) expounds, artists read the symptoms around them to enter "the path of uninhibited jouissance" (p. 177). Pursuant to this transgression, since "without a transgression there is no access to *jouissance*" (p. 177), one encounters "the Thing" (p. 55). It is "the Thing" that can perceive such "primitive subsistence" (p. 140) as in the primeval artistic productions that "were thrown up" (p. 139) on the walls of the Paleolithic caverns. The witnessable onlooker immerses himself endlessly to such creative output "being deeply linked both in a tight relationship to the world (. . .) and to something that in its subsistence appears

as possessing the character of a beyond of the sacred” (p. 140). These works of (re)presentational art primarily delve upon a “mystery” (p. 141) concerning the subject’s unfolding that is subjugated by the agony of “the Thing,” they –

imitate the objects they represent, but their end is certainly not to represent them. In offering the imitation of an object, they make something different out of that object. Thus, they only pretend to imitate. The object is established in a certain relationship to the Thing and is intended to encircle and to render both present and absent.

(p.141)

This rendering of “both present and absent” forms the basis for what Bataille (1961/1989) ultimately discovers in Lascaux’s depths – “the extremities of the possible” (p. 53). The state from animality to humanity brings forth a birth foretelling an eventual death, wherein neither term is resolved but is left to waste in its indeterminacy. This hypothesis binds the artwork and its viewers by a virtuality or what Lippit (2003) describes as “an irreducible experience of the almost, of an as if” (p. 23), congruous to Looking-Glass House where “queens and kittens are identical” (Graves, 1925/1971, p. 115).

In a vertigo-induced manner, Carrollian physicians of culture above all immerse *themselves* in an assessment of values which entails - both a diagnosis of the forces and attitudes that shape the world and; a creative deployment of forces in new configurations. The chameleon physician is not simply an interpreter of signs, but also a shaman who perversely enjoys reviving cultural pathogens to recreate them through ‘death’ in a variety of ways. The artist mirrors the shaman whom, as Eliade (1951/1989) writes, is predominantly a “psychopomp” (p. 4) or a “great master of ecstasy” (p. 4) conducting souls to the afterlife; “the shaman specializes in

a trance during which his soul is believed to leave the body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld” (p. 5). Their role is not to judge the deceased, but simply provide safe passage to the underground chambers of another world. The melancholy maiden’s interactions with the animal spirits and other “strange things” that haunt Wonderland and Looking-Glass House seem to attest to this shamanistic aspect in which, as Eliade (1951/1989) expounds -

The presence of a helping spirit in animal form, dialogue with it in a secret language, or incarnation of such an animal spirit by the shaman (masks, actions, dances, etc.) is another way of showing that the shaman can forsake his human condition, is able, in a word, to “die.” From the most distant times almost all animals have been conceived either as psychopomps that accompany the soul from the beyond or as the dead person’s new form. Whether it is the “ancestor” or the “initiatory master,” the animal symbolizes a real and direct connection with the beyond. (pp. 93 - 94)

Following a study of the primitive hunting peoples of Siberia and Canada, French anthropologist Éveline Lot-Falck claims that “[l]ike people, animals have one or more souls and a language. Furthermore, they often understand the language of humans, while the reverse is not true, except for the shamans” (Ruspoli, 1986/1987, p. 150). As soul guides or psychopomps, shamans have been related at different times and in diverse cultures to a ‘diversity of species’⁵⁰ serving as the “clearers of the way” (Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1963, p. 196).

⁵⁰ In *The Savage Mind*, cultural anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (1962/1966) describes how an animal could be a predominant form of this totemic imagination since – “the diversity of species furnishes man with the most intuitive picture at his disposal and constitutes the most direct manifestation he can perceive of the ultimate discontinuity of reality. It is the sensible expression of an objective coding” (p. 137). Shamanistic transformations make take the forms of horses, dogs, harts, armadillos, and birds

The healer/shaman attempts to hinder ‘death’ via an intercession that involves travelling and struggling with uncanny forces. The shamans of the indigenous people Chukchee (of the Arctic Ocean) are prohibited from funerals since “shamanistic séances can bring back the dead” (Bogoras, 1911, p. 520). Nevertheless, in other cultures such as the Lepcha people of Sikkim, India, these interlocutors “are among the ritual specialists involved in funerary rites and can be the masters of mortuary ceremonies” (Williams, 2001, p. 202). As Eliade (1951/1989) notes, the course of a shaman to reach the *other* realm is that of a ‘symbolic death’ –

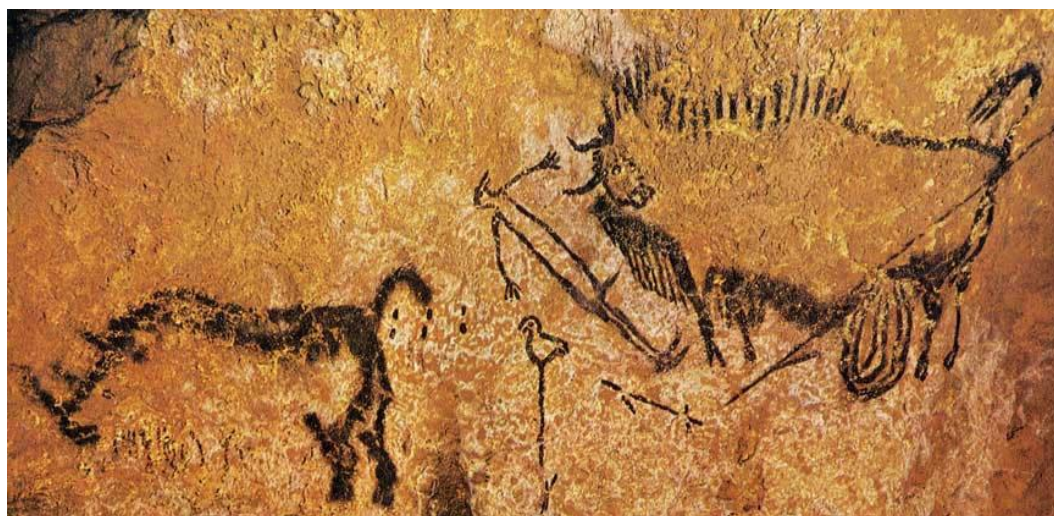
a shaman differs from a “possessed” person, for example; the shaman controls his “spirits,” in the sense that he, a human being, is able to communicate with the dead, “demons,” and nature spirits,” without thereby becoming their instrument. (p. 6).

These shamanic initiations in mythical funerary geographies may date back to prehistory. In the cave of Lascaux, we find a painting depicting a therianthrope figure, the sole portrayal of a human in the entire cave, confronted by a charging bison which appears to have been stricken by a spear and partly disemboweled. One may observe an image of a bird on this ‘wounded’ figure’s stick, possibly being the animal role assigned as psychopomp. The beak-like qualities on the head of this zoomorphic figure seem to attest to this hypothesis. Archaeologist David Lewis-Williams (2002/2012), whose research on southern African San (Bushmen) rock art bear striking similarities with Lascaux art, observes –

what we have in the Shaft is not a hunting disaster (. . .). Rather, we have transformation by death: the ‘death’ of the man paralleling the ‘death’ of the eviscerated bison. As both ‘die,’ the man fuses with one

including owls, crows, ravens, whip-poor-wills, sparrows, and cuckoos. A soul guide in Egyptian mythology, for example, is the jackal-headed Anubis.

of his spirit helpers, a bird. The close juxtaposition of the ‘broken sign’ and the similarity between such signs and the bird staff suggest that this type of sign was in some way associated with zoomorphic transformation and the bridging of cosmological levels that becoming a shaman necessitated. (p. 265)



26. Anonymous Lascaux artist. (Upper Palaeolithic). *Rhinoceros and bird-man struck by a bull* [Cave painting].
The Shaft, Lascaux.

Perhaps, what we are seeing in this (re)presentation is an (un)self-portrait of the anonymous cave artist who created the scene – a revenant who shares the same *jouissance* as that suffered by the Carrollian physician of culture and other spectres of wounded healers.⁵¹ The Palaeolithic shaman records his initiation in the “sanctuary” (Ruspoli, 1986/1987, p. 162) of Lascaux and leaves traces of that which “awakens powers dormant in ordinary vision, a secret of preexistence” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1964, p. 182). Adhering to the radical displacement that Lascaux

⁵¹ This interpretation might recall Jung (1951/2014b) when writing – “[i]t is no loss (. . .) if he feels that the patient is hitting him, or even scoring off him: it is his own hurt that gives the measure of his power to heal. This, and nothing else, is the meaning of the Greek myth of the wounded physician” (pp. 168 - 169). In fact, a typical Jungian archetype of the Wounded Healer in Greek mythology is found in Chiron; a centaur that suffers incurable excruciating pain from a poisoned arrow wound but, yet, emerges as a renowned healer.

initiates in the viewer's perception, Bataille (1955) explains the iconography conceived by "new-born mankind" (p. 15) as follows -

it unceasingly rewards that expectation of the miraculous which is, in art and in passion, the most profound aspiration of life. We often belittle, call childish this need to be wonderstruck (. . .) but we set right off again in search of the wonderful. That which we hold worthy of our love is always that which overwhelms us: it is the unhopd-for, the thing that is beyond hoping for. It is as though, paradoxically, our essential *self* clung to the nostalgia of attaining what our reasoning *self* had judged unattainable, impossible. (p. 15)

In this hinting at a melancholy farewell in our-*selves*, the child-like onlooker is bestruck by the "magic activity" (Leroi-Gourhan, 1980/1982, p. 75) that haunts the parietal art and experiences "a fantastic ode to life" (Aujoulat, 2004/2005, p. 194). That which is perceived as absent is endlessly kept alive, and interminably enriched, via a dazzling proliferation of supplements. Abiding by this bewildering experience, Ruspoli (1986/1987) writes that inside the "mystic" (p. 149) vaults of Lascaux, "charged with occult power" (pp. 149-150), the viewer experiences a "metaphysical shock" (p. 150). This is shared by Herzog (2010) when describing the achievements of the Chauvet cave artist(s) - "as if the human soul was awakened within them." These primal scenes induct a vertiginous absorption for "these fires answer one another in the night" (Merleau-Ponty, 1952/2007, p. 260). As Merleau-Ponty (1961/1964) explains -

The animals painted on the walls of Lascaux are not there in the same way as the fissures and limestone formations. But they are not *elsewhere*. Pushed forward here, held back there, held up by the

wall's mass they use so adroitly, they spread around the wall without ever breaking from their elusive moorings in it. I would be at great pains to say *where* is the painting I am looking at. For I do not look at it as I do at a thing; I do not fix it in its place. My gaze wanders in it as in the halos of Being. It is more accurate to say that I see according to it, or with it, than that I *see it*. (p. 164)

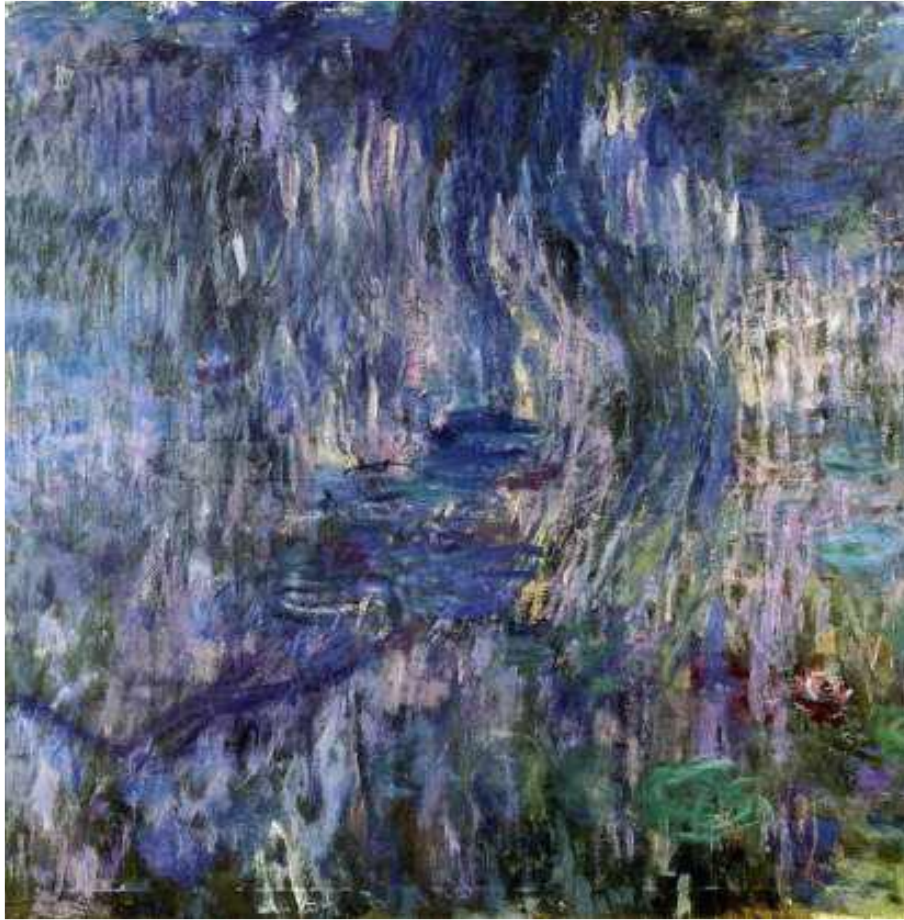
On a similar tone, Blanchot (1971/1997) describes the Lascaux artist(s) as “thus for the very first time truly man – returns to the sources of natural overabundance in the jubilation of a brief interlude, to what he was when he was not yet” (p. 4). Their works are “attempting to commune with infinite chaos” (Ambrose, 2006, p. 142) and can be accessed through “the innocence of the eye” (Smith, 1995, p. 99) - an indispensable tool which captures, as Spate (1992) succinctly describes, “the colour of time.” It is “a moment with no past and no future” (p. 7). An exemplar of this incorruptibility is *Camille Monet on her Death Bed* (1879) that “dissolves into drifting skeins of paint” (p. 7) and find its *temps retrouvé* on a garden-canvas, such as *Water Lilies, Reflections of Weeping Willows* (ca. 1916 - 1919). Monet, blind in his old age, might have possessed the innocent eye of the “primitive” as described by de Unamuno (1912/1954) -

Primitive man, living in society, feels *himself* to be dependent upon the mysterious forces invisibly environing him; he feels *himself* to be in social communion, not only with beings like *himself*, his fellow-men, but with the whole of Nature, animate and inanimate, which simply means, in other words, that he personalizes everything. Not only does he possess a consciousness of the world, but he imagines that the world, like *himself*, possesses consciousness also. Just as a

child talks to his doll or his dog as if it understood what he was saying, so the savage believes that his fetish hears him when he speaks to it, and that the angry storm-cloud is aware of him and deliberately pursues him. For the newly born mind of the primitive natural man has not yet wholly severed *itself* from the cords which still bind it to the womb of Nature, neither has it clearly marked out the boundary that separates dreaming from waking, imagination from reality. (p. 81)



27: Monet, C. (1879). *Camille Monet on her Death Bed* [Oil on canvas].
Musée d'Orsay, Paris. 90 x 68 cm.



28: Monet, C. (ca. 1916 – 1919). *Water Lilies, Reflections of Weeping Willows* [Oil on canvas]. Helly Nahmad Gallery, London. 200 x 200 cm.

In performance art, this search to see “real things” or “the Thing” is reiterated in the ‘salutary’ and ‘wild’ ritualistic oeuvre of Joseph Beuys. In the Action performance *I Like America And America Likes Me* (1974), Beuys is escorted by an ambulance to a gallery where he connects with a coyote, considered by Native Americans as an intermediary between the spirit and human realms. Delving into rituals of the deep metaphysical essence of American culture, the German shaman initially interacts with the hostile animal that eventually become friendly and behaves almost dog-like. Recalling an observation made by Deleuze (1995) that the artist “links up art to what it lacked” (p. 174), Beuys thinks that - “only by going back to our true-*selves* and nature, only by embracing the irrational principles of art, we can heal the damaged world around” (Gasyuk, 2016).



29. Beuys, J. (1974). Still image from *I Like America And America Likes Me* [Action].
SoHo: René Block Gallery.



30. de Sagazan, O. (2019). Still image from *Transfiguration* [Performance Art]. London:
Lilian Baylis Studio Theatre.

The existential performance of Olivier de Sagazan's *Transfiguration* (2019) is a sculptor's grotesque gesture of anguish; the artist uninhibitedly barging in his material clay to give him his frenetic life. Sculpting multiple layers of clay around his head, he buries himself in the porous material, wiping out his own identity and transforming himself into an in-between state that belongs to both a puppeteer and a marionette. Moreover, since the malleable material blinds him, he is compelled to gaze inwardly at the abyss of his *self*. Via a shifting of identities, the expressionist performer transforms his humanity into animality and hybridity in this queer ritual of improvisatory dancing in trance-like states.

A work of art that perverts the world derives from a 'neurotic' symptom of the world in which the shaman/artist lives - the fruit of an (in)direct relation mediated by the phantom errant - in both cases of de Sagazan and Beuys via the body as a communicative mediumistic device. A profound kinship between "the Thing" and the "spirit-writing" one finds inside Looking-Glass Land reveals itself in the Carrollian cultural physician as a medium honed with ethnographic skills searching for phantom indexes.

The gateways to Alice's fantasy world are the windowpane and the Looking-Glass. It is via these glass portals that the re(*presentation*) turns itself inside out and supplies the witnessable onlooker with the arche-epistemology, pre-disciplinary of a primal scene – the *heterotopia* of humanity's eruption out upon the earth's surface. Like the anonymous cave artist, the fairy-tale heroine sees through the membrane and participates in the events of her K(nightmare) realm.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological and practical analysis of this practice-led research investigates the response to this dissertation's research question via the creation of a body of works aiming to capture the enigmatic themes playing out within the adapted text. These four projects are in a form of practical work involving experimentation in diverse media and techniques such as digital collage, found objects, silk, photography, VR, and kinoptics. This sort of multidisciplinary addresses the thematics of the unknown, the ambiguous, and paradox in Carroll's metonymic-metaphoric trope of metamorphosis found within the White Knight's "melancholy farewell" moment.

This series of projects is a search for symbolic forms working as rhetorical metaphors and metonyms to capture moments of rapt stasis within the "melancholy farewell" moment. The works are not studied through individual tracings of mark, drip, paint, dot component, or pixel, but as a reflection upon the complexities of the whole process. It is a consequence mapping that connects each project's formation via the shaping emergent ground with its antecedent and 'about-to-be.'

Motivated by processes in metamorphoses, states of becoming, and alterity, the themes and motifs in these works arise organically out of earlier ones, and the array of subjects that are developed over the years remains close and ready for revisiting or readapting. Such a metaleptic approach is reiterated in the implemented conceptualizations of all four projects. *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* merges symbols from both *Alice* texts via anachronism. *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief* is an amalgam of symbols derived from the *Alice* texts, nuclear semiotics, and sign systems related to washing instructions. The last two projects entitled *Who are you?*

Is it Alice or (No)body? and *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* explore perceived transgression in the *Alice* human/animal boundary. The Carrollian metaphoric-metonymic trope of metamorphosis is intrinsically interwoven with Cervantine subtexts in all these projects.

The reflective practice and critical thinking that are incorporated in these projects employ an unforeseen made out from conscious plans as well as unconscious intentions triggered by feelings. An ongoing scrutiny of my practice-led research is, nevertheless, continuously involved in analyzing its underlying assumptions. It is a search for an approach that allows me as an art practitioner to perceive any disparity between actual practice and formal theory - ideas, paradigms or models that work in theory and are counterpoised by the processes of realizing, applying or enacting them in studio practice. This process engaged in continuous reflective conversations with my supervisors and other professionals in the arts and sciences, all questioning the validity of these projects and the habitual actions in my practice.

3.1 *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland: Anachronisms in the wilting (de)mystification of the White Knight*

A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland conflates the myth of both Cervantes's and Carroll's heroic knight with the 'mad tea party' in Wonderland, alluding to the numinous 'Last Supper' from the canonical gospels. Akin to Alice's uninvited tea ceremony where the girl's trauma reached one of its furthest descents into her illogical dreamlands, this project's last dinner party attempts to postulate a lunatic (trans)figuration. In this rationale, a linear vision of Alice's adventures in both Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land is utterly abandoned so that the

“melancholy farewell” episode is presented as sediments of Alice’s phantom afterlife.

A weird fantasy of (de)mystification is vested in this project via allegorical experimentation with traditional artistic media and digital collages. Comprising of a set of six mural digital prints and an installation, this project attempts to address the dissertation research question via subversion in anachronism and Christology (related to faith, dissent, and the White Knight’s mirroring of Don Quixote). The reiterative efforts in these works are haunted by the digital reproducibility and manipulation of images which in turn are haunted by traits of fine art processes.



31. Catania, A. (2015). Installation view from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland*.
Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral.

In canvas form or a nineteenth century post-mortem table, Alice’s handkerchief intrinsically reveals the anachronistic *imago* of the Quixotic Knight on phantom tea-stains of a ‘Last Supper’ episode in Wonderland. The aesthetic synapses

to construct these works are haunted not only by a multitude of features that are commonly associated with postmodernism (such as fragmentation, pastiche, intertextuality, montage, genre blurring and bricolage) but also by an anagogic interpretation of Alice's *indifference* to her beloved White Knight during the "melancholy farewell" moment.

3.1.1 The *remaindered lack* in a chaos of mark making

Art, in its phenomenal diversity, is a mirror reflecting on the transcendence of the boundaries of life, and this is evidenced since the first known depictions made by humankind in the Upper Paleolithic. Bataille (1955) describes these icons as - "vying with one another in energy and exuberance that attain fullest expression in the game of birth and death played on stone" (p. 38). Modern and contemporary artists continue to dwell upon existentialist themes. Alberto Giacometti laments that "[t]here is no hope of achieving what I want (. . .). I go on painting and sculpting because I am curious to know why I fail" (Abel, 1976, p. 267). Anselm Kiefer declares in an interview - "one of the primordial reasons why artists are compelled to make art may be to make sense of the world. The other is to affirm the fact that they are here, that they exist" (Kiefer & Marlow, 2014). Since our cave-dwelling days, the question of why we make art has haunted us as a perennial spectre of the human experience. All these artists made use of mark making as their indispensable tool; they sought to capture images with a metaphoric meaning that may sustain the viewer's gaze and, in some way or another, give some significance to the vitalities and passions of our own existence.

There lies a continuous criticism along the whole creative process together with an ideological interaction with the medium. As a practitioner who could

“identify emergent processes as being physical events” (Cain, 2010, p. 52), my methodology is on how to implement an adaptation by “incarnating it (. . .) in a material” (Collins, 1994, p. 115). One critical procedure is through the technique of mark making, a rudimentary application tool used by humankind since the earliest known engravings on stone and the scribble-stages of toddlerhood. This process may be analyzed from the perspective of Miller (2012) -

To inscribe a mark is to posit two things: the mark (its materiality, as a trace of ink, for example) and its place. If one effaces the mark, its trace remains, in the form of place. Thus aren't there always at least two series? – that of marks and that of lacks?

A drawing or a “complex of marks” (p. 81), as Badiou (2011) expounds, has “no place” (p. 81), since “the marks, the lines - the forms, if you will - create the background as an open space” (p. 81). Conscious marks combined with improvised experimentation create *lacks* that expose what Mallarmé calls “the empty paper which is protected by its *whiteness*” (p. 81). In their potential to remain undisclosed, these spectral *lacks* have a deconstructive capacity to create intensity and fragility. Thus, the question of Drawing, as it is of the whole project itself - “is to be and not to be” (Badiou, 2011, pp. 81 - 82).

In my techniques there lies a kindred spirit with Abstractionism and Neo Expressionism in how drawing is applied as a tool to what Cain (2010) calls “informal, gestural and experimental attitudes to mark-making” (p. 28). In this interaction of the medium with the artist's ideas, the creative act of mark-making demands that the artist remains *indifferent* to the implementation of *lacks*. It is only once these *lacks* are set on the picture plane that the creative eventually criticizes and

reshapes them with further marks or erasures. It is a paradoxical situation that both embraces and opposes the aleatory, imitative and the academic.

The reasoning process behind this project can be inferred from transition states - from one representation to a subsequent representation just like sketch drawing. This sketch drawing approach is used extensively in my methodology to visualise and develop design concepts that subsequently induce an idiosyncratic process. The generative aspect in this creation process is a visual experience built upon choice, disruption and/or interference. A choice is always demanded, even when there is no reason for one choice rather than another, and this creates an anxiety produced from the medium itself, as Abel (1976) writes - “[t]he medium is recalcitrant; it makes its own demands” (p. 270). Mamet (1991/1992) puts it in a more drastic way - “[e]ven the minimally serious artist is humbled constantly by the screaming demands of craft” (p. 28). There seems to be a resemblance between mark making and writing, as great authors also observe such obstructions - “All things resist being written down” (p. 209) says Franz Kafka (1948/1976). T. S. Eliot (1943/1971) expresses this impediment in *Burnt Norton* -

Words strain,
 Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
 Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
 Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
 Will not stay still. (p. 7)

There are always elements of correction and erasure which correspond with that of change. Thus, the forms and each elemental component within each work may disassemble abysmally then reassemble themselves, as Deleuze (1981/2003) writes – “painters pass through the catastrophe themselves, embrace the chaos, and attempt to

emerge from it” (p. 103). The intricate process in the artworks, both traditional and digital, involve a slow unfolding of manifestations that are never quite as they appear.

In Alice’s dreams and intuitions, all is like shadows; unsubstantial, fleeting, in constant flux, and strongly felt at times but not subject to any rational analysis. Thus, irrational techniques are required to adapt the *Alice* texts. Adhering blindly to any rational analysis is also anathema to the creative act itself which, as Koestler (1959) discloses, “involves a regression to a more primitive level, a new innocence of perception liberated from the cataract of accepted beliefs” (p. 519). Congruous to this rationale, my concerns in the drawing process involves a search for this “innocence of perception” through the techniques of distortion and (ir)rational association. As in all the projects of this dissertation, the method of creative investigation includes both conscious and unconscious manipulations of a medium in a paradoxical process of thinking through feelings.

3.1.2 Error in the improvisation of a stain

Edgar Allan Poe (1840/1980) declares - “[a]ll experience, in matters of philosophical discovery, teaches us that, in such discovery, it is the unforeseen upon which we must calculate most largely” (pp. 37 - 38). What is being consciously juxtaposed here is the term “calculate” that seems to be implying a logical measuring of factual data, with the “unforeseen” or that which perhaps could only be anticipated rather than ciphered or measured. How does one attempt to paradoxically “calculate” on the “unforeseen”? Poe seems to be implying a futility in telic endeavour, showing the fruition in the peculiarities of chance. Echoing this observation, Sarah Talmann

makes an acute observation on the *blind* act of creativity in Peter Greenaway's film *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982) –

A really intelligent man makes an *indifferent* painter. For painting requires a certain blindness – a partial refusal to be aware of all options. An intelligent man will know more about what he is drawing than he will see, and in the space between knowing and seeing, he will become *constrained*, unable to pursue an idea strongly.

The construct of *blindness* as an oblivious act that leads to the *unforeseen* recalls the opening séance in *Through the Looking-Glass*, an oxymoronic fright/play allusion where knowingness interferes with actual perception, where one finds hidden the metaphor of the *blind* practice of the necromantic artist. In this conceptual vein, *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* adopts the creative method of chance as an application tool to explore visual adaptations of the “melancholy farewell” moment.

To meet the challenges of this project, there lies a reliance on a kind of improvisation learned in practice which offers the possibility to illustrate other truths, other complexities, other levels of experience and reality that also exist but may have not yet been perceived before the execution of the work. This approach embraces the accidental style and its concerns with raw painterly gestures, flaws, smears, and pours of paint that create texture. The visual expression of this project also consciously borrows from artists who deploy the unconscious gesture in their improvisatory techniques and acts of spontaneous creation. The extemporized aesthetics of Japanese Zen artists as well those of Western visceral artists such as Turner, Hugo, Dubuffet, and Twombly all adopt the unarticulated process of improvisation which offers an *as-of-yet unseen* in the incorporation of their random

effects into works of art.⁵² This approach of the occurring mark is congruous to an art dictum by Frank Auerbach (1978) that says - “Good paintings attack fact from an unfamiliar point of view. They’re bound to look genuine and in some way rawly and actively repellent, disturbing and itchy and not right” (p. 16).

Paradoxically, an analytical method of thinking is applied to this chance technique. Once the accidental mark, stain, or lack is applied, a rational process of aesthetic analysis is involved which includes erasures, additions, montage, and other alterations and amendments to the visual composition of the final work. The technique of cropping is also used extensively by selecting only part of the subject concerned to be included in the picture plane. The background, middle ground, foreground, depth of field, and *lacks* in negative spaces are all scrutinized. The selecting and editing of the constructed images of this project were crucial in capturing the essential moments and climaxes that highlight and communicate a Carrollian narrative infused with Cervantine nuances and intertextual references. This correlation of the rationally logical and the sensuous in art whether it is, in the structure of an artistic work, in a creative act, or in the process of its perception, is a recurrent preoccupation of major artists. According to Eisenstein (1949), the dialectic of artworks involves a tension between two opposing poles -

A drive towards the thematic-logical side renders the work dry, logical, didactic. But over-emphasis on the side of sensual thinking, with insufficient account taken of the thematic logical tendency, this is equally fatal for the work: it is condemned to sensual chaos, elemental and raving. (pp. 144 - 145)

⁵² See Appendix A for a comparative analysis of how visual artists (from the nineteenth century to the present day) have adopted the unconscious gesture as their predominant painting trope.

Congruent to Talmann's understanding of the *indifferent* artist, the serendipidist relies on chance technique; "where from the twinning of matter with the unconscious, images emerge as if through magic" (Briffa, 2015). This making accountable for the unaccountable possible at diverse granularities, or, signposting the pareidolic labyrinths of possible inquiries from the impossible, is an essential paradoxical factor of what constitutes the medium in an accidental artist. The uncovering and unearthing of subject matter via the aleatory create a phantom metaphor in the actual process of artistic re-invention, re-reading, re-contextualizing, reformatting or re-articulation. Cast in this context of aesthetic "spirit-writing," the artwork is presented as a mysterious unity of imperfection, separate from the process of its becoming.

3.1.3 Gallantry and wilt in a stained *ex-centricity*: Prototypes for a visual semiotics in the grotesque iconography of a blundering knight

The iconography of the White Knight commenced in early works such as *Quixotic Equitation* (2006; fig. 32) and *Lunar attack* (2009; fig.33). Such (re)presentations were (re)visited from several personal journals. The primary use of these sketchbooks is to reflect on life's personal 'journey' and to act as an aid for any future possible projects. Observational drawings and media trials are continuously conducted on this source of documentation to extend the visual language of the projects concerned in the aim of building visual intelligence. Most of these works are made by intuitive drawing, thereby eschewing any preconceived ideas that might have hindered the aesthetic flow of emergent shapes and traces that oscillate between gestural abstraction and (re)presentation.



32. Catania, A. (2006). *Quixotic Equitation* [Pastel]. 42 x 29.5 cm.

In these spontaneous drawings, ideas were generated by using the medium of black pastels, many times combined with other media. Adopting experimental rendering and line techniques using wet mediums such as Indian ink, watercolour, acrylic paint, and oils produce effects which are unrepeatable. The investigative tool of the stick-formed pastel consists of an amalgam of pure pigment and a neutral-hued binder. When this powdery medium is mixed with water/oil-based paints and/or other liquid ancillaries it tends to leave traces of its chalky residue. Such ludic

experimentation in these preliminary works can move freely from figure to ground, and this interaction offers me immense formal possibilities. At times the experimentation in visual manifestation occurs only with water and oil-based paints letting the occurring mark to haunt the picture plane. In other circumstances, effects are created by dripping splashes of Indian ink onto a watery ground and applying paint with a sponge or stick.



33. Catania, A. (2009). *Lunar attack* [Pastel]. 5 x 14.6 cm.

The stylistic approach of the works in *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* incorporates an eccentric visual aesthetic that illustrates a penchant for Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers* series and other forms of expressionistic and fantastic devices. Such a critical approach focuses on the mannerist contextuality of the grotesque⁵³ whose very nomenclature, according to Maiorino (1987) is structured on "the mimetically *ex-centric*" (p. 2). In this project, eccentricity and *ex-centricity* turn their protean outreach toward figures of excess, visual rhetorical hyperboles, liminal playfulness, extravagant outdoing, and grotesque abnormality. It is a technique that strives for a particular "dissolvable" manifestation, an in-between state that Deleuze and Guattari (1991/1994) speak about -

⁵³ In connection with the theme of *katabasis*, as Sullivan (1996) points out – "the grotesque is etymologically derived from the Italian *grotta* and the ancient Greek word *krypte*, meaning an artificial hollow beneath a temple or palace. The term thereby juxtaposes the senses of descent, enigma, art, and burial" (p. 156).

Painting needs more than the skill of the draftsman who notes resemblances between human and animal forms and gets us to witness their transformation: on the contrary, it needs the power of a ground that can dissolve forms and impose the existence of a zone in which we no longer know which is animal and which human. (p. 173)



34. Catania, A. (2015). *Gallant Stain 1* [Mixed media]. 10 x 14.5 cm.



35. Catania, A. (2015). *Gallant Stain 2* [Mixed media]. 10 x 14.5 cm.



36. Catania, A. (2015). *Equastrian Wilt* [Mixed media]. 22.3 x 10.5 cm.



37. Catania, A. (2015). *Wilted Knight 1* [Mixed media]. 8 x 6.2 cm.



38. Catania, A. (2015). *Wilted Knight 2* [Pastel]. 29.5 x 21 cm.



39. Catania, A. (2015). *Wilted Knight 3* [Pastel]. 21 x 29.5 cm.

These depicted prototypes for the White Knight are reincarnations in the appearance of Don Quixote. Foucault (1966/2002) states that Don Quixote’s “whole journey is a quest for similitudes” (p. 52) and amplifies that these analogies and multidimensional affinities are “deceptive and verge upon the visionary or madness” (p. 53). Eco (1997) tells us that the hidalgo is the “real hero of the Library of Babel” (pp. 61 - 62) whilst Turgenev (1965) asserts that “Don Quixote is an enthusiast, radiant with his devotion to an idea” (p. 95). The Don’s interplay of manifold mirroring and re-experiencing of identities in La Mancha conflates with the “fantastical inversions” (Carter, 1995) of the White Knight’s landscape. In the drawings of this project these “fantastical inversions” can be understood not only from their representations but also from the technique itself - at times resembling the contemplative aftershock of an outburst of emotion, at others the ripples in water.

Cervantes’s epic was written in times of great delusions of grandeur “through a fascination with the “other,” whether that “other” is located on the fringes of

Spain's own natural preserve (. . .) or in its American colonies" (de Armas Wilson, 1999, p. 53), a territory which Mignolo (1995/1998) calls "the first periphery of the modern world" (p. xi). This allure in what Said (1978/1979) terms as the "new median category" (p. 58) had its cost, for it ushered the -

beginning of the time when the Christian God began to forsake the world; when man became lonely and could find meaning and substance only in his own soul, whose home was nowhere; when the world (. . .) was abandoned to its immanent meaninglessness. (Lukács, 1920/1971, p. 77)



40. Catania, A. (2019). *Quixotic Wilt 2* [Pastel]. 29.5 x 21 cm.



41. Catania, A. (2019). *Quixotic Wilt 3* [Pastel]. 20.8 x 23 cm.

In this unredeemed exile of a deprived home, “in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels an alien, a stranger” (Camus, 1942/1955, p. 13). De Cervantes (trans. 2003) abandons his innocuous heroic creation - “Somewhere in La Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember” (p. 19). The Spanish words *La Mancha* literally translates as “the stain” (Fuentes, 1992/1999, p. 192). The blundering knight’s homelessness is his trauma, but his intimate bearing is the spiritual awareness that he “was born, by the will of heaven (. . .) to revive the one of gold, or the Golden Age” (de Cervantes, trans. 2003, p. 142). This golden age corresponds to a Carrollian one which literary critic Karoline Leach (2000) describes as follows -

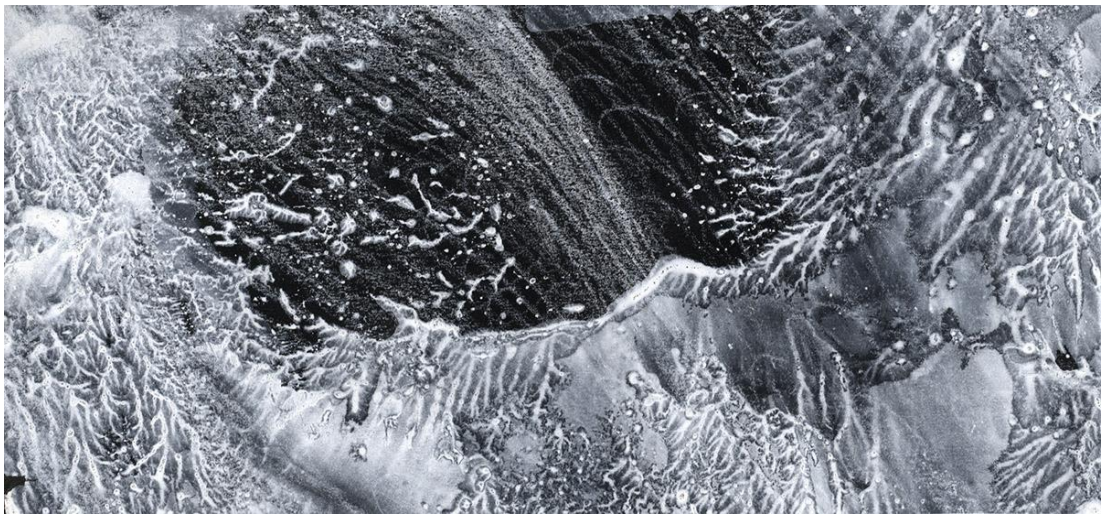
For the Victorians, caught as they were on the cusp of a new age in which all old certainties were dying, “Lewis Carroll” came to mean a readiness to believe - in wonderland, fairytales, innocence, sainthood, the fast-fading vision of a golden age when it seemed possible for humanity to transcend the human condition. Carroll became a way of affirming that such things really had once been. Even before Dodgson’s death, his assumed name had become the ultimate embodiment of this Victorian aspiration toward otherworldliness.



42. Catania, A. (2015). *Equine Fall* [Mixed media]. 14 x 8 cm.



43. Catania, A. (2015). *Quixotic Golgotha 2* [Mixed media]. 5.5 x 18.5 cm.



44. Catania, A. (2015). *Deluge* [Mixed media]. 14 x 18.5 cm.

“The failed mind sees the heart’s failings.” This adage, observed by Kyoami, the moral fool in Akira Kurosawa’s epic period drama film entitled *Ran* (1985), correlates to Don Quixote’s attributes which verge on what Harold Bloom (2001) calls “visionary madness” (p.147). The idiosyncrasies of Cervantes’s accursed wanderer, as that of Carroll, are instigated by lofty idealism and noble imagination for these queer heroes fought for the transcendence of spiritual illness in a degenerate and uncomprehending world.

The Manchegan knight “is aware of the why and wherefore of his existence” (Turgenev, 1965, p. 95). In humanistic psychological terms, he has “a meaning to his existence” (p. 101) for as Frankl (1946/1985) writes - “[h]e knows the “why” for his existence, and will be able to bear almost any “how”” (p. 101). The Quixotic

hierophany is not only synonymous with the piety of “homo religiosus” (Eliade, 1957/1987, p. 18) and the messianic aura of the “victimized Christ-figure” (Close, 1978, p. 249), but also with the quenching of a spiritual thirst in our “evolutionary dead-end” (Hughes, 1994/1995, p. 129).

The Knight of the Sorrowful Face is informed by the vigour and reward in the relentless pursuit for meaning whilst being immersed in the horrific cold countenance of human nature. Bearing his nature as a wound, the aesthetic posture of this inveterate melancholic hero is that of world-weariness! Iffland (1999) points out that Cervantes’s work - “has to do with the collapse of the heroic “grand narratives” of chivalric fiction” (p. 241). However, ironically, his gallant hero thrives on “resurrecting” (Iffland, 2007, p. 109) Romantic chivalry through parody, and with this mocking rebirth, spiritual chivalry is revitalised into “a new Gospel” (Genette, 1982/1997, p. 324). This revival is a paradoxical continuum of the sacred and epic “grand narratives” which Lyotard (1979/1984) paragonises with “the emancipation of humanity” (p. 60) and “the dialectic of Spirit” (p. 60). This oxymoronic irony elicits what Genette (1982/1997) calls the “law of equilibrium” which connotes that “a serious text calls for an ironic hypertext; an ironic text, for a serious hypertext” (p. 324). It implies that “the mockery became a parody of humanity as such, and even more its glory” (Bloch, 1969/2006, p. 67).

De Cervantes (trans. 2003) describes his doleful hero as - “his complexion was weathered, his flesh scrawny, his face gaunt” (p. 19). His grotesque features are those of Vincent van Gogh’s deceased *Four Cut Sunflowers* (1887) reincarnated in Kiefer’s *La Berceuse (for Van Gogh)* (2010), recalling long-lost “memories of lullabies” (Hurwitz, 2011). Always carrying his cindery rosary beads, his attire is the “brass basin” (de Cervantes, trans. 2003, p. 154) worn as the golden “helmet of

Mambrino” (de Cervantes, trans. 2003, p. 153). He is the alien Christ-Pierrot whose armour shines with lunar gleam (see figs. 46 - 48), wandering in an apocalyptic Golgotha of dark windmills and deluges (figs. 42 - 44). He is a paradigm to what Paulson (1998) calls “the aesthetic of the blemish” (p. 104).



45. Kiefer, A. (2010). *La Berceuse (for Van Gogh)* [Three vitrines with chair and sunflowers]. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. 400 x 150 x 150 cm (Each vitrine).



46. Catania, A. (2015). *Knight of Doleful Countenance* [Mixed media]. 41.5 x 28 cm.



47. Catania, A. (2015). *Knight of Doleful Countenance 2* [Pastel]. 29.5 x 21 cm.



48. Catania, A. (2015). *Knight of Doleful Countenance 3* [Pastel]. 29.5 x 21 cm.

In my works there lies a great debt to art-historical and iconographic precedents seemingly joined in the shared investigation into the imagination and the supernatural as exemplified in Victor Hugo's *supernatural*.⁵⁴ The surreal anthropomorphism in the flora of the naturalistic imagery of this project is reminiscent of the surreal portraits of Giuseppe Arcimboldo who animates the *nature morte* genre into one of a *nature morte vivante*. The visual is adapted to the semantic and the attribute only confers meaning by deduction. The vertebrated life in the decayed outcrops, dasyphyllous offshoots and other vegetative excrescences in works such as the *Wilting Knight series* (see figs. 36 - 41) represent the wispy elongated limbs, tenuous joints, ectomorphic torsos, and other bizarre anatomy of the (im)mortal White Knight.

A combination of the Greek words *bios* (life) and *morphe* (form), the term 'biomorphic' might be applied to these quasi-abstract works that resemble a concoction of living forms (including the human body and plants). Plants suffering blight and disease may absorb the qualities, essence, and form of other living beings in a Quixotic animism. This confusion between the living and the inanimate is haunted by an uncanny sense of *otherness*. This *other* element may be observed in my practice as the scenic diversification of diachronic acts (as in a theatre) which run in parallel temporal dimensions, each of which 'misbehaves' or slips *out of joint* causing these scenes to invade, overlap and haunt each other. They are attempts to capture a phantom that is perfectly *out of joint* caught inside the

⁵⁴ Victor Hugo's mention of the *supernaturel* is not referring to "something different from reality" but rather as "the reality normally hidden from view" (Gaunt, 1972, p. 7). Hugo conducted séances in which he allegedly contacted renowned departed personalities, animals, and intangible spirits, including the Ocean and Death itself (Rodari et al., 1998). This mediumistic style influenced not only Hugo's automatist and experimental techniques as a writer and visual artist but generations of modernist artists who realized phantom indexes in the absences of swirls, occurring marks, textures, stains, and shadows. See Appendix A for more information.

Platonic cave of the illusory world and, at the same time, glimpsing and pointing to the possibility of its transcendence.

In an informal conversational interview dated 7th July 2015, Prof. Saviour Catania observes that – “rather than depicting grotesque monstrosities of the vegetative world, figs. 36, 37, 41 and 54 are depictions of humanized sunflowers, portrayals of the tragic chivalry of the White Knight/Don Quixote wilting into spiritual decay.” Inspired by patterns in nature, these works are portraying a disparate humanity combating the natural forces within it. They are paradoxically imbued with the search for the origin or the primordial, and the possibility that when nature eventually supersedes humankind after our inescapable demise, spiritual faith and myth might still haunt our world.

The *Wilting Knight series* depict death and life in an oxymoronic manner through both fertile and dead sunflower seeds. They are the Keatsian representations of the melancholic “droop-headed flowers (. . .) in an April shroud” (Keats, 1820/1995, p. 247) in which, as Bloom (1961) points out - “The enduring colour of fresh life is only a grave colour” (p. 404).⁵⁵

As the expression ‘falling in love’ denotes; the suffering experience of a *passio* is not considered as something that you actively *do*, but as something happening *to you*. The White Knight’s passion shown here is that of the presaged suffering bestowed upon his seared heart. The seeds of the decaying sunflowers, whether blackened or spectrally white, still have a craving love for embryonic life through pain; whether mirrored through his agony, reincarnated from a Vincent van Gogh canvas, or undulating against the Mediterranean blood sea.

⁵⁵ This Keatsian metaphor was reiterated in an exhibition entitled *Wilting Annunciation* held between December 2017 and January 2018. See Appendix B.



49. Dürer, A. (ca. 1498). *The Large Passion: The Crucifixion* [Woodcut].

Victoria and Albert Museum, London. 57.15 x 40 cm (Plate).

The White Knight is a lunatic human with lunar connotations in the anthropomorphized iconography of Dürer's *The Large Passion: The Crucifixion* (ca. 1498). In this woodcut Campbell (1986/2002) notices that Christ is flanked by "Upper left, the sun of the spring equinox; upper right, the full moon of Easter" (p. 42), moreover, the "radiance" (p. 41) of the solar principle represents eternity in its transcendence of earthly cycles. The moon "ever dying and *self*-renewed, is symbolic

of consciousness incarnate in all living beings, suffering in each the pains of desire for the passing gratifications of temporal life, subject in each to death, and yet through death's progeny renewed" (p. 44). In this confrontation, the dreamer's procreator⁵⁶ is "not quenched in solar light, but fully illuminated, *self-equaling*" (p. 41)!



50. Soutine, C. (ca. 1924). *The Rabbit* [Oil on canvas]. Private collection, New York. 73.3 x 47.9 cm.

⁵⁶ According to the dream divination of Artemidorus - "Selene the Moon represents both the wife and mother of the dreamer. She also represents prosperity, business ventures and navigation." (Jones, 2005c, p. 6175).



51. Dion, M. (1994 - 2007). *Killers Killed* [Tree, taxidermy animals, tar, galvanized aluminium, foam, paint]. Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York. 325.12 x 165.10 x 152.40 cm.

The lunar knight holds the disquieting corpse of the March Hare/White Rabbit (fig. 52), (re)presenting the total annihilation of the Easter Rabbit's seasonal cycle.⁵⁷ Akin to the Hiroshima victim's wrist-watch that stopped on *Little Boy's* detonated hour, its time ceased when "dipped" (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 86) in the "black milk" (Celan, 1948/1972, p. 33) of cataclysmic extermination. This depiction echoes "the raw idiosyncrasy" (Steiner, 1975, p. 460) of Chaim Soutine's hanged

⁵⁷ The Easter Rabbit is "most likely of pre-Christian origin. The rabbit was known as an extraordinarily fertile creature, and hence it symbolized the coming of spring" (Jones, 2005b, p. 2580). In the Greco-Roman world, the hare "was especially associated with Dionysos, the god not only of love, fertility, and life but also of death and immortality" (Jones, 2005d, p. 7590).

bestiary series (fig. 50) and Mark Dion's "interspecies lynching" (Budick, 2013) in *Killers Killed* (1994 – 2007; fig. 51).



52. Catania, A. (2015). *Easter Wonderland* [Mixed media]. 41.5 x 28 cm.

3.1.4 Visualizing the peekaboo iconography of a dream child's offering

When the Caucus Race in Wonderland is over and all the animals ask at the end, “[b]ut who is to give the prizes?” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 36), the Dodo appoints Alice as the prize giver. It is a gesture that denotes a certain respect, after all she is the only one that dared challenge the tyranny of the Queen of Hearts. This heroine is a “combative female”⁵⁸ courageous enough to expose all the naked emperors that come across her. In both *Alice* texts where rationality vanishes as one chases after it, a little pilgrim raises a voice of common sense against the adults’ unjust commandments and despotic regulations. Carroll (1887/2011) himself gives instructions that his Alice is intended to be portrayed as “trustful, ready to accept the wildest impossibilities with all that utter trust that only dreamers know” (p. 225).⁵⁹



53. Catania, A. (2015). *Pouring Wine* [Mixed media]. 9 x 10 cm.

⁵⁸ Conveying an emphasis on individual freedom of expression, Romanticism bolstered up a generation of prominent women to loom radiantly - such as Mary Shelley, Emily Brontë, and Dorothy Wordsworth. Although this movement was established long before Carroll, it has been propounded that his Alice is one of these “combative females” (Thacker, 2002, p. 46).

⁵⁹ In April 1887, Carroll publishes an article entitled “Alice on the Stage” in *The Theatre* as a reaction to an adapted stage play production of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.



54. Catania, A. (2015). *Wilting Tea-Party* [Mixed media]. 10.6 x 19.1 cm.

Despite her tender years, Alice, the little girl “with bright eager eyes” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 241) is a strong personality that Empson (1935/1971) interprets as a “little rogue” (p. 349). Perhaps Alice is an enigmatic child in her playful mischievousness, but she is also “unpolished and unspoiled, whose words bear a mysterious meaning” (Hinz, 1953/1971, p. 146). Her child-life creed is a “primordial religion” for, as Altizer (2012) defines the term, it “is deeply grounded in the movement of eternal return” (p. 19). Through her alternate fantastical realities, she is the child that experiences life as “the incomprehensible light of grace” (Balthasar, 1965/1991, p. 616), and “distinguishes itself by deeds which point to the conquest of the dark” (Jung, 1940/2014a, p. 167).

The idea of juxtaposing the tea party scene in Wonderland with the Gospels’ Last Supper originates from Alice’s observation that she doesn’t “see any wine” (p. 83) on the party table set outside the March Hare’s house. In *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland*, Alice takes the epicentre of the tea-party - it is she who serves from the teapot (figs. 53 - 55) as a symbolic oblation even though the tea-

party (dis)organizers in the original story cry out that there is “no room!” (p. 83) for her. Alice looks beyond the strife that sets her apart from her fellow creatures, when she is no longer a *self* defined in opposition to other *selves*, but rather moves through the space between things and tries to learn anew what “growing up” means among other living beings.

Alice’s learning to cope with the changing and antagonistic world is a clear metaphor for “growing up” but also for Carroll’s vision of the world’s folly. It is the White Knight who shows her the way - he is her saviour. The configuration of their world is atypical of an effect described by Ramachandran and Hirstein (1999) as the ‘peekaboo’ principle in their neuroaesthetical ‘laws’ of art which underlines perceptual ‘problem solving’ – “a puzzle picture (or one in which meaning is implied rather than explicit) may paradoxically be more alluring than one in which the message is obvious” (p. 33). Alice is (trans)figured together with the K(night) of Faith in an Emmaus-like scenario but in reverse - they reincarnate in the past rather than the future of their ‘melancholy farewell.’

The narcissist child who gazes in front of her mirror is also a Quixotic dreamer of truths and a nonconformist observer, proclaiming the *errors* of any age. In this project, her proclamation is that of an *error* in her *ex-centric* saviour’s chronology. It could be also be interpreted as the prediction of her own *error*, portending her own death in the *Alice* sequel where she jumps to the Eight square and remain no longer a child.



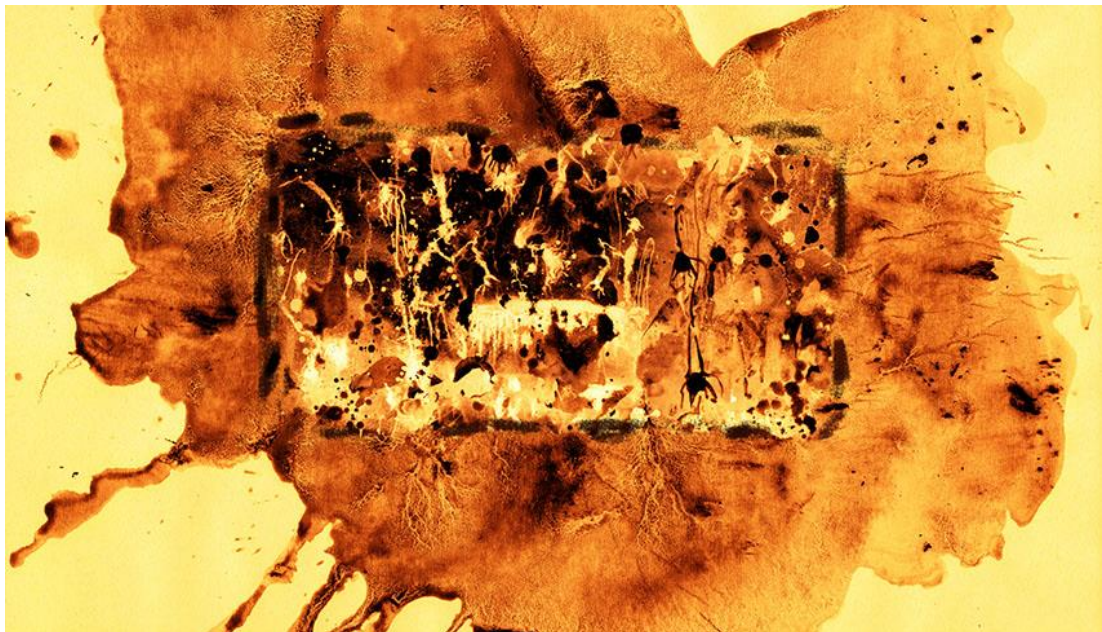
55. Catania, A. (2015). *Carcassed Tea-Party* [Mixed media]. 11.8 x 20 cm.

3.1.5 The decay of an (un)trackable aura in digital print

The aesthetic synapses of this project are also haunted by the digital reproducibility and manipulation of images which in turn were haunted by traits of fine art processes. The juxtaposition of the images to create a final series of digital murals created a bricolage of multi-panel diversity and meanings which manifested in the occurrence of unexpected associations. This pastiche of disparate devices explored issues of framing, linear and non-linear flow in the contrasting temporal discourses of its narrative, dealing with concerns such as eventhood, paradox, opposition, simultaneity, scale, and anachronicity.

The application tool, or what Manovich (2013) calls “media software” (p. 24), used for organizing and manipulating the media content of this project’s drawing aspect is Adobe Photoshop. Thus, the drawing’s existence is altered to what Benjamin (1936/2007b) would have called the “decay of the aura” (p. 223). Davis

(1995) writes that “[t]he aura, supple and elastic, has stretched far beyond the boundaries of Benjamin’s prophecy into the rich realm of reproduction itself” (p. 381). Even more, with the advent of what Manovich (2001) calls the “metamedium of the digital computer” (p. 33), the aura of the digitally edited and reproduced artifact reaches an abysmal level of decay, for as Legrady (2000) explains – “Once information is digitized, it is by nature fragmented, discrete and can be ordered in any sequential structure” (p.84).

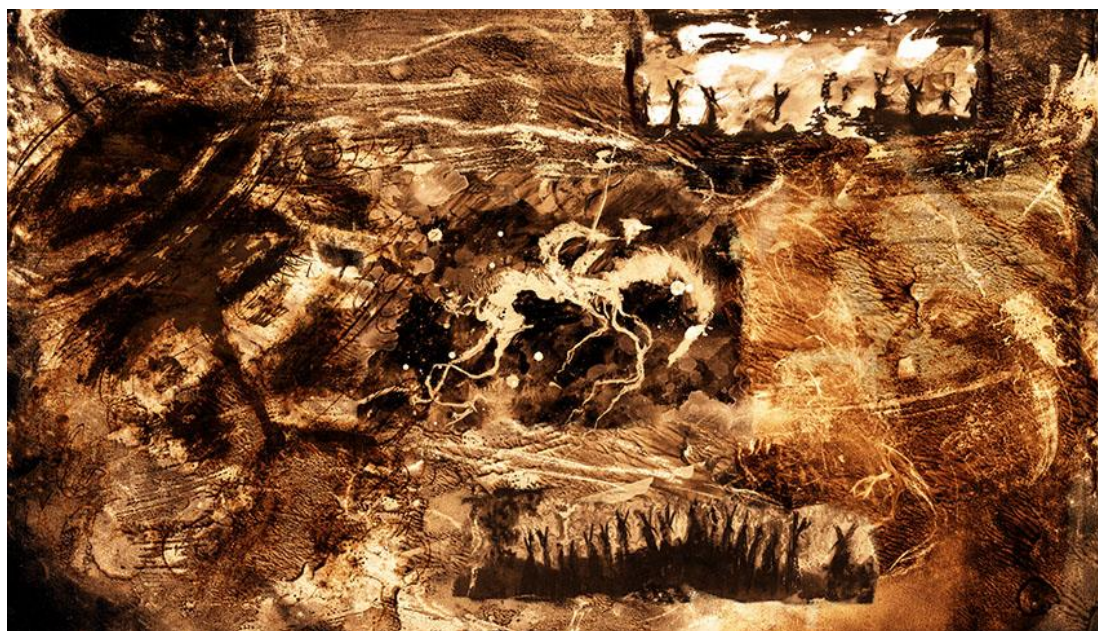


56. Catania, A. (2015). *Wine Stain from A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* [Digital collage on canvas].
Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral, 142 x 253 cm.

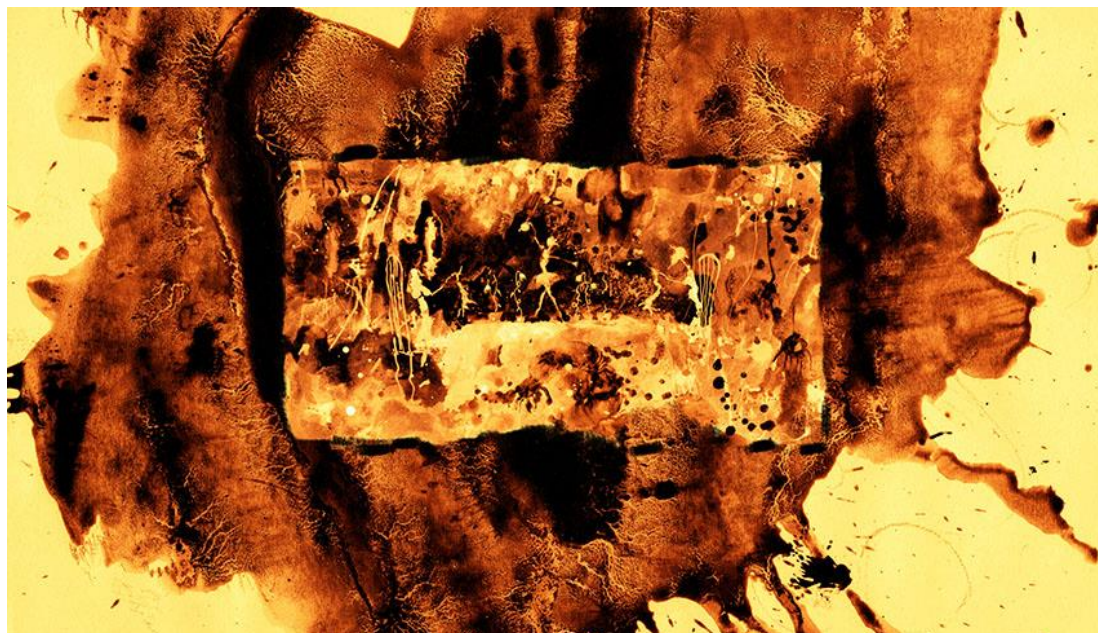
Selected images discussed in the previous chapters were juxtaposed as layers and edited using filters that “work on continuous-tone images” (Manovich, 2013, p. 132). Multiple layers of altered drawings were superimposed to create the final compositions, which may be described by Manovich (2013) as the “result of an “adding up” data (technically, a composite) stored in different layers” (p. 144).



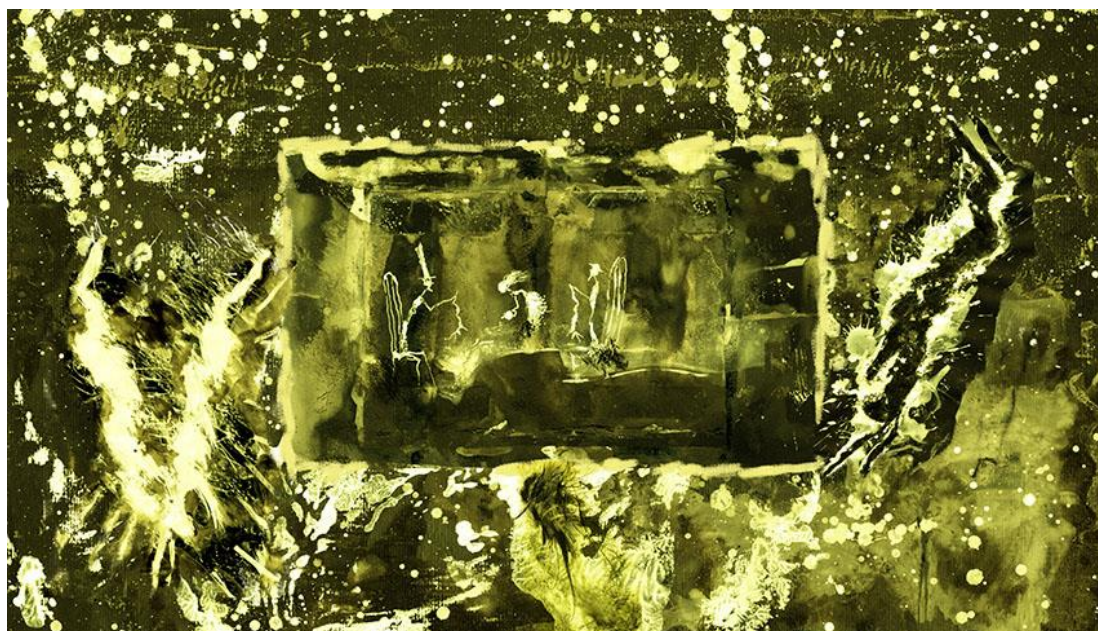
57. Catania, A. (2015). *A Tea-stained Closure for a White Knight* from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* [Digital collage on canvas]. Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral, 142 x 253 cm.



58. Catania, A. (2015). *A Closure for a White Knight 2* from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* [Digital collage on canvas]. Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral, 142 x 253 cm.



59. Catania, A. (2015). *Wine Stain 2* from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* [Digital collage on canvas].
Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral, 142 x 253 cm.



60. Catania, A. (2015). *An Erring Tea Party* from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland*
[Digital collage on canvas]. Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, 142 x 253 cm.



61. Catania, A. (2015). *A Curiouser Closure* from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* [Digital collage on canvas]. Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, 142 x 253 cm.

The decayed aura of these works emanated from their recorded, stored, and potential-to-be-multiplied state. Once digitalized, any individual detail may be extracted from the ‘original’ composition to be replicated on the digital artworks. The aura as an artwork’s attribute in its unique presence in space and time seems to be lost in these digital murals. These works seem not to connect any longer to the notion of “authenticity” (Benjamin, 1936/2007b, p. 220), since in their potential to be reproduced they are never fully ‘present.’ Nevertheless, even though the ‘original’ is not ‘present,’ there lies a paradox in the vanished “authenticity of a digital artwork, or any other reproduced artwork for that matter. Let us take, for example, a first edition comic from the 1940s which might have been reproduced in innumerable copies at the time of its manufacture but survives today intact unlike the other hundreds of thousands whose unfortunate destiny condemned them to the trash. Does this unique copy become an original? Is there a rebirth of its aura?

The final digital works in this project were all printed once despite the potential reproducibility to create others using the software that manipulated them in their ‘present’ state. Since all digitalized records that contained their image data are now deleted, do these ‘monoprints’ possess an ‘aura’ as that of the ‘original’ drawings made in traditional media? Or, will there always remain traces of their digitized storage somewhere hidden in a virtual space that dooms any ‘aura’ in a digital permanence?

3.1.6 The melancholic realms of the monochromatic: Intensity, recession, and *extimacy* in a single hue

Explaining his choice of a restricted palette, the French abstractionist Pierre Soulages declares that “the more limited the means, the stronger the expression” (Ferrier & Le Pichon, 1989, p. 687). I adhere to this credo. The painterly sensibility of creating in monochromatic space is characterized by subtle, idiosyncratic nuances of texture emulating a throbbing of forms and rhythm via a fading up of space and time. Monochromatic space and its relationship with distant time are one of the major preoccupations expressed in my work. In my practice, the reductivist stance of depicting in monochromatic colours is a search for expression that denotes recession or similar acts of *withdrawing*.

Time and distance turn tones, tints and shades into a single hue. In aerial or atmospheric perspective, for example, distant objects are perceived as fainter and seem to be monochromed in a veiling luminance. Such practice of emulating the illusion of depth in a drawing or painting, which Leonardo da Vinci (trans. 2008) refers as “the perspective of disappearance” (p. 113), modulates chromatism to adumbrate atmospheric transformations on the tints, tones ad shades of distant

objects. In this monochromatic colour of the ground that appears to merge with the sky, Solnit (2005) notes that the horizon's cerulean hue is - "a deeper, dreamier, melancholy blue" (p. 22) than that of the sky itself -

For something of this longing will, like the blue of distance, only be relocated, not assuaged, by acquisition and arrival, just as the mountains cease to be blue when you arrive among them and the blue instead tints the next beyond. Somewhere in this is the mystery of why tragedies are more beautiful than comedies and why we take a huge pleasure in the sadness of certain songs and stories. Something is always far away. (pp. 22 - 23)

Perhaps, a vanishing point is always melancholic by its very nature. The monochromatic colour of recession is a light that does not touch us physically but still caresses a deep emotional response within us. This light does not seem to travel the complete distance from the sun to our *immediate world*, it gets lost in the interim. Thus, its monochromatic melancholy is also projected via time. Time fades colours. Tones, tints and shades fade or lose their intensity in their exposure to all sorts of atmospheric conditions. The frescoes of the Sistine Chapel all verged into the monochromatic before their conservation-restoration intervention that took place in the 1980s and '90s. Likewise, in photography, the chemical makeup of a picture taken by a camera is affected by ultraviolet light, various toxins, and pollutants, causing the colours to fade away.

Time may re(*present*) a moment that slips away to provide an isolated glimpse of an elusive shadowy light. Such a monochromatism draws one closer and closer to muse on eternity at a melancholy distance, where the 'inside' and 'outside' are inextricably intermeshed in an intersubjective structure. Rothko's brown and gray

paintings are an example *par excellence*. Made during the artist's struggle with depression which ended in suicide, these flattened pictorial spaces take the viewer aback by their *extimate* accentuation of flickering areas of light and shade, especially when visible in close proximity, as Werschkul (2011) explains –

the intangible impression of luminosity one usually receives from a distance gives way, when one is in closer proximity, to an acute awareness of the strokes of the brush. In this way, Rothko insistently presents the private language of the brush to be deciphered by the viewer, so that an immediate sense of *self*-conscious struggle and of a striving for internal reconciliation ultimately supplants the more remote experience of an incommunicable mystery. Through this tension between close intimacy and distant strangeness, of what is particular and what is ethereal, Rothko succeeds in conveying a newfound sense of courage and faith, even as he reveals an inescapable human fragility. (p. 32)



62. Rothko, M. (1969). *Untitled* [Acrylic on paper].
The Met, New York. 153.4 × 121 cm.

Such a penchant for sombre moods and atmosphere in monochromatisms recalls the greyish silvers and ethereal blues in Whistler's *Nocturne in Blue and Silver: The Lagoon, Venice* (1879-80; fig. 63) where one might witness subdued hues that mimic the elusive structures of a floating city. The distant lights glimmer along the horizons, reflecting alongside gondoliers that immaterialize into the insubstantial substance of the silhouettes that hover in their backgrounds. Whistler captures what Byron (1812-18/1994) calls - a "fairy city of the heart." (p. 223)! To create such

subtle harmonic rhythms, the artist adopted a particularly ‘blinding’ approach that involves repetition and memorization, as his earliest biographers record -

His method was to go out at night (. . .) stand before his subject and look at it, then turn his back on it and repeat to whoever was with him the arrangement, the scheme of colour, and as much of the detail as he wanted. The listener corrected errors when they occurred, and, after Whistler had looked long enough, he went to bed with nothing in his head but his subject. The next morning, if he could see upon the untouched canvas the completed picture, he painted it; if not, he passed another night looking at. (Pennell & Pennell, 1911, p. 113)



63. Whistler, M. (1879-80). *Nocturne in Blue and Silver: The Lagoon, Venice* [Oil on canvas].
The Met, New York. 50.16 × 65.4 cm.

Does 'blindness' in art practice enhance the values of the monochrome? Are there any connections between dreams and monochromatisms?

The ancient Greeks taught that there were four elements, each associated with a particular colour, as Pastoreau (2008) describes; "fire is red, water is green, air is white, and earth is black" (p. 22). Is the presocratic view right in thinking that any of these colours is primary but transmutes into the other colours. Why should any colour of the elements be considered as primary? Could one take, for example, red as a primary if it has the potential to change into green, white, and black, thereby relinquishing all its attributes as redness? What remains constant in metamorphosis?

In studio practice, we know that mixing all primary colours form a chromatic black. Is this compound a primary of the primaries or just a murky smudge? Is it a primordial black that perhaps carries some substrate from the "fertile black" (p. 22) associated with the earth?

It is via some enigmatic substrate in the monochromatic that my search in artistic practice attempts to capture the melancholic experience of living in a foreign space and in the proximity of an outer void.

3.1.7 *A Postmortem Tea Party: An archaeological rigor mortis and other residues of the White Knight's (trans)figuration*

The installation entitled *A Postmortem Tea Party* (2015) makes use of an eighteenth-century dilapidated bier and soil-encrusted objects such as coins, keys, and tableware associated with the Victorian tea ceremony. These found objects are placed in a specific way as to imply an archaeological find - remnants or residues of what might have occurred in the White Knight's (trans)figuration depicted in the print mural series.



64. Catania, A. (2015). *A Postmortem Tea Party* from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* series
[Eighteenth century bier, glazed ceramic, glass, soil, coins, keys, and rock].

Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, 72 x 172 x 60 cm.



65. Catania, A. (2015). *A Postmortem Tea Party* from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* series [Eighteenth century bier, glazed ceramic, glass, soil, coins, keys, and rock].
Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, 72 x 172 x 60 cm.



66. Catania, A. (2015). *A Postmortem Tea Party* from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* series [Eighteenth century bier, glazed ceramic, glass, soil, coins, keys, and rock].
Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, 72 x 172 x 60 cm.

A Postmortem Tea Party (2015) also ponders on the mortiferous aspects of Alice's mirrored *selves*, as novelist John Updike (1989) writes – “[n]ot only are selves conditional, but they die. Each day, we wake slightly altered, and the person we were yesterday is dead’ (p. 211). Playing on the idea of a past moment of a corpse in the process of a pre-funeral, where a coin was once placed on each eye lid to lock them closed from *rigor mortis*, the exhibition site becomes a pre-mortuary setting. According to past religions, superstition, and traditions, this was to pay Charon to ferry the corpse's shade across the river Styx or Acheron into the underworld, or simply to hinder the corpse from staring back! In Victorian times, during this mourning process, as Seaward (2013) informs –

Mirrors were covered: our reflection in a mirror is said to be the reflection of our soul – if the soul of the dead person should see itself it might not leave (. . .) or perhaps take another soul with it! (. . .). At the moment of death, pictures sometimes fall off walls. It's unlucky if a clock stops at the time of death. Perhaps a raven might land on the roof, then there would certainly be a death.

Placing a fantastical narrative related to death in an ambiguously historical setting is not a novelty in Conceptual Art, one could find examples in Matthew Barney's *Boat of Ra* (2014) and Damien Hirst's *Tale of Shipwreck and Salvaged Treasure* (2017). In harnessing the idea of archaeology, this artistic project transposes the fundamental questions asked in this dissertation to contexts associated with the historical past, the thrill of discovery, and the commodification of objects. How does *A Postmortem Tea Party* reflect the production and consumption of archaeology and cultural heritage in terms of *extimacy*? Beyond this privileged setting, what does this *self*-conscious (re)presentation of the archaeological process

even with a macabre artistic license reveal about *extimacy* with the material remains of the past? What role/s does the dilapidated bier context play in framing an understanding of the White Knight's *ex-centricity*?

The keys inserted amongst the archeological finds of this project allude to those that Alice had to open in her own underworld. Together with the tea-ceremony cutlery they also allude to the Mad Tea-Party ceremony in Wonderland and domestic items which question reason such as Oppenheim's *Object* (1936; see fig. 67).⁶⁰ A *Postmortem Tea Party* transforms the isolated values of existentialism, anachronism, and aesthetic formalism in a cultural configuration of Carroll's paradoxical *postmortem* writing. As in the adapted text of the "melancholy farewell" episode, a critique of (re)presentation and the contrapuntal expression of a metaphysics describe two marginal moments of human existence - death and writing - moments that transform presence and contingency into absence and destiny.

In this context, one might recall the striving for phantom indexes in contemporary art. In Rachel Whiteread's negative space mummifications⁶¹ we find a turning towards the ruins of Egyptian (re)presentation as an alien source of possibility, or in terms of Heidegger (1927/1962), for an authentic *Dasein* which "finds itself *face to face* with the 'nothing' of the possible impossibility of its existence" (p. 310). Matthew Barney's search for phantom indexes which lies simultaneously in the ancient, modern, and postmodern, as Taylor (2012) explains - "ancient in the origin of its vision, modern in its transformative mission, and

⁶⁰ Oppenheim's *Object* (1936) presents a fur wrapped teacup, saucer, and spoon (fig. 67). Things that are usually related to civilization and household orderliness are transformed into a Surrealist sculpture evoking a surprising blend of associations and messages that recall wild nature. *Object* epitomizes Breton's premise that strange meanings may often be projected onto mundane objects. When represented in an unpredictable manner, any mundane item is capable to question reason and perhaps even connect to the subconscious.

⁶¹ See Appendix C for a comparative analysis between *Through the Looking-Glass* and Rachel Whiteread's *Ghost* (1990).

postmodern in its performance of the impossibility of realizing this vision and accomplishing this mission” (p. 49).



67. Oppenheim, M. (1936). *Object* [Fur-covered cup, saucer, and spoon]. New York, NY: Moma. Cup 10.9 cm in diameter; saucer 23.7 cm in diameter; spoon 20.2 cm long, overall height 7.3 cm.

Perhaps one could find the essence in Barney’s art, and perhaps that of the *Alice* texts too, through the opening line of the novel *Ancient Evenings* (1983) by Norman Mailer (1983/2013) - “Crude thoughts and fierce forces are my state” (p. 3). Barney adapts Mailer’s novel which is, in itself, another adaptation – that of the ancient Egyptian funerary text *The Book of the Dead*. By recasting the ancient Egyptians’ fanatical interest in corporeal transformation in the operatic film *River of Fundament* (2014), Barney combines the characteristic modern and postmodern questioning of language and (re)presentation with a metaphysical expression embracing telepathy, communication with the dead, the afterlife, and reincarnation.

The macabre theme of *A Postmortem Tea Party* echoes the sandy, scorched fossilization of death in *Pale Rider* (2010; fig. 69). The visual expression drawn from nature, and pertaining to some organic sedimentation or petrified extinction, is its inescapable DNA. The confluence of atmosphere and the region between figuration and abstraction becomes equal fertile territory with the surreal-organic which, as Prof. Saviour Catania (2011) writes, “collapses into the *totentanz* of its event horizon, for its starless numinous annihilates (. . .) all that’s made to a black thought in a pale shade.” Prof. Ivan Callus (2011) also notes within this context –

light scarcely enters except to shadow, dimly, the terminal trembling of the tenebrous – to identify the body. Stayed there, though we shrink to realize it, we are spectres. What else, who else, can witness the dying of death too after all else has died?



68. Barney, M. (2014). (Director). Still image from *River of Fundament* [Operatic experimental film]. USA: Laurenz Foundation.



69. Catania, A. (2010). *Pale Rider* [Mixed media on canvas]. 100 x 80 cm. Photo: Kevin Casha.

The conceptualization of *Pale Rider* is an attempt to revisualize Death's *rictus* in Bruegel the Elder's *The Triumph of Death* (c. 1562; fig. 70) which has triumphed over the mundane and razed the Earth until its own 'life' is now extinguished. The "*peak shift effect*" (Ramachandran & Hirstein, 1999, p. 18) is deployed in *Pale Rider* to exaggerate the eerie aspects related to this frozen (re)presentation of the melancholic saturnine outlook of Death as conceived in the middle ages. The "ruler of the months" (Benjamin, 1963/2003, p. 151) does not

appear triumphantly, but as a Mazeppa-phantom as that represented in the turbulent mists of Turner's *Death on a Pale Horse* (ca.1825-30; fig. 71). The submissive skeletal form in *Pale Rider* has ended its reaping role for there is no more use for its scythe – it is its own unquiet cycle that has now become silenced. The last of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse has announced its own Day of Judgement.

Schopenhauer (trans. 1966) writes that “dying is certainly to be regarded as the real aim of life” (p. 637), Freud (1920/1961) reiterates that “*the aim of all life is death*” (p. 32). Thus, besides the life instincts, there is an acknowledgment of *thanatos*. All our life is a continuous struggle between these opposite polarities, one which seeks to perpetuate life, the other seeks to terminate it. Art captures this condition of living that tends to return to the nonliving, marking its repetition of a death that is thereby not a death.



70. Bruegel the Elder's, P. (c. 1562). *The Triumph of Death* [Oil in panel].

Museo del Prado, Madrid. 117 x 162 cm.



71. Turner, J. M. W. (ca.1825-30). *Death on a Pale Horse (?)* [Oil on canvas].
Tate Britain, London. 59.7 cm x 75.6 cm.

3.1.8 The exhibition space

Forming part of the Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale 2015, the project *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* was exhibited in the subterranean vaults of the Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral Museum, a mid-18th century building originally a seminary (fig. 31 and 72). The site specificity itself, that of an underground vault, attests to the *katabasis* concept of this work. Suspended upon metal frames, the digital murals take on a sculptural, tactile sense of three-dimensionality in their explorations of depth. Visual relief is provided by the artificial light that seeps through and permeates from behind each canvas. The installation *A Postmortem Tea Party* (2015) is set alongside these digital murals. Further enhancing its anachronistic values, this work stands on top of the remains of an old Roman wall, a survival of a construction dating from centuries before the foundation of the seminary in 1734.

A selection of this project reappeared in a theatrical performance (fig. 73) in 2018 entitled *Unintended* - produced by Unifaun Theatre Productions, written by Adrian Buckle, and directed by Stephen Oliver. Held at Spazju Kreattiv, Valletta, this play delves on terrifying adult human behaviour and its unrelenting struggle to taint innocence - another harrowing of a contemporary Hell.



72. Catania, A. (2015). Installation view from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland*. Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral Museum.



73. Installation view from theatrical production entitled *Unintended* including work *Tea-stained Closure for a White Knight* from *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland* (2015).

Photo: Unifaun Productions.

3.2 *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief*: Mourning the impossible labyrinth of Onkalo in black silk

The White Knight, who is of the opinion that he is the most systematic and rational thinkers, paradoxically raises questions about just how we know ourselves not to be paranoid delusives. It is the little pilgrim (who has not been Queened yet) that exposes the futility of his inventions haunted by an omniscient and omnipotent stewardship of the world ever since Prometheus's defiance. This crazy gallant knight projects a paradoxical naturalism that may be articulated from both an epistemological and an ontological perspective.

The Victorian knight propagates on *self*-endowed attributes in a revived modern idea of invention. In an age of colonization, the knight advances idealistic ideas that – “man can create new means of bettering himself and his environment”

(Ansay, 1995). On the other hand, rather than facilitating life, the White Knight's inventions generate doubts about their own efficacy; for example, all the objects he had placed in his invented box are lost - "[t]hen all the things must have fallen out" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 277). When Alice notices the mousetrap on his horse and comments - "it isn't very likely there would be any mice on the horse's back" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 278), one may assume that since Alice's passage through the Looking-Glass is a dream fantasy, any hyperbolic idea might be plausible. Nonetheless, the Knight's concurrence with Alice, "[n]ot very likely, perhaps" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 278), suggests that Alice's logic prevails in both Alice's and the Knight's world. This might be a caution against - "inventing for the sake of inventing rather than facilitating life" (Ansay, 1995)!

Our enlightened society depends upon scientific investigation and Pinker (2018) might be right in suggesting that "the ideals of the Enlightenment are in fact stirring, inspiring, noble - a reason to live" (p. 21). However, is scientific investigation the sole ethos upon which the design and work of human beings rely? How are the objectives and goals of human 'development' upon nature established? What kind of ethics govern our scientific rationality? Do these ethics conflate with those of capitalist economics creating an increasing global inequality? How much is scientific knowledge abiding by the chess game rules of Kafka's Castle? Where will we live in our near future?

What is certain is that the fracking, cutting down of trees, and other destructive human interventions that, perhaps, serve to generate technological advances have produced the accelerated thawing of the Arctic permafrost, global air pollution, and other irrevocably complex and controversial environmental issues. How much do we as humans know ourselves in this Anthropocene Age as a species

that brought about such disasters? The natural world is in crisis and, perhaps, we as human beings (*Anthropos*) may not even notice quite how quickly it is changing by our own toxic mark on the planet.

The folly of our own inventions is haunted by spectres which come to symbolize the acts that produce them. It is a phenomenon which is controlled by dark forces blinding us to court irrevocable dangers. Our anthropocentric *immediate world* is rapidly becoming a less biological diverse, less healthy and less moral place to live in. With each new generation, our idea of what a healthy ecosystem looks like diminishes, and yet we seem to be *indifferent* to all this tragic *error*. Žižek (2009) accounts for this phenomenon in *First as Tragedy, then as Farce* describing “the ultimate Real of our lives” which is dominated by -

[a] beast that by definition cannot be controlled, since it itself controls our activity, blinding us to even the most obvious dangers we are courting. It is one big fetishistic denial: “I know very well the risks I am courting, even the inevitability of the final collapse, but nonetheless (. . .) [I can put off the collapse a little bit longer, take on a little bit more risk, and so on indefinitely].” It is a selfblinding “irrationality.” (p. 37)

Lewis Carroll’s visionary work is about human *error* and, perhaps, has predicted our age. It could be telling us that we are in the “melancholy farewell” moment of our Anthropocene age; that we are approaching what Žižek (2010) calls our “apocalyptic zero-point” (p.10), or living on the threshold described by Foucault (1966/2002) soon to “be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea” (p. 422). Carroll’s phantom may very well imagine the erasure of that memory in far futures of the planet, after the extinction of humans. With great anxiety, I look at

today's turbulent world and ask if one could create art in such a hostile place? But we need to – even more! In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche (trans. 1999) writes that “Art alone can re-direct those repulsive thoughts about the terrible or absurd nature of existence into representations with which man can live” (p. 40).⁶²



74. Catania, A. (2019). *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief, Humpty Handkerchief, or Vistu f' Onkalo*
[Proposed concept. Medium: silk]. 30 x 24 cm.

⁶² Echoing Nietzsche, Bukowski (1969/2008) writes that “the difference between Art and Life is that Art is more bearable” (p. 145)!

Humans created nuclear waste without thought about the dire consequences that it may have in our future. This project is a comment and reminder of the dramatic implications of a site in Olkiluoto, west Finland, that is being dug deep inside its bedrock as a burial ground for nuclear waste generated from the research and production of nuclear weapons. Onkalo, which literally translates as “cavity” (Rose, 2011) or “hiding place” (Madsen, 2010), is “based around a spiralling track that will eventually be three miles long, and reach a depth of 500 meters” (Ford, 2010).

The storage facility together with the biosphere and all living organisms that reside within and surrounds Onkalo will need to be protected from its hazardous radioactive content for at least the next hundred thousand years. This subterranean nuclear waste depository is the aphotic spell of a “cold enormity of time” (Ford, 2010). Unlike the wonders left by our Paleolithic ancestors, our haunted age bequeaths caves no human will ever inhabit or see, depraved places designed to repel human life and light. Onkalo is the *zeitgeist* of the Anthropocene epoch.

The final production of this project involves an ongoing experimentation in the creation of a series of hanging sculptures (fig. 74) made in silk, serving as a reminder of Onkalo.

3.2.1 Inverting Babel: The impossibility of lifting the veil of time in a subterranean nuclear waste repository

Onkalo, with its honeycomb of spreading out storage vaults, is reminiscent of Breughel’s spirally Tower of Babel in opposite ways. Our age’s mega-structure is inverted to head downwards towards the Earth’s core rather than aiming at the skies. Moreover, as Donatella Di Cesare (2012) poignantly notes about the Jewish myth –

“The Tower was surely erected in the restless and troubled search for eternal fame, for renown, for a *name*” (p. 38). Onkalo will be an unmarked grave, it will not be given a *name* in the fear that a future archeologist might wander inside a “sacred burial site,” as Stefan Skrimshire (2017) observes –

The future discoverers of Onkalo may conceivably be human (or human-like), but the challenge remains that we act in the present with the knowledge that our message to the future may be misunderstood.

(p. 144)

The “angel of history” (Benjamin, 1940/2007c, p. 257) succumbs to the stormy debris of progress that has become carcinogenic by the nuclear “ravages of time” (Lomberg & Hora, 1997, p. 178), signifying that our surroundings bear the same likenesses as those of Alice. Our landscapes preserve the *extimacy* of the same ‘aura’ – “the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be” (Benjamin, 1936/2007b, p. 222). We both manifest in our interior/exterior spaces of *extimacy* in the sense that the subjects’ emotional condition is literally inscribed into the *heterotopia* of our landscapes. Onkalo is our *heterotopic* realization as is Wonderland and Looking-Glass House for Alice.

If we consider the incomprehensible forecasted timespan of Onkalo in reverse, we find that the Earth was in the middle of the Pleistocene glaciation. No structure produced by human hands has survived such a vast stretch of time. The Step Pyramid, the oldest known pyramid in Egypt, dates back to circa 2780 BC; the earliest remains of Hal Saflieni Hypogeum in Malta around 4000 BC. Described by Madsen (2010) as the “longest lasting relic of our civilisation,” this sepulchred cache is mocking the heterogeneous preeminence of temporality, congeneric with the Mad Hatter’s offense of “murdering the time!” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 88).

Onkalo could be devastated by innumerable unforeseeable geologic forces such as “rising waters from the rebound occurring from the Pleistocene ice sheet that covered Finland (. . .), sinking waste, permafrost, earthquakes and copper eating microbes” (Friends of the Pleistocene, 2010). In 2012, Swedish corrosion researchers at KTH in Stockholm found out that the cylindrical copper containers that are planned to be used are not as corrosion safe as the companies planning the nuclear waste caves claim. According to recent Swedish studies, these capsules can corrode thousands of times faster in anoxic water than the nuclear industry predicts. The research conducted by The Swedish Radiation Safety Authority (Szakálos & Seetharaman, 2012) revealed that the copper capsules will last around a thousand years and not one hundred thousand as estimated by Posiva (the Finnish organisation in nuclear waste management) and SKB (the Swedish nuclear waste depositing company).

We cannot count on institutional safeguards for nuclear waste beyond a thousand years let alone an infinity.⁶³ This is the reason why the “impossibility” in the title of this chapter does not have “im” in parentheses. There is no atemporal parenthesis in Onkalo’s time. Onkalo’s temporality could not be intrinsic to an out-of-time-ness. Withal these cataclysmic risks and hazards, Timo Äikäs, the executive vice president of Posiva tells us that - “[w]hen you make a decision concerning this kind of thing, which takes us to 2100 when the final sealing takes place, there will always be uncertainty. So you have to have trust” (Black, 2006)!

Through the Looking-Glass has its own truths, one of which is the irony with which it aids us to view our own.

⁶³ Reports from US. EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) place the limit to just a hundred years (Shrader-Frechette, 1993, p. 17).

3.2.2 Marking nonsensically for a futureless-directed project

Experts have been pondering deeply whether it is better to mark or just forget the deep geological repository of Onkalo. If yes, should the site's designers put markers to deter any people in the future millennia who might stumble upon this antithesis of life? The implications are great, starting with the longevity of these long-term warning signs, as Lomberg and Hora (1997) corroborate -

Markers must be made as durable as possible so as to survive exposure to the natural stresses such as temperature change, moisture, chemical reaction, gravity, earthquakes, encroachment by sand or soil, and all the other ravages of time. (p. 178)

In southeastern New Mexico, experts dealing with the performance planning of markers intended to ward off any human trespassing at the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) were faced with similar problems. They claim that a "marker system should be chosen that instills awe, pride, and admiration, as it is these feelings that motivate people to maintain ancient markers, monuments, and buildings" (Trauth, Hora & Guzowski, 1993, p. F-152). Suggestions by these experts included imagery that speak beyond verbal language and yet transmit the emotional nature of danger, such as large-scale graphic replicas of Edvard Munch's iconic *The Scream* (1893). Other proposals comprised a series of monoliths with pictographs, runic symbols or signs, and an underground library explaining the tunnel. Designs for harrowing concepts to mark the complete site such as *Landscape of Thorns* (1993), conceptualized by Michael Brill and executed by Safdar Abidi, were also studied (fig. 75). The experts' report reads that -

Some designs use images of dangerous emanations and wounding of the body. Some are images of shunned land (. . .) that is poisoned,

destroyed, parched, uninhabitable, unusable. (Trauth, Hora & Guzowski, 1993, p. F-57)



75. Brill, M. & Abidi, S. (1993). *Landscape of Thorns* [Drawing]. In K. M. Trauth, S. C. Hora, & R. V. Guzowski (1993), *Expert judgment on markers to deter inadvertent human intrusion into the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant* (No. SAND--92-1382). Albuquerque: Sandia National Labs.

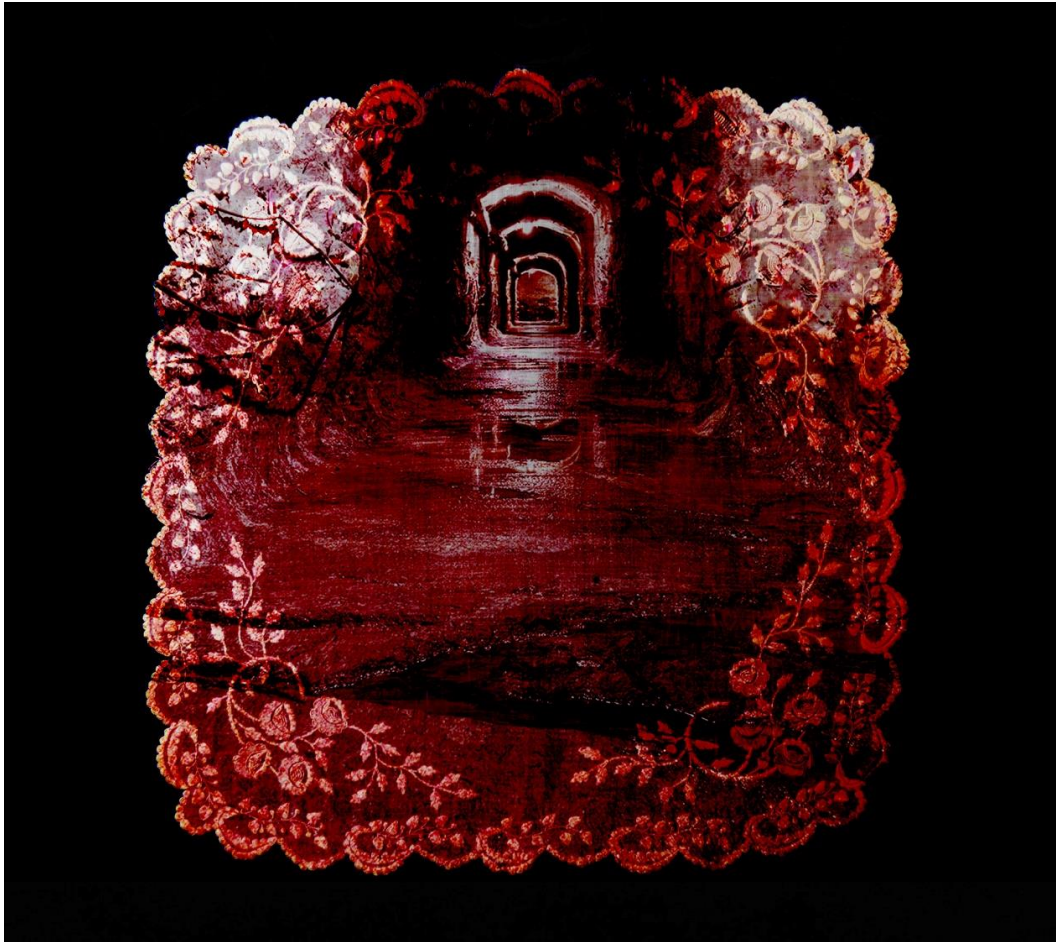
Any signs we choose to mark this fearful place of death will not alter the inevitable catastrophe of this colossal time bomb. As a result of the experts' judgement, Onkalo will be a sight without reference since its designers decided that it will be much safer to leave the site unmarked in the hope that eventually no one will know that this fearful place of death ever existed at all. As Bradshaw (2010) explains - "[a]n array of symbols might simply whet the curiosity of any future visitors: they might become insanely excited at the thought of a Tutankhamun-style vault." The only warning models applied are those that rely on integrating the waste

disposal facility within society so information about their presence can be passed on from generation to generation. The Finnish documentary *Into Eternity: A Film for the Future* (2010) is a prime example of this ‘firekeeper’ concept. Onkalo’s state will be what Blanchot (1949/1995b) calls an “existence without being” (p. 334) leaving this colossal bunker to be erased by the next ice age.

This project entitled *Alice’s Atomic Handkerchief* is about remembering the spent nuclear fuel repository of Onkalo - to keep the flame ablaze of the fire commenced by Madsen’s film project. Its metaleptic construct merges nuclear semiotics with an amalgam of sign systems related to washing instructions combined with Carrollian symbols related to the emotional nature of danger, as well as that of faith. The idea of this project⁶⁴ is to create Carrollian symbols of menace on handkerchiefs which will all eventually form part of an installation in which all handkerchiefs will be displayed along information related to Onkalo.

A discarded proposal was that for a *sudarium* with actual documentary photography of Onkalo’s interiors printed in vermilion hues to connote stained blood (fig. 76). Although the idea intrigued me due to its allusion to Alice’s menstruation coming of age, its relevance within the context of nuclear activity was inapposite. In this project, death comes from atomic plague reminiscent of divine retributions and cataclysmic calamities such as - the petrification of Lot’s wife; the pyroclastic death of the inhabitants of Pompeii and Herculaneum; the extermination of the millions of Jews that were mechanically cremated into ash; and the vaporised atomic annihilation of the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki leaving only their pulverized pale shadows (fig. 111).

⁶⁴ The genealogy for this project may be traced to an exhibition entitled *Spectres of Actaeon* held in 2014. See Appendix D.



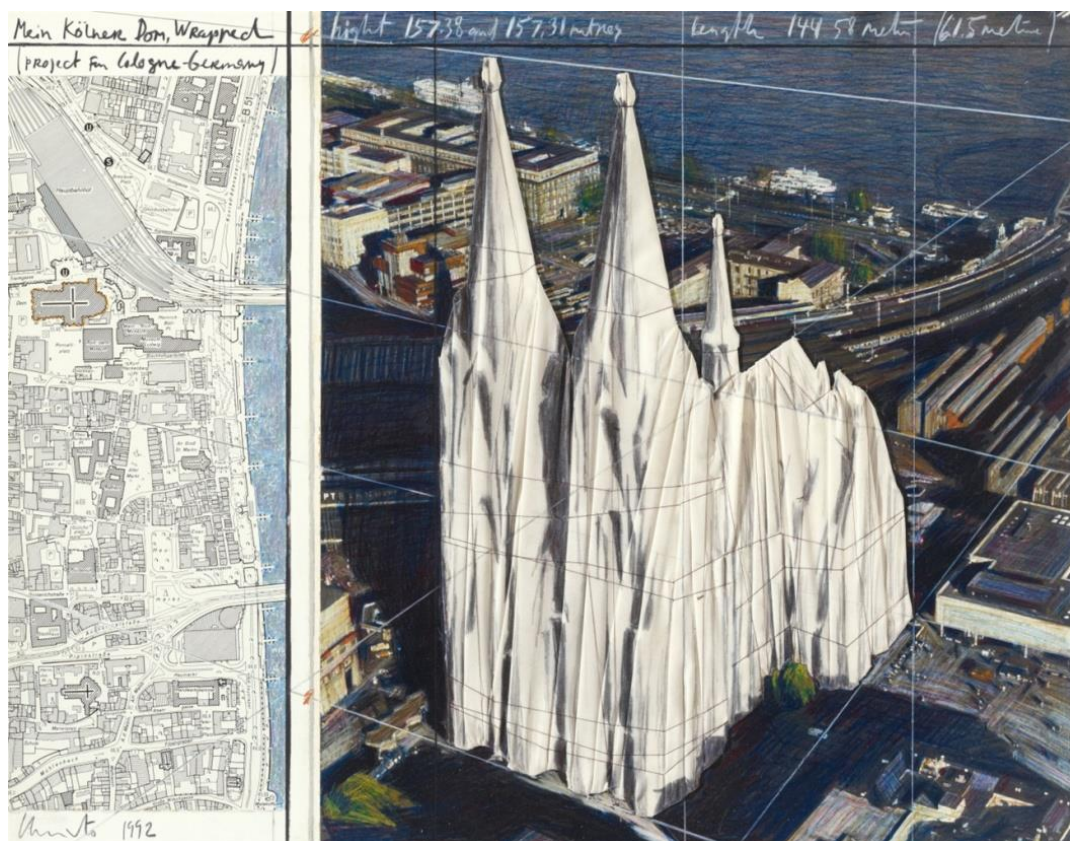
76. Catania, A. (2019). *Alice's Onkalo sudarium* [Digital image]. 61.24 x 68.58cm.

The *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief* project employs visual modes of signification for presenting itself such as traditional and digital media, adopting a semiotic class of (re)presentational art as a series of composite images that somehow recall the haunting manifesto of Christo and Jeanne Claude. As their mode of expression, the husband-wife team presents prioric art⁶⁵ for their projects to shroud

⁶⁵ “Prioric art” is defined by Alexenberg (2006) as - “the presentation of a proposal or plan for a potential event, an *a priori* statement of what can be” (p. 49). The “prioric art” concept is used extensively in many art forms such as scores in music and dance, architectural plans, and scripts in theatre, comics, and film. Akin to these forms, visual artists can propose artworks that they do not make themselves, and in so doing visual artists act more like composers, choreographers, playwrights, and architects. Musicians perform music created by composers, film or theatre actors enact a script written by playwrights, dancers move to choreographers’ notations, and building contractors convert architectural designs into buildings.

buildings and settings by means of preparatory drawings, collages, and scale models (fig. 77). Gerhard Kolberg and Christos Zeichnungen (1981) explain that -

Christo's wrapping initiates the quest for a "lost" reality. And even in those places where a wrapping action falls through or can't be realised, thus remaining in the state of preparatory drawings and collages, "reality" already has an impact. It is reality after all which makes something "real" or not. Christo's art refers to reality right from the outset. The artist explores the reality of everyday life, a reality that has a past and will have a future and his art urges this comprehension. (p.25)



77. Christo. (1992). *Mein Kölner Dom, Wrapped*. [Pencil, charcoal, pastels, wax crayon, photocopy, cloth, thread, and map on card on wood]. Kunsthau Lempertz, Cologne. 56 x 71 cm.

What distinguishes mostly the *modus operandi* of this project from that of Christo and Jeanne Claude is that *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief* not only initiates the quest for a “lost” reality but emphasizes the fact that Onkalo will have a “lost” future. Thus, in a way, the creative output of this project subverts the concept of prioric art. This is not a future-directed project but rather a futureless-directed one!

3.2.3 Designating nonsense from a labelled name of the White Knight's song

Although a proper name is a mundane articulation of human language, its significs remain debatable. Does a name have a meaning, or does it merely signify a *peculiar* object (or group of objects) without that reference being contextually mediated by a signification? Do significations from nonsense names connote or denote a ‘meaningless’⁶⁶ text?

Sutherland (1970) claims that - “Carroll's definition of ‘name’ establishes any name's symbolic status” (p. 118), defining a ‘name’ as “a linguistic token which stands for a given thing to which it has been assigned on the basis of that thing's inclusion in a given class” (pp. 118 - 119). While a ‘name’ identifies the thing(s) it stands for, it is also analogous to a *label*⁶⁷ that one might affix to specific things. A section from the “melancholy farewell” episode epitomizes the author's manipulation of the *labelling* function of a ‘name’ and, moreover, this sophisticated envisaging of language discoursing about language. The White Knight tells Alice what his song is called –

The name of the song is called ‘*Haddocks' Eyes.*’ (. . .)

“Oh, that's the name of the song, is it?” Alice said, trying to feel

⁶⁶ In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1953/1986) urges to “distinguish the words of language from words ‘without meaning’ such as [those that] occur in Lewis Carroll's poems” (p. 7).

⁶⁷ Wittgenstein (1953/1986) writes that “naming something is like attaching a label to a thing” (p. 7).

interested.

“No, you don't understand,” the Knight said, looking a little vexed.

“That's what the name is *called*. The name really is ‘The *Aged Aged Man*.’”

“Then I ought to have said ‘That’s what the *song* is called?’” Alice corrected herself.

“No, you oughtn't: that’s quite another thing! The *song* is called ‘*Ways and Means*’ but that's only what it's *called*, you know!”

“Well, what *is* the song, then?” said Alice, who was by this time completely bewildered.

“I was coming to that,” the Knight said. “The song really is ‘*A-sitting on a Gate*’: and the tune’s my own invention. (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 285)

By emphasizing the distinction between call-names and things, the knight’s metalanguage of appropriating ‘a name of a name’ contextualizes significations in logic and language. Nevertheless, Alice’s confusion incubates from what appears to be a “logical imbroglio” (Marret, 1993, p. 219) in that any ‘name’ could be a mutual call-name that may be applied for any other homonymous specific and/or generic name - any verbal symbol may be applied interchangeably. Alice’s confusion emanates from the failure to distinguish between names (or any other fragment of discourse) and the designatory uses of linguistic expressions. She could not understand that her hero is breaking signifiers from signifieds but not from the referent. The girl’s language and logic systems flounder in those of her weird gallant guide’s most fluid “linguistic expressions” or lingual (mis)interpretations of semantics. Interestingly, Nagel (1956) attributes the girl’s confusion to a difference

between oral communication and written language, explaining that in any assertion dealing with a “linguistic expression” -

the statement should contain as a constituent not *that expression* but a *name* for the expression. Now there is a widely used current device for manufacturing names for written and printed expressions: it consists in placing an expression within single quotation marks, and using the complex made up out of the expression and its enclosing quotation marks as the name for the expression itself. (p. 1884)

One might observe that the text in the White Knight’s explanation makes use of this semantic convention. Thus, Carroll was cognizant of the linguistic need to differentiate types of representations by conventional and/or arbitrary tactics. Nevertheless, by merely listening to her guide’s speech, Alice could not comprehend his ambiguous utterances that could be distinguished between those that are without and within single quotation marks.

When investigating textual representations, Wittgenstein (1953/1986) advises - “don’t think, but look!” (p. 31) at the applications to which a text may be contextually placed just like playing on “board-games, with their multifarious relationships” (p. 31). Wittgenstein makes another analogy within the same context, that of the miscellany of “tools in a tool-box” (p. 6) which could be compared to the “language-game” (p. 5) in which the “functions of words are as diverse as the functions of these objects” (p. 6). In Carroll’s nonsensical “language-game,” tools are objects that take on an inexhaustible diversity of interpretations. They paradoxically dissolve and emphasize the signifying practices of any culture. They might also become contested subjects with anthropomorphic attributes playing their own “language-game”!

This passage unfolds Carroll's subtle ability to realize that the hierarchy of continuous metalanguages, capable of being formed in nonsense literature, seem to be endless. Perhaps, the call-name of the White Knight's song faces much graver problems than semantical attributions, since its nonsense referent is as infinitely mysterious as the empty shelvings of the Sheep's little dark shop and the dream-rushes that melt away at the feel of Alice's touch!

3.2.4 Nuclear semiotics on the washing instructions of Alice's *pleuvoir*

Indeed, that *Through the Looking-Glass* questions logic is the source of its mystique. As an allusion to the mocking of time in both Onkalo and the *Alice* texts, this project plays with the idea of a cross-code experiment that replaces the context of particular pictogram semiotics - those pertaining to nuclear activity with those of laundry instructions. The clothing labels, or care labels for clothes customized garment labels, are intermixed with those of warning messages that symbolize danger and threat (fig. 74). This muddled compound becomes also a reflection upon the visual mechanisms of humanity's methods of systemizing order and universal domains that are supposedly cross-cultural. Questions are asked about what is the universal, symbolic, visual, and/or mnemonic language of a pictogram.

Warning/hazard symbols are recognizable representations devised to alert and caution against materials, objects and/or locations that are perilous, risky, unhealthy and/or unsafe. Such symbols, which are often regulated by law, may appear with additional information to indicate hazard classifications and threat levels (fig. 80). In the *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief* project, rationality is subverted by navigating these symbols towards absurdity. The denotation of rationality gets blurred when 'universal' domains of pictograms are placed out of context.



78. ISO 361 [Basic international ionising radiation trefoil symbol].

The design of the atomic handkerchief's washing instructions included the ISO 361 ionising radiation trefoil sign first developed at UCRL (Berkeley Radiation Laboratory, University of California) in 1946 to symbolize the activity of an atom by depicting three 60 degree arcs of an annulus equally spaced around a circular midpoint. It also makes use of details from the ISO 21482 ionizing radiation warning symbol,⁶⁸ an improved version of its predecessor which according to IAEA (2007, February 15) had “no intuitive meaning.”

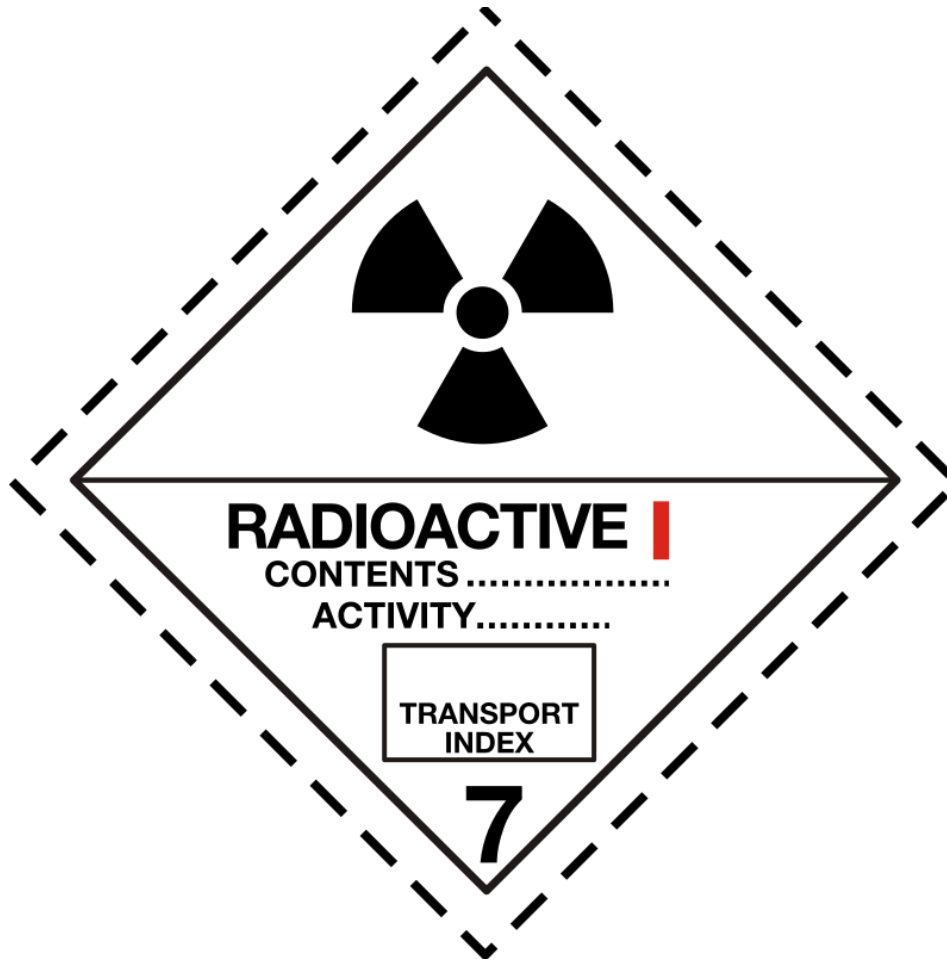
⁶⁸ In 2007, the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) and the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) jointly launched an updated version of the ISO 361. Developed by radiation protection experts, graphic artists, and human factor experts, the improved ISO 21482 provides further information on the peril associated with radioactivity and the necessity for laymen to stay away from the labelled material.



79. ISO 21482 [Symbol warning of radioactive material].

The symbolic representations of the ISO 21482 comprise of radiating waves streaming from a three-cornered trefoil, a death's head, and a person running behind a pointing arrow sign. The red background of the ISO 21482 further enhances the warning of danger. The purpose of integrating more universal symbols to complement the three-cornered trefoil is to avoid nuclear accidents such as the Goiânia incident in 1987 and the Samut Prakan disaster near Bangkok in 2000 which all showed that the trefoil symbol itself might be too abstract for uninformed or untrained members of the public.

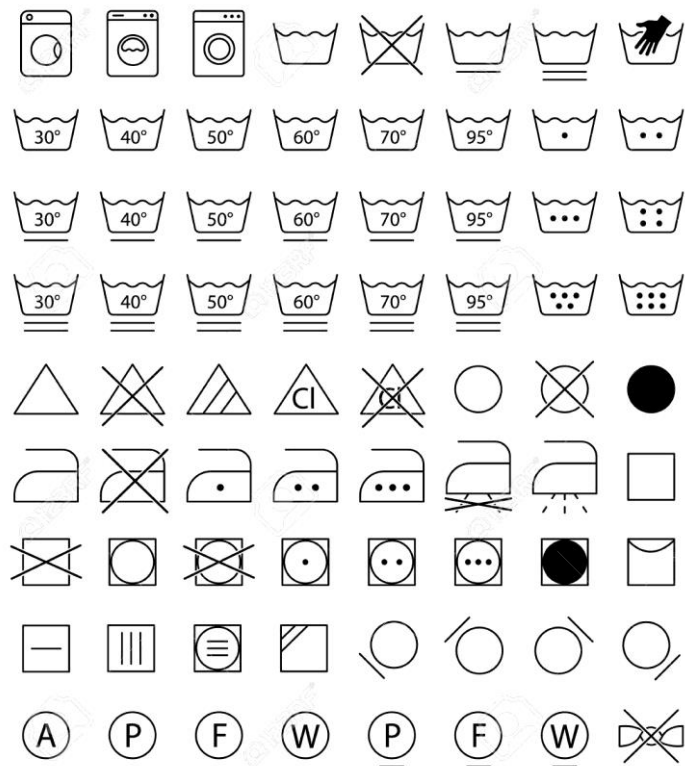
Further questions to be asked in the *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief* project are how has rationality tricked us? How has rationality led us astray under the auspices of logic? The primary cause of the Goiânia accident in Brazil was radioactive contamination induced from an abandoned teletherapy machine whose pictograms were undecipherable by the local population. Opening up a Pandora's box adorned with cryptic codes, the curious claimants were enthralled by the nuclear fission of the remaining Cs-137 that released a bluish glow in the dark! (IAEA, 1988).



80. Class 7: Hazard Radioactive material.



81. Garment label.



82. Laundry icons, washing symbols.

3.2.5 Domestication, metamorphosis, and blindness in the materiality of funerary silk obtained from a caterpillar's cocoon

What is an image? The Latin root *imago* denotes; “both an echo (. . .) and a reflection, which we might conceive of as a visual echo” (Fantham, 2004, p. 45); “a statue, picture, or mask” (Drever, 2013, p. 39); “a likeness or reflection of a thing contained in one’s thoughts, as in a mental picture or idea” (p. 39); and “a wax figure made to commemorate the dead” (Sharpe, 2017, p. 85). This term also stands for “the last or perfect state of insect life: an image or optical counterpart of a thing” (Davidson, 1903, p. 454). Thus, a picture has an entomological connection of undergoing metamorphosis within the final developmental stage of an insect, usually its winged state. The image as an artefact has also translative connotations - for Oscar Wilde (1891/2003), about cultivating a “temperament of receptivity” (p. 260); for Leo Tolstoy (trans. 1995) it is about the transference of emotional “infectiousness” (p. 118).

Alice's Atomic Handkerchief is materially conceived in silk, a material that has intrinsic qualities that are identifiable from the roots of the word *imago*. The material research of this project is inspired by silkworms which Sebald (1995/1999) describes as - “pale, almost transparent creatures, which would presently give their lives for the fine thread they were spinning” (p. 151). Their product is a material with properties of ‘infectious’ metamorphosis. Silk is nowadays produced from *Bombyx mori*, the completely domesticated silkworm also known as the mulberry silkworm due to its staple diet which feeds only on mulberry leaves. Unlike other natural fibres, silk is “a protein fibre and its amino acid composition is close to that of the human skin” (Currie, 2001, p. 9). Moreover, its complete dependence on humanity

for its survival conveys a striking metaphor for Alice's *withdrawing space* and death in the Eighth Square –

This domestication has taken the form of suppressing the silkworm moth's ability to fly, so that it is entirely captive. This means that its production of eggs can be totally controlled. The moth has no digestive tube, so after mating and laying its eggs it dies. It is also sightless. (Currie, 2001, p. 13)

Silk produced from *Bombyx mori* sericulture is conceived from the silkworm's cocoon in which the larva morphs first into a chrysalis and subsequently into a moth (if allowed to live due to commercial activity). Pupation occurs in the transformation stage between the larva and the imago, within the pupal case that is made of one continuous filament of silk averaging a thousand metres in length. For commercial purposes, the cocoon is preserved intact by stifling - the killing of the chrysalis/pupa with hot air or steam.

As a textile material, silk finds further connotations of death especially when dyed in black. Queen Victoria donned this fibre in the black mourning dresses she wore to perpetually mourn the death of her husband. Dating back to the seventeenth century, the Maltese silk *faldetta* is a woman's black head-covering that has always been associated with the *vistu*; the vernacular term for mourning (Cremona, 1923). The iconoclastic function of black mourning ribbons in seventeenth-century Holland also constitutes a reference to funerary silk –

It was customary, in a home where there had been a death, to drape black mourning ribbons over all the mirrors and all canvasses depicting landscapes or people or the fruits of the field, so that the soul, as it left the body, would not be distracted on its final journey,

either by a reflection of itself or by a last glimpse of the land now being lost forever. (Sebald, 1995/1999, p. 165)

3.2.6 Black, a primordial light other than light

The perceptible (non)colour black plays an important role in fashioning the aesthetic of *melancholy* in the dissertation question. Alice is blinded by “the black shadows of the forest” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 286) whilst listening to the “melancholy music” of the White Knight’s song. This becomes accentuated when contrasted with the lightness of the gallant usher’s “kindly smile” and humourful nonsense against which the darkness of black, the archetypal colour of sadness,⁶⁹ darkness, trauma,⁷⁰ and death, becomes transcendental. Such is the paradox of black which, as Badiou (2015/2017) writes, is “not the opposite of light but the basis for *a light other than light*” (p. 41).

From the the ancient myths to the Old Testament, all evoke black as a “primordial colour” (Pastoureau, 2008, p. 20) in their portrayals of darkness anticipating light in the origin of the world or resuming light in the afterlife – “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep” (Genesis, 1:2, KJV). In Greek mythology, Nyx is the daughter of Chaos, ruler the night, and the primordial void. She dwells in “the dark regions of the lower world,” withdrawing there “during the day before crossing the sky, clothed in dark robes (. .

⁶⁹ Regardless of the ways in which the conception of melancholy has been re-imagined and re-defined over time, the dominance of blackness prevails. Contemporary sayings that serve as metaphors for mental illness and sadness, abound with the symbolism of black - “under a black cloud; the black dog on my shoulder; in a black hole” (Stott & Tickle, 2010, p. 63).

⁷⁰ Black is indicative of shadows, the menacing unknown, all that which is sinister and unfamiliar. It is oppressive and total; the black night without stars or moon. Black points to that which is hidden, that which is obscured. Creed (1990) tells us that: “[o]ne approach to the existence of things horrifying in human culture is to look into the inner recesses of the mind, the black pit of the unconscious” (p. 236). Celan (1948/1972) depicts the historical trauma of the Holocaust as the “black milk” (p. 33) of cataclysmic extermination in his poem *Fugue of Death*.

.) accompanied by the stars, which follow in her train” (Berens, 2013, p. 136). To the ancient Egyptians the black jackal god Anubis is the god of embalming, thereby the (non)colour represented death and the afterlife and was an essential colour in their sealed sarcophagi. Moreover, the black flesh of Osiris, the king of the netherworld, is also associated with fertility and rebirth because much of their agriculture was dependant on the rich soil of tilled fields along the Nile during the inundation (Williams, 2014).

Black pigments have haunted artists since the early dawn of civilization. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the Middle English word ‘pigment’ is derived from the Latin *pigmentum* and *pingere* meaning “to paint” (Stevenson & Waite, 2011, p. 1086). From analysis of Paleolithic Rock art, pigment colours were obtained from both inorganic sources such as minerals and organic materials like dyes obtained from plants or animals. According to Chalmin et al. (2003), the black used in northern Spain, central France, and southwestern Europe was obtained from “charcoal, soot, bone charcoal or manganese oxide” (p. 1591). As Pastoureau (2008) writes –

The oldest of these pigments was probably carbon black, obtained by the controlled combustion of various woods, barks, roots, shells, or pits. Depending on the original material and the degree of calcination, the shade of black obtained was more or less brilliant and more or less dense. (pp. 24 - 25)

Organic, mineral or synthetic in origin, each pigment may have drastic or subtle variations in colour tone and shading, at times with dark connotations; Pliny the Elder (trans. 2004) in his *Natural History* (xxxv, 14) writes that “[p]ainters have been known to dig up charred materials from graves to obtain this pigment” (p. 331).

Black also particularly appealed to the Georgians and Victorians, with their fashions both for cut-paper silhouettes and stories of desperate love. This type of (re)presentation is associated with the origin theory of the Butades mythic image that has reappeared in paintings and drawings throughout the history of Art. The non(colour)'s penchant for a phoenix-like metaphor of a charring annihilation/reincarnation is generic. Since ancient history, its natural pigment is produced "by burning organic substances, sometimes vine wood or ivory" (Pomerance, 2013/2016, p. 34).

We find other paradoxical circumstances in the black paintings of Soulages called *Outrenoir*, translated as *Beyond Black*, or "black-as-light" (Schubert, 2016, p. 6). The multitude of black pigments prepared by the conservators⁷¹ to restore Soulages's works seem to testify for the artist's ability to capture a vast array of subtle differences in the (non)colour, as Schubert (2016) explains -

The perception of black changes according to their properties (including the refractive index, coverage, morphology), their particle size (blackness is even lesser when the pigment is more finely ground) and their smooth or structured appearance (determined by the binder and the mode of application). (p. 14)

The *Outrenoir* series, an ongoing research/production that commenced in 1979, demonstrates the chromatic versatility of ivory black,⁷² a deep and velvety black pigment derived from the carbonisation of bone without contact to air. Due to the infinite variations in ambient light, these single pigment paintings may even take

⁷¹ Pierre-Antoine Héritier and his team of conservators/restorers prepared a library of thirty two black pigments to restore Soulages's works that eventually formed part in the exhibition entitled *Noir, c'est noir? The Outrenoirs of Pierre Soulages* was held at the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne ArtLab Building between November 2016 and April 2017.

⁷² The term 'ivory black' originated from the pre-twentieth-century practice of extracting the pigment from ivory and antlers.

on hues of different colours depending on the site where they are displayed. The artist streaks the paint surface using wide, coarse or fine haired paintbrushes, or blades, to process ambient light from the paradoxical nature of the single colour to create something radically different from monochrome. Soulages explores the reflection of light on his black paintings in contrasting surface conditions thereby creating a perceptual experience very difficult to describe, as the artist claims -

What I do is not in the domain of language. (. . .) I will take the most basic example of all: when you say black, you don't say whether it is large or small. (. . .) Moreover, when saying black, we do not say whether it is round or square, angular or soft. (. . .) That takes care of quantity and form. But then there is also density and texture. Black can be transparent or opaque (. . .), it can be shiny or mat, smooth or grainy – and that changes everything. (Soulages & Jaunin, 2012, pp. 12 - 13)

Despite the fact that since Isaac Newton's colour theory black has been considered a non-colour that absorbs all light, the painter has instead seized it as the very means by which to pursue and reveal light. The *Outrenoirs* illustrate optical phenomena such as diffuse and specular reflection, as well as absorption and transmission – they could be considered as technical processing devices of the visible light spectrum. The artist's works feature changing surface conditions depending on the technique used, as Schubert (2016) describes –

oil mixed with acrylic resin, or, since 2004, exclusively with acrylic – the thickness, and especially the pictorial layer of paint. He plays with juxtapositions of mat with gloss and solid with stripes that are produced by using tools specifically designed for the task. (p. 6)

The experience of the canvas thereby plays a part in a triangular relationship between painting, lighting and point of view that is continually renewed according to the movement of the viewer. The specific apprehension of an *Outrenoir*, which is linked to the diffusion of a light field reflected by the canvas and depends on the angle from which it is viewed, includes the public as an active participant in creating the oeuvre. In this process of light being transformed in space, everything ultimately contributes to turning light into a material itself. As Badiou (2015/2017) explains, the *Art Informel* painter lends himself to an interpretation of the Palaeolithic artist venturing deep into “the pitchblackness of the caves to paint a luminous conviction in black on the walls” (p. 41).

The quest for the ‘absolute black,’ according to the properties of the pigment itself, continues to this day. The artist Anish Kapoor acquired exclusive rights to use *Vantablack*, a black pigment in which light enters but virtually none of it escapes - more than 99% of visible light is absorbed over the whole visible range. Surrey NanoSystems, a company in southern England, produced this black by lining up a dense array of carbon nanotubes on the microscopic level. Any crumpled surface coated with this synthetic paint appears almost perfectly flat with an illusory appearance of a two-dimensionality rather than three, as seen in Kapoor’s work *Descent into Limbo* (1992; fig. 83).



83. Kapoor, A. (1992). *Descent into Limbo* [Concrete and pigment].
Kassel, Documenta IX. 600 × 600 × 600 cm.

In a series entitled *Tea-Partying at Emmaus* (see figs. 85 and 86) black is paradoxically utilized to portray the White Knight infused with a religious sentiment. These parodic works pay homage to Rembrandt's *The Supper at Emmaus* (ca.1628) in which the Dutch artist depicts Christ's apparition evoked by the apostle Luke. Positioned next to a table set for a tea-party, the March Hare and Mad Hatter (replacing the disciples) are awed by what they are gazing at. Using a similar strong *contre-jour* effect as that found in Rembrandt's mysterious work, the black shadow of the transfigured Knight appears as a supernatural phenomenon. Using chiaroscuro effects to dramatic effect, the puissant blackness that materializes the mysterious figure of the White Knight into an immaterial silhouette is synonymous with that which surrounds the whole composition. The light source that imbues the wilting hero emanates from within his aura thereby underlining his 'divine' nature.

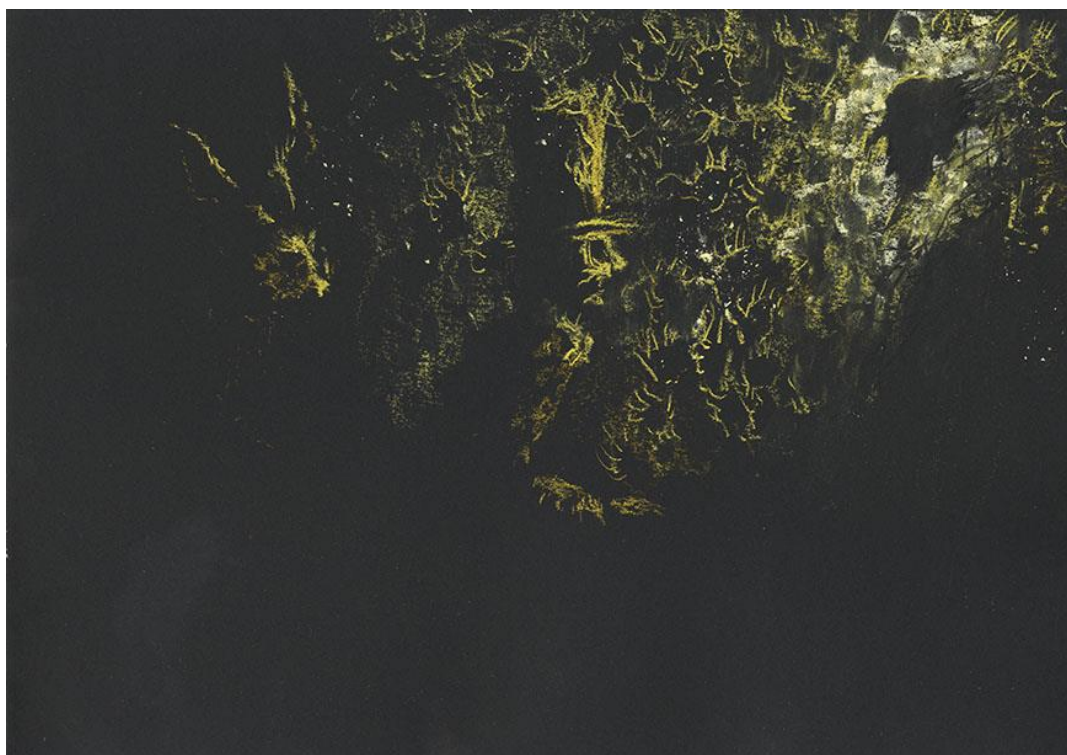


84. Rembrandt, H. V. R. (ca.1628). *The Supper at Emmaus* [Oil on wood panel].
Musée Jacquemart-André, Paris. 39 x 42 cm.

The transient nature of the (non)colour black also permeates from ‘melancholy’ – a term derived from the Greek “*melas* (black) and */khole* (bile)” (Radden, 2002, p. ix). We know that the ancient Greeks deemed health as a balanced bond between the elements and four humours, substances, or fluids that flow in the human anatomy - phlegm, blood, and both yellow and black bile. Any variation in these humours justified disparities in temperament that occur from one person to another, and any kind of malady in a given individual (Klibansky et. al, 1964/1979; Lawlor, 2012).



85. Catania, A. (2019). *Tea-Partying at Emmaus 1* [mixed media including pastel]. 28 x 41.5 cm.



86. Catania, A. (2019). *Tea-Partying at Emmaus 2* [Pastel]. 28 x 41.5 cm.

What kind of *melancholy* is manifesting in the *melancholy* farewell moment? Is it a *melancholy* as that described by Hippocratic scholars in the form of a somatic condition, a type of humoral imbalance that results in the excess of Alice's black bile? Is it a chronic mental illness symptomatic of her excessive fear and sadness? Is it an indolent aspect in her *withdrawal* recalling the medieval melancholic's sin of *acedia*? Is it a melancholy derived from the Renaissance - an "inclination or mood" (Ferber, 2013, p. 2)? Or is it the consequence of demonic undertakings or witchcraft (as that implied in the seventeenth century)? Or, perhaps a Romantic desirable state inducing genius and productivity? Or, an animalistic pathology?

3.2.7 Looking-Glass screams in an aesthetic antithesis of the *sudarium*: Spectral visualizations for a Carrollian iconography to convey the emotional nature of danger

Alice's Atomic Handkerchief explores Alice's handkerchief as a mourning *pleuvoir*, serving as an antithetical aesthetic of the *sudarium* relic (fig. 74) and thus subverting the Roman Catholic iconography of the veil of Veronica. Rather than capturing divinity, this black sweat-cloth shows Alice's harrowing of Hell via the horrors of Wonderland and Looking-Glass Land. Pastel drawings were made to illustrate seminal characters in both *Alice* texts that contributed to Alice's confusion and erring.⁷³

Lecerle (1994/2002) describes Humpty Dumpty as "like a hero of tragedy, he misinterprets the oracle, and fails to comprehend the fate assigned to him by the Gods" (p. 137). He, or it, denies the nursery rhyme in which he belongs - "Humpty Dumpty had a great fall." The egghead arrogantly claims that he "can explain all the

⁷³ Informal conversational interviews related to these images were conducted with academic scholars. See Appendix E.

poems that ever were invented - and a good many that haven't been invented just yet" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 252). Alice's disturbing encounter with this creature makes her exclaim – "of all the unsatisfactory people I *ever* met" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 258). He is portrayed in this project as a rotating head (fig. 91) having the accoutrements of the "inverted faces" (Wade et al., 2003, p. 1) of Rex Whistler's rotating face series (fig. 87) which can be read upright or inverted. This ambigram was used for an atomic handkerchief prototype entitled *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief, Humpty Handkerchief, or Vistu f'Onkalo* (2019; fig. 74).⁷⁴



87. Whistler, R. (1948). *Changing Gaze* [Illustration for *OHO!*]. 16.5 cm x 21.5 cm.

⁷⁴ *Vistu f'Onkalo* translates from the Maltese language as *Mourning in Onkalo*.



88. Bruegel the Elder, P. (1563). *The Tower of Babel* [Oil on oak panel]. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. 114 x 155 cm.

Cats, as the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Jones, 2005a) annotates, have “special” traits such as “graceful movements, their liveliness at night, and their inaudible steps as well as their independent spirit” (p. 1462). The cat is also “an agent of the supernatural” (p. 1463), many goddesses have feline attributes such as the Roman Diana who “assumes the form of a cat” (p. 1462) and the ancient Egyptian Bast - a “goddess of pleasure (. . .) represented with a cat’s head” (p. 1462). Alice tells the rulers of Wonderland that - “A cat may look at a king” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 104). Moreover, when Alice shakes the Red Queen, the monarch turns into her black kitten, Dinah. The appearing and disappearing Cheshire Cat (see studies on this subject in figs. 92 - 93) is “a sort of guardian imp and liaison officer” (Lennon, 1947/2006, p. 28) between the underworld and the “Real” world. This feline with its “ontological grin” (Bloom, 2006, p. 4) comforts Alice’s longing for

her pet cat named Dinah - “the one link to the daily world, the one person Alice misses” (Lennon, 1947/2006, p. 28), so perhaps the fantastic creature “with the disappearing head (the Cheshire Cat, from Charles’s birthplace) is Dinah’s dream-*self*, who, by the laws of dreamland, instead of frightening the creatures away, only keeps them pleasantly on edge” (Lennon, 1947/2006, p. 28)!

The Mad Hatter is a “very rude” (p. 58) character, making Alice admonish him not to “make personal remarks” (p. 84). Consequently, the Hatter “opened his eyes very wide” (p. 84) uttering words reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe - “Why is a raven like a writing-desk?” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 84). The angelus bell continuously tolls for him since it is “always six o’clock now” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 89) and “always tea-time” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 89), thereby condemning him to haunt the tea-party perpetually.



89. Murnau, F. W. (Director). (1922). Still image from *Nosferatu* [Motion picture].
Germany: Jofa-Atelier Berlin/ Prana-Film GmbH.

The top hat, in his portrayals for this project (see figs. 94 - 95), adumbrates crumbling gothic ruins as a metaphor for the collapsed facade of the destroyed Babel of Onkalo as well as forgotten history. However, it is also an ironic parody of the narcissistic schizophrenic who, as Bedell (2001) explains, gazes into the mirror “to secure the SELF in a crumbling, chaotic universe” only to discover that the same “SELF” is “crumbling and disappearing” since “the mirror is cold; it is only a mirror visually” (Freud, 1914/1963, p. 39). The rendition of this macabre subject is reminiscent of Pieter Breughel the Elder’s *The Tower of Babel* series (fig. 88), Nosferatu’s “new home” (Perez, 1998, p. 135; fig. 89) in Wisborg (fig. 88), and images from the 9/11 World Trade Centre attack (fig. 90). Perhaps, its significance distillates into “ruins of meaning and ruins of art” (p. 306), as Arasse (2014) interprets Anselm Kiefer’s fragmentary artistic conception.

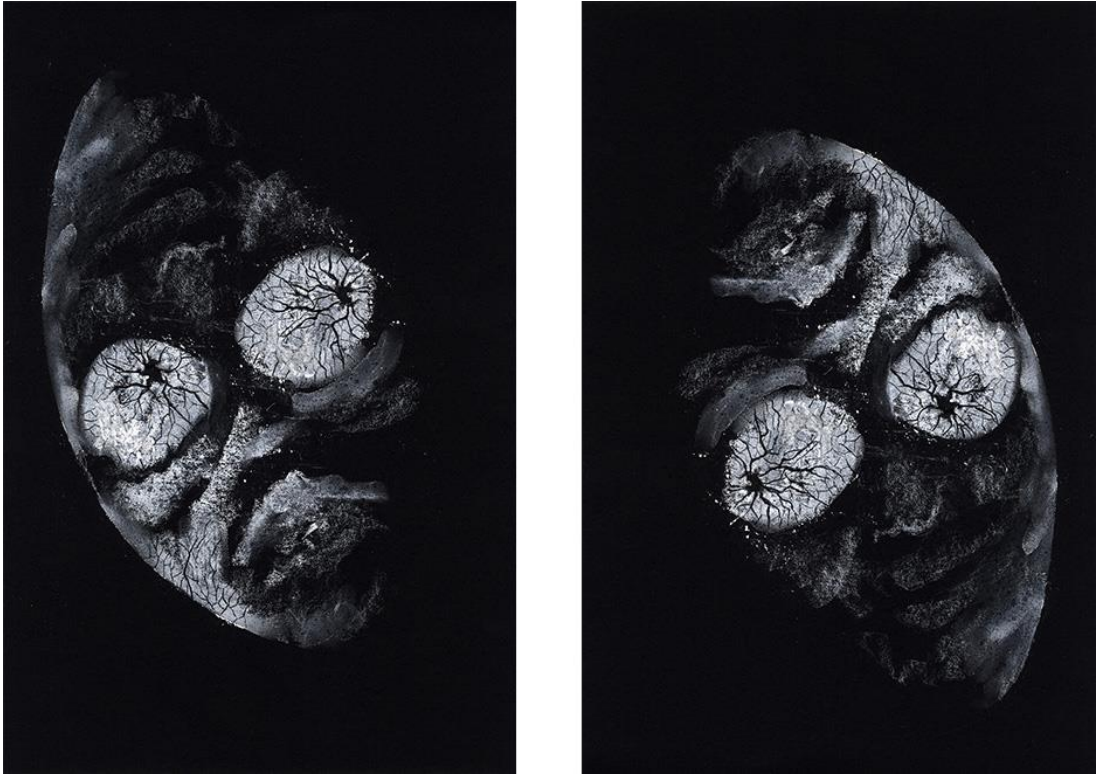


90. Rodriguez, B. (2001). *The Remaining Section of the World Trade Centre Surrounded by a Mountain of Rubble* [Photograph]. FEMA News. EWTN News.

The Mad Hatter effigies are also what Foucault (1961/2004) calls the “screams from black holes” (p. 267), depictions of the scream, described by Lacan (1978/1988b) as that which unmasks “the back of this throat, the complex, unlocatable form, which also makes it into the primitive object par excellence” (p. 164). Examples of which we find in Carravagio’s *Medusa* (ca. 1598), Goya’s *Pilgrimage to the Hermitage of Saint Isidore* (ca. 1821 – 1823), Munch’s *The Scream* (1893), Rouault’s *Clown Tragique* (1911) and Francis Bacon’s *Screaming Pope* series. The anxieties associated with the feelings of height in these works also recall how Paul de Man (1971) describes the fragility of poetic transcendence –

The comings and goings of the wanderer or the seafarer are voluntary and controlled actions but the possibility of falling, which is forced upon the mountain climber by an outside force, exists only in vertical space. The same is true of experiences that are closely related to falling, such as dizziness or relapses. This is another way of saying that, in the experience of verticality, death is present in a more radical way than in the experiences of the active life. (p. 46)

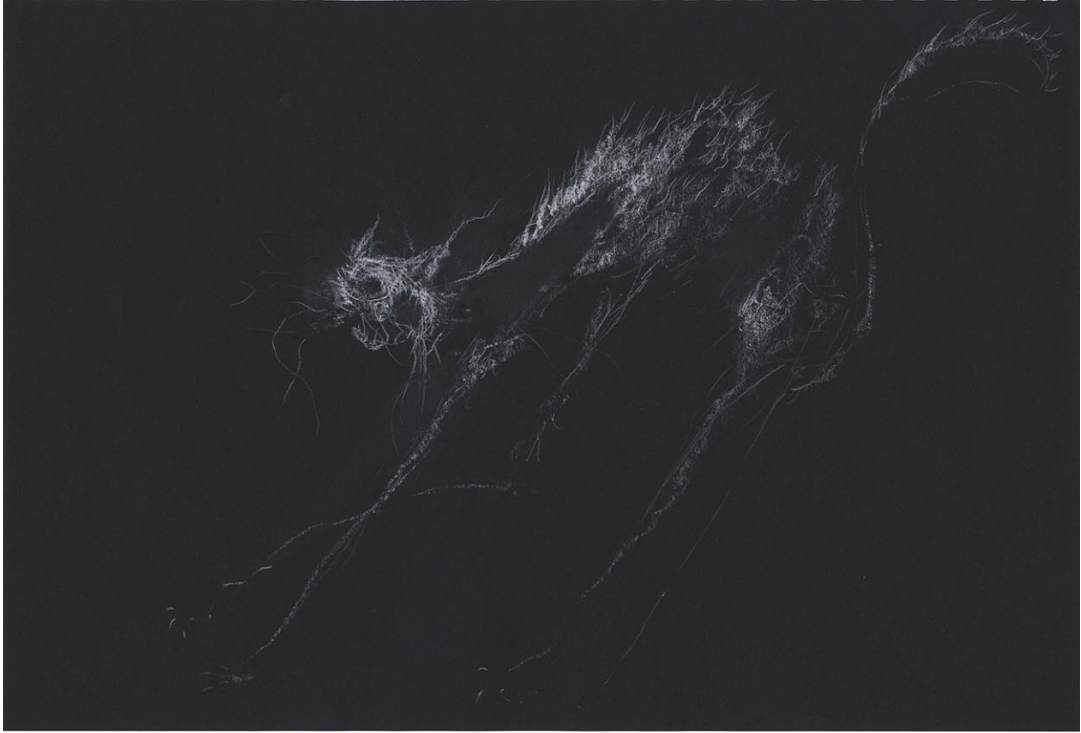
Carroll’s *extimate* fabling of space and anxiety is prescient today as ever before. Alice mirrors the troubles and obsessions of our current time. It is this reflective approach to Alice’s world upon which this thesis is built – a probing into the issues that perplex and fascinate us now - temporality, memory, identity, and the problem of how to wrestle with the constant threat of change and death.



91. Catania, A. (2016). *Lunar Humpty* [Pastel]. 42 cm x 28.5 cm.



92. Catania, A. (2016). *Ontological Cat 1* [Pastel]. 42 cm x 28.5 cm.



93. Catania, A. (2016). *Ontological Cat 2* [Pastel]. 28.4 cm x 42 cm.



94. Catania, A. (2016). *Hatter Scram 1* [Mixed media]. 42 cm x 14.1 cm.



95. Catania, A. (2016). *Hatter Scram 2* [Mixed media]. 42 cm x 14.2 cm.

3.2.8 A further Looking-Glass scream: The queerness of Caterpillarian existentialism

“Remember who you are!” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 197) declares the Red Queen at the start of the chess-game in Looking-Glass Land, echoing the ancient Greek aphorism and Delphic maxim “know thyself” chiselled into the forecourt of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi. The theme of Alice’s developing identity is at the centre of her entire story, and the meeting with the Caterpillar emphasizes this theme. The Caterpillar represents change for the little girl, after all, she meets the marvellous creature after having gone through many transformations to her own height. Metamorphosis is a fate that the Caterpillar would eventually experience as Alice remarks - “when you have to turn into a chrysalis (. . .) and then after that into a butterfly, I should think you’ll feel it a little queer” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 58 - 59).⁷⁵

Alice meets the hookah-smoking Caterpillar seated on a mushroom. Here, she is asked one of the most essential questions of her adventure - “Who are you?” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 59). This question confounds the little pilgrim and hurls them both into a circular dispute until the quick-tempered Caterpillar crawls away. In this one existential question, made by a creature whose peculiar characteristic supposedly denotes new possibilities, is implying - What makes you? Why are you important? What is your purpose? What do you want? This question sends Alice on a fantastic journey to try and figure out her identity, importance, and place in the world until she becomes a chess queen - A world imbued with abiding themes about the amoral,

⁷⁵ The hardening of skin into a chrysalis and metamorphosis into a butterfly is explained by evolutionary biologist Elizabet Sahtouris (1990) – “Cells with the butterfly genome were held as disclike aggregates of stem cells that biologists call ‘imaginal cells,’ hidden away inside the caterpillar all its life, remaining undeveloped until the crisis of overeating, fatigue and breakdown allows them to develop.” Such a metaphor in this biological process has long been adapted to represent the metamorphoses of inner experience.

rudimentary forces at work beneath the surface of a predominantly urban, ‘civilized’ culture. Within this context, André Gide (1941/2012) has a valid point in *Autumn Leaves* -

Know thyself. A maxim as pernicious as it is ugly. Whoever studies himself arrests his own development. A caterpillar who seeks to know himself would never become a butterfly.



96. Tenniel, J. (1865). Alice meets the Caterpillar [Wood-engraved by George and Edward Dalziel, Illustration for the fifth chapter of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*].

Pre-chrysalis, pupal, and post-pupal insects figure prominently in Victorian literature. In *The Two Voices* by Tennyson (1842/1995) we find a dragonfly coming “from the wells where he did lie” (p. 48). This insect forces its way into adulthood out of the “old husk” (p. 48) that covers it, and after its wings are fully expanded -

“like gauze they grew” (p. 48) – it appears as a “living flash of light” (p. 48) making “its maiden flight” (Mitchell & Lasswell, 2005, p. 30) across its pond. Carroll’s Caterpillar is an inverted version of this kind of spiritual transformation, it seems to undergo a sickly anti-metamorphosis!

One might presume that a caterpillar looks *forward* to its own transfiguration. On the contrary, Carroll (1871/2015b) portrays a caterpillar representing deep-rooted inertia – sitting on his “large mushroom” (p. 55), giving advice like an old man or as a High Court Judge (as Tenniel portrays him in fig. 96), covered in smoke coming from its “long hookah” (p. 56), cantankerously quizzing and lashing out at the curious little girl who has come along interrupting its rest. One could hardly imagine the metamorphosis of this caterpillar into any kind of butterfly! Carroll’s creature exemplifies a paradoxical principle of *stasis* rather than embodying the caterpillar metaphor *par excellence* of transition and identity.

Perhaps one is reminded here of a particular passage in Dante (trans. 2003) recalling an image of a cocoon and the sloughed skin as a figure of spiritual renewal. The description is that of the First Cornice of the Slope of Purgatory, decorated with flawless white marble sculptures, “adorned with such carvings that not only Polyclitus but even Nature would be put to scorn there” (p. 161). The poet’s contemplation of these reliefs is interrupted by a procession of men crawling under great slabs of rock. They are the train of the proud, “[t]he heavy condition of their torment buckles them toward the earth” (p. 165), at the sight of whom Dante exclaims -

O proud Christians, weary wretches, who, weak
in mental vision, put your faith in backward steps,
do you not perceive that we are worms born to

form the angelic butterfly that flies to justice
without a shield?

Why is it that your spirit floats on high, since
you are like defective insects, like worms in whom
formation is lacking? (p. 165)

The denunciation of the proud as blind to the goal of human existence, which requires radical change from earthly values, makes explicit a central motif of Dante's *Comedy* (and perhaps implied in the *Alice* texts too) - spiritual change as metamorphosis. The analogy is with insects, whose first phase *vermo* [worm] is defective, lacking form. The metaphor of man as worm finds echoes in the Bible - "how much less a mortal, who is but a maggot - a human being, who is only a worm!" (Job 25.6 NIV); and St Augustine of Hippo (trans. 2009) in *Homilies on the Gospel of John* - "For, all human beings born of flesh, what are they but maggots? And from maggots he makes angels" (p. 49). Dante's brilliant adaptation of the attraction of the moth to the flame has the angelic butterfly survive the fire.

Carroll's inspirations for the hallucinatory effects of the Caterpillar's size-changing mushroom and the hookah-smoking device may be detected to particular sources of information. As Day (2015) observes - "as a classicist he would have been familiar with the theory that ancient Greek cults ingested mushrooms to induce trances and visions" (p. 93). Carroll was also an avid reader of Thomas de Quincey as his diaries testify and *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* was definitely an influence (Lovett, 2005). One may compare the effects of opium-eating on the narrator's dreams with the surreal and shifting nature of Alice's dream worlds –

The sense of space, and in the end, the sense of time, were both
powerfully effected. Buildings, landscapes, etc, were exhibited in

proportions so vast as the bodily eye is not fitted to receive. Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable infinity. This, however, did not disturb me so much as the vast expansion of time; I sometimes seemed to have lived for 70 or 100 years in one night. (de Quincey, 1821/2009, p. 119)



97. Catania, A. (2018). *Icy Caterpillar* [Pastel]. 42 cm x 28.5 cm.

3.3 Who are you? Is it Alice or (No)body? - Photographing inter-virtual primitivism via cast shadows projected from bodily antics associated with the attire of the virtual-reality headset

The intriguing conversations held during my supervisory meetings enabled me to reach out from my core discipline of painting to other specialisms, thereby providing opportunities for further multidisciplinary research. This project probably attests to this challenging outstretch even more than the previous two - both in my vistas of visual art experimentation in uncharted territories and; in its concept of combining modern day high-tech technology with a speleological approach in photography that captures a perceived transgression in human/animal boundary.



98. Catania, A. (2018). Observing the kinematics of reaching movement using VR goggles in Ghar Dalam, Malta [Digital photograph by Lawrence Catania].

The term *(No)body* in the title of this project not only alludes to the hypostatizations in Homer's and Carroll's texts, but the non-parenthesis of the word 'body' makes an indirect reference to the Butades myth. Alice's image-capturing via blindness is congruous with Butades's daughter's act of shadow tracing as a primordial form of symbolization due, as Sharpe (2017) notes, to "the loving tracing of a direct projection of a lover's body" (p. 86). It is the (re)presentation of the lover's 'body' that is captured via the ephemerality of his shadow to keep his likeness *present* in his absence. Butades transposes that intimacy by turning it into an *extimate* relief sculpture, Carroll transcends it into an *extimate* fairy-tale.

The creative output of this project entitled *Who are you? Is it Alice or (No)body?* involves the creation of a series of photographic works that capture shadows cast from a VR user and projected onto the *present* topography of the cave of Ghar Dalam in Malta (figs. 113 - 116). Engaged with the idea of the body seen in its exceptional, if not uncanny, oxymoronic and unearthly state, the VR user is not presented as a sculptural object but as a distanced reflection - a *present absence* of a natural (non)human shadow ephemerally drawn by light on stratifications that date back to the Ice Age.

3.3.1 Deflowering Alice in a punctum: Exploring Dodgson's wet collodion plate negatives as a Looking-Glass medium

Among his many interests, Carroll was skillful at handling the complex wet collodion process of early photography. As Warner (2002/2007) documents - "The camera's intrinsic properties exactly matched Carroll's fantasy: the dissolving of the Cheshire Cat, and the inside out and upside down character of negatives and of images in a viewfinder" (p. 189). As a photographer, Carroll "identified in

photography an intermediate state between the material and the immaterial, which could seize evidence of the fairy world” (p. 188).

Cole (2016) insightfully explains that this medium – “selects, out of the flow of time, a moment to be preserved, with the moments before and after falling away like sheer cliffs” (p. 197). In the “Winter Garden Photograph” (p. 70), Barthes (1980/1981) connotes a personally wounding and touching feature with an intense rapport with his deceased mother. This intensely private meaning is termed as “punctum” (p. 27) and is comparable to the Zen Buddhist notion of “*satori*” (p. 49) - the spiritual essence of impermanence or “the passage of the void” (p. 49). The fundamental aspect of the “punctum” is its allusion to death thereby implying that the essential nature of photography’s subjective experience lies in an index indicating - “[t]hat-has-been” (p. 77).

This ambiguity in the photographic *presence* promotes a further multiplicity of other readings especially if we adhere to what Sontag (1977/2001) infers – “there is something predatory in the act of taking a picture” (p. 14). The conceptual fixation to capture phantom indexes in this dissertation is further substantiated by the medium itself. The camera, as Bryson (1983) explains, is a mechanical device that operates in “real time” (p. 89) and “it is by its initial immersion in and subsequent withdrawal from the physical continuum that the photograph, in so many analyses, comes under the sign of Death” (p. 89). Sontag (1977/2001) perceives this grim property with Barthesian acuity –

To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt. (p. 15)

Through the elusive eye of Carroll's camera lens we are able to gaze at the furtive eyes of Alice Liddell. Analogous to Actaeon's doom-destiny, the prying camera eye of Carroll the haunted hunter becomes that of the haunted hunted. It is a gaze of seeking eternal knowledge which exhibits a duality - it (re)presents a synthesis of *real-self* and *real-non-self*. The gaze of enlightened discovery becomes a possession or an "Actaeon complex," a term which Sartre (1943/1953) construes as - "What is seen is possessed; to see is to *deflower*. If we examine the comparisons ordinarily used to express the relation between the knower and the known, we see that many of them are represented as being a kind of *violation by sight*" (p. 578). Carroll seems to be capturing a *deflowering* of the real Alice via his camera lens, a technique which Sontag (1977/2001) explains as -

To photograph people is to violate them, by seeing them as they never see themselves, by having knowledge of them they can never have; it turns people into objects that can be symbolically possessed. Just as the camera is a sublimation of the gun, to photograph someone is a sublimated murder - a soft murder, appropriate to a sad, frightened time. (pp. 14 - 15)

Every photograph contains the sign of a phantom in its distinctive characteristic of being a memorial art especially when it outlives the person captured through the camera lens. Carroll freezes the image of a "bright-eyed, fearless gamin with short dark hair [who] probably left few houses of cards standing" (Clausen, 1982, p. 196; fig. 99). He also celebrates the coronation of his chosen Queen of May (fig. 100). Crowned in laurel, Alice's picture is taken inside a photograph just like a fairy-tale not only serving as a personification of springtime but also as a sign of prestige and courage - a "champion of play" (p. 196). One could be indelibly touched

by this poignant feature. She wears her laurel wreath as a symbol of heroic feats - for guiding us through the incubus of Lewis Carroll's *Commedia*.



99. Dodgson, C. L. (1858). *Alice Liddell* [Wet collodion glass-plate negative].
National Portrait Gallery, London. 15.2 x 355.5 x 317.5 cm.



100. Dodgson, C. L. (1860). *Negative of Alice Liddell as 'Queen of May'* [Wet collodion glass-plate negative].
Private collection, New York. 15.3 x 12.8 cm.

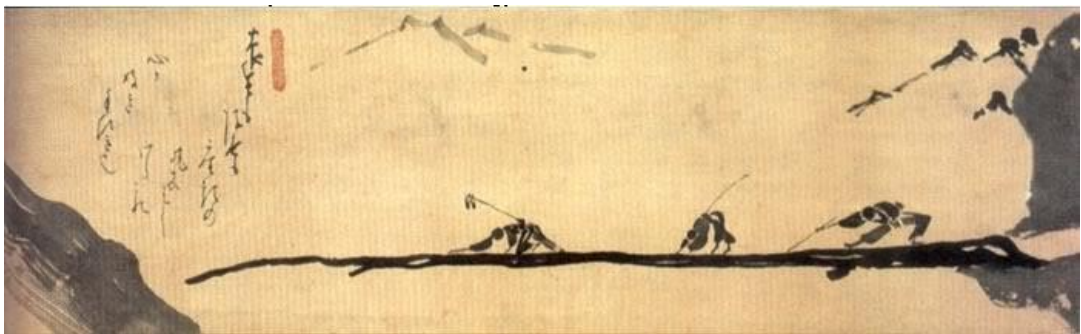
3.3.2 Blind trajectories of (im)possible faith: A comparative study in the kinematics of reaching movement in Tenniel, Coypel, Hakuin, Bruegel the Elder, and the virtual reality user



101. Tenniel, J. (1887). *Alice entering the Looking-glass World*
[Wood-engraving by George and Edward Dalziel].

Tenniel (fig. 101) illustrates the moment in which Alice ‘passes through’ the Looking-Glass as a suspended state of transition between parallel worlds. Certain parts of her physical body are not visible in this delayed *peripeteia* giving the impression that they have by now formed part of an *elsewhere space*. In the Victorian *immediate world*, we could still see her on top of a chimney place standing

between two glass bells.⁷⁶ Still visible is also her right arm which is raised to the mirror. Tenniel depicts Alice's hand antics in a position that recalls those in the "melancholy farewell" moment. Whilst one hand is being shaded from *our* eyes, we could witness the other being raised in a waving position as if it is removing breath from the surface of the mirror-glass. These hand antics possess a core universality in the trope of blindness that transcends historical and cultural influence.



102. Hakuin, E. (Edo). *Three Blind Men Crossing a Bridge* [Ink on paper].
Private Collection. 19.37 x 67.31 cm.

In *Three Blind Men Crossing a Bridge* (fig. 102) both calligraphy and image are incorporated and merged in the same piece. The elegant, “rather spidery” (Addiss, 1989/1998, p. 112) calligraphy, the novelty and humour of the subject, and the predominance of grey tones are characteristic of Hakuin's early works. The bold and nearly abstract pictorial style has the notable characteristic of irregularity in Japanese taste inherited from the Chinese ink-painting tradition.⁷⁷ One of the Zen master's seals stamped on this work reads - “Paintings that help sentient beings attain liberation” (Stevens & Yelen, 1990, p. 142). This aphoristic inscription hinges on the

⁷⁶ The glass bells amplify the metaphoricity of glass in the episode. Furthermore, the contents of these typical Victorian decorations (artificial flowers and a clock) become seminal symbols in Alice's adventures behind the mirror (as we have seen in the literature review).

⁷⁷ Japanese monk-painters such as Shūbun (flourished 1414-63) and Sesshū (1420-1506) who were amongst the first to absorb this influence were a great influence on later Zen art and subsequently on the improvisatory methodology and highly gestural techniques of Western *Tachisme* and *Art Informel*.

painter's belief that in order to realize the depths of one's inner nature it is necessary to undergo "*Daishi*" or the "Great Death" (p. 94) –

If you wish accordance with the true, pure non-ego, you must be prepared to let go your hold when hanging from a sheer precipice to die and return again to life. Only then can you attain to the true ego of the four Nirvana virtues. (Hakuin, trans. 1971, p. 135)

Hakuin was a reviver of the Rinzai Zen school⁷⁸ which taught that the "Great Death" (*daishi*) leads to "[p]ermanence, peace, Self, purity" (p. 135). The existential understanding of this differentiated self⁷⁹ bears a striking resemblance to the encounter with the nothingness disclosed by the notion of *Angst* as described by Heidegger. As a far-reaching primordial possibility of disclosure, *Angst* or anxiety makes manifest in the *Dasein* concept of Heidegger (1927/1962) in its "*Being towards* its ownmost potentiality-for-Being - that is, its *Being-free for* the freedom of choosing itself and taking hold of itself" (p. 232). This revelatory mood (*Stimmung*) of anxiety represents the harbinger of authenticity - "[a]nxiety brings Dasein face to face with its *Being-free for* (. . .) the authenticity of its Being" (p. 232).

The revelation of "the abyss" is also found in Nietzschean philosophy. In *Ecce Homo*, we find a Shakespearean contemplation on "how a man must have suffered to be so much in need of playing the clown!" - to which Nietzsche (trans. 2007) adds – "in order to feel this, one must be profound, one must be an abyss, a philosopher"(p. 194). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche (trans. 1966) ponders on boundless chasms and forbidden knowledge reminiscent of Prometheus' theft of fire

⁷⁸ The Japanese Rinzai Zen was "[f]ounded by Lin-Chi (Rinzai) in China in the 9th century" (Hyers, 1989, p. 21). Hakuin's brushwork is predicated upon a Far Eastern aesthetic hailing from a period when the self-imposed isolation of his country encouraged a revival and refinement of past traditions.

⁷⁹ Also interpreted as "the dying of ego and illusion" (Hyers, 1989, p. 21).

from the gods of Mount Olympus and Yahweh's admonition to Adam and Eve not to eat the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3:3 -

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you. (p. 89)

Directing one's gaze into the abyss is a nihilistic dictum implying that vision is a mirror condition in which one both possesses and is possessed. The seer and the seen are joined in the matrix of *extimate* visibility as that experienced by Alice whilst gazing at her White K(night)!

Hakuin's unique painting subject in *Blind Men Crossing a Bridge* deals with the idea that the unenlightened are sightless. Near the Shōin-ji Temple in Hara was a deep gorge over a river that one may cross only via a perilous, narrow log bridge. Hakuin perceived the metaphor and composed several versions of this subject incorporating the same *haiku* -

Both inner life and the floating world outside us
Are like the blind men's round log bridge –
A mind that can cross over is the best guide.
(Addiss, 1989/1998, p. 109)

In this terse poem we read that the enlightened spirit, or the "mind that can cross over," is fearless from life's exigencies, clearly viewing and accepting all that comes with equanimity. By contrast, the sequence of "unenlightened" (Addiss, 1989/1998, p. 109) blind men struggling to cross the bridge, provide a "metaphor for the precariousness of life" (Stevens & Yelen, 1990, p. 142). American composer John Cage reminisces on the subject two centuries later – "[a] structure is like a bridge from nowhere to nowhere, and anyone may go on it" (Seo & Addiss, 2010, p.

141). There seems to be a parallel in the search for the non-meaning recalling the White Rabbit's nonsensical evidence in Wonderland's trial by jury-

“If there's no meaning in it,” said the King, “that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any.” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 143)

In *Three Blind Men Crossing a Bridge* (fig. 104), the long horizontal of the single beam bridge dominates the landscape setting. The human depictions are defined by bold brushstrokes of dots and short dashes in wet tones of grey, seeming fully alive; “they have the combination of seeming fragility and inner strength of the insects that may inherit the earth” (Seo & Addiss, 2010, p. 141). Further marks and strokes depict the shores which flank the bridge from both sides, as well as mountains that seem to float in the sky. The strenuous effort to cross the bridge commences from the right side of the log. One traveller reaches out with his staff and carries his sandals so that he can sense the firmness of the logs with his bare feet. In front, another blind man with his staff tightened to his belt reaches down to touch the bridge with his fingertips. A third, whose sandals are fastened at the end of his walking stick for balance, crawls on his hands and knees. Will they make it across? Are Hakuin's blind men asserting the compulsion to touch as a veracious passage to knowledge, and perhaps, analogizing sight with touch? Seo & Addiss (2010) ask if Hakuin's three travellers are in fact – “a single blind man in three stages of his journey?” (p. 141).

Despite the gravity of the message in Hakuin's work, there is nothing dismal about this religious and artistic masterpiece; on the contrary, it has a purifying and calming impression upon the viewer. A touch of ironic humour to the parable is reached by the fact that the edge of the log does not quite reach the opposite shore.

The empty space implies what Žižek (2015) writes as “the void in which inner-worldly things disappear” (p. 17). It suggests “solitude in the vastness of nature” (Seo & Addiss, 2010, p. 141) and enlightenment -

the realization that the substratum of existence is a Voidness out of which all things ceaselessly arise and into which they endlessly return, that this Emptiness is positive and alive and in fact not other than the vividness of a sunset or the harmonies of a great symphony (Kapleau, 1965/1967, p. 16)

The theme of traversing boundaries via a bridge is, of course, not limited to strictly Buddhist meanings, but seems to maintain a spiritual force even in more secular poetry. For example, the poet Yang Wan-li (1127-1204) wrote the following opening lines to a poem entitled *Crossing a Bridge* that might represent the inner thoughts of one of Hakuin’s blind men, or Alice for that matter -

I stop halfway across the flimsy bridge;
The deep water frightens me.
I think of returning - but I’m halfway already.
I think of advancing - but I’m too dizzy to move.
(Seo & Addiss, 2010, p. 271)

The importance of the hands in this image may be traced to Hakuin’s *kōan* “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” (Hyers, 1989, p. 30). The Zen master developed a form of practice where the student was given a paradoxical riddle to “meditate on, and the student would, in turn, be given a chance to answer the master, acting as a guide, in any form they wanted” (Borup, 2008, p. 165). As Hori (2003) explains, Hakuin’s question provokes the “Great Doubt” (p. 23) meant to confound the Zen practitioner into a dilemma that is not aimed at “the conventional self, but

against the self that got created with *satori*” (p. 23).⁸⁰ It is the first awakening and understanding for the embarkation toward enlightenment.

A person could make a sound with both hands clapping, but is it possible to produce one with just one hand? Perhaps, the paradoxical nature of allusion and analogy in Hakuin’s *kōan* gains its strength as a symbolic analogue that haunts a duality of object and subject. Does a nonduality of object and subject exist? What is the reason that Hakuin instructs his pupils to become one with the *kōan*? Perhaps, the riddle is solved only when one realizes and experiences the nonduality of object and subject within oneself. Perhaps, one must become an instance of that nonduality as Alice is portrayed in Tenniel’s illustration. Perhaps, the sound of a clap made with just one hand takes one outside language to listen!

Although separated by more than a century and made in completely different cultures, *Three Blind Men Crossing a Bridge* finds a curious resemblance with a particular European painting which also visualizes a group of blind men struggling along their path. In Pieter Bruegel the Elder’s *The Parable of the Blind* (1568; fig. 103), the gestalt principles of similarity and dissimilarity are utilized exquisitely to illustrate Christ’s scolding of the Pharisees, or “blind guides” - “if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matthew 15:14, NIV). As Arnheim (1954/1974) elucidates –

A group of six coordinated figures is tied together by the principle of consistent shape (. . .). The heads form a descending curve, connecting the six figures into a row of bodies, which slopes downward and finally falls rapidly. The painting represents successive stages of one process: unconcerned walking, hesitation, alarm,

⁸⁰In Zen Buddhist philosophy, *satori* deals with the comprehension of *kenshō* - “seeing into your True-nature and at the same time seeing into the ultimate nature of the universe” (Kapleau, 1965/1967, p. 47).

stumbling, falling. The similarity of the figures is not one of strict repetition but of gradual change, and the eye of the observer is made to follow the course of the action. The principle of the motion picture is applied here to a sequence of simultaneous phases in space. (pp. 88 – 89)



103. Bruegel the Elder, P. (1568). *The Parable of the Blind* [Distemper on linen].
Museo di Capodimonte, Naples. 86 x 154cm.

Again, are we witnessing a single blind man in diverse stages of his journey? The symbolic blindness discussed in the works of these artists might be explored in the story of creation. In the Adam and Eve episode there appears to be a notion of some virtue of blindness. It is in visual terms that the woman is allured to eat the fruit from the tree of knowledge - “Ye shall not surely die” (Genesis 3, KJV) the serpent tells her. “For God dot know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:5, KJV). When Adam and Eve gave in to the serpent’s temptation - “the eyes of them both were

opened, and they knew that they were naked” (Genesis 3, KJV). Knowledge is equated with the opening of the eyes. As Mantle (2008) observes -

Their nakedness, as exposure, implies that what they can see now, they could not see previously. It is not that they were blind, because blindness would mean that there was impairment in the perfect world; rather, their nakedness was unseeable. (p. 289)

Adam and Eve’s blindness is an act of humility, thereby out of respect, we seem to restrict vision or sight of the naked body. Transgression of this *hubris* leads to punishment as the case of Actaeon in Greek mythology. Alice, on the other hand, sees herself “naked under the gaze of a cat” (Derrida, 2006/2008, p. 11) in front of the mirror!



104. Kerr, D. (Director). (2018). Still image from *Johnny English strikes again* [Motion picture].
UK: Universal Pictures.

Comparisons of visual works of art from different eras and geographical regions may be difficult to make since, as we have seen, even terms as common as “flame” or “light” are embedded with cultural assumptions. Nevertheless, the blind figures in the works discussed seem to haunt each other with uncanny similarities. Another revenant that might join this league of blind spectres is a contemporary clown whose physical bodily antics are immersed in virtual reality (VR) by using a head-mounted display (HMD). The blind figure that is nearest the empty space leading to the precipice, in Hakuin’s *Three Blind Men Crossing a Bridge*, crawls on his hands and knees in similar gestures as those in Rowan Atkinson’s role play in the motion comedy *Johnny English strikes again* (2018; fig. 104). Has our age’s buffoon reached the abyss?

Technological advances have provided us with our age’s blindfold. Antoine Coypel’s *The Error* (ca. 1702; fig. 24) has reincarnated into the corporeal embodiment of the contemporary user of digital media wearing a set of VR headset glasses. The apt commentary given by Boumans and Hon (2014) to describe the lonely wanderer from the Enlightenment may very well be applied to the VR user – “curious, anxious to see and to touch, his hands restless, groping under a veil of darkness” (p. 1). The safety information web-page for HTC’s Vive seem to confirm this stance when warning – “[w]hile wearing the product’s headset you are blind to the world around you” (HTC, 2019, p. 2).

The kinematics of reaching movement of the VR user’s hands also find resemblances in pictorial art. Let us compare as an example Coypel’s *Study of the Blind* (fig. 106), a preparatory drawing for the now lost painting *Christ’s Healing of the Blind of Jericho* (ca.1684), with a still image from a novel VR approach to

treat binocular vision disorders such as strabismus and amblyopia⁸¹ (fig. 105). Although both subjects are facing opposite directions, their hands seem to have a similar reaching position and, even more, their outstretched fingers seem to be in an identical position. Does this imply that the amblyopic patient controlling visual stimulus behind an HMD has the same immersive movement as the blind beggar confronting Christ? Is the VR gamified vision therapy software (offering an alternative to treatments such as eye drops and eye patches) transmogrifying “Virtual reality sickness”?



105. Still image from *High-tech Health: Virtual Reality Vision Therapy* [Documentary]. Time.

Along her Looking-Glass journey, Alice encounters phantom shadows of dream-creatures hovering from lightness to darkness. Such spectral chiaroscuro in the world of Carroll’s linguistic nonsense establishes a tension which, in its reaction to the human senses, becomes identifiable within a rapt stasis. Perhaps, Alice’s mirror is not only a medium that divulges evil or darkness, but a sensory instrument for revealing to herself infinite levels of reality! In Tenniel’s illustration, to go back

⁸¹ Also known respectively as crossed eyes and lazy eye

from where we started, Alice's positioning is akin to that of Rembrandt's prodigal son whose "head shorn[s] like a penitent's as he kneels in contribution" (Schama, 1999, p. 685). Was this an intentional metaphor? Perhaps, her K(night) journey through the mirror is broken from transgression to atonement! Perhaps, in Tenniel's illustration we are witnessing *our* melancholy farewell to Alice, the dream-child that hears the sound of her visible hand clapping against its shaded reflection!



106. Coppel, A. (ca. 1684). *Study of the Blind* [Black, red, and white chalks on grey paper].

Louvre, Paris. 34.5 x 25.5 cm.

3.3.3 Digital blindness and other aberrations in the “shroud of the virtual”

Saler (2015) claims that “Lewis Carroll is the fairy godfather of virtual reality,” emphasizing the fact that the *Alice* twin narratives advocate our necessity of building realities within realities, of delaying certain convictions so that other assumptions are fostered. This capability to pass through symbolic spaces anticipates the metaphysics of modern-day immersive environments simulated by digital interactive experiences such as the digitalized mirror medium of VR.

Our age is one of deep consternation about the nature of reality, and one of endless amusements to help us avoid it. We are, to quote Eliot (1943/1971), “[d]istracted from distraction by distraction” (p. 8) working tirelessly to avoid ourselves. Virtual worlds seem to be akin to the natural world. Withal their spectrum of attributes that are uniquely peculiar to their domain, they also unfold traits conveyed from the natural world. Saler (2012) defines contemporary virtual worlds as “acknowledged imaginary spaces that are communally inhabited for prolonged periods of time by rational individuals” (p. 6). However, human traits such as rationality and integrity are being threatened in computer-simulated worlds for they are spaces where, as Tweedledee exclaims – “you’re only a sort of thing in [t]his dream!” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 225).

There are many major health concerns about VR. Optometry specialist Martin Banks demonstrates how its use disturbs “the growth of the eye, which can lead to myopia or nearsightedness” (LaMotte, 2017). American journalist and cultural critic Virginia Heffernan (2017), who defines this medium as “the digital production, in a headset, of an immersive and convincing audiovisual illusion” (p. 119), explains –

To create and experience presence requires a keen sympathy between technology and neurology. Virtual reality sickness, most believe, is

produced by a brutal conflict among sensory inputs. Under the spell of VR the eyes and ears tell the brain one story, while deeper systems—including the endocrine system, which registers stress; the vestibular, which governs balance; and other proprioceptors, which make spatial sense of the body’s position and exertions – contradict it. The sensory cacophony is so uncanny and extraterrestrial as to suggest to the organism a deadly threat. (Heffernan, 2017, p. 121)

Heidegger (1967/1998) had made his critique of technology intrinsically tied to modern day’s metaphysics,⁸² and came to see in it the exacerbation of twentieth century’s root evil. Envisaging a surging peak of information that will eventually engulf humankind, he writes - “history and what it hands down to us may be leveled out into the uniform storage of information and as such made useful for the inevitable planning needed by a humanity under control” (p. xiii). In a similar presage of calamity, Dewey (1932/1985) predicts –

In the present state of the world, the control we have of physical energies, heat, light, electricity, etc., without control over the use of ourselves is a perilous affair. Without control of ourselves, our use of other things is blind. (p. 318)

Byung-Chul Han (2013/2017) writes that “the society of information is discrediting all belief, all faith” (p. 71). ‘Trust’ designates a confidence in reliance or dependence on the *other*, and thereby a relationship with the *other* could be possible even when there is little or no knowledge of the person in ‘trust.’ The contemporary possibility to obtain information as quickly and easily as possible is damaging trust, creating a crisis in faith - “Digital networking makes it so much easier to obtain

⁸² Heidegger (1947/1993a) writes - “[a]s a form of truth technology is grounded in the history of metaphysics, which is itself a distinctive and up to now the only perceptible phase of the history of Being” (p. 244).

information that trust, as a social praxis, has less and less meaning” (p. 71). In a social system where information is readily and rapidly obtained, ‘trust’ is now yielding to control and transparency - our “society of transparency is approaching the society of surveillance” (p. 71). There lies behind the apparent accessibility of knowledge not only the collapse of trust but also the homogenization and disappearance of privacy -

Every click that one makes is stored. Every step that one takes can be traced. We leave digital tracks everywhere. Our digital life is reflected, point for point, in the Net. The possibility of logging each and every aspect of life is replacing trust with complete control. Big Brother has ceded the throne to Big Data. The total recording of life is bringing the society of transparency to completion. (p. 71)

The disquieting photograph entitled *Watching Bwana Devil in 3D at the Paramount Theater* (1952; fig. 107) by LIFE magazine photojournalist J. R. Eyerman shows the opening-night screening of the first ever colour 3D film (aka ‘Natural Vision’) in 1952. The megalopic people, in “a virtually trance-like state of absorption, their faces grim, their lips pursed” (Levin, 2002, p. 429), are in what Marxist theorist and philosopher Guy Debord (1967/1992) calls the “*spectacle*” (p. 7). This “social relation between people that is mediated by images” (p. 7) designates a *Wetanschauung* or the alienation of late capitalism - “the domain of delusion and false consciousness: the unification it achieves is nothing but an official language of universal separation” (p. 7).



107. Eyerman, J. R. (1952). *Watching Bwana Devil in 3D at the Paramount Theater*
[Documentary photography]. The LIFE Picture Collection.

VR is a phenomenon of “spectacularity” (Levin, 2002, p. 324) serving as a paradigmatic instance of the “domain of delusion and false consciousness” (Debord, 1967/1992, p. 7). According to Mura (2011), VR is supposed to be a situation “of what exists powerfully in reality, it’s essential and existential condition” (p. 4). On the contrary, a VR user regresses into “the realm of artificiality, in the cave of

illusion” (Badiou, 2012, p. 215). Heffernan (2017) describes the contemporary digital VR experience as a “forcible suspension of disbelief” (p. 122) inverting a trope adopted in literary theory by Coleridge (1817/1984) – the “willing suspension of disbelief” (p. 6).⁸³ But what is so virtual in an individual’s willingness to defer judgement and accept a “semblance of truth”? Perhaps, we might find an answer in an etymological description of the term ‘virtual’ –

com[ing] from the Latin *virtus* (strength, manliness, virtue), which gave to scholastic Latin the philosophical concept of *virtus* as force or power. (This sense survives today in the expression “by virtue of”). In scholastic Latin *virtualis* designates the potential, “what is in the power [*virtus*] of the force.” (Ryan, 2001, p. 26)

Aristotle (trans. 1998b) distinguishes between potential and actual existence and specifies that “[e]very potentiality is simultaneously the potentiality of the negation of what it is the potentiality of” (p. 275). In scholastic philosophy, virtuality relates dialectically to actuality and not as an opposite. Rather than lacking existence, virtuality is that which carries the potential of unfolding into actuality –

every output of a production *progresses* towards a principle, towards an end [*telos*]. A principle is something for whose sake something else is, and an end is something for whose sake a production occurs. But the end *is the actuality*, and it is for the sake of this actuality-end that the potentiality is brought in. It is not in order to possess sight that animals see, but in order to see that they possess sight. (p. 274)

In Middle English, “virtual” came to mean “possessed of certain physical qualities” (Adams, 1996, p. 20). Since the Enlightenment, the term virtuality starts to

⁸³ The Romantic poet’s notion implies that if a writer could infuse “human interest and a semblance of truth” (p. 6) into the diegesis of a narrative, the reader would temporarily relinquish to the idiosyncratic world of the author long enough to fathom and engage in the work.

hold an antithetical position apropos of reality and transforms into, as Ryan (2001) explicates – “the fictive and the non-existent (. . .) (t)his sense is activated in the optical use of the term” (p.27). A “virtual image,” such as the reflected duplicate on Alice’s Looking-Glass, “is one made of virtual foci, that is, of points from which divergent rays of light seem to emanate but do not actually do so” (Adams, 1996, p. 20). Like the light rays that seem to emanate from the virtual Alice, her nonexistent point is distilled in her mirrored image and the virtual image from which she radiates as a reality. As Ryan (2001) writes –

Exploiting the idea of fake and illusion inherent to the mirror image, modern usage associates the virtual with that which *passes as* something other than what it is. This passing involves an element of illegitimacy, dishonesty, or deficiency with respect to the real. (p. 27)

Artaud (1938/1958) was amongst the first theorists to adopt the phrase “*virtual reality*” (p. 49); describing it as - “the purely fictitious and illusory world in which the symbols of alchemy are evolved” (p. 49), and as a consequence; “all the aberrations, phantasms, mirages, and hallucinations which those who attempt to perform these operations *by purely human means* cannot fail to encounter” (p. 49). These negative connotations remain implicit in contemporary digital VR technology which, according to French philosopher and cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard (2004/2005), is tragically creating the “drip-feeding of all minds” (p. 117). VR is a manifestation of what Debord (1967/1992) describes as “a concrete inversion of life, an autonomous movement of the nonliving” (p. 7). Heffernan (2017) describes the visceral experience of the Oculus Rift VR gear as follows–

Virtual reality sickness, *la nausée*, can be seen as the body’s radical disbelief in this illusion. It surfaces to remind you, in horror, of your

subjectivity and to force you to reclaim your sensory autonomy. (p. 124)

Heffernan draws on French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938), a philosophical novel that narrates the recurring feelings of revulsion and the banality and emptiness of existence. In *The imaginary: A phenomenological psychology of the imagination*, Sartre (1940/2004) develops a phenomenology of the image that is predicated on a radical separation of consciousness from that of imaging to the perceptual. His search is an escape as a cure for a disgust of reality via the act of imagination or the "magical act" (p. 125) -

the object as imaged is an irreality. Without doubt it is present but, at the same time, it is out of reach. I cannot touch it, change its place: or rather I can indeed do so, but on the condition that I do it in an unreal way, renouncing being served by my own hands, resorting to phantom hands that will deliver unreal blows to this face: to act on these unreal objects, I must duplicate myself, *irrealize myself*. (p. 125)

Sartre seems to be making another prediction of what was to come in our technological era. This need to be *irrealized* is underscored by Baudrillard (1995/1996) in his contention of accusing VR of committing "the perfect crime" by "the cloning of reality and the extermination of the real by its double" (p. 25). There is a theft of reality in VR's capability of luring the human mind into simulated virtual worlds which appear more realistic than reality itself. VR is one of our age's eerie simulacra - an illusion which we are forgetting that it is an illusion. Holding on to material reality becomes a near-impossible task - "[i]n the shroud of the virtual, the corpse of the real is forever unfindable" (Baudrillard, 1995/1996, p. 46). Žižek (1997/2008) postulates a "spectral" dimension to this spectacle of sepulchre reality -

the oppressive and simultaneously elusive presence of the Other subsists in the very absences (holes) of the symbolic texture [. . .].

[R]eality is virtualized, so that instead of the flesh-and-blood presence of the Other we get a digitalized spectral apparition. (p. 200)

French feminist philosopher Hélène Cixous (1996/2005) makes a poignant self-reflection that questions vision – “[n]ot seeing the world is the precondition for clairvoyance” (p. 115). Expressing a phantasmagorical predicament for mortiferous analogies, the VR headset might be a mediumistic tool for the user that purportedly mediates communication with “digitalized spectral apparitions.”

3.3.4 *Absent presences in a danse macabre shadow-self: Morphing shadows in the metaleptic zone of inter-virtual primitivism*

This dissertation is all about an *absent presence* that is captured in a specific narcissistic moment. It is an event inside Alice’s malleable portal within which disturbing subjective perspectives mark and (dis)organize meaning. It is the blinding moment when Alice covers her eyes and whilst waving with the folds of her handkerchief, captures an image in her memory. This is the process of drawing a lasting picture of the White Knight in her head - replacing the loss of the *present*, of what can be seen directly, by the process of blindfolding. It is the preempting of the loss in order to overcome it and keep the image *present* in the Knight’s absence.

The preempting, or appropriating the shadow in advance, is echoed in the blindfolding of Coypel’s *The Error*. This is a study in the dynamic of blindfolding and *error*, of preempting the off-sight loss to engage with and prepare for the transformed reality by transcending it - metamorphosing into the being that does not need what will eventually be lost. The protohuman, preparing itself to lose, is able to

live outside the shelter of the cave, the nourishing folds of Gaia. Alice prepares herself for the transformation into adulthood by transcending that transformation, and preempting it with a series of metamorphoses, as Daphne preempts her loss to Apollo by metamorphosing into a laurel tree.

Humans have always been driven to (re)present nature through images, but nature has always already (re)presented itself within itself, through the natural phenomena of shadows. The shadow has theatrical properties in its ephemerality for as French artist Christian Boltanski (1991) explains, it is “the representation within ourselves of a *deus ex machina*” (p. 73). Perhaps, one could say that the first art-image is a shadow since its subject is already a shade, someone or something doomed to die. The shadow of death looms over this anthropic effort at artistically embracing a shadow to capture a trace. The shadow is an *imago* of what will die and the *imago* is a shadow of what already has died. One wonders if the art found within the Paleolithic cave were made to preserve the shadows of proto-humans, or the *imago* of their *absent presence*. Imagining the genesis of images in the prehistoric Chauvet cave in France, Werner Herzog (2010) briefly discusses moving shadows on fixed surfaces with archaeologist Jean-Michel Geneste –

HERZOG: Could it be, how they set up fires in Chauvet Cave, there’s evidence that they cast their own shadows against the panels of horses, for example?

GENESTE: The fires were necessary to look at the paintings and maybe to staging people around. When you look with the flame, with moving light, you can imagine people dancing with the shadows.

HERZOG: Fred Astaire? Fred Astaire?

GENESTE: Yes. I think that this image dancing with his shadow is a very strong and old idea of human representation, because the first representation was the walls, the white wall, and the black shadow.



108. AFP/Getty (2019). *A tribesman aims his bow and arrow at an Indian coastguard helicopter over North Sentinel Island* [Documentary photograph].

The cave wall, or what Lewis-Williams (2002/2012) metaphorically calls “the living membrane” (p. 199), is itself the support where the figural present/absences of shadows dance in a metaleptic transfiguration. If one observes, from a documentary photograph taken on a helicopter (fig. 108), how the shadow of a hunting Sentinelese tribesman clings to the corporeal figure in a therianthropic state; one might expound the preposition that what the proto-humans painted on the cave walls were actually *danse macabre* (re)presentations of themselves. Did the proto-human capture the figural absences of shadows, that seem to be black holes in the light, allegorizing the all-conquering and equalizing power of death in *present-ness*?

In Alice's *Totentanz* dream-worlds, animals and all sorts of creatures talk. Carroll transforms the people around him much like the typographical caricatures of Grandville's *Les Ombres Portées (Projected Shadows), No. 2* (fig. 109), in which the shadows of a parade of public figures take on the physiological attributes of various beasts – all “satirically representing their “true” selves” (Sharpe, 2017, p. 368). In this lithograph a government censor casts a devil's shadow and a politician makes the shape proleptic of Orwell's porcine vision of power politics. We find another example of how this dark revelatory shadow is used to comic effect in Tim Burton's stop motion picture *Vincent*(1982) where a child projects a dragon-*self* shadow on the distorted walls of an interior (fig. 110), as Pomerance (2013/2016) ponders –

stretching out toward a wall, then up the wall, curving and rearing into an angry beast with its toothy maw open in rage. Rage, or impotence.

A conventional cartoon of a fellow so timid he's afraid of his own shadow? Or is the shadow perhaps afraid of the hairy little man emitting it? (p. 38)

One wonders why these zoomorphic shadows are not portrayed on the walls of Hiroshima (fig. 111)! The haunting imprints of victims pulverized by the atomic blast and the erratic heat impact of the explosion are left as indelible marks of the horrors of humanity. Their bodies bloodlessly vanished, leaving their black shadows behind just as those left by the White Knight.



109. Grandville, J. J. (1830). *Les Ombres Portées* (*Projected Shadows*), No. 2 from *La Caricature* [Lithograph with hand colouring on paper]. Houston: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. 20.6 x 31.3cm.

What kind of shadow does the VR user emit? Brian McHale (1987) discusses the prevalence of the postmodern “zone” - the “alien space *within* a familiar space, or *between* two adjacent areas of space where no such ‘between’ exists” (pp. 45 - 46). In a way, the VR user transgresses into this kind of *extimate* space immersed in hyperspatial images that are purely mental, sitting beside the real world but never materially manifested. Such virtual “space” existing parallel to normal or ordinary “space” could also be envisaged in the experience of a viewer who observes a user immersed in VR - a ‘zone’ of a ‘zone.’ This is an alternate space existing “parallel to the normal space of the diegesis, or a rhetorically heightened “other realm”” (Bukatman, 1993, p. 157). VR users are immersed in these zones of *extimacy* with eyepieces serving as blindfolds thereby depriving them of their sense of vision from

reality, and yet still transmitting diverse bodily antic movements from their real-*selves*. Thus, like the shadow, here again the digital-virtual-*self* reveals different levels of reality.



110. Burton, T. (Director). (1982). Still image from *Vincent* [Stop motion picture].

USA: Walt Disney Productions.



111. Matsumoto, E. (1945). *Shadow of soldier and ladder on a wooden wall (Nagasaki - 4,400m from the hypocenter)* [Photograph]. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, Hiroshima. 54 x 46 cm.

3.3.5 Photographing speleological virtualities: Casting metaleptic shadows from a VR user in an in-between Cave of Darkness

Who are you? Is it Alice or (No)body? is a project that is not concerned with visual perception in virtual environments, but with visual perception around virtual environments. An experiment conducted in 2018 explored Alice's virtual image on her Looking-Glass via the virtuality of shadows projected on the immersive wall of a cave. A light source was transmitted over a VR user in the immersive environment of Għar Dalam (Cave of Darkness), an in-between cave situated in Malta. In this sort of geological Pompei from the Ice Age, *The Error's* revenant unveiled zoomorphic features which were captured through the medium of photography (figs. 113 - 116).

The Lilliputian archipelago of Malta, positioned in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, is a junction of Orient and Occident. It is haunted by what Lehmann (2007) terms the “ghost of the Colonial Other” (p. 85) that permeates this incessant home, fortress, and centre of trade to diverse cultures, all disseminating their own deaths on the palimpsest of both the physical and epistemological strata of its land. The very name of this country is believed to have originated from the Phoenician word *Maleth*, meaning refuge.

The prehistoric site of Għar Dalam, a long water-worn tunnel situated in the south-east of Malta, has a well-preserved stratigraphy marking its importance in archaeology, palaeontology, and ecology. Fabri (2007) writes that the cave's lowermost deposits date back to “180,000 years ago” (p. 3) showing evidence of animals and exotic fauna living on the Maltese archipelago during the “Pleistocene or the Ice Age” (p. 3). These levels of the Quaternary age contain, as J. D. Evans (1971) documents – “large quantities of animal bones, at first chiefly dwarf elephant and hippopotamus, later chiefly red deer” (p. 19).

The history of Għar Dalam can be decrypted not only from the remote antiquity of its stalagmites and stalactites, but also from its stratigraphy. Unlike other European countries, the Maltese archipelago did not experience glaciation in the Ice Age but rather “a Rain Age or Pluvial Age” (p. 24). Living animals were swept away by floods and torrential rains ending up deposited in the lowermost layers which now contain the fossil bones of predominantly dwarf elephants and hippopotami. As Dr Trevor Borg explains -

Since there was no Ice Age in Malta, we had plenty of migration of various large elephants who travelled over here to find shelter during that period (. . .). But due to the climate conditions here, they started to morph and shrink in size – that’s why we have dwarf elephant remains – and eventually died out. (Reljic, 2018)

These lowermost layers, as Fabri (2007) construes, are topped by the so-called ‘Pebble Layer’ - “indicative of [a] scarcity of animal life” (p. 26). Immediately covering it we find a ‘Deer Layer,’ dated to the latter part of the Pleistocene (18,000 – 10,000 years ago) – “[t]hese remains are predominantly composed of antlers and of long bones of two species of deer (. . .) other remains pertaining to wolf, brown bear, and red fox” (p. 26). Enveloping the Deer Layer we find the Calcereous Sheet – “a sterile layer corresponding to a volcanic ash layer” (p. 26). The top layer, or ‘Cultural or Domestic Layer,’ dates throughout the last 7,000 years. The earliest evidence of human settlement on the Maltese Islands, around 5,200 BC, was discovered here. Evans (1971) records that this upper layer yielded evidence of the first Neolithic settlers on the Islands – “[h]uman remains, pottery, and artefacts of stone and bone” (p. 19), including “a regularly shaped piece of globigerina limestone

showing signs of fire” (p. 19). This Neolithic point in time is named - “the Ghar Dalam phase” (Evans, 1954, p. 44).

Photographing a VR user over these stratifications is a capturing of an *absent presence* haunted by many pasts (fig. 98). The VR user immerses herself in “shroud of the virtual” commuting with “digitalized spectral apparitions” whilst becoming herself a “digitalized spectral apparition.” Via her captured photograph, she becomes a *memento mori* of an underworld ghost hovering over the sediments of a cave. In this context, one may allude to the Orphic myth where a voyeuristic gaze attempted to transgress the command of the underworld god. Intrinsic to the penetrative frame of reference taken by Blanchot (1955/1999), this denouement is an allegory for the Icarian artist who perseveringly strives to obtain illumination and vision. This Orphic gaze attempts to look at what the gods conceal where the “essence” of the (K)night “reveals itself to be inessential” (p. 437) - to be ‘nonsense.’ (fig. 99).

In this project, one could read the hypnagogic states and the phenomenon of Alice’s lucid dreaming like the stratifications of a cave that in themselves are haunted testaments of natural and historic borders being blurred and transgressed. They have witnessed (K)nightmares in the waking within the sleep of their dogged gaze. They seem to silently gaze into “the night at what the night is concealing - the *other* night” (Blanchot, 1955/1999, p. 438). Indeed, as Farbman (2008) points out, it is this waking-within or “sleep-resistant center - an intimate alien” (p. 2) that prevents the sleeper from succumbing to an all too final rest. In this sense, “the sleeplessness of the dream” (p. 2) maintains a liaison with the waking world.

Caves within themselves are folds in the ground, in the body of the earth, the folds that turn the earth into Mother Gaia and give birth to the human - or protohuman who is first nourished within, and then emerges from its speleological

folds. Here one might also recall Zeus who is hidden in a fold in the earth before he can emerge fully formed, his mother Rhea “hid him in a cave hard of access, down in the secret places of the numinous earth, in the Aegean mountain with its dense woods” (Hesiod, trans. 1988, p. 17). The protohumans then go back into the folds and recreate their world around the inner folds of the earth - wrapping their paintings on the actual folds, while they are themselves folded and blindfolded by darkness, and in the process, they unfold their human nature to emerge again as fully humans – “to what he was when he was not yet” (Blanchot, 1971/1997, p. 4).

Blanchot (1955/1982), in *The Space of Literature*, retraces an anti-history of art by spotlighting contradictory points in time that underline it. Each of these aporetic stages partakes of a loss - Art loses or forgets the deities, then it loses humanity, and at the end it loses itself. At each moment, it also forgets the forgetting, to such an extent that it is compelled at each moment to remold itself in terms of “the error of the essential solitude” (p. 40). This kind of *error* is an alterity in the *extimacy* inducted by the primal scene depicted on the cave wall where the *real-self*, the primary referential Self - “see[s] according to it, or with it” (Merleau-Ponty, 1961/1964, p. 164) rather than *seeing it*. The *real-self* performs a pilgrimage to be blinded within the folds of the cave’s formations to experience this “essential solitude,” to be blinded within a *virtual-self* in an “intimate space of knowledge” (Blanchot, 1971/1997, pp. 1 – 2) - to be “hypnotized by solitude” (Bachelard, 1958/1994, p. 36).

The gaze is central to Hamlet who, as Benjamin (1963/2003) writes; “alone is a spectator by the Grace of God; but he cannot find satisfaction in what he sees enacted, only in his own fate” (p. 158). Like Hamlet, we are hypnotized by the welter of idle conundrums and thoughts still undetected in the infinite folds of the secluded

cave. Through a camera lens, the peeping Tom could also gaze deep into those folds, although he is privy to the knowledge that this lens is a window with an unglimped external mystery, just like a mirror. In its partial truthness, the camera's frame opens an intangible portal unto forgotten connections and percolated memories.

In the matrix of the digital VR world, "Selves" also gain an unexpected degree of freedom, existing as whomever and whatever and anywhere they wish to be, although its experience is not to be confused with "essential solitude." Most probably, Blanchot (1955/1982) would have called it "concentration" (p. 20). Like the White Knight or Peter Pan, the digital-virtual-*self* is not tied to a shadow, or an identity bounded by geographical, social, or even physical, biographical limitations. VR users interact in virtual and nonphysical spaces, they interact with fantasies that come to life, individual chances to step outside of one's real-*self* to transcend the boundaries of one's own identity into something not unlike the 'religious' experience of a pilgrimage. It is an immersion into a digitalized communications technology that is transparent, ubiquitous, and self-effacing, as Rutsky (1999) explains -

The function of virtual-reality technologies is to allow users to be "immersed" in the "reality" that they present, to make that "reality" as fully present as possible. In order to achieve this experience of "immersion," virtual-reality technologies must efface their own technological form, make that form transparent or invisible to their users. The nearer that VR technology comes to achieving this transparency, the nearer it comes to being a perfectly functional form - a form that follows its function so closely as to efface itself completely. (p. 111)

What relation in terms of *presence* is there between the virtual-*self*, the real-*self*, and the digital-virtual-*self*? Is there a primary identity that connects the *presence* of these three kinds of *selves*? Are the virtual-*self*, the real-*self*, and the digital-virtual-*self* alterities of the same *presence*? By making manifest our idealized *self* into a digital-virtual-*self*, does this imply that the *presence* of the real-*self* becomes our own *other presence*? Transgressing from the *present* of the real-*self* to the *present* of the digital-virtual-*self* implies the same transgression as that of the proto-human who transgresses *presence* in the inner folds of the cave? Being truly *inter*, these questions thus demand Carrollean insights.

Alice's virtual-*self* is linguistically skewed and (dis)ordered along enigmatic lines of deliberate interpretive resistance and, yet, expressing a curiosity to know and understand. Perhaps, Cixous and Maclean (1982) are right in saying that one might interpret the Looking-Glass story as "a figurative representation of the imaginary construction of self, ego, through reflexive identification, the other side of the mirror never being anything else but this side" (p. 238). Alice's abyss is our own Cave of Darkness!

3.3.6 A K(night) watch

The initial idea for this project was to have the photographed VR user immersed in a virtual environment of the cave itself. In these first proposals, it was intended to include the experiencing of simulated imagery from past projects represented as 'cave drawings' on the actual cave through virtual reality (fig. 112). Heritage Malta, the Maltese national agency curating Għar Dalam, had granted me the permission to set a 360-degree VR film in the site and project digital imagery from the *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief* projected onto its walls using LED/LCD

projectors. A team of professionals from the University of Malta was organized including Mr Joseph Camilleri (VR filming), Mr Mark Bugeja (App development), and Dr. Dylan Seychell (consultancy). A set of the following set of equipment was to be utilized – Samsung Galaxy Gear VR, Oculus Rift, and an android PC set-up. Unfortunately, due to lack of funding, this idea had to be abandoned.

The VR user in this project made use of a Samsung Gear VR HMD to interact in a single user game entitled *Meeting Rembrandt: Master of Reality* (created by ForceField in partnership with Rijksmuseum and Samsung Gear VR). The user-interface design of this Oculus app game includes a wayfinding technology where, via the VR goggle, the player immersed herself to interact in the master's studio and 'gaze' at the *Night Watch* – the spectre of Rembrandt came to haunt this dissertation once more!



112. Catania, A. (2017). Cave of Darkness [Proposed concept drawn in pastel]. 30 x 24 cm.



113. Catania, A. (2018). *Who are you? Is it Alice or (No)body?I* [Digital photograph by Lawrence Catania].

82.36 x 25 cm.



114. Catania, A. (2018). *Who are you? Is it Alice or (No)body?2* [Digital photograph by Lawrence Catania].

65.6 x 30 cm.



115. Catania, A. (2018). *Who are you? Is it Alice or (No)body?3* [Digital photograph by Lawrence Catania].

72.26 x 30 cm.



116. Catania, A. (2018). *Who are you? Is it Alice or (No)body?4* [Digital photograph by Lawrence Catania].
49.64 x 30 cm.

3.4 *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise*: A luminescent sculpture (re)presenting the interspecific architectonics of *Alice*cat's (K)nightmare



117. Catania, A. (2019-20). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [PLA, PMMA, moiré animated acetate transparencies, PVC pipe, sisal rope, wood, iron wire, silk & paper]. 168 x 33 x 33 cm. Photo: Jean Pierre Gatt.

Half-Dreaming Phantomwise is a freestanding sculpture that envisages Alice's hypothetical doll's house. In its miniature form, this uncanny cabinet of mirror curiosities is imagined through the heroine's perspective as she traverses the Looking-Glass, consciously bringing together both parallel worlds fused into one object. It is elemental in its experience, with light, motion, and reflectivity being important stimuli to blur the line between the permanent and the ephemeral.

Addressing themes such as paradox, human metamorphoses, and urban domesticity, this artwork speculates on the particularly curious form of a doll's house once we see it from Alice's in-between state of her *withdrawing space* joined with the *elsewhere space* of her (K)nightmare. Amalgamating the physical appearance of

a Victorian doll's house with those of the twisted-ladder structure of deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) and a cat's scratching post, this artwork probes into a creaturely *otherness* in the child that holds a potential for rethinking the human.

Making use of 3D printing technology, moiré animated acetate transparencies, and polymeric materials such as polylactide (PLA) and polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA) that have transparent, translucent, and reflective properties, *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* borders between the material and the immaterial, the human and the non-human. This bizarre perspective is also investigated via the trope of the caged bird metaphor and a hybrid architectural framework designed on the nonsense text's corkscrew symbology.

Whilst drawing us into Alice's fairy-tale chamber, this sculpture represents a house where adjectives such as 'welcoming' and 'homely' become emptied out of their acknowledged function. This in-between miniature house alludes to a Quixotic deceptiveness that verges upon the visionary space of a dreamed dreamer – a White Spectre whose perpetual farewell haunts the past and the future with the melancholy present.

Mirroring the pivotal curious heroine, poised between object-hood and subject-hood, innocence and disenchantment, this medium-hybrid sculpture⁸⁴ sustains paradigmatic shifts in structure and type, material and metaphoric-metonymic trope.

⁸⁴ See fig. 117, Appendices F - I, and video clip on <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UI-0ixz4iP0RSqefaaybFXRyoyHI2lGG/view?usp=sharing>

3.4.1 Infinite riches in little rooms: An *extimate* doll's house for a paradigmatic curious girl

“Animal and child refrains seem to be territorial” (p. 303) claim Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2005). It is Alice's awareness of the ‘living’ world around her which is always at the centre of her dream adventure inside her ‘living-room’ and brings it very near us readers by her struggle to better understand our human condition.

Alice's *withdrawing space* seen through her Looking-Glass darkly offers a compelling reminder of the ultimate restrictions of our existence. Her wonder room glitters, all crowded surfaces and busy corners as those in the Sheep's little dark shop behind the mirror, but it glistens with the promise of something secret inside like a doll's house. The curious chamber of miniatures promises to double its reader as well – to allow us, quoting Alice in Wonderland, to “pretend to be two people” (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 21).

In keeping with Carroll's characteristic delight in the play of paradoxes, this project's ‘secret’ rooms motivate shifts of perspective as those found amongst the elusive things in the little dark shop where Alice notices “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” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 242). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* attempts to bring together such elusiveness in the miniature as both an experience of interiority and exteriority and the process by which this *extimacy* is constructed.

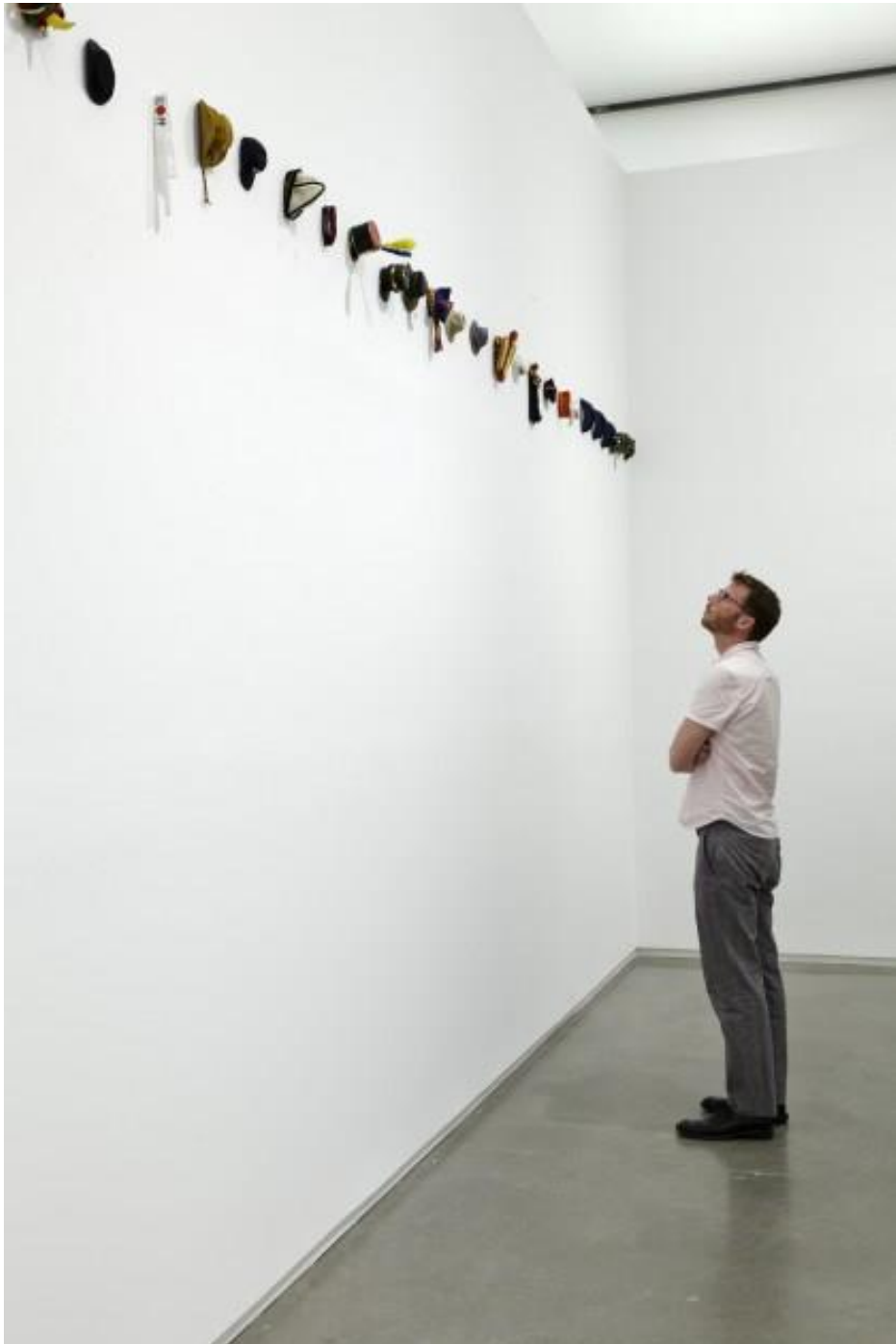
In its peculiar form of a distorted doll's house, this sculptural project presents a diminutive and thereby manipulatable and domesticated version of experience. The miniature is intrinsically associated with distance and mimesis, it epitomizes – “the structure of memory, of childhood, and ultimately of

narrative's secondary (and at the same time causal) relation to history”

(Stewart, 1993, pp. 171 - 172).

An example of a sculptural art installation that was developed according to this principle of phenomenology is Charles LeDray's mixed media installation entitled *Village People* (2003-2006; fig. 118). This is a work dealing with the possibilities of diminutive sizes presented in a way that makes us think about “smallness and distance, even memory and mortality” (Schwartz, 2016). The display is a series of extremely small hats lined up high on the wall, perhaps a way to blur the viewer's perception of each object's precise details. These “sculptures of clothes” (Schwartz, 2016) are the individualized hats of people who form part of our *polis* - the miner, the man at the hotdog stand, the businessman, the sailor, the cowboy, etc. Feeling a little like Alice, or a Lilliputian, we look up on the hats that are equally distanced and proportioned, creating a tension between heterogeneity and homogeneity. Moreover, this work in its diminutive scale seems to teasingly imply *another* time, a type of transcendent temporality as described by Stewart (1993) -

The miniature does not attach itself to lived historical time. Unlike the metonymic world of realism, which attempts to erase the break between the time of everyday life and the time of narrative by mapping one perfectly upon the other, the metaphoric world of the miniature makes everyday life absolutely anterior and exterior to itself. The reduction in scale which the miniature presents skews the time and space relations of the everyday lifeworld, and as an object consumed, the miniature finds its “use value” transformed into the infinite time of reverie. (p. 65)



118. LeDray, C. (2003-2006). *Village People* [Mixed media].
Craig F. Starr Gallery, New York. Ca. 13 x 550 x 10 cm.



119. Chapman, J. & Chapman, D. (2013). *In Our Dreams We Have Seen Another World* (detail)
[Glass-fibre, plastic and mixed media]. White Cube, London. 150 x 76.2 x 76.2 cm.

Perhaps, LeDray's vision reminds us that it is imperative that Lilliput remains an island which negates change and the flux of lived reality - The miniature world remains uncontaminated and perfect by the bizarre so long as its absolute boundaries are maintained. The *Hellscape* series (fig. 119) of the British artist brothers, Jake and Dinos Chapman, subverts this idea by encasing in a glass box heaps of small-scale freakish models. The meticulously and intricately crafted pieces represent morbid creatures and perverse monsters ranging from crucified Ronald McDonalds to zombies. Due to the direct referencing to capitalism, morality, and religious themes, the creative duo's miniature dioramas depict an "Alighieri-esque purgatory" (Azzarello, 2014).

Although never mentioned in the *Alice* texts, a doll's house must have found a place in the typical Victorian home of Carroll's heroine. What form does this toy

take once seen through the Looking-Glass, darkly? Is it similar to the Chapman brother's pessimistic vision, heavily saturated in moral depravities? Or, akin to that LeDray due to Carroll's imagination combining a mathematician's lucid precision with moral sensibility? Alice is the paradigmatic curious girl - she is an object of curiosity and is also herself curious. Perhaps, we might re-enter her fairy-tale chamber, cross the threshold into a darker form of curiosity, evoking associations with spectral demarcations.

In the Looking-Glass purgatory, Carroll imagines fictional characters that are at once life-sized, imposing, or even magisterial figures but also as Lilliputian miniatures - the Looking-Glass White King, for example, is terrified "when he found himself held in the air by an invisible hand" (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 171). Such fascination with the idea of a condensed scale without compromising the values of a given object is embodied in the doll's house. As Stewart (1993) notes, its structure "is a version of property which is metonymic to the larger set of property relations outside its boundaries" (p. 62). It marks the differentiations of privacy and "erases all but *the frontal view*" (p. 62). Its outward aspect is the perpetual and incontaminable appearance of the architectonic self, or a metaphor for the body as a container of objects -

In its tableaulike form, the miniature is a world of arrested time; its stillness emphasizes the activity that is outside its borders. And this effect is reciprocal, for once we attend to the miniature world, the outside world stops and is lost to us. In this it resembles other fantasy structures: the return from Oz, or Narnia, or even sleep. (p. 67)



120. Simmons, L. (Designer), Wheelwright, P. (Designer), & Bozart Toys (Manufacturers). (2001). *Kaleidoscope House* [Injection-moulded polystyrene]. Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
Floor plan: 56 x 71.12 x 61 cm.

Moreover, doll's houses, like dolls, not only cross that uneasy border between childhood and adulthood, commencing with the crèche and moving on through mourning dolls, but also reside at the origins of the curiosity cabinet. Such notions of inward movement in the structure of a doll's house could be demonstrated in the *Kaleidoscope House* (2001; fig. 120), a collaborative project with Bozart Toys, designed by photographer Laurie Simmons and architect Peter Wheelwright. The 1:12 scale twenty-first century architectural toy is equipped with sliding transparent colour walls and an accessory line of stylish furniture designed by several contemporary artists ranging from Cindy Sherman to Laurie Simmons. The *extimate* nature of the doll's house both *is* and *is not* our world -

A house within a house, the dollhouse not only presents the house's articulation of the tension between inner and outer spheres, of

exteriority and interiority - it also represents the tension between two modes of interiority. Occupying a space within an enclosed space, the dollhouse's aptest analogy is the locket or the secret recesses of the heart: center within center, within within within. The dollhouse is a materialized secret; what we look for is the dollhouse within the dollhouse and its promise of an infinitely profound interiority. (p. 61)

The possible linguistic correlations of these miniature worlds, as Stewart (1993) writes, are "the *multum in parvo* of the epigram and the proverb, forms whose function is to put an end to speech" (p, 67). Nevertheless, the origins of these miniatures were intended not only as "children's playthings, or *wunderkammers* for the diversion of visiting ladies: they were also didactic tools, a way of illustrating just how domestic life should be played out – essential, as one eighteenth century historian put it, for "the training of maidens"" (Wainwright, 2014).

3.4.2 Remembering crows: Avian melancholy in the White Knight's song, Vincent van Gogh's *Wheatfield with Crows*, Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* and Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*

The narcissistic view (re)presented by the diminutive, its abstraction of the mirror into the micro, furnishes the desiring subject with an illusion of mastery, of heterogeneity into order and time into space. It also exploits that forbidden borderland between an objectified creature and a living entity with eerie consequences, as Stewart (1993) writes - "The dream of animation here is equally the terror caused by animation, the terror of the doll, for such movement would only cause the obliteration of the subject – the inhuman spectacle of a dream no longer in

need of its dreamer” (p. 172). This terror not only echoes the Red King’s dream conundrum but also the avian imagery that permeates the Looking-Glass narrative.

In the moment when Alice gets annoyed in Tweedledum and Tweedledees’s company, she craves - “I wish the monstrous crow would come!” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 229). Alice wishes to get rid of the twins by frightening them away by the enormous crow “[a]s black as a tar-barrel” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 213), as the nursery rhyme about them predicts. The crow resurfaces again in the Looking-Glass text when the White Knight reads his poem about the aged, aged man and describes him as - “[w]hose face was very like a crow, [w]ith eyes, like cinders, all aglow” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 289). One is reminded here of the narrator in *The Raven* by Edgar Allan Poe (1845/2013b) who attaches a poignant significance to crows - “the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom’s core” (p. 236).

Rather than being critically redundant, the melancholic poem/song of the knight reiterates a conflict in Wordsworth’s *Resolution and Independence* – a clumsiness refigured in its protagonist the old man. The “combat of depths” is surely expressed in the poem/song which parodies the encounter between the narrator and the Leech-Gatherer occurring in the second half of Wordsworth’s poem. In the face of adversity and suffering, this narrator learns the value of resolution and independence via perception and identification with the old man’s perseverance, as Malpas (1997) explains – “The self is healed through an empathy with the suffering of the other.” In one of his letters, Carroll explains the relationship between his poem and that of Wordsworth –

‘Sitting on a Gate’ is a parody, (. . .) though not as to style or metre - but its plot is borrowed from Wordsworth’s ‘Resolution and Independence,’ a poem that has always amused me a good deal

(though it is by no means a comic poem) by the absurd way in which the poet goes on questioning the poor old leechgatherer, making him tell his history over and over again, and never attending to what he says. Wordsworth ends with a moral - an example I have *not* followed. (Gardner, 1960/2015, p. 288)

Wordsworth's Leech-Gatherer who advises about the perseverance of resolution and independence is reiterated in the crow-faced "Aged Aged Man" whose "half-crazed explanations of the bizarre schemes by which he earns his living are utterly ignored by a narrator who has his own, equally outrageous, plans to consider" Malpas (1997). This violent reduction of the *other* may, perhaps, be attributed to characteristics attributed to all species of corvids that dwell amongst human environments – Creatures which are "usually conspicuous and their-quick-wittedness often enables them to profit from opportunities created by man's activities and largely to frustrate any attempts he may make to get rid of them" (Goodwin, 1976/1986, p. 60).

Carroll (1871/2015b) imbues his poem with a violent encounter that comes straight to the fore – its Quixotic ambiguity oscillates between gravitas and parody. In the Looking-Glass version he is "thumped (. . .) on the head" (p. 287), shaken "well from side to side / Until his face was blue" (p. 288) whilst, in an earlier version of the poem entitled *Upon the Lonely Moor* (1856), he is "kicked" (p. 286), "pinched" (p. 286), his ear is given "a sudden box," his "grey and reverend locks" are "tweaked" and he is generally "put into pain" (p. 287). What is the reason for all this sadistic pain? Perhaps, an answer might be given by Malpas (1997) who hints at a *mise en abyme* in the Knight's poem –

the ludicrous schemes and the physical violence (. . .) have an exuberance that is utterly foreign to Wordsworth's original. And yet, as a parodic rendering of the encounter that takes place in Wordsworth it also seems to be extremely apt. One is left with the impression that Carroll has discovered, has uncovered, a violent subtext that cannot - and perhaps should not - be wholly excised from a reading of the poem. Carroll's reading presents an injunction, a demand to the reader of "Resolution and Independence": "you must recognise the violence to which the other, the old man, is subjected."



121. Catania, A. (2019). *Quixotic Road to Neverland* [Pastel]. 20.8 x 23 cm.



122. Catania, A. (2019). *Quixotic Road to Neverland 2* [Pastel]. 20.8 x 23 cm.



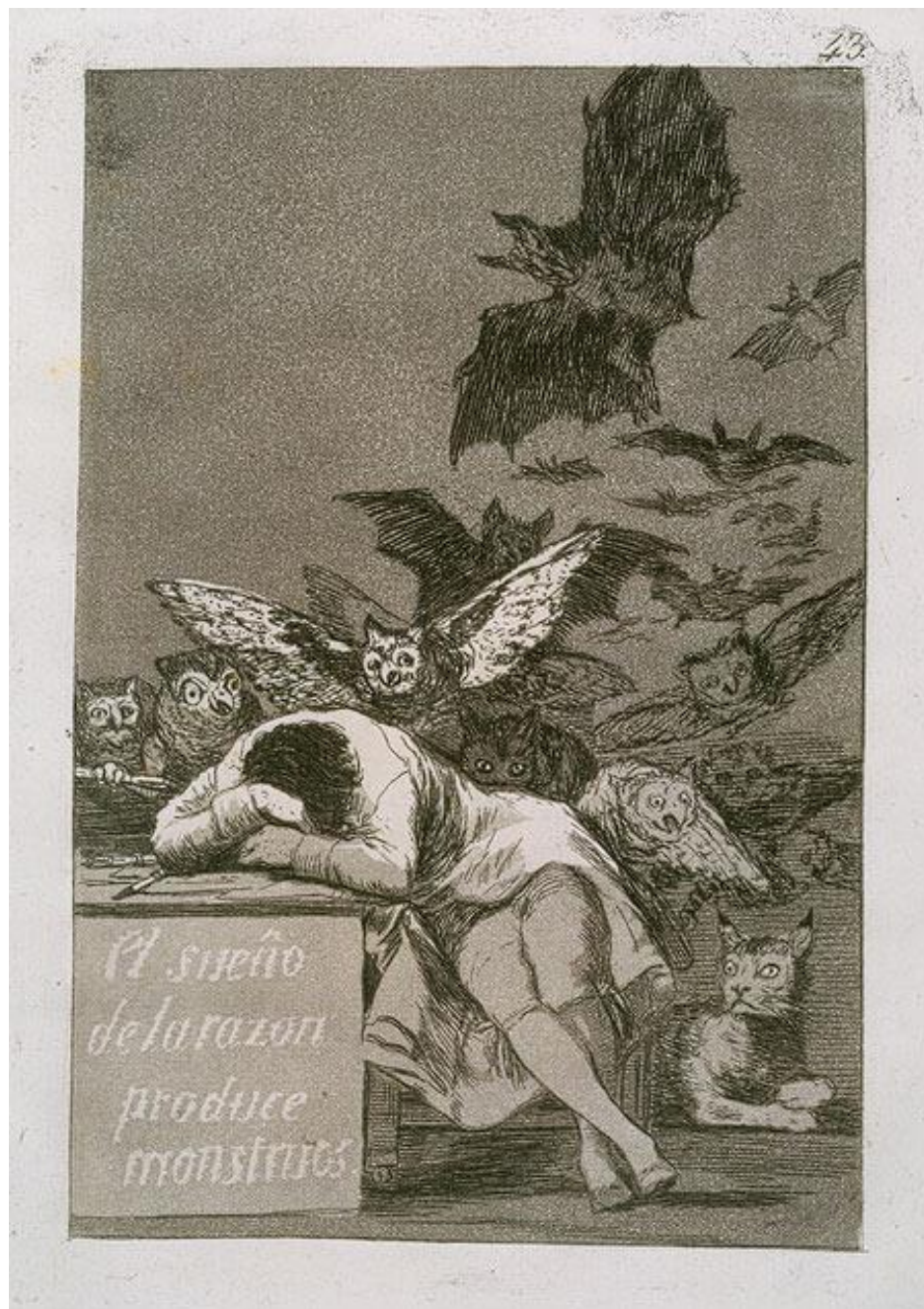
123. Catania, A. (2019). *Quixotic Flight* [Pastel]. 21 x 29.5 cm.



124. Doré, G. (1863). *Ravens and bats swarm as Don Quixote hacks a passage into the cave of Montesinos (Don Quixote II, 22)* [Wood-engraved by H. Pisan].

The White Knight's song seems to depict the material reality of a violent class relation. Yet, in the empathic paradigm of the metadiegetic poem we may sense the singer's bumbling persona as a reiteration of that of Cervantes's hero depicted in the intra-spiralling paths of the *Quixotic Road to Neverland* series (2019; figs. 121 - 122) and the chaotic *Quixotic Flight* (2019; fig. 123). The terror of the Manchegan gentleman is the "scattering flocks of crows and bats" (de Cervantes, trans. 2003, p. 600) that inhabit the Cave of Montesinos. In Doré's illustration (fig. 124) of this "Christ-like *descensus ad inferos*" (Sullivan, 1996, p. 45), the hero drudges his way on a precipice by charging at the menacing creatures resembling those in Goya's

Capricho etching *The Sleep of Reason Giving Birth to Monsters* (fig. 125). These horrific beasts propagate an internal vision of what Foucault (1961/2004) calls “savagely free” (p. 267) forces and “*Raging Madness*” (p. 267).



125. Goya, F. (ca. 1796 - 1797). *Los Caprichos* plates 43: *The Sleep of Reason Giving Birth to Monsters* [Etching and aquatint]. Davidson Galleries, Seattle. 21.3 cm x 15.1 cm (plate).



126. van Gogh, V. (1890). *Wheatfield with Crows* [Oil on canvas].
Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam. 50.5 x 103 cm.

Another spectral chronotope of the avian imagery found in the Montesinos raven/bat swarm moment is Vincent van Gogh's *Wheatfield with Crows* (1890; fig. 126). Painted during the last months prior to the artist's premature death, this work forms part of a series interpreting the wheat fields of Auvers-sur-Oise under different atmospheric conditions. It is here that van Gogh, anxious and downcast, gives vent to the feelings of his last days before his premature death. In a letter addressed to his brother Theo, van Gogh (trans. 2014) writes -

[O]nce back here I set to work again - the brush however almost falling from my hands and - knowing clearly what I wanted I've painted another three large canvases since then. They're immense stretches of wheatfields under turbulent skies, and I made a point of trying to express sadness, extreme loneliness. (. . .) I hope to bring them to you in Paris as soon as possible, since I'd almost believe that these canvases will tell you what I can't say in words, what I consider healthy and fortifying about the countryside. (pp. 33 - 35)

It was van Gogh's intention to portray his turbulent wheatfields to express "sadness, extreme loneliness," and paradoxically, concurrently it was also his aim to convey what he considered "healthy and fortifying about the countryside." In this landscape of the soul, unique for its vigorous strokes, heavy colour contrasts, and its dark stormy sky, none of the crimson paths seem to lead to an exit from the empty vastness of the wheatfields. Perhaps, only the crows can escape with their entirely black plumage and deep gruff calls! Perhaps, these flying creatures are trying to reiterate the words of T. S. Eliot (1943/1971) in *Four Quartets* – "Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind/ Cannot bear very much reality" (p. 6). The presence of van Gogh's corvids has given rise to numerous interpretations, for example, Eiss (2010) writes -

The field of wheat and the sky are the two worlds, visible and invisible, colliding. The black birds are the birds of knowledge and of death. They are the Jungian Shadow circling, similar to the blackbirds of Alfred Hitchcock's movie *The Birds*, frightening awakened Shadows symbolizing the dark side of the universal human psyche entering into and threatening the daylight world of consciousness, Tricksters, to overturn sanity and bring about the creative turmoil of insanity, and at the same time messengers of the Savior descending upon the earth, the one meant to take into himself all of the suffering, to free the world of sin and offer hope for a better life in the next world. (p. 273)

According to Halwani and Jones (2007), Hitchcock's birds attack "whenever the characters treat romantic love lightly, irresponsibly, or wrongly" (p. 69). They also appear in metaphorical cages that offer the lover's protection and some degree

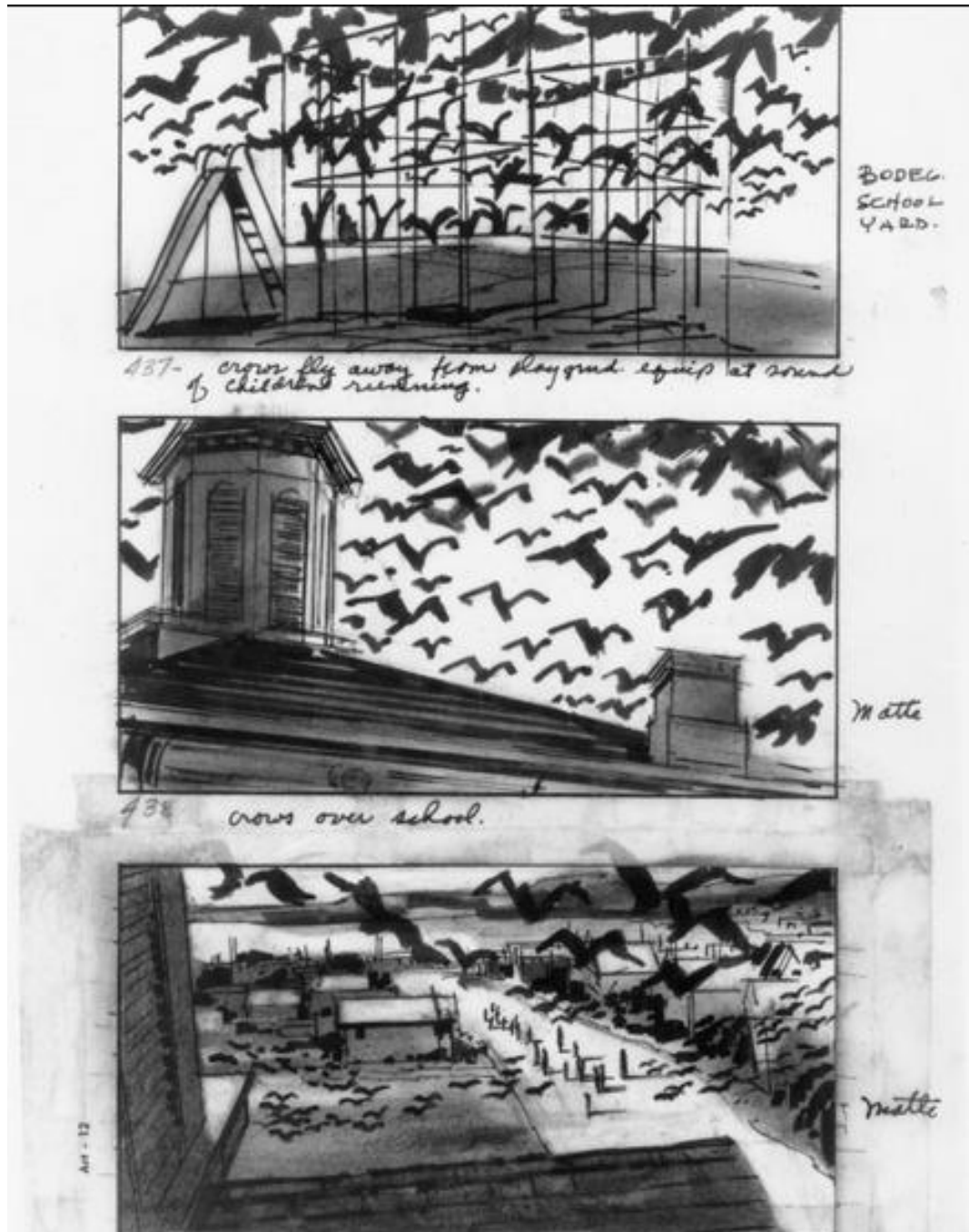
of luxury; offering a choice between freedom and safety, as Mitch says to a captured canary – “Back to your gilded cage, Melanie Daniels” (Hitchcock, 1963). The Hollywood auteur introduces a sort of disaster in a natural violence that has a multi-layered psychoanalytic metaphor. Recalling *La Mancha* which signifies “the stain,” Žižek (1992) writes that the first bird’s attack on Melanie appears as a “Hitchcockian “blot” or “stain”” (p. 94) - a visual smear that triggers the inside/out of our picture of reality and “materializes the *maternal superego*” (p. 97). The terrifying metaphor of the birds not only (re)presents a calamity of our environmental ecology but also -

the embodiment in the real of a discord, an unresolved tension in intersubjective relations. In the film, the birds are like the plague in Oedipus’s Thebes: they are the incarnation of a fundamental disorder in family relationship. (p. 99)

In this context, Jeong (2013) explains that “[w]e are helpless in accounting for this intrusion of the Real, and our powerlessness proves nothing but the absurd otherness of the animal” (p. 141). Robin Wood (1989) interprets these conflicts in different words – “we know it is *our* agony, *our* anguish that we are witnessing, for the birds are waiting for us all” (p. 171). Our time, to return to Eliot (1943/1971), “[points] to one end, which is always present” (p. 6).

The anguish of the Hitchcockian “blot” is clearly evidenced in the stain drenched artwork of the story boards for the movie made by Harold Michelson (fig. 127). In *Wonderland*, Carroll (1865/2015a) had created his own agonizing blot related to avian horror where “a large pigeon had flown into [Alice’s] face, and was

beating her violently with its wings” (p. 66), thinking that the long-necked girl⁸⁵ was a predatory snake trying to devour her eggs.



127. Michelson, H. (1963b). Storyboard for *The Birds*.

⁸⁵ Alice's second attempt at eating the Caterpillar's magical mushroom causes her neck to grow so tremendously long that she can bend it "about easily in any direction, like a serpent" (Carroll, 1865/2015a, p. 66).

The figure of a threat in the shape of birds is also manifest in van Gogh's painting. Here, the crows may represent manifestations of catastrophe (they actually cause damage to crops), harbingers of bad luck and death but at the same time, paradoxically, may also represent resurrection. As Jones (2016) writes - "The bird, even a caged bird, remains a symbol of freedom and a stimulus for thinking about the relationship between freedom and human society" (p. 107). In 1880, in another letter addressed to his brother, van Gogh (trans. 2014) speaks about birds as a symbol of freedom and compares himself to a bird in a cage -

But then comes the season of migration. A bout of melancholy - but, say the children who look after him, he's got everything that he needs in his cage, after all - but he looks at the sky outside, heavy with storm clouds, and within himself feels a rebellion against fate. I'm in a cage, I'm in a cage, and so I lack for nothing, you fools! Me, I have everything I need! Ah, for pity's sake, freedom, to be a bird like other birds! An idle man like that resembles an idle bird like that. (pp. 129 – 130)

Vincent's painting may very well represent a world where interiority and exteriority are intermixed, the movement of the crows and that of the corn oppose and contradict each other, sinking in one direction, rising in the other, creating an *extimate* dual rhythm. The invisible world of the mind may become visible, and van Gogh's own manifestation is the universal human manifestation, just as that of Carroll. Alice, the little damsel in distress, is locked in her caged room observing the *warmth* of the snow outside. Both artists have reached into the depths of the human unconscious and brought them to light, have given us the expression of that dark, nightmarish world of Jung's Shadow, and at the same time have shown us how it is

potentially the world of the Saviour. Both have given us the idea of the caged bird as the soul trapped in the body depending on the bird as a metaphor for freedom. It is stereotypically an inhabitant of the air. Pliny the Elder (trans. 2004) writes that “we began imprisoning creatures to which Nature had assigned the sky” (p. 176). It is free in ways in which humans are not. When Daedalus and Icarus are imprisoned in a tower in Crete, they are like birds in a cage. Both father and son make their escape by using wax and feathers “to look like real birds’ wings” (Ovid, trans. 1955, p. 184) and thereby transform themselves into artificial birds.

In *Wheat Field with Crows*, crows fly across corn tinged with crimson towards a lowering sky, unfolding a foreboding of disaster. This dark side has always been near the surface in Vincent’s life but has now burst through the membrane between the conscious world and the unconscious world of the dream. One of his favorite authors, Jules Michelet (1870/1981), included the following description of crows in *The Bird* -

They interest themselves in everything, and observe everything. The ancients, who lived far more completely than ourselves in and with nature, found it no small profit to follow, in a hundred obscure things where human experience as yet affords no light, the directions of so prudent and sage a bird. (p. 16)

The raven is sacred to Odin in Norse mythology. The god’s dyadic messengers, Memory and Thought, are ravens that fly about the world all day and in the evening return to their master’s shoulders telling him all that happened. As Goodwin (1976/1986) writes - “[t]he raven’s small degree of sanctity was not, however, sufficient to prevent it being sometimes made use of as a land-finding bird, carried at sea to be released and followed in the hope that it would find land when the

crew had lost their bearings. According to tradition Iceland was first discovered in this manner” (p. 60). This corvid played a searching part in the floods of both Noah and his earlier prototype Gilgamesh. To determine if the flood waters had abated, Noah “sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth” (Genesis 8:7, KJV). One might imagine Noah’s bird as in Édouard Manet’s illustration for Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Raven* flying tirelessly across nothingness in search of anything that whets its existential angst -

Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore -
Till the dirges of his hope that melancholy burden bore,
Of ‘Never – never more.’ (Poe, 1845/2013b, p. 236)



128. Manet, E. (1875). *The Flying Raven*, Ex Libris for *The Raven* by Edgar Allan Poe
[Lithograph on simili-parchment]. The Met, New York. 15.6 x 29.5 cm.

3.4.3 A double-helical structural design for Looking-Glass wanderings

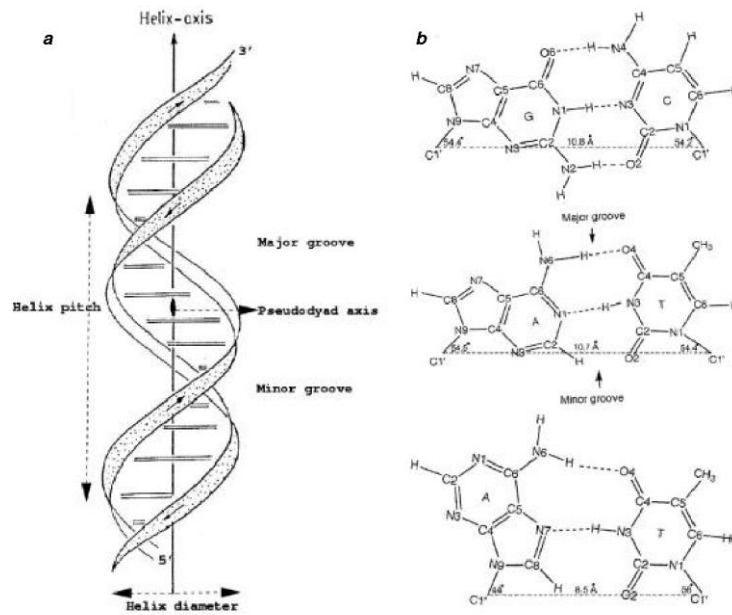
Paradoxically, the moves that Alice plays as a pawn seem not to lead to the goal but rather the opposite direction, even turn back on themselves and lead back to the starting point. To reach the Red Queen, Alice walks backwards and when she observes the path leading to the Garden of Live Flowers, the girl exclaims - “It’s more like a corkscrew than a path!” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 184). In fact, one finds several references to corkscrews in *Through the Looking-Glass* that work much like the later epochal discovery of the twisted-ladder structure of DNA by James Watson and Francis Crick. As Gardner (1960/2015) explains –

for the helix is an asymmetric structure with distinct right and left forms. If we extend the mirror-reflection theme to include the reversal of any asymmetric relation, we hit upon a note that dominates the entire story. (p. 167)

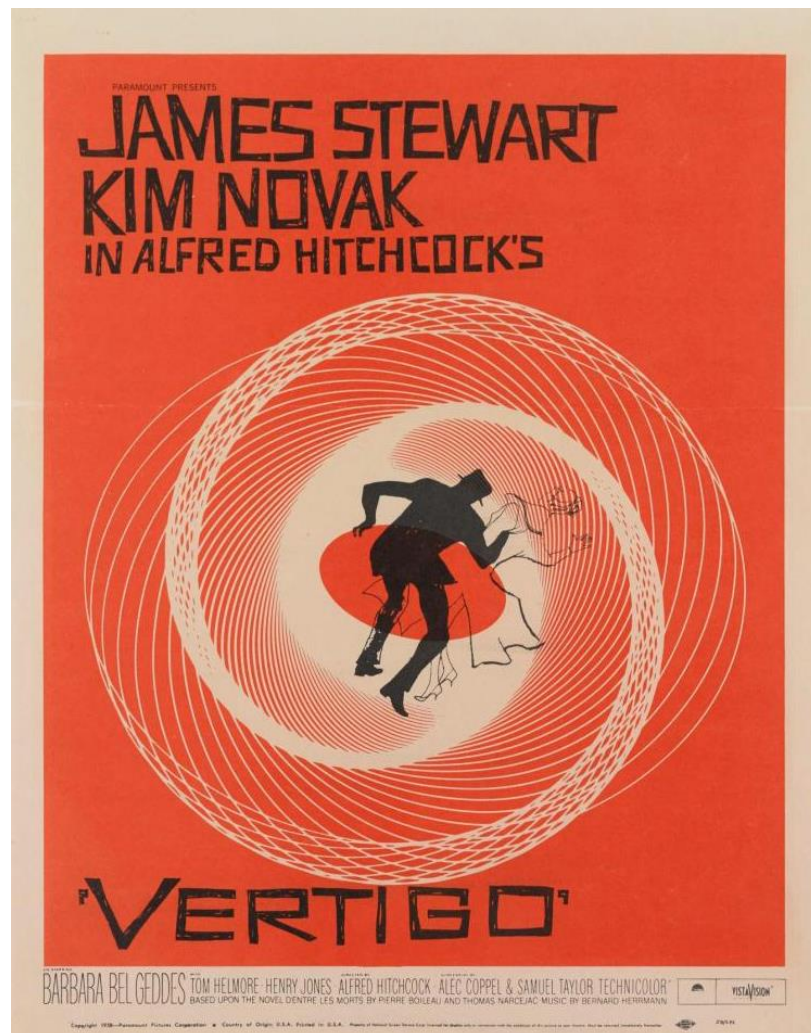
How could one move in a chess-board design that holds a symmetrical-(reverse)asymmetrical structure? Carroll’s metamorphic trope burrows and elevates into double helix dreams - Alice’s narcissistic mirror reflects Wonderland’s dreams. Both *Alice* texts commence with the main protagonist on the fringe of dream and wakefulness. She falls in a daze into a deep well or pretends a play entry into a mirror that “was beginning to melt away, just like a bright silvery mist” (Carroll, 1871/2015b, p. 167). The tunnel and the Looking-Glass, on top of the fireplace, are archetypal crossing-points as they lead either into the depths of the earth, or into a mirrored reflection of the sky with smoke emanating from the transforming fire below.

In its theoretical framework for the question of the animal, this project explores a multiplicity of performative “becomings” in the symbolism of the double-helical structural design. The eerie rooms in this interpretive curiosity cabinet are a collection of ideas and objects that intersect in unexpected ways in the manner of how Alice weaves inside her vertiginous dream leaving paths that the reader must retrace and reformulate in order to grasp where they connect. Carroll’s metamorphic trope burrows and elevates into double-helical dreams where twisting trails work much like the framework of DNA (fig. 129) - The exemplary symbol of all hereditary material in humans and almost all other organisms, DNA, or what Anthony Stevens (1982) describes as “the replicable archetype of the species” (p. 73).

The structure of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* is designed on the corkscrew symbol in *Through the Looking-Glass*, a symbol of crucial importance that relies on metamorphic transformations, described by Clarke (2008) as “a sequence of narrative operations that shows forth the systematic effects of reversible crossings over the formal boundaries of various conceptual distinctions” (p. 66). Carroll effectively conveys all his messages by carrying us off in a corkscrew whirl where despair and hope answer each other endlessly.

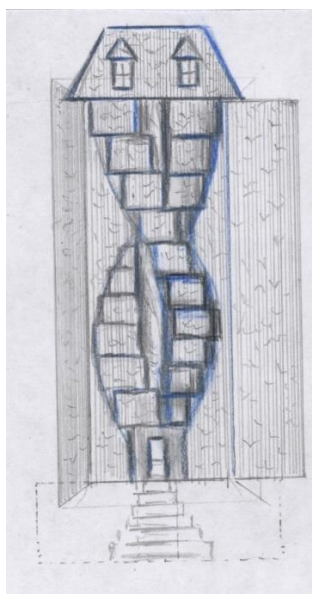


129. A schematic diagram of the Watson–Crick double helix.



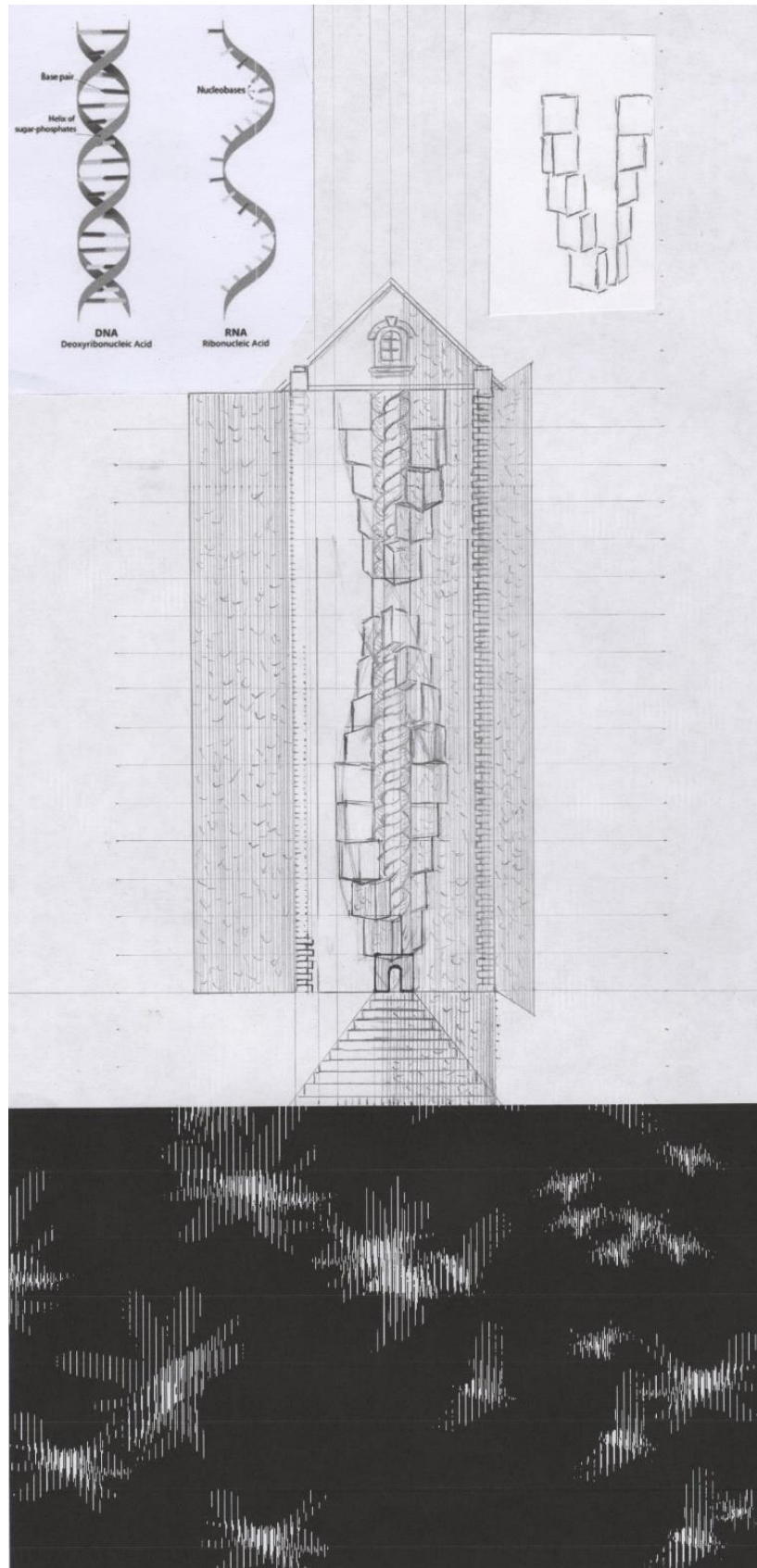
130. Bass, S (1958). *Vertigo* [Movie poster, US]. Sotheby's, New York. 47 x 26 cm.

Anthony Stevens (1982) suggests that the double-helical structure of DNA is “the replicable archetype of the species” (p. 73) and thus can be inspected for the location and transmission of archetypes. DNA present inside a cell acts as a genetic blueprint and brings a degree of regularity, pattern, and order into the natural world since it is coterminous with natural life and should be expected wherever life is found. The spiral vortex is also reminiscent of Saul Bass’s poster design for the classic Alfred Hitchcock film thriller *Vertigo* (1958) conveying the feeling of anxiety and disorientation central to the film (fig. 130). This structure was a crucial design element in *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* from the very first sketch of its conception (fig. 131). Thereafter, prioric designs and models for the project were developed (figs. 132 - 136). These initial plans for *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* proposed the idea of a panopticon-like facade in the form of a moiré animated glass case (fig. 136). This idea was discarded⁸⁶ due to a kinegramic superfluity which would have hindered the optical illusion.

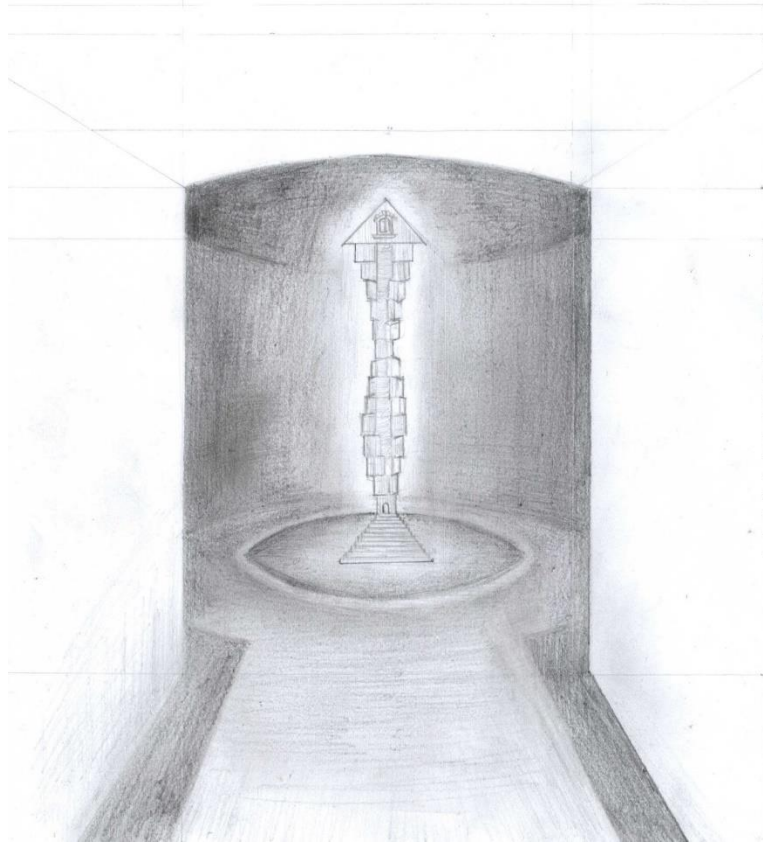


131. Catania, A. (2019). *Concept sketch for Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Graphite]. 12.5 x 6.5 cm.

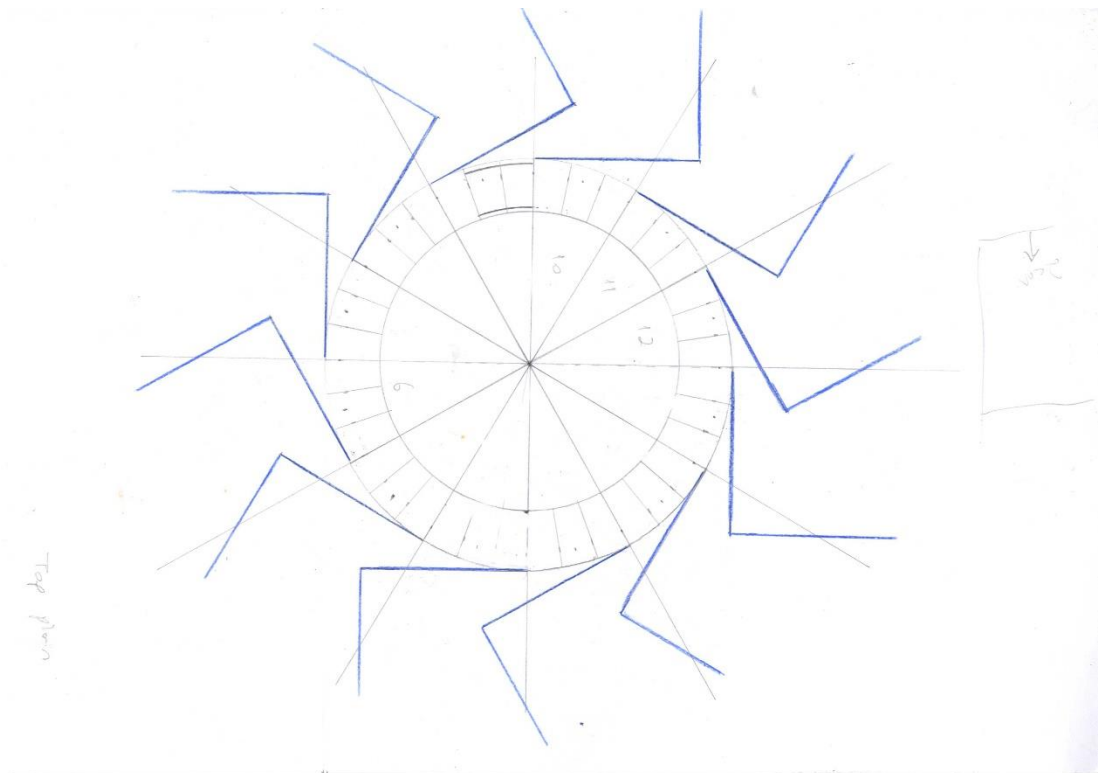
⁸⁶ For other discarded ideas apropos of the *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* project see Appendix H.



132. Catania, A. (2019). *Prioric design for Half-Dreaming Phantomwise*
 [Graphite, photocopy, and digital print]. 42.3 x 21 cm.



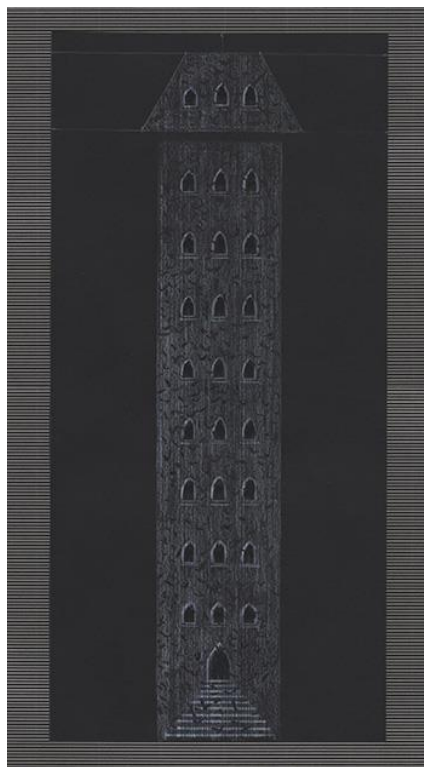
133. Catania, A. (2019). Proposed installation in the Meditation Room of Spazju Kreattiv.



134. Catania, A. (2019). Top plan of 'doll's house.'

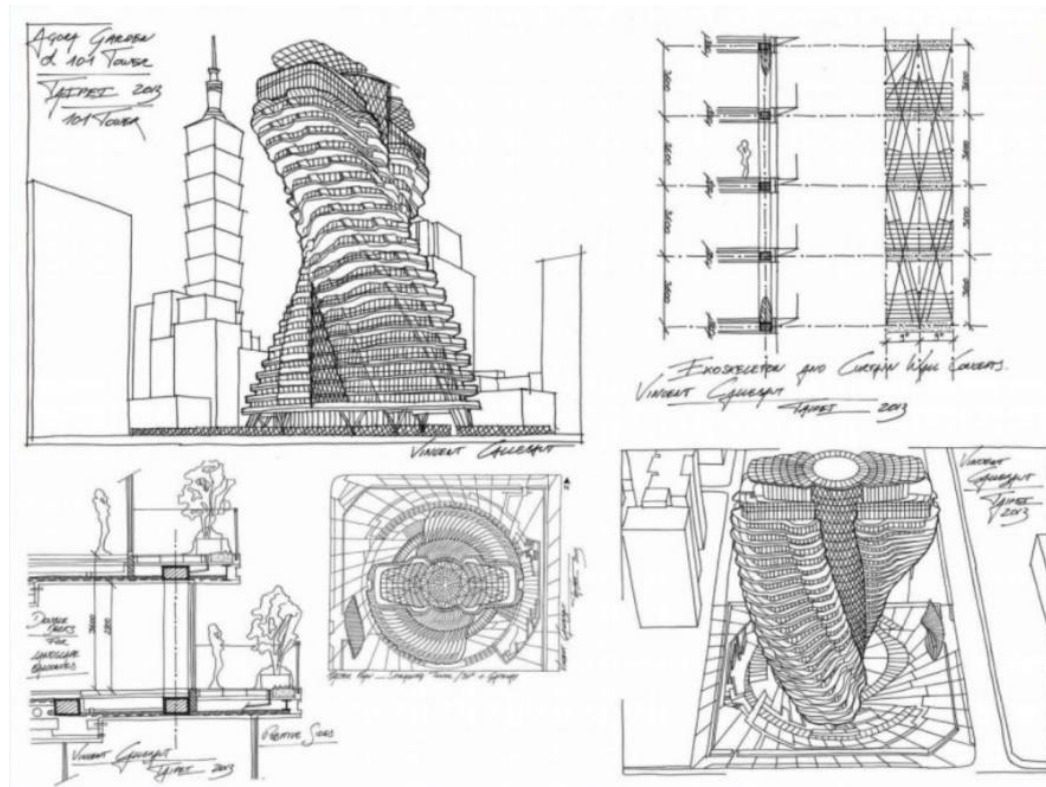


135. Catania, A. (2019). Full scale model (without base) of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise*
[Cardboard and PVC (polyvinyl-chloride) pipe]. 166 x 33 x 33 cm.



136. Catania, A. (2019). Proposed *façade design of a glass case for Half-Dreaming Phantomwise*
[Pastel, photocopy, and digital print]. 42.3 x 21 cm.

The double-helical structure of DNA came to influence diverse artistic projects such as the *Tao Zhu Yin Yuan* sustainable tower in the Xinjin District of Taipei City, Taiwan by Vincent Callebaut Architectures (fig. 137). Prior to its discovery, Vladimir Tatlin created the model for *Monument to the Third International* (1920), one of the seminal Russian architectural works of the early twentieth century (fig. 138). This Constructivist building was envisaged as a towering symbol of modernity, symbolically representing the ambitions of its originating country and a defiance against the Eiffel Tower.

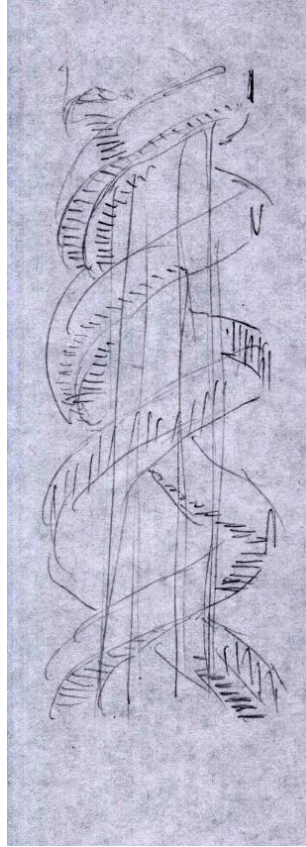


137. Vincent Callebaut Architectures (2013). *Structural designs for the Tao Zhu Yin Yuan tower in the Xinjin District of Taipei City, Taiwan.*

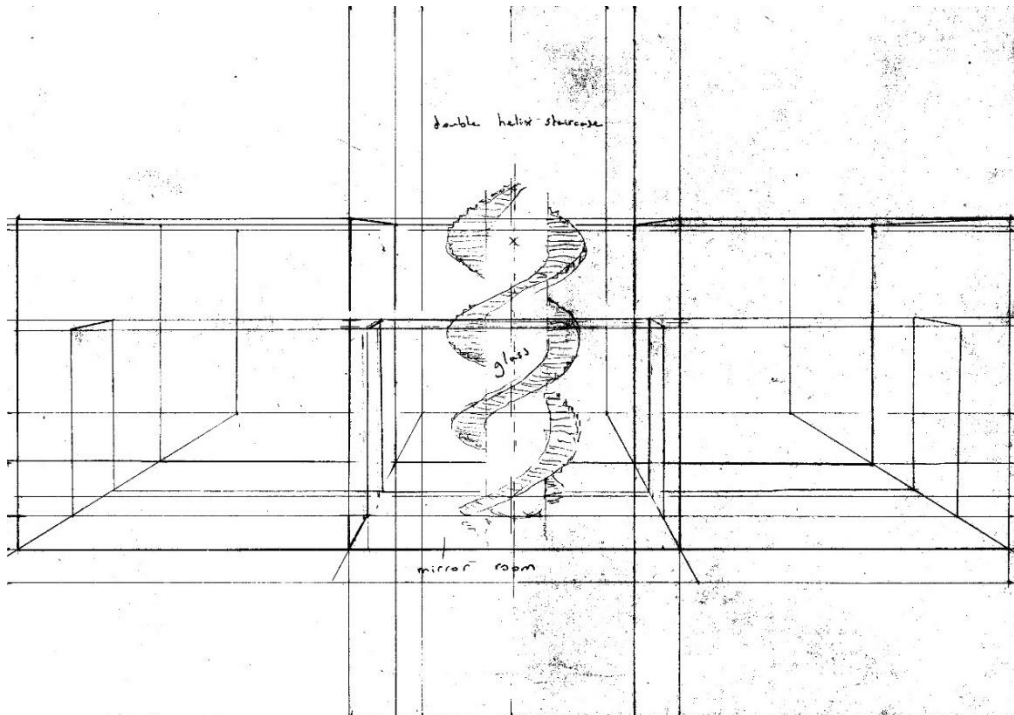


138. Tatlin, V. (1920). *Model for Pamiatnik III Internatsionala (Monument to the Third International)*
[Wood and metal]. Destroyed. 420 x 300 x 80 cm.

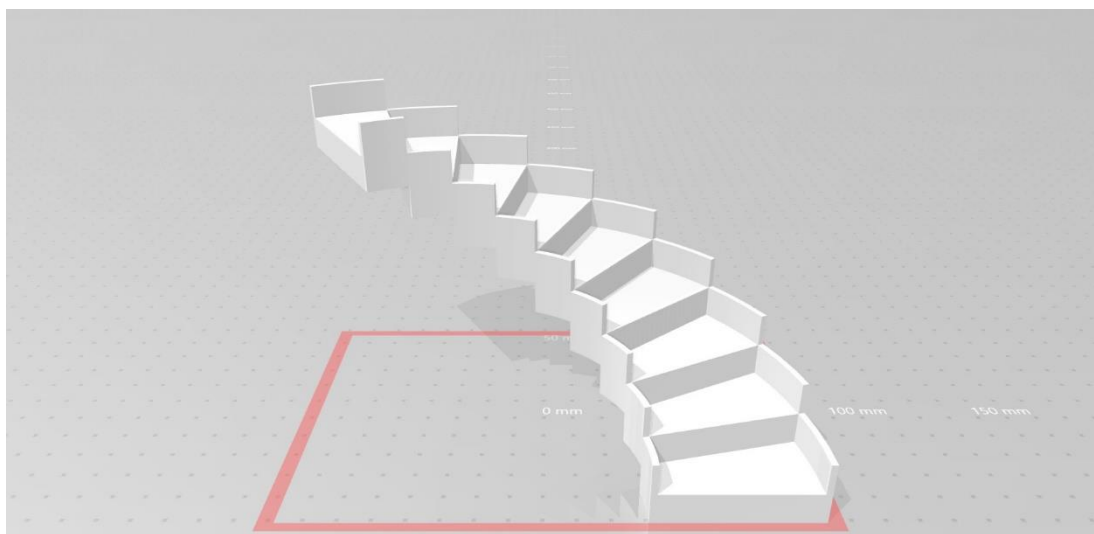
It was also intended to include a symmetrical staircase (figs. 139 – 141) for *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* based on the design of Renaissance spiral staircases such as those of Giovanni Condi in the Palazzo Contarini dal Bovolo (1497 - 99) in Venice, and Bramante's Belvedere Court (1495 - 1506) at the Vatican. The latter consists of a circular ramp with an open stairwell, supported by a helicoidal barrel vault, terraced on three levels on a sloping site conjoined by a grand staircase and arcaded loggias with superimposed orders. Since 3D printing filament-based FDM printers do not print without supports, the structure of a flying staircase could not be made due to such support structures that would overlap in the double-helical composition.



139. Catania, A. (2019). *Concept sketch for 'doll's house' staircase* [Graphite]. 21 x 6 cm.



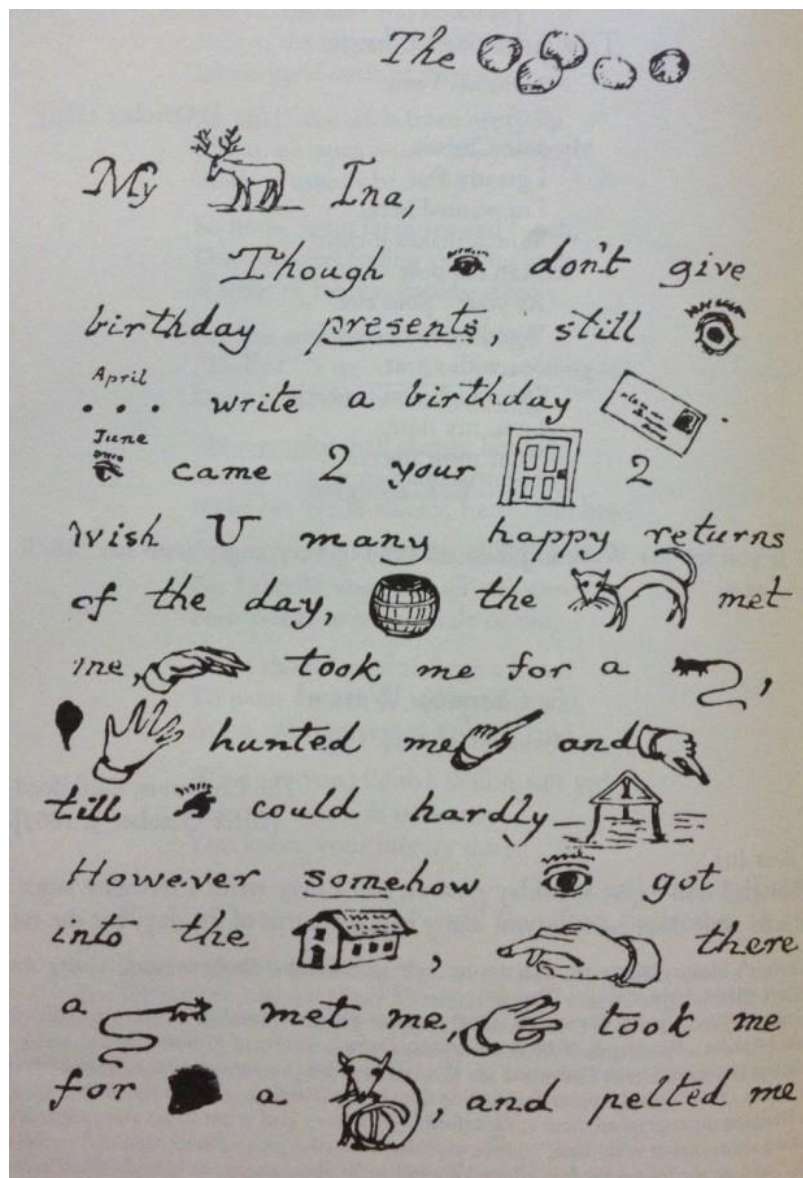
140. Catania, A. (2019). *Concept sketch for 'doll's house' staircase* [Graphite]. 21 x 29.5 cm.



141. Design for 'doll's house' staircase using AutoCAD software.

3.4.4 Re-imagining Alice's valedictory wave: Conceptualizing the peekaboo walls of a moiré animated dollhouse

Drawing us into the uncanny spaces of her dream worlds, the curious rooms of Alice's hypothetical doll's house are a collection of ideas and objects that intersect in unexpected ways in the manner of Lewis Carroll's fascination in the manipulation of nonsense text. From rebus to mirror-writing, Carroll's writing projects a whimsical charm behind the creative genius playing with all sorts of literary tricks to decipher the hidden word. This is evidenced, for example, in the challenging of linguistic conventions in the letters he wrote to the children he befriended (fig. 142). In the *Alice* texts we inevitably encounter a fondness for mathematical games, logic paradoxes, riddles, puzzles, charades, poems, jokes, songs, conundrums, magic tricks, and every variety of word play including anagrams, puns, the calligramme, and acrostic verse.



142. A rebus letter by Lewis Carroll sent to Georgina Watson.

The interpretive curiosity cabinet *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* interprets such ideas visually generating optical illusions as the viewer moves around it. Via the technique of moiré animation, the images become fluid from the interaction between translucent imagery and the viewer. This implies an unmasking of intention, of the hidden becoming visible and the visible hidden, leading to the possibility of transformation and transcendence into new realms with their treats and opportunities where the concealed becomes unconcealed, passage non-passage, and vice versa. Via

this fluctuating image, this work aims at capturing Alice's handkerchief wave - the textual wave becomes the viewer's physical movement to comprehend pictorial representation. Thus, Alice's valedictory wave is adapted via the movement of one's body to perceive the kinoptical effect of the imagery.

This research led me to conjoin my artistic practice with the fabulous world of optical illusions. To achieve desirable effects in such optical art research one must not only investigate novel techniques and media in the field of visual design, but also understand how such techniques arouse naturalistic visual stimuli. This project juxtaposes what we perceive as motionless with how we discover motion, hanging in between what we "see" and what we "saw" (Kurashima & Mischie, 2013). There is also an element of 'peekaboo,' described by Ramachandran and Hirstein (1999) in their neuroaesthetical 'laws' of art, in which – "the visual system 'struggles' for a solution and does not give up too easily" (p. 33).

Op Art create illusions to our optic nerves via contrasts such as clear - dark, vertical - horizontal, straight - oblique, thick - thin, and so on. The method adopted in this project is also encountered in literature as "Kinegram, Barrier Grid Animation, Picket-fence Animation, Magic Moving Images, or Scanimation" (Georgiou & Georgiou, 2018). Derived etymologically from *kínēsis* meaning "natural movement" (Trott, 2013, p. 25), the term "Kinegram" originated by Swiss company Landis and Gyr who adopted the moiré animation technique to the "world's most prominent security applications including banknotes and passport overlays" (Richardson & Wiltshire, 2018, p. 79). This was a reaction to the alarming concerns of central banks in the early 1980s when forgers counterfeited banknotes with the first colour copiers that had just appeared on the market. Landis and Gyr developed an optical feature

with tilting movement in the form of a silvery patch that has the potential to be hot stamped onto the paper substrate.

A moiré animation is a lenticular process consisting of an underlying stratum of stripe patterned shapes and an overlay of alternating solid and clear stripes on a sheet of clear plastic transparency. Via a process of selective interference and superimposition, this technique stimulates an illusion of movement by passing a striped acetate mask over a composite image. Thus, the cognitive illusion occurs when the masked grid of thin transparent lines passes over the base of a composite graphic illustration.

The moiré animation technique adopted in this project refers to multiple frames that can be captured in one drawing composed of sets of vertical line segments which are revealed in sequential order by a screen composed of vertical black bars with clear spaces between them. In this technique we have a play of concealment and unconcealment; when one frame is unconcealed, others (usually four to five) are concealed. The technique, as Odysseas Georgiou and Michail Georgiou (2018) explain, “is based on masking all, but one, frames of the animation at a time, using the grating layer” (p. 49). An illusory phenomenon of “apparent motion” is realized while “two or more adjacent stimuli are briefly presented, one after the other” (Sperling, 1966) due to a successive registration of frames. The illusion of motion is realized when the transparent overlay is relocated slightly from the picture. The number of image frames, the widths of transparent slits, and the size of the black bars on the scanline are the three basic elements of the kinegram. Precision is extremely important in this creative process; a small change in the moiré animated picture can strongly modify or negate the optical illusion.

Variations and adaptations of the moiré animation technique may be classed in three categories based on the viewer-apparatus interaction. In the first group we find those animation that are created via a grating translation. The grating is kept static in the second category so that the motion is transferred onto the interlaced illustration. The third category, which this project is based upon, involves no movement in the constituent parts of the two layers but relies on the viewer to create the animated illusion.

Examples of the first category include the eighteenth-century *Artificial Fireworks* in which a lined screen was required to move in juxtaposition to a perforated illustration. Recent Scanimation books, toys, and gifts such as those by Colin Ord and Rufus Butler Seder also belong to this category. Takahiro Kurashima's book-object series entitled *Poemotion* (2014/2019) also correspond to this category, being an exploration of motion in printed form as pieces of interactive art.

A wordless collection of noetic moods, Kurashima creates interactivity using the book format as an analog device, while questioning the standardized formats in contemporary art/poetry/graphic design and challenging their boundaries. The spectator may observe how the illusions of forms and figures are produced from optical film overlays that are set in motion to subsequently vanish again. The abstract graphic patterns create the illusion of motion once the viewer overlays them with the enclosed lined film. Virtual moiré emerges out of complex shapes and patterns to infer symbols and other meanings, as the artist expounds on his work *Rabbit Hole* in *Poemotion* (2014) inspired by *Alice in Wonderland* -

This is an expression of process when Alice fell down to another dimension. I wanted to suggest the existence of a hidden world or

dimension. This pattern was the entrance in my book, to suggest that the world is not only everything we can see. (Kurashima & Mischie, 2013)

A prototypical example of the second class of moiré animation is the *Ombro Cinema Toy* popular in 1920s France - “Operated by an analogue clockwork mechanism, the interlaced image (a paper roll) is moved behind a grating to produce an animation” (Georgiou & Georgiou, 2018). Thus, a strip of the composites is spooled behind the grid of transparent lines that are static in the viewing frame. One interesting example that belongs to the last category is John Leung’s *Magic Carp-pet* (2010) consisting of a rug which is viewed through a specially designed glass coffee table to perceive a moiré effect animation of carp movement.

3.4.5 Probing through the folds of Alice’s handkerchief wave: Playing symbolic games in domestic warmth and cave walls

The optical illusion in this project is engaged in altering one’s visual perception of space, disorientation, and paradoxical engagement of domestic *warmth* with an oppressive and obtrusive psychological experience. Alice, the little damsel in distress, is caged in her *withdrawing space* observing the *warmth* of the snow outside, reaching into the depths of the human unconscious and bringing them to light, giving us the expression of that dark, nightmarish world of Jung’s Shadow, and at the same time showing us how it is potentially the world of the universal human manifestation of games and toys.

In her psychic *Garden of Erring Delights* Alice is now weaned on a regular diet of dark madness from the Wonderland and Looking-Glass creatures. It is only when she meets the White Knight that her status of forming part in this malaise

becomes questioned again. As stated earlier, Alice sways in the cradling origins of Being that “holds to its truths and keeps to itself” (Heidegger, 1950/1984, p. 26).

Thus, the melancholic farewell episode with Alice waving her handkerchief denotes an anguished loss in her half-dream that turns into a kind of ‘fun and games’ with language.

During his departure, the White Knight’s gentle request for Alice to repeat an act of waving her handkerchief may well be alluding to a goodbye ritual to soothe down his pathetic idiosyncrasies. However, this very act or gesture might also be inducing Alice in returning to repetitive games of infant play associated with pleasure and excitement such as those produced via the “fort-da” game - German exclamations that Freud’s little grandson uttered “‘*fort*’ [‘gone’]” (p. 9). and “‘*da*’ [‘there’]” (p. 9) whilst playing. This child’s entry into language is marked by a realization that the absence or loss of a beloved thing can be controlled by mastering the symbolic code of language, as Freud (1920/1961) explains -

The interpretation of the game (. . .) was related to the child’s great cultural achievement - the instinctual renunciation (that is, the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction) which he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting. He compensated himself for this, as it were, by himself staging the disappearance and return of the objects within his reach. (p. 9)

This game of concealing and unconcealing may be traced back to Palaeolithic cave art. One may observe a search in optical illusions that produce movements in a freeze frame showing five stag heads in the Nave region of Lascaux cave (fig. 143). Lascaux’s curator Jean-Michel Geneste claims that - “Today, when you light the whole cave, it is very stupid because you kill the staging” (Zorich, 2014). According

to Geneste, this type of lighting (as well as that used in the evenly lit cropped photographs that we see in art books) removes the images from their context of the stories they were meant to be narrated. Geneste claims that Palaeolithic artists utilized a focused area of light as a story-telling device - “It is very important: the presence of the darkness, the spot of yellow light, and inside it one, two, three animals, no more,” Geneste says - “That’s a tool in a narrative structure” (Zorich, 2014).



143. Anonymous Lascaux artist. (Upper Palaeolithic). *Five stag heads*
[Cave painting]. Nave region, Lascaux cave.

The frieze of “swimming stags” (Ruspoli, 1986/1987, p. 143) in the Nave of Lascaux cave depict outlines reduced to heads, the subjects arranged in a single file. The five cervid heads are almost identical, but each one is positioned at a slightly different angle. Viewed one at a time with a small circle of light moving right to left,

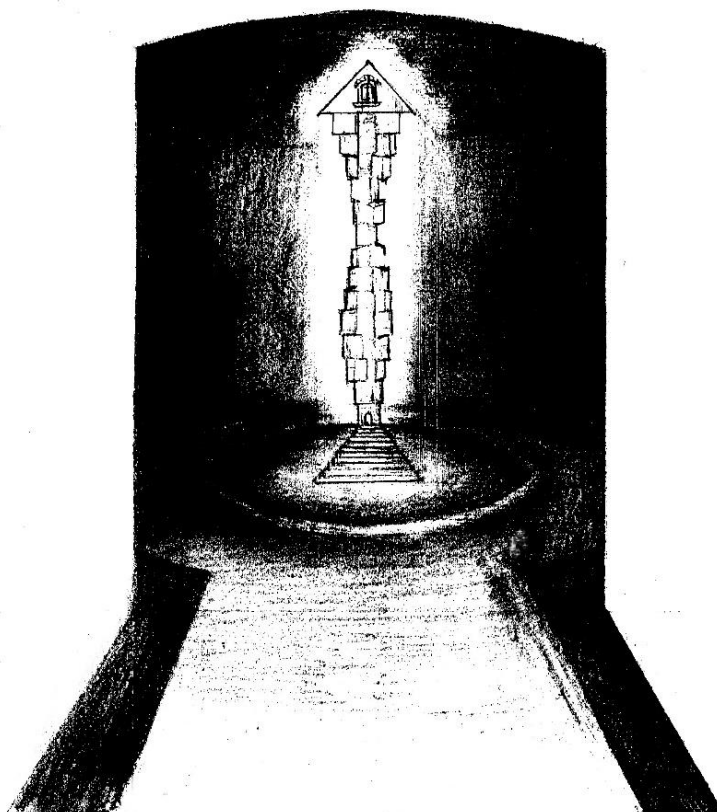
the images seem to illustrate a single deer raising and lowering its head as in scanimation or a short flipbook animation. Thus, the juxtaposition in these multiple heads resembles a single, animated beast. One may imagine the Paleolithic spectators moving their fire-lit lamp along the walls of this tunnel as they unravel a story step-by-step, using the darkness of the pitch-black interiors of the cave as a frame that surrounds the images inside a small circle of glowing firelight. The flickering effects of the flames emitted from their torches might also have been integral to the paintings' narratives in conjuring impressions of motion. In dim light, shadows become harder to distinguish from actual objects, and the soft boundaries between things disappear. Images straight ahead of us look out of focus as if they were seen in our peripheral vision. Physiologically, as Livingstone (2002) explicates, human eyes undergo a switch when we slip into darkness –

We have two kinds of photoceptors, rod and cones, both of which generate neural signals in response to light. Cones are less sensitive than rods and are used in daylight vision. Rods, which are more sensitive, are used under dim (nighttime) lighting conditions. (p. 26)

Light and dark is a recurrent dialectic in my work and this project continues to affirm it. For this purpose, *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* was proposed to be exhibited in the Meditation Room of Spazju Kreattiv in Valletta (fig. 144). The entire space was to be dimly lit by this work only.⁸⁷ For better or worse, the location had to be changed in the wake of a global pandemic. The sculpture was eventually filmed and photographed in my studio with an added feature of an outside lighted source

⁸⁷ The sculpture is corded-electric requiring an AC power socket to connect with a 3-pin plug.

filled with eerie silhouettes⁸⁸ reminiscent of the entangled vegetative world of the *Wilting Knight series*.⁸⁹



144. Proposed installation of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* in the Meditation Room of Spazju Kreattiv in Valletta, Malta.

⁸⁸ The outcome of the filming and photography of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* could be viewed in fig. 117, Appendix F, and video clip on - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UI-0ixz4iP0RSqefaaybFXRyoyHl2lGG/view?usp=sharing>

⁸⁹ The *Wilting Knight series* is discussed in chapter 3.1.3 and Appendix B.

3.4.6 Implementing the technique of moiré animation

Our brains discover figures in patterns of amazingly sparse data, if only they move coherently as in the movements and gaits natural to most animals captured on Eadweard Muybridge's camera. Straddling science and art, the British-born pioneer of early photography made his most influential images of stopping action, the 781 plates of *Animal locomotion: An electro-photographic investigation of consecutive phases of animal movements (1872-1885)* deployed photographic stilled or stop-action capturing a muscle in a state of tension, or the gait of a horse in mid-step by using gelatin dry plate process with timing technology. In *Animal Locomotion: Plate 765*, for example, we see twenty-four frames of a flying crow captured by a line of cameras set up with tripwires, each of which would trigger a picture for a split second as the crow ran past (fig. 145).

Half-Dreaming Phantomwise is a sculpture in the hybrid form of a Victorian dollhouse and a cat's scratching post in which moiré animated images bleed through its dimly lit rooms capturing the Muybridgean sense of movement. In a way, this optical illusion works much like the *tabula scalata* and *tabula stritta* in which each image may be viewed correctly from a certain angle creating the effect of the picture morphing from one image to another while walking past it. In such anamorphic paintings or turning pictures, the viewer is initially confronted by a distorted perspective caused by two images in the case of the *tabula scalata* (three in the case of the *tabula stritta*) painted on alternate sides of vertical strips. An example is the *momento mori* painting *Anamorphosis, called Mary, Queen of Scots* (1580; fig. 146) which should be looked at from left to right to reveal the human head of a young woman changing into a skull that can only be seen in their true form from a single viewpoint.

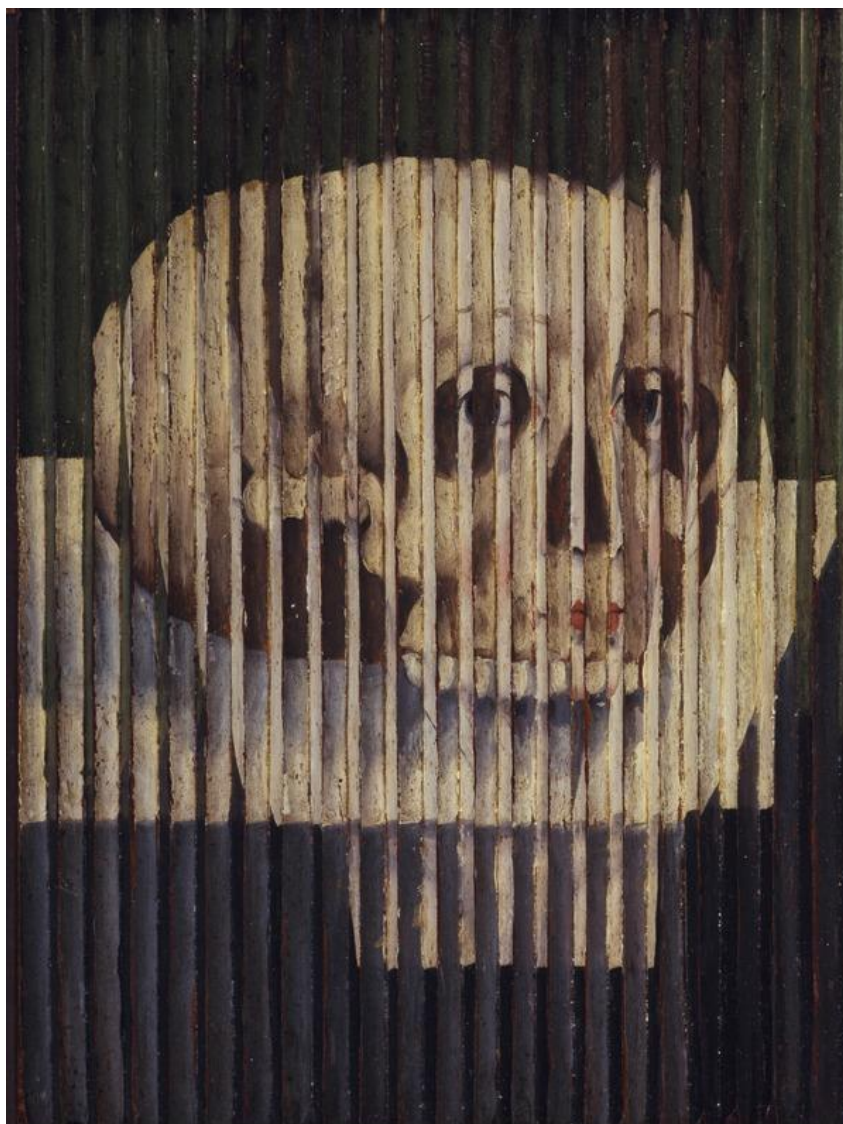


145. Muybridge, E. (1887). *Animal Locomotion: Plate Number 765. Crow in flight* [Collotype print].
National Gallery of Art, Washington (DC). 45.7 x 59.7 cm.

Since the moiré animation technique is based on the utilization of a loop using a limited amount of high-resolution frames (in my case five), a frequent visual evaluation of a large number of tests was necessary to ensure the legibility and flow of the animation. Creating design options for the animated birds and the actual slicing and recomposing of frames presents a laborious and time-consuming process. Any variation in the width of the grating slit can hinder the animation effect.

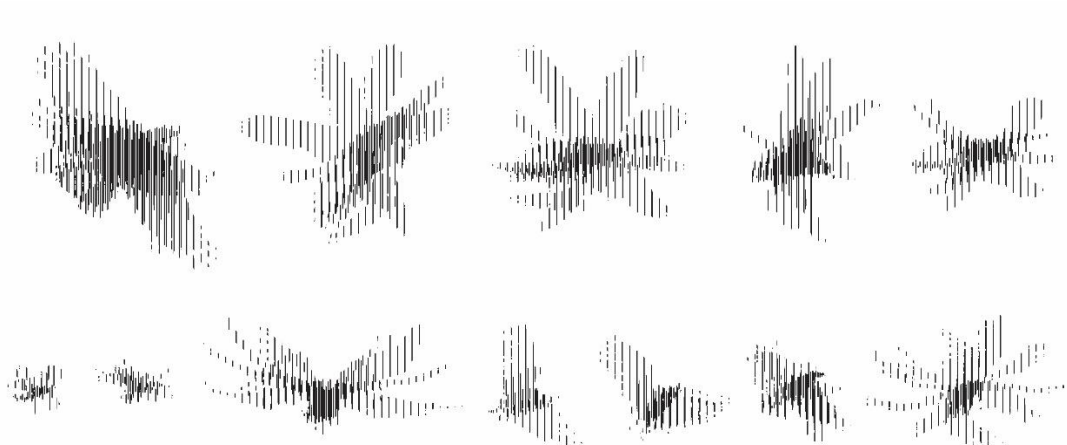
Using a graphics editor with layer support (Adobe Photoshop), the barrier grid animation was made by reducing the subject in each ‘frame’ of the intended loop into a black silhouette, and then replace the black infill with a hatching of just a

few vertical lines. The hatched silhouettes are then combined into a composite image. As the striped mask passes over it, only one frame at a time is revealed.

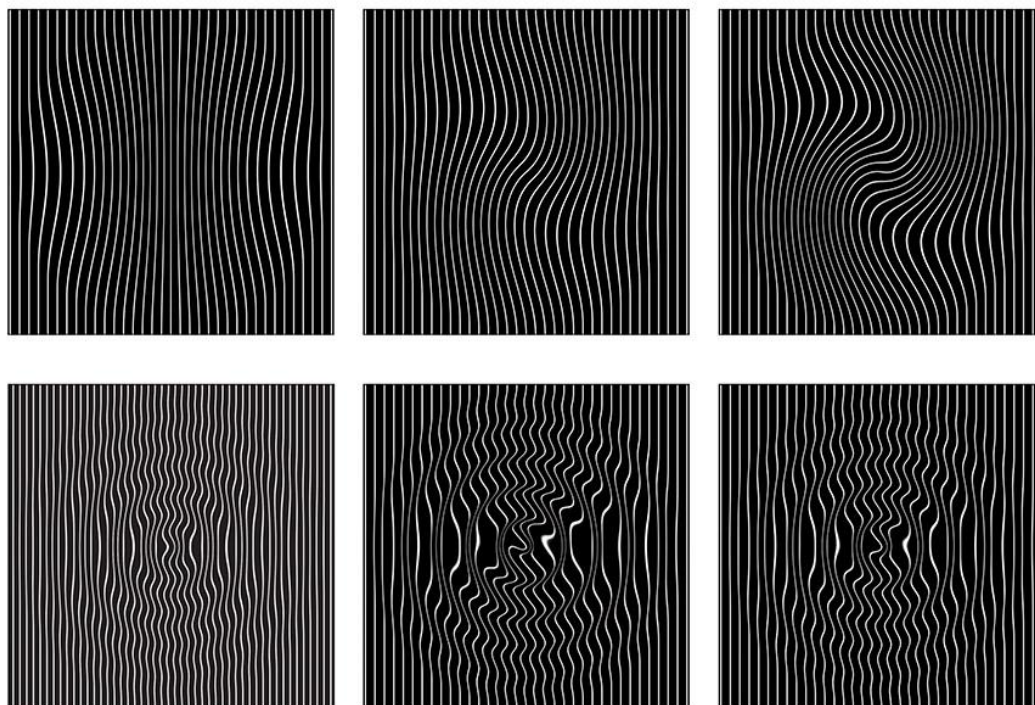


146. Anonymous sixteenth-century artist. (1580). *Anamorphosis, called Mary, Queen of Scots* [Oil on panel]. Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh. 33 x 24.8 cm.

The moiré animated walls of the sculpture (including 32 cubes/rooms and the roof) were variations of flying crows (fig. 149) and abstract optical illusions (fig. 148). The technique applied is described as follows - The width of the silhouette's hatched lines was deduced according to the number of animation frames (equivalent to the width of the clear lines in the mask). A screen of evenly spaced, black vertical bars with clear windows between them was produced in Photoshop. The bars were four times the width of the spaces between them, allowing for five frames of animation. A sequence of five frames were drawn, of a movement that starts and ends on the same image. Successive figures of a crow in flight are carefully placed in the right position within every frame, so that successive frames are 'in register.' Next, each dark silhouette was reduced to a hatched figure (fig. 147). The number of hatched lines may vary as the movement and size of the crow varies between frames. Nevertheless, the spacing and thickness of the hatching is critical and must match exactly those of the transparent stripes in the mask.

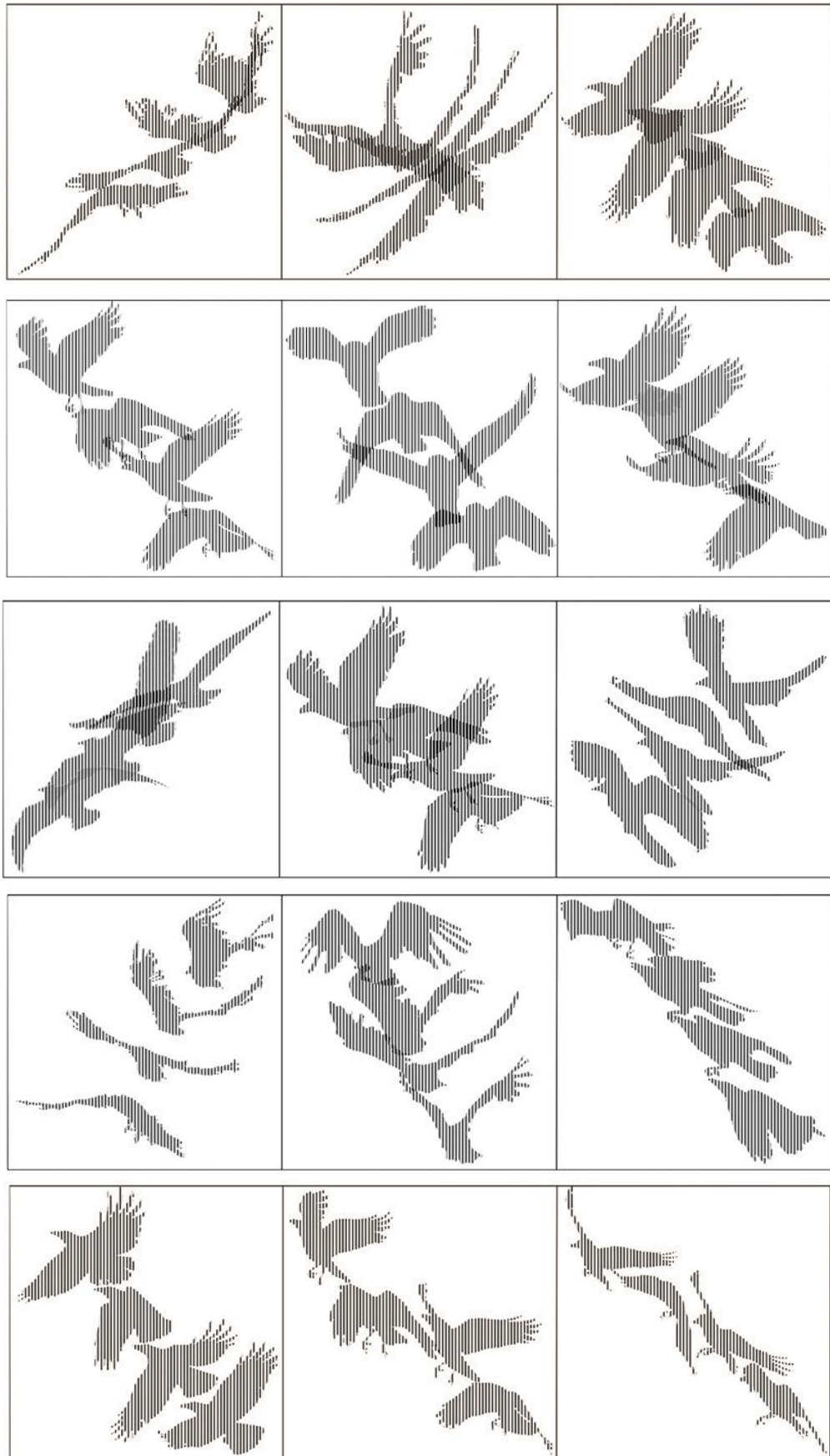


147. Hatched variations of flying crows applying a sequence of five frames in moiré animation.

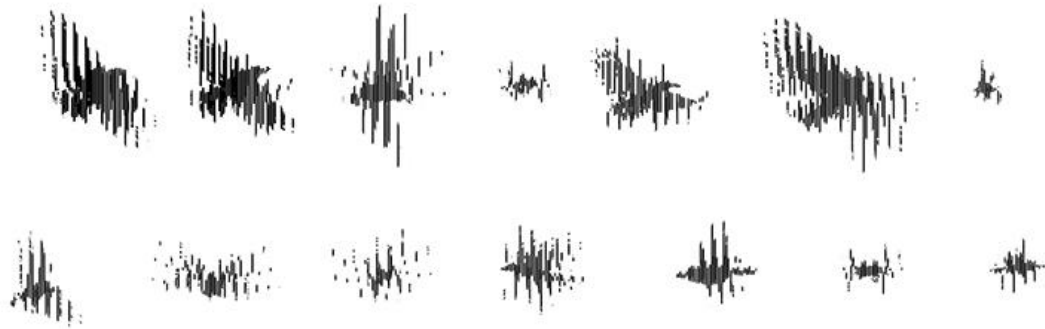


148. Hatched variations of abstract optical illusions applying a sequence of five frames in moiré animation.

One might add that a further attempt was made to change the ‘pitched roof’ hatched crow figures into a sequence of seven frames (fig. 150) with the preconceived notion that the amount of frames determines how fine the movement of the moiré animation will be. However, although adding more frames resulted in a smoother movement on screen and print, the animated effect was lost in the space of the actual sculpture.



149. Hatched variations of flying crows applying a sequence of four frames in moiré animation.



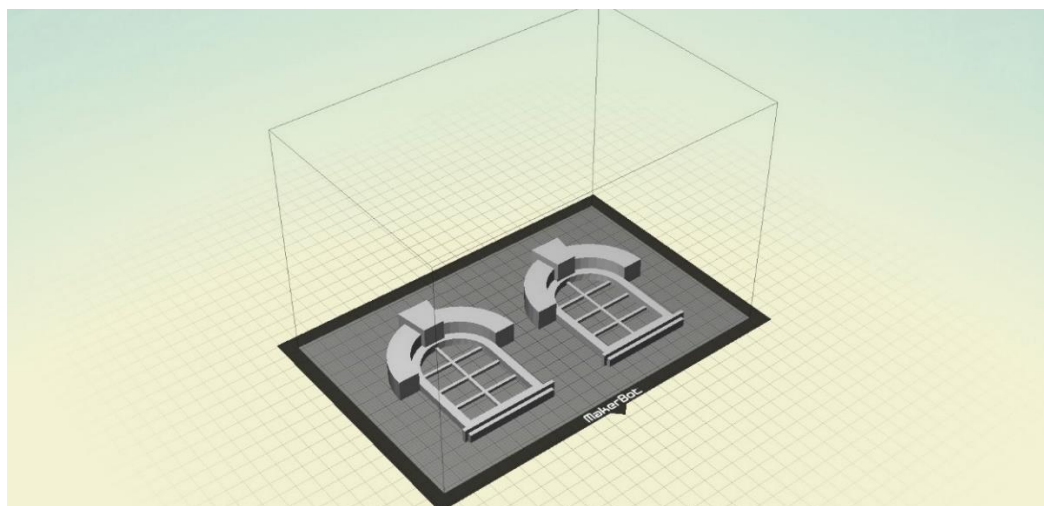
150. Hatched variations of flying crows applying a sequence of seven frames in moiré animation.

3.4.7 Erring in transparent material and 3D printing

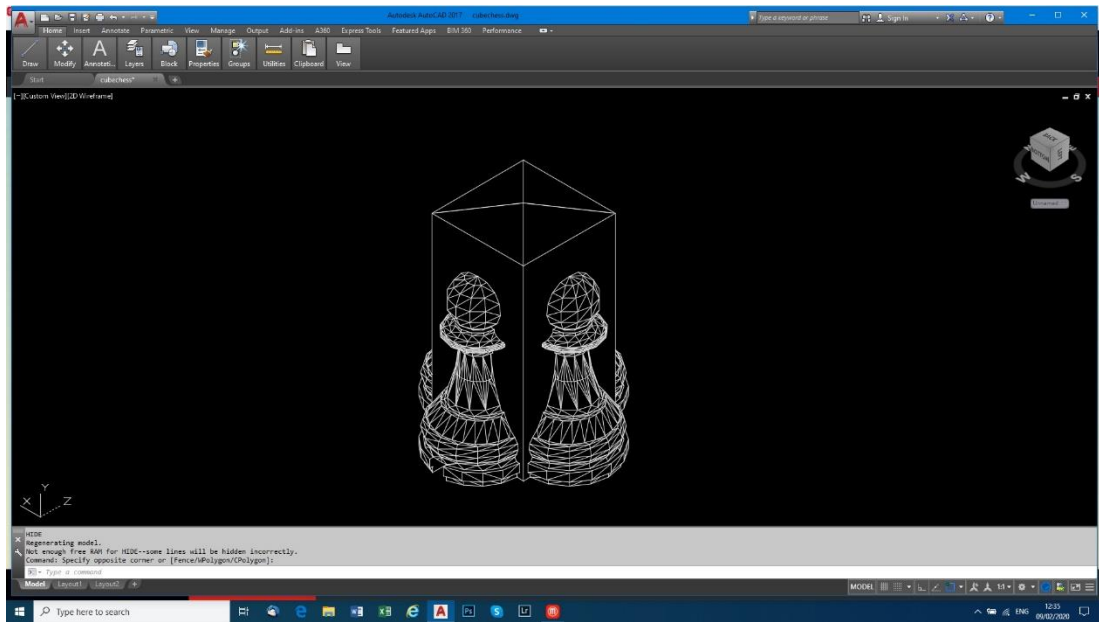
Most materials used in *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* are transparent materials. The rooms and pitched roof of the ‘doll’s house’ are made from poly(methyl methacrylate) abbreviated as PMMA, also known as acrylic, acrylic glass, or plexiglass. This transparent thermoplastic homopolymer is a lightweight and shatter-resistant alternative to glass. Spring clips and adhesives were used to join these acrylic boxes with the mirror cylinder (made with self-adhesive mirror vinyl sheets on a PVC pipe of 110mm in outside diameter) from which all the electrical wiring passed through.

Creating this double-helixed roomed/spiral staircased doll’s house involved avian imagery that was made to appear like fantastic luminous shapes, floating inexplicably in the air. These optical methods were controlled by light displayed through the transparency of PMMA and applied films of moiré animations. When

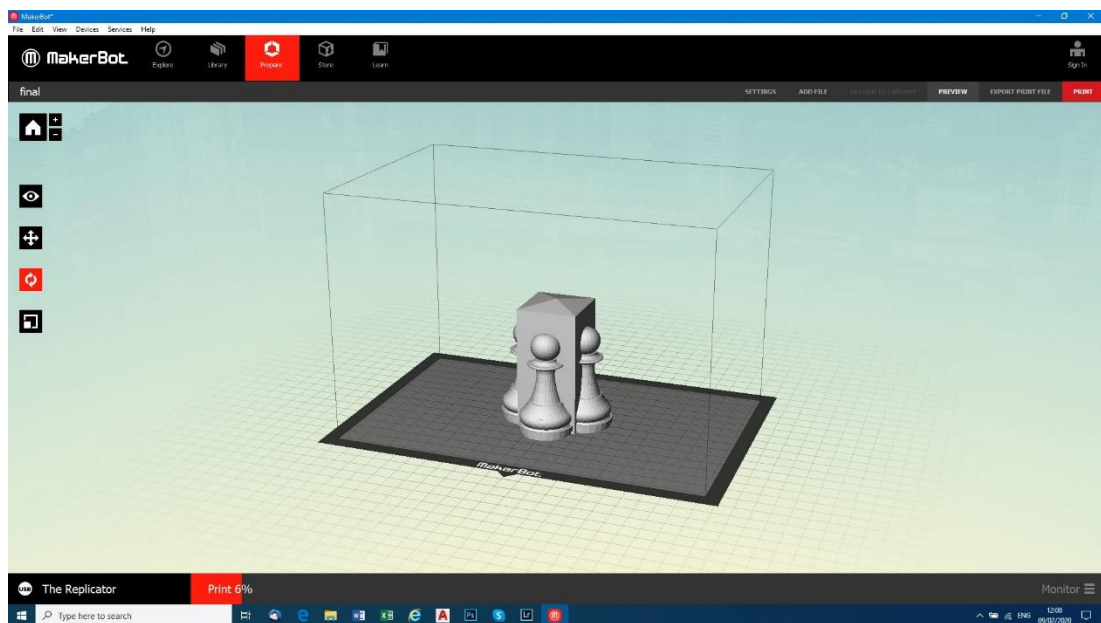
first testing these moiré animations, Dr. Ing. Emmanuel Francalanza brought to my attention lighting issues that hindered their ideal effectivity. The brightness of the bulbs used was too high for the optical illusion to work and dimmers or diffusers were suggested. A diffuser was henceforth created to connect with the LED light fixtures. This device was developed into a sculptural element within itself representing Alice as a pawn (see figs. 152 - 153). This ‘doll’s house’ bulb diffuser was made via 3D printing technology using transparent polylactic acid or polylactide (PLA). This material is a thermoplastic aliphatic polyester obtained via renewable resources such as sugar cane or corn starch. PLA, which is an amorphous polymer with intermediate mechanical properties, was also used to construct the windows of the project (fig. 151).



151. Layout of ‘doll’s house’ windows using 3D printer software.



152. Design for 'doll's house' bulb diffuser using AutoCAD software.



153. Layout of 'doll's house' bulb diffuser using 3D printer software.

Similar to glass, PLA and PMMA have transparency and translucent properties - light may penetrate through these materials without destroying it, albeit their refractive index differs from that of glass. Fierro (2003) annotates that - “[h]overing between material and immaterial, glass is quintessentially an open medium, sustaining often paradigmatic shifts in structure and type, material and

metaphor” (p. x). Having reflective capacity, this “open medium” absorbs philosophical as well as psychoanalytical questions instigated by its *extimate* properties, combining visual links between the interior and exterior. These mutable substrates allow for both the revelation of surreptitious light phenomena and transmission of light, as Carpenter (2006) explains –

We can understand that there are (. . .) two levels of light as ‘information’ that tells us about our world. There is the conscious observation that becomes the framework for our memory and then there is unacknowledged visual information that becomes the substance of our dreams. In this view of light, occupying our conscious and unconscious selves, glass can clarify the most subtle of phenomena, making visible the subconscious act of perception and cognition, and suggesting that beyond interpreting the world, we have access to our memories and dreams. (p. 1)

Modernity was fascinated with the idea of transparency with the glass building being the exemplary vehicle of redemption and social transformation. Working with such symbolic vocabulary in mind, Eisenstein’s *Glass House* seems to have been an architecturally inspired project working with the idealistic and individualistic vision of building as “a psychological prison in glass” (Robertson, 2008). As Goodwin (1993) explains - “[w]ith the extensive use of glass in Bauhaus architecture and design in mind, Eisenstein imagined for *The Glass House* a completely transparent apartment building in an American city as his setting. Only doors would remain solid, as a token of conventional privacy” (p. 122). The *Glass House* was intended as a polemical response not only to Bruno Taut’s *Glass Pavilion*

(1914) and Mies van der Rohe's *Friedrichstraße Skyscraper Project* (1921), but also to Frank Lloyd Wright's *Glass Tower Project* (1927).

According to Taut, a glass building would establish sensory qualities and relationships between people and the universe, modifying their visual perception and habits. In his journal *Frühlicht* he writes ecstatically in January 1920 - "Long live our realm of non-violence! Long live the transparent, the clear! [Long live purity!] Long live the crystal. And long and ever longer live the fluid, graceful, angular, brilliant, sparkling, light — eternal building, long may it live!" (Neumeier, 1987, p. 54). The Constructivists, as Kaji-O'Grady and Smith (2019) write, "thought a transparent building would destroy the distinction between the private and the public and that the application of glass in modern architecture would herald a new culture in which the shadows of the past would vanish and secrecy in the present would be impossible" (p. 75). Walter Benjamin (1929/2005) extolls the revolutionary attributes of transparent architecture in his essay *Surrealism* -

(In Moscow I lived in a hotel, in which almost all the rooms were occupied by Tibetan Lamas who had come to Moscow for a congress of Buddhist churches. I was struck by the number of doors in the corridors which were always left ajar. What had at first seemed accidental began to disturb me. I found out that in these rooms lived members of a sect who had sworn never to occupy closed rooms. The shock I had then must be felt by the reader of *Nadja*.) To live in a glass house is a revolutionary virtue par excellence. It is also an intoxication, a moral exhibitionism, that we badly need. (p. 209)



154. Cornell, J. (ca. 1932). *Untitled (Glass Bell)* [Wood, glass, paint, printed paper, plaster and metal].

Christies, New York. 40 x 21.9 x 21.9 cm.

Due to its diaphanous properties, glass symbolizes the elimination of contagion whilst maximizing the possibilities of transcendent vision. Consider, for example, Joseph Cornell's formal device of the bell-jar (fig. 154) derivative from the craft-making practices of Victorian bourgeois ladies that transformed relics of nature under glass. A popular conceit for displaying clocks, model ships, taxidermy birds, as well as other objects, the bell jar as *objet trouvé*, here, becomes a looking glass into the blossoming vocabulary of its maker. These *assemblages*, as Leppanen-Guerra (2017) writes, were made in the belief that the child "must be sequestered from contamination by the adult world" (p. 97) -

Ultimately, for Cornell, the glass bell functions not so much as a feminine symbol of vanity and display, so much as an androgynous

one of protection and preservation. It is meant to maintain the child's innocence, while allowing clarity of vision. (p. 98)

In contrast to stone, deception, and veiling, transparent materials transmit much of the light that falls on them and reflect little of it, like crystal, water, and nakedness. Jean-Jacques Rousseau imagined French post-revolutionary society as one without misunderstandings or injustice using – “the image of the glass heart, “transparent as a crystal” to conjure a vision of a society where there are no secrets between citizens, or citizens and the state” (Kaji-O’Grady & Smith, 2019, p. 75). Further ubiquitous metaphors of light in the West may in large measure go back to the biblical narrative. In the origins of primeval history, light is the first created thing – “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness” (Gen 1:3-4, KJV). At the end, in the apocalypse of John, the light of God obliterates all darkness and the night is no more – “And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev 22:5, KJV).

The New Testament is steeped in the imagery of the Old Testament, particularly St John’s Gospel, where Christ is presented as the *Logos*, the creative principle in the universe – “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1, KJV). The metaphor of light as a metaphysical and transformatory agent clearly blossomed in the medieval stained glass of High Gothic architecture. For abbot Suger, the coloured glass in his cathedral of St. Denis possessed the ability to -

transform that which is material to that which is immaterial (. . .).

Then it seems to me that I see myself dwelling, as it were, in some

strange region of the universe which neither exists entirely in the slime of the earth nor entirely in the purity of Heaven; and that, by the grace of God, I can be transported from this inferior to that higher world. (Cowen, 2005, p. 27)



155. McGill, D, & Cem Mengüç, M. (2009-10). *Muqaddimah*. [Graphite on paper mounted on canvas]. Derek Eller Gallery, New York. 203.2 x 630 cm.

The leitmotif of divine illumination has historically served to connect religious and philosophical thought (such as those in Plato and Descartes), so that even in a philosophical context, the use of ‘light’ and ‘transparency’ metaphors have retained religious overtones. In a large graphite on paper hanging circular drawing

Muqaddimah (2009–10) made by Dominic McGill with the assistance of Murat Cem Mengüç (fig. 155), we find an evocation of contemporary uncertainty, everything is equally suspect with no absolutes. Teeming with inscriptions and figures (including an updated version of the biblical false idol Moloch), this work “seems to illustrate and satirise the current tensions between the Islamic world and the West” (Lucie-Smith, 2018).

The paradoxical contemplation on the symbolism of transparency in *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* is based on an Unamuno-esque anagogy of a mystical interpretation in Quixotism. This spiritual existence is one vital facet in the “melancholy farewell” moment where the adult Alice still dwells. Dwelling as both noun and verb – the space/place and the action of lingering – conflate with both Looking-Glass space/place and the White Knight’s anagogical method of ascension. In her *katabasis*, Alice retains the heroic status of an adventurer in a weird land retaining her dignity and sanity in the underground nonsense world. It is the melancholy of her parting shot with the White Knight that this *katabasis* conflates with the anagoge. This associative dimension could be extended into a sixteenth century perception in which, as Michel Foucault (1961/2004) in *Madness and Civilization* quotes from Francois Boissier de Sauvages’s *Nosologie methodique* (1772), those who were deprived of reason were called “vessels of glass” (p. 111). Surrounded by pitch-darkness, the dimly lit rooms in this interpretive curiosity cabinet are a collection of moiré animations that intersect in its reversal structure implying the potential for contradictory meaning at every turn.

3.4.8 Alice's doll's house or Kitty's scratching post?

Half-Dreaming Phantomwise is a hybrid sculpture combining both a Victorian doll's house and a contemporary cat's scratching post. The latter domestic item (fig. 156) merges into the project's phantasms via Alice's dreamworld rather than the Victorians' obsession to remember their domesticated feline dead with odd taxidermied memorabilia.⁹⁰



156. Catbox (2020). *Scratching post* [Wood, sisal rope, teaser toy]. 104 x 50 x 50cm.

⁹⁰ Collinson (2017) writes that – “[t]owards the end of the 19th century, cats began to be kept more widely as family pets and companions, particularly amongst the fashionable middle classes.” The taxidermied body of a cat named Oliver once owned by a family in Charlton and now situated in the Museum of London is an example of this growing trend in pet-keeping. Charles Dickens was a most notable pet-lover having several cats, which he held dear. When one of his most beloved cats, Bob, died in 1862, the author's sister-in-law, Georgina Hogarth had the cat's paw taxidermied and turned into a letter-opener. She “had the strange feline and ivory piece engraved ‘C. D. In Memory of Bob. 1862’ and gave it to Dickens as a gift, to remind him of the love of his cat. He kept it in the library at Gad's Hill, so that it was at his side as he wrote” (Oldfield, 2013, p. 73).

The ‘pillar column’ and bottom plate of the ‘doll’s house’ sculpture *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* serves also as a scratching trunk, wrapped in sturdy sisal rope⁹¹, allowing *Alice* to whet its claws. It is a project that evokes our animal heritage in Alice as a pawn, where children have not yet learned to estrange themselves from the rest of the animal kingdom and, at the same time, pointing towards *animalséance*.

In front of her mirror, Alice digs her way into the mausoleum of prehistory by way of animality, where the archaic animal assumes a feline form. This project voyages back to what Freud (1918/1981) resonantly calls “the prehistoric period of childhood” (p. 18). This understanding of human development implies that childhood may be comprehended as consonant with early human history and even with human prehistory. Constructed within a Darwinian framework, this period precedes that where the female is rigidly distinguished from the male, or the human from the animal. It is a belief that traces of humanity’s animal origins were still embedded in the individual’s mental and physical structures -

A child can see no difference between his own nature and that of animals. He is not astonished at animals thinking and talking in fairy-tales; he will transfer an emotion of fear which he feels for his human father onto a dog or a horse, without intending any derogation of his father by it. Not until he is grown up does he become so far estranged from animals as to use their names in vilification of human beings (p. 140).

⁹¹ For an engaging experience of the overall structure and material used in the sculpture entitled *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* please follow this link - <https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/alice-2-e153dd62e7004f6191ebd8dcc4bcfb75>. Still images and other information about this 3D model could be viewed in Appendix I.

Alice's dreamworld also finds connections in Freud's use of the recapitulation theory that combines the mimetic development of the individual to the holistic development of the species. Freud (1900/2010) adds a very specific notion of recapitulation to the 1919 edition of *Interpretation of Dreams* where he writes –

dreaming is on the whole an example of regression to the dreamer's earliest condition, a revival of his childhood, of the instinctual impulses which dominated it and of the methods of expression which were then available to him. Behind this childhood of the individual we are promised a picture of a phylogenetic childhood - a picture of the development of the human race, of which the individual's development is in fact an abbreviated recapitulation influenced by the chance circumstances of life. (p. 550)

This discourse echoes Nietzsche (trans. 1996) when writing that “in dreams we all resemble [the] savage; (. . .) we repeat once again the curriculum of earlier mankind” (p. 17). Like Alice, the savage confuses knowledge with illusion, smuggling an excess of tropical, barbaric heat into the cooler, more temperate atmosphere of civilization. This mythology, which like any mythology makes “reality” out of “images,” is a product of “forgetfulness” (p. 17) composed by the Carrollian physician of culture who does not distinguish between what exists actually in “reality” (p. 17) and what exists potentially in “images” (p. 17), confusing all into an enrichment what was given to sensation with an excess given by imagination. As Bracken (2007) explains – “[w]hat fuels this art, furthermore, is an excess of metaphor, the capacity to discover “similarities” between things that are not manifestly “the same”” (p. 69).

A “phantom” is defined by Bracken (2007) as “a sign that stands for the body when the body cannot make itself present” (p. 71). When the “primordial” Alice encounters the spirit world in her dreams, she does not dismiss it as the false image of the waking world. Dreams are as real for her as the objects she experiences in daylight hours. In her heroic feat, she endows the products of fantasy with life and motion, for when she dreams, she makes contact “phantomwise” with a “second” real world. As Nietzsche (trans. 1996) chronicles - the ancient concludes that “[t]he dead live on, for they appear to the living in dreams” (p. 14).

CONCLUSION

I have tried to present this academic work as clearly and effectively as possible though, admittedly, the compaction of complex metaphors and metonyms that lie within the *Alice* texts requires open spaces for enigmatic interpretation. Though contextualized, the very fragmentary nature of the visual artistic projects presented in this thesis attest to a Carrollian heteroglossia of Babel-like consternation that calls everything back into question. Analogous in configuration to both a constellation and meteor shower, the paradoxical ineffable nature of the wonder-full *Alice* undersong is infinitely mysterious. In the company of Alice, we can never quite be curious enough for she “allowed wonder to be described without its being explained away” (Douglas-Fairhurst, 2015, p. 290). That curiosity is a match to the heart but also the opening of a Pandora’s box!

This ongoing project-led research is a Quixotic quest to (re)present Alice’s access to a Montesinos-like cave, allowing me both the need for an order that enables a theoretical interpretation of the *Alice* world, and a feeling of chaos due to the swarming mass of elements composing it up. The unbound imagination of such an abyss is transmitted via a conglomeration of the foreseen with the unforeseen in a shifting crossroad where concealing becomes unconcealing, the hidden unhidden, folding unfolding, death birth, black white, renunciation annunciation. This dissertation explores the mysteries of the creative process through Alice’s experience of the “melancholy farewell” moment as a breakthrough of ideas derived from some depth below the level of awareness. The little pilgrim shows us that much of the creative process depends on obtaining access to this normally inaccessible material, dredging it up from the unconscious to the conscious where it can find expression.

The architect Walter Gropius (1937/1962), founder of the Bauhaus, recognized the importance of this source of powerful new ideas, recommending that – “[t]he initial task of a design teacher should be to free the student from his intellectual frustration by encouraging him to trust his own subconscious reactions, and to try to restore the unprejudiced receptivity of his childhood” (p. 33). The Carrollian physician of culture seems not only to infuse his “unprejudiced receptivity” with qualities where “[n]othing ‘means’; everything just ‘is’” (Webb, 2009, p. 65), but also with a quasi-religious revelation - as though what is to be revealed has a universal validity; or a window has been opened into ultimate reality. Such realization of form in the mysterious act of creating and aesthetic appeal is a coming to a revealing understanding in which humanity’s immutable essence comes from that invisible realm that offers an *imago* of eternal reality, that from which “dreams are made on.”

The *Alice* meta-narrative is a paradoxical event certainly wrestling with a tragedy in which lights and blinding flashes explode, so much so that any analysis overflows the specifics of whatever description or the limits of inventory. The powerful metaleptic conundrums found within the text make it very hard to be pigeonholed as a specific literary genre. Perhaps Carroll (1871/2015b) is right in calling it a “fairy-tale” (p. 157)! The supernatural beings that spirit Alice away surely attest to this designation. Moreover, this magnum opus forms part of humanity’s narrative canon which articulates what it is like to live in a human skin, addressing itself to the gamut of dramatic emotion - love, desire, hate, belief, passion, repentance, ambition, avarice, and all other human conflicts. He encompasses the entire theatre of what it means to be a human and how to live in the world without breaking the amusement of the cherished children’s fairy-tale.

The “melancholy farewell” moment is a story about the humanity of a girl and her hero and a story about the hero’s mechanical inventions. The thematic relevance of his weird objects could be understood from a metonymic perspective as that which lacks organicity, albeit, concurrently the *raison d’être* of the nonsense narrative could be understood as metaphorically filled with a pathos of change and renewal. Perhaps, the metonymic/metaphoric rationale of the story’s (in)organic structures is to assert the common humanity of us all, as the gallant knight emphatically tells Alice - “You did not cry as much as I expected.” The blundering fool realizes humanity in acknowledging the existence of tears. Alice evokes in this respect King Lear whose determined reluctance to cry indicates that he is still crawling up the calvary of his humanization. What perhaps unites the narrative, albeit its metonymic displacements, is the triumphant humanization of the dream and the fact that as we read the story, feel that we are, after all, not in a dream company but in human company.

Schor (2013), who refers to the *Alice* texts as realist novels, elucidates on how to “see the fairy tale at the heart of the novel – and to see that for the curious heroine, as she walks into the haunted chamber, the line between what is matter-of-fact real and what is fantastically dreadful is a very thin line indeed” (p. 71). I remember my little daughter Nina watching Walt Disney’s *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) for the first time, frightened and shocked by this animated adaptation. She glimpsed at the coeval world of Alice - “a world of familiar things “dreadfully out of place” and equally of dreadful things making themselves quite at home” (Schor, 2013, p. 78).⁹²

⁹² Tim Burton describes the *Alice* books as “drugs for children” and *Wonderland* as a place where “everything is slightly off, even the good people” (Woolf, 2010).

Bettelheim (1976/77) explains how the fairy-tale dynamic is “presented in a simple, homely way” (p. 26) - a seemingly familiar or natural circumstance that becomes denatured. The *Alice* fairy-tale truly accomplishes what Stephen King (1993) discerns as a crucial trait in horror fiction - it places “a cold touch in the midst of the familiar” (p. 299). What makes the *Alice* dream so terrifying is that they are so eerily like our world, so different and yet so immediately recognizable, what Dickens (1853) describes at the end of his preface to *Bleak House* as “the romantic side of familiar things” (p. x) or, put differently, the principle that the uncanny begins at home.⁹³

Part of Carroll’s complex achievement in his fairy-tale parable is to deprive the reader of one’s sense of what ‘safe ground’ feels like or looks like, and yet at the same time, offer a Quixotic utopian space of faith, hope and continuity! Another crucial aspect is that Alice abides in *child-time* - one that gives us possibilities to re-live one’s childhood. Virginia Woolf (1947/1948) voices what has now become a standard interpretation of Carroll’s literary magic - his are “the only books in which we become children” (p. 83). These fairy-tales foster a crossover literature whereby readers of all ages are encouraged to ‘inhabit’ alternative worlds with outsize characters and their own (il)logic, where rules and structure are replaced with the absurd – “it is literature that addresses both an implied child reader and an implied adult reader at the same time, and not the one at the expense of the other” (Ommundsen, 2015, p. 72).

Child-time is not quantifiable as that of adult-time, it is not engrossed with regulation, organization, and production. In its fluidity, irrationality, and infinity, this

⁹³ The nonsensical vastness of the dream spaces in which Alice roams is that of the uncanny described by Freud (1919/2004) as “that class of the terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once very familiar” (p. 76).

curious kind of temporality seems to find affinities with that of dreams. It stands against a foundational principle of the social order - that humans are persons and the remaining animals, vegetables, minerals, elementary/molecular sequences are things. In her *child-time*, Alice epitomizes the figures of a “female Odysseus” (Dedebas, 2011, p. 58) and a “female Quixote” defined by Hardack (2000) as “both victim and rebel, and one who destabilizes language and the definition of the human” (p. 221). She is a curious spectral *flâneur* wandering in nonsense realms in search of her double, the object that brings her to life in a dream we half-haunt with her.

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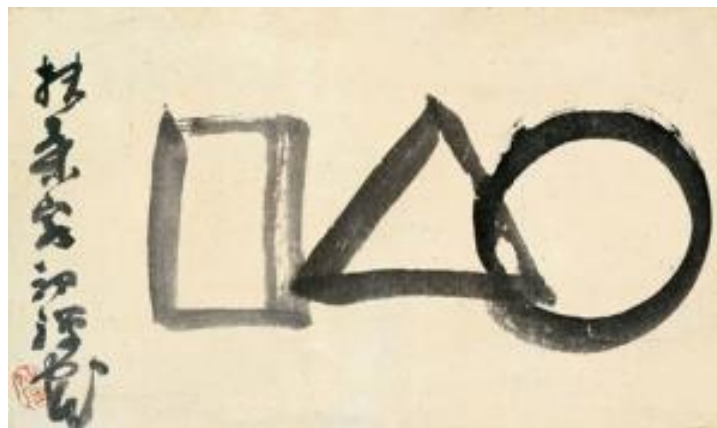
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Appendices

Appendix A - Serendipity and the unconscious gesture in painting

In the visual arts, the creative method of “blindness” may be primarily associated with extemporized aesthetics such as chance, improvisation, accident and the blemish. For many such techniques immediately call to mind, in the West, the early experiments toward non-representational painting by Wassily Kandinsky (1911/1946), who claimed improvisation as a kind of artistic inspiration defining it as - “[i]ntuitive, for the greater part spontaneous expressions of incidents of an inner character, or impressions of the “inner nature”” (p. 98). Rather than adopting a constant process of correction, the unarticulated process of improvisation offers an *as-of-yet unseen* in the incorporation of random effects into works of art. Visceral art chooses the unconscious gesture, and on a similar ideological schema, Lacan (1981/1993) construes that - “the unconscious is (. . .) the discourse of the Other” (p. 112). The poet and founder of Surrealism, André Breton (1924/1972) writes - “[i]t is true of Surrealist images as it is of opium-induced ones, that man does not evoke them; rather they come to him spontaneously, despotically” (p. 36).



157. Sengai (ca.1819 - 1828). *Circle, Triangle, Square* [Ink].

Idemitsu Museum of Arts, Tokyo. 28.4 x 48.1 cm.

Zenga masterpieces predate the improvisatory methodology and highly gestural techniques of twentieth century art by more than two centuries. In the ink painting *Circle, Triangle, and Square* (ca.1819 - 1828) by the Japanese Zen monk Sengai Gibon (1750–1837), the forms in which the hues progress from lightness to darkness, overlap to suggest interconnections between these fundamental shapes. In this ink painting, as Manghani (2010) notes – “rather than a single consistency of black or gray, the ink tones fluctuate continuously, a difficult technical achievement in this medium” (p. 37). D.T. Suzuki (1971/1999) also sees the embodiment of “the universe” (p. 36), interpreting Sengai’s three basic forms as geometries of formlessness and infinity, underscoring his own view of emptiness as the essence of Zen enlightenment –

The circle represents the infinite, and the infinite is at the basis of all beings. But the infinite in itself is formless. We humans endowed with senses and intellect demand tangible forms. Hence a triangle. The triangle is the beginning of all forms. Out of it first comes the square. A square is the triangle doubled. This doubling process goes on infinitely and we have the multitudinosity of things, which the Chinese calls ‘the ten thousand things,’ that is, the universe. (p. 36)

Movements such as *Tachisme*, *Art Informel*, *Action Painting*, *Abstract Expressionism*, *COBRA*, and *the Gutai Group* are all characterized by spontaneous brushwork, limiting the thought process that arrests the flow of sensations. One finds antecedent approaches to this improvisatory approach in myriads of examples throughout the history of art - the preparatory and finished works of the Renaissance, the Dutch Golden Age, the Baroque, and the Romantics exemplified by artists such as Leonardo, Titian, Rembrandt, Rubens, Poussin, and Lorrain, to mention a few.



158. Turner, J. M. W. (ca. 1815 - 1819). *An Italianate Terrace or Bridge with a Statue*
 [Pencil and watercolour on off-white wove paper]. Tate, London. 23.2 x 31.5 cm.

In the nineteenth century, Joseph Mallord William Turner and John Constable showed dexterity in expressing the aleatory in pigment on paint. For example, Turner's unfinished drawing *An Italianate Terrace or Bridge with a Statue* (ca. 1815 - 19), made with watercolour washes, stains, and pencil marks, shows an imaginary scene of a garden with a balustrade with silhouetted trees and distant classical buildings or ruins reminiscent of Claude Lorrain's works. Victor Hugo painted with random splashes of ink and colour to be later developed into recognizable compositions. Referred by the artist himself as "vagaries of the unknowing hand" (Vine, 1999), these works are characterized by a spontaneous approach and receptiveness to the myriad possibilities of materials and medium. In a letter addressed to Charles Baudelaire, April 29, 1860, Hugo writes -

I'm very happy and very proud that you should choose to think kindly of what I call my pen-and-ink drawings. I've ended up mixing in pencil, charcoal, sepia, coal dust, soot and all sorts of bizarre concoctions which manage to convey more or less what I have in view, and above all in mind. It keeps me amused between two verses.

(Vine, 1999)



159. Hugo, V. (ca. 1875). *Taches (Stains)* [Black and gray-blue ink and wash on paper]. 44.3 × 55 cm.
Paris: Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Hugo often relinquished his drawings to what he calls the *surnaturel* by soaking the paper, permitting ink, coffee, or tea to stain into impromptu shapes. He also adds to the complexity of his experimental images with the use of collage and stencil, and by making impressions of various objects such as leaves, lace, or even his own fingertips. Hugo's enigmatic ink and wash compositions vacillate between

the depiction of landscapes and architecture from eerie representations of castles and ruins to the rendering of abstract ethereal forms and taches (stains). His process is described by his son, Charles –

Once paper, pen, and inkwell have been brought to the table, [he] sits down and - without making a preliminary sketch, without any apparent preconception - sets about drawing with an extraordinarily sure hand: not the landscape as a whole, but any old detail. He will begin his forest with the branch of a tree, his town with a gable, his gable with a weathervane, and little by little, the entire composition will emerge from the blank paper with the precision and clarity of a photographic negative subjected to the chemical preparation that brings out the picture. That done, the draftsman will ask for a cup and will finish off his landscape with a light shower of black coffee. The result is an unexpected and powerful drawing that is often strange, always personal, and recalls the etchings of Rembrandt and Piranesi. (Piepenbring, 2015)

These experimental strategies were further taken up in the early twentieth century by the Dadaist and Surrealist image-makers who saw in collage the freedom to permit nature - or matter - take its course with random connections informing the production of a final object. Max Ernst also incorporated rubbings from wood, what he called *frottage*, into his compositions. Inspired and justified by Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic research at the turn of the century, improvisation as a working method was also adopted and subsequently exploited as "[p]sychic automatism" (Breton, 1924/1972, p. 26). André Breton and Philippe Soupault concurrently instigated the practice of automatic writing in *Les Champs Magnétiques* (1919),

which informed the technique of automatic drawing pioneered not only by Jean Arp, but also by André Masson, Salvador Dalí, and other Surrealists. Such works correlate with Marcel Duchamp's cerebral experimentations in the readymade. In his exploration of the unconscious gesture, Dali (1933) developed a theory called "paranoïaque-critique" (p. 66), or paranoid criticism, in which a painted object appears to take on another form altogether, joining multiple images in a single play of optical illusion.



160. Domínguez, O. (1937). *Untitled* [Decalcomania (gouache transfer) on paper].
New York, NY: MoMA. 16.6 × 24.9 cm.

As Saorsa (2011) documents, Oscar Domínguez referred to his work as "decalcomania with no preconceived object" (p. 33). This Surrealist artist took up the tracing technique of decalcomania, "an artistic technique that involves the transfer of images from one surface to another, usually from prints or engravings to pottery, it was popularised during the ceramic transfer craze of the mid-1870s" (p. 33). His

gouache paintings which influenced contemporaries such as Max Ernst, Hans Bellmer, Remedios Varo, Yves Tanguy amongst others, were created “by pressing pre-painted paper or glass onto canvas while still wet, leaving a trace of the original image” (p. 33).



161. Dubuffet, J. (1960). *Personnage* [Ink on paper].
Trinity House Paintings, London. 30.5 x 23.6 cm.

In *Personnage* (1960) Dubuffet creates his own take on ‘art brut’ with a primitive individuality full of free expression that eschews Western ideals of beauty. It is a spontaneous work depicting the constant reworking of a fluid black line and monochromatic background. On Cy Twombly’s large scale, graffiti-like, and calligraphic paintings we find direct quotes from Keats, Mallarmé, and Rilke, along with allegorical references to classical mythology. We find expressionist gestures also in the works of his contemporaries such as Rauschenberg, Johns, Basquiat, Baselitz, Kiefer, Cucchi, and Clemente.



162. Polke, S. (1988). *The Spirits that Lend Strength are Invisible V (Otter Creek)* [Silver leaf, Neolithic tools, and synthetic resin on canvas]. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco. 300 x 400 cm.

To create a composition that shifts depending on the viewer’s position Sigmar Polke experiments with different abstract techniques and unconventional chemically based materials, also adding ready-mades such as Neolithic tools in his 1988 work *The Spirits that Lend Strength are Invisible V (Otter Creek)*. Julian Schnabel

experimented likewise, encrusting his paintings with smashed crockery. Gerhard Richter's 'squeegee' abstractions are an interplay of planning, intuition, and coincidence; made with a length of acrylic plastic or aluminium film affixed to a wooden handgrip, the edge of which is used to etch, scrape, or smear the thick oil under-paint across the surface of the painting. Moved by a common fate, the characters in David de la Mano's paintings tell stories via the aleatory about journeys and exploration, narrative of odysseys, exiles, crossings and collective migrations (fig. 163)



163. de la Mano, D. (2016). *L. Pesadilla* [Ink on paper].
Wunderkammern Gallery, Rome. 28 x 38cm.

Mark Wallinger's series of *id paintings* (fig. 164) are based on da Vinci's articulated proportions in the *Vitruvian Man* (ca.1490). The width of Wallinger's canvases are each his own 1.8m span, and their height is double that measurement. As Young (2017) writes – “[t]his reflection of the self in the material of the work responds to the recurring theme of identity throughout Wallinger’s practice as a whole.” Painted directly and simultaneously with both his hands, these works recall the Rorschach inkblots adopted as psychological tests. The artist’s physical proximity to the canvas in creating this series has conducted to Wallinger’s description of the working process as “almost painting blind” (Bradley, 2017, p.66) thereby implying the instinctive nature of these works.

The unconscious ‘blind’ gesture continues the inquiry into the nature of perception. Does the improvisation of a stain provoke the viewer to pay more attention? Or does it produce irritation? The interval between looking and seeing is one of communication’s most profound issues. When designers are asked to comment about the act of creating what turns out to be their best work, they often experience a sense of doubt and confusion. How could it be otherwise? As Milton Glaser (2012) writes – “Certainty is a closing of the mind. To create the new requires doubt” (p. 87).



164. Wallinger, M. (2015). *Id Painting 27* [Acrylic on canvas]. carlier gebauer, Berlin. 360 x 180 cm.

Appendix B - An entangled denunciation of an Annunciation:
Reminiscing on the *Wilting Knight series* in *A Quixotic Transfiguration in Wonderland*

In *Ode on Melancholy*, Keats (1820/1995) speaks to a person or thing absent or present, in a highly lyrical poem. The speaker addresses the reader while developing his meditation that all beauty is suffused with a boundless and poignant sorrow, combined with musings on intoxication, death, and melancholy -

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
 Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
 That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
 And hides the green hill in an April shroud
 p. 247)

The Keatsian metaphor of the melancholic “droop-headed flowers” (Keats, 1820/1995, p. 247) in the *Wilting Knight series* was reincarnated again in the *Wilting Annunciation* exhibition held at the Mdina Cathedral Contemporary Art Biennale between December 2017 and January 2018. Adopting the symbology of fertile/dead sunflower seeds/flowers, this series (see figs. 165 - 166) (re)presents the typical iconography of the archangel Gabriel announcing to the Virgin Mary that she will miraculously give birth to God’s incarnation. The messenger’s revelation is also that of the passion of a *Mater Dolorosa* cradling her son’s corpse, an agony endured for the redemption of humanity. Life and death are configured oxymoronically in an *extimate* space where descent and creation become entangled. In her yearning for strife’s passing from the world she comes close to the becoming-imperceptible pole sketched out by Deleuze and Guattari (1980/2005), where plant-becoming supplants animal-becoming as the metaphor of choice –

To be present at the dawn of the world. Such is the link between imperceptibility, indiscernibility, and impersonality - the three virtues. To reduce oneself to an abstract line, a trait, in order to find one's zone of indiscernibility with other traits, and in this way enter the haecceity and impersonality of the creator. One is then like grass: one has made the world, everybody/ everything, into a becoming, because one has made a necessarily communicating world, because one has suppressed in oneself everything that prevents us from slipping between things and growing in the midst of things. One has combined "everything" (*le "tout"*): the indefinite article, the infinitive-becoming, and the proper name to which one is reduced. Saturate, eliminate, put everything in. (p. 280)

Gibson (2015) designates a "fourth kingdom" (p.149) for plants with feelings and perhaps even intentions, a category that perturbs the clear boundaries of 'animal, vegetable, and mineral'- "[s]ensitive plants" (p. 153). The Virgin's vegetative passion shown here is that of the presaged suffering about to be bestowed upon her seared heart and the divine offspring that she is about to carry. She can be identified with the "black but comely" bride of the Song of Solomon (1:5, KJV). The nativity stories in Matthew and Luke are transposed to the Calvary scenes of the gospel authors; all set into words about conceptions of momentous, divine events. The seeds of the decaying sunflowers, or the polyps that regenerate themselves, whether blackened or spectrally white, still crave love for embryonic life through pain.

The smallness of the heads in these works, when compared with their elongated bodies, recall those of El Greco in a metaphorical sense that Benjamin (1963/2003) explains - "For their actions are not determined by thought, but by

changing physical impulses” (p. 71). These works thrust toward both denunciation and annunciation since these opposite poles cannot be exhausted when the reality denounced cedes its place to the reality previously announced in the denunciation.

In the hermeneutics of these works we have, perhaps, a phenomenon akin to photosynthesis in plants, even if they are dying - the presence of light converts carbon dioxide into oxygen. In the same way, the viewer’s perception and reaction to such figuration is a process of configuration whereby imagery is converted into a personal repertoire of images that open out for arguments about life, its sources and its varieties. In this process of appropriation, the *Wilting* series also denote apocalyptic undertones. Schopenhauer (trans. 1966) writes that – “[j]ust as the whole slow vegetation of the plant is related to the fruit that at one stroke achieves a hundredfold what the plant achieved gradually and piecemeal, so is life with its obstacles, deluded hopes, frustrated plans, and constant suffering related to death, which at one stroke destroys all, all that the person has willed, and thus crowns the instruction given him by life” (p. 637). Our “perishing individuality” (p. 637) as a phenomenon with all its self-contradictory strivings will surrender to *thanatos*.

Nature will eventually supersede humankind after our inescapable demise. The annunciation of metempsychosis postulates regeneration in the form of different beings - all categories of adult human, child human, transhuman, and protohuman will transmigrate into chaos and compost.



165. Catania, A. (2017). *Wilting Annunciation I* [Pastel]. Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral, 21 x 24.4 cm.



166. Catania, A. (2017). *Wilting Annunciation 8* [Pastel]. Mdina: Mdina Metropolitan Cathedral, 41.5 x 28 cm.

Appendix C - The Beyond in Rachel Whiteread's *Ghost* and Alice's haunted house



167. Whiteread, R. (1990). *Ghost*. [Plaster on steel frame]. National Gallery of Art, Washington D. C. 269 x 355.5 x 317.5 cm.

The room where the whole narrative is set in *Through the Looking-Glass* finds uncanny resemblances with Rachel Whiteread's mausoleum-like practice in sculpture. Both British artists seem to work in kindred spirit on similar obsessions with phantoms and phantasmagoria to expose hidden aspects of society and explore humanity's fate in a universe no longer imaginable in common, cultural terms.

Whiteread's work involves the indexing of domestic spaces by creating positive room-sized objects from their negative spaces, whilst the nonsense writer also utilizes reversed spaces to set his protagonist's manifold mirroring and

reexperiencing of identities in a grand chess-board game. In a peculiar way, Whiteread's work is also a "Thing" of the *Imaginary Class* since what is depicted is the very air that surrounds empty spaces. The silent plaster casting of *Ghost* (1990; fig. 167) could very well bear the impressions of Alice's own inverted Victorian living room where her Looking-Glass hangs on top of the fireplace complete with traces of soot residue.

In a sounding of what Jacques Derrida (1967/1973) calls the "memory of old signs" (p. 102), Whiteread proclaims that her artistic endeavour is to "mummify the air in the room" (Walsh, 2010), thereby recalling the Egyptian culture of the dead comprising of hieroglyphics, architecture, and funerary preparations. It is a search for a 'world' that includes both life and death, the individual soul and the world soul, writing and immortality. Since in pictographic writing, as John T. Irwin (1980) writes; "the shape of a sign is in a sense a double of the physical shape of the object it represents, like a shadow or a mirror image" (p.61), similarly Carroll provides a nonsense verbal inventory of literary elements that are founded on the circulation of "Things" of the *Imaginary Class*, a circulation that mirrors the economy of souls and nature his phantom guide reveals.

Mummification serves as the prelude to a cosmic journey to the Beyond, but also as an idiomatic earthbound (re)presentation. By accepting sculpture as a power similar to a mummified body, Whiteread overturns modernist, existentialist dialectics by materializing the invisible presence of the referent into its visible absence. Similarly, Alice finds herself within a narrative of one's imagination that caves in a primordial nonsense emanating from such presences and absences. Thus, both artists are concerned with the hieroglyph as a metonym, a ghost from a dead culture brought to life in the apparently fruitless self-reflexivity of nonsense literature and

postmodern sculpture; concocting original kinds of visionary art, perhaps Whiteread very much influenced from Carroll's legacy.

Appendix D - Tracing a genealogy to *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief*: An excursus into a (trans)cultural adaptation of Actaeon's oxymoronic life-in-death in sequential art

The genesis behind the concept of the *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief* project may be traced to an exhibition⁹⁴ held in 2014 at St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, Valletta (fig. 8). Entitled *Spectres of Actaeon*, this installation explored a sequential art adaptation of Actaeon's 'life-in-death' trope set in Onkalo's nuclear holocaust future. Combining both digital and traditional techniques, this work examined concepts from the Ovidian myth's oxymoronic expression conjoined with current research in environmental disaster.



168. Catania, A. (2014). *Spectres of Actaeon* (detail) [Digital print]. St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, Valletta.

In this sequential art installation, still images were placed together to form a narrative as those pertaining to some apocalyptic cinema which are incorporated into a long chain of prior images and after-images, imaginary-images and perceived-images of a cyclonic hurricane that threatens annihilation. The paradoxical moving image is frozen, captured in a fossilized moment, as a phantom, in an atmosphere of

⁹⁴ This exhibition formed part of an MFA program organized by the Department of Digital Arts, University of Malta.

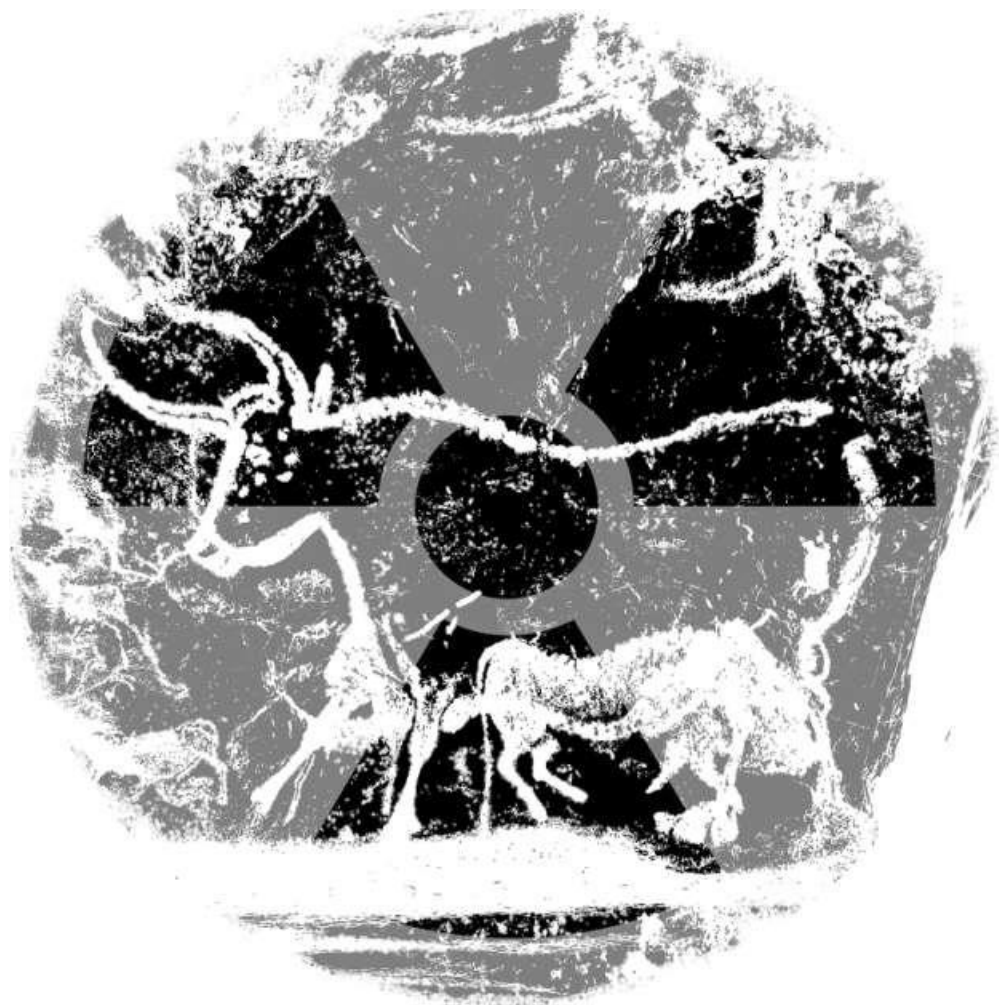
gloom and doom. In their own fossilization, these works could still be regarded as dynamic masks of a visible/invisible interior of a tortured, divine struggle revealing a catastrophic and tragic end. The transformation of visible figurations becomes recognizable via their sequencing of masking onto the support, configured by both digital and traditional media. The elements are left to the chance of nuclear decay as the rain, wind, and damp cold batter, lash and pound humanity into total surrender and destruction leaving nature mourning with humankind for a paradise now lost forever.



169. Catania, A. (2014). *Spectres of Actaeon* (detail) [Digital print]. St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, Valletta.



170. Catania, A. (2014). *Spectres of Actaeon* (detail) [Digital print]. St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, Valletta.



171. Catania, A. (2014). *Spectres of Actaeon* (detail) [Digital print]. St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, Valletta.



172. Catania, A. (2014). *Spectres of Actaeon* (detail) [Digital print]. St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity, Valletta.

The seeming abstract sequences that open *Spectres of Actaeon* depict a Charontic barge (fig. 169) in a series of juxtaposed images of unearthly tidal surges shrouded in mist and spray. Mysteriously led by metaphysical powers, there are no clues as to what lies inside this oar-less craft making its tumultuous voyage through the mists of time and space. The chords of Orpheus's lyre fastened to the scythe-like prow of a seeming Viking longboat, with the dark traits of the Coleridgean spectre-bark, are seen through chaotic moments endowed with assailing unrush and mysterious atmosphere. This Stygian navigation approaches the demise of its turbulent saga beneath constellations of falling shooting stars and flashes of lightning mimicking undergrowth rhizomes.

The narrative continues with visualizations of imaginary dystopic forests bordering on cadaverous pine trees (fig. 170) recalling the actual site of Onkalo which is situated in Olkiluoto, west Finland, "in a flat stretch of land covered by pine trees" (Gordon, 2017). Bonner (1909) describes that in the Greek myths of antiquity – "[t]he pine is a conventional back-ground, a scenic property of bucolic poetry (. . .) a tree sacred to Pan" (p. 278). A ghostly mist pervades this dark *mise-en-scène* of desecrated spiked boughs besieged by decayed nuclear vapor emanating from the ground. This series of establishing shots are captioned with the place, Olkiluoto, and the date, 802,701 AD.; coinciding with the year the time traveller of H. G. Wells (1895/2002) is confronted by "a colossal figure, carved apparently in some white stone" (p. 14); echoing a variation of Oedipus's encounter with the sphinx on the road to Thebes. The drawings depict skies clad with black dismal clouds and two seeming full moons projecting white translucent rays. These ominous looming lights that have a pareidolia effect for their resemblance of evil eyes have an imposing position. These anthropomorphist lights could be the eyes of the gods piercing

humankind's wasteland, or having an ocular omnipresence in the form of two seemingly ozone holes intersecting the skies surveying the underlying terrestrial tragedy. Together with their cutting emanating light they also configure the spectral forms of Dante and Virgil roaming from one crepuscular dimension to another.

Alluding to Alice's entrance into the white rabbit hole to reach Wonderland, the entrance to Onkalo is seen through a glass darkly. Actaeon is led by a wild boar to a gaping black hole. Surrounded by sacrificial hanging rabbits, this mouth of Hell ushers a subsequent pitch black atmosphere, evocative of what Blanchot (1955/1999) calls the "essential night" (p. 441) that follows Orpheus after losing Eurydice. Actaeon, whose ghost light emanates as that of a will-o'-the-wisp, follows the boar with an "impulse toward the empty depths" (p. 438). Once Actaeon accesses the inner tenebrous vaults of Onkalo and penetrates its labyrinthine cavernous tracts, his overcast shadows are stretched out from his body (fig. 168). His transient stride is towards what Bachelard (1938/1987a) calls the "impure fire" (p. 106), a fire invoking the eternal fire of consciousness, the activating element of the Sartrean nothingness at the heart of our finite existence. This light at the far end of the tunnel, reminiscent of a near-death experience as envisaged by Hieronymus Bosch in his painting *Ascension* (1482), foreshadows the last ghoul's inexorable extinction. On the walls of this place, we find radioactivity warning signs (fig. 171), symbols that may have been corroded through the ashes of time or from radioactive leakage. Through their disintegration, these radioactive signs are now exposing bovine and cervid themes in their negative spaces showing an anachronistic displacement and dislocation of the Lascaux cave which may be seen to overleap the continuum of history.

The final section of this work portrays images of radioactive and nuclear decay illustrating what Bachelard (1958/1987b) calls “the threshold of being” (p. 72). Both the cervid theme and the abstraction concept of “de-figuration” (Groensteen, 2011/2013, p. 14) loom throughout these last sequences. Actaeon, himself a revenant, is now experiencing a threshold incorporeity through corrosive metamorphosis. In these final sequences the harrowing victim is mutated and disseminated back and forth between human inhumanness, *absent presence*, and existing nothingness in a series of atomic and zoomorphic metamorphoses (fig. 172). By the nuclear powers unleashed by Onkalo, Neo Earth and its last traces of human fabric are wiped out, leaving no aftermath in what Blanchot (1980/1995a) calls a “posthumous disaster” (p. 5). With this kind of “disappearance,” as Lyotard (1987/2000) postulates, “thought will have stopped (. . .) leaving that disappearance absolutely unthought of” (p. 130).

To depict this terminal *Totentanz*, a series of images morph into unrecognizable biomorphic forms. These works are accompanied by symbols that represent the core of humanity such as Rosalind Franklin’s double-helix structure of DNA in an attempt to illustrate the annihilation of the human genome, or the entirety of human organism’s hereditary information. Medical and anatomical illustrations were likewise referred to. A series of ancient cuneiform, relief sculpted and painted glyphs and codes from lost civilizations were used in a (re)presentation of (in)decipherability. Their crack that was once discovered or never deciphered, is now forgotten for the last time through a semantic and syntactical collapse. It is the maelstrom of what Derrida (1972/1977) calls the “nuclear traits of all writing” (p. 8). Cross-cultural communication accumulated by time has vanished in this entropic finale of aphasiac “*mal d’archive*” (Derrida & Prenowitz, 1995, p. 19).

The incohesive and disorganized graphic space of this chapter recedes to a series of white thorn panels on a white background in an abstract (re)presentation of the fallout. The bleached erosions in the white support are achromatic remnants that not only serve as a denouement to the “last kill” (Hughes, 1997, p. 112) but also as an amorphous interpretation of a diaphanous tabula rasa. This liminal ending is imbued with a grim and meaningless void that illustrates an oxymoronic statement authored by Blanchot (1980/1995a) - “*It is dark disaster that brings the light*” (p. 7).

Appendix E - Observation groups/Interviews apropos of the *Alice's Atomic Handkerchief* project

On the 17th of October 2016, an informal conversational interview was held with Prof. Ivan Callus and Dr Marija Grech. Illustrations (figs. 91 - 95), comprising of *Lunar Humpty* (2016) and both the *Ontological Cat* and the *Hatter Scream* series, were displayed and the interviewees were open to observe and comment upon them. The interpretative remarks regarding the *Hatter Scream* visual illustrations were that the subject matter depicted “a manic and loud joker.” As regards the *Humpty Dumpty* visual illustration, the depiction was that of “a *hellish*, heartbreaking and deeply sinister illustration that conveys a silent tone.” As regards the *Cheshire Cat* visual illustrations – “A cat trailing its dangerous claws and grin in its wake.”

A question was raised; how should the very concept of *Hell* be materialized in a Wonderland context? The answers were – 1) “*Hell* was always timelessly there. *Hell* is memorably there”; and 2) “Whose *Hell* it is must be implicated rather than implied. Let the viewer interpret whose *Hell* it is!”

On the 10th of November 2016, another informal conversational interview was held with Prof. Giuseppe Schembri Bonaci and the same illustrations were displayed for analytical purposes. The comments and other interpretative remarks regarding the *Cheshire Cat* visual illustrations were that they depicted; “a skeletal aura full of transparent layers.” As regards the *Hatter Scream* visual illustrations –

These are reminiscent of Anselm Kiefer’s seven spectral towers built from reinforced concrete in *The Seven Heavenly Palaces* (2004 - 2015); a permanent installation at HangarBicocca Foundation in Milan. These structures seem to float on shifting sands in their vertical interpretation of history, evoking also ruins, debris, traces, crisis, and

paradoxically enough, beginnings. The *Mad Hatter* visuals also recall Vladimir Tatlin's *Project for the Monument to the Third International* (1920). This Russian tower not only challenges the Eiffel Tower as an emblematic pillar of modernity, but also symbolizes the aspirations of its originating nation. Perhaps in this latter megalomaniac aspect, Tatlin's tower finds a kindred spirit with Kiefer's.



173. Kiefer, A. (2004 - 2015). *The Seven Heavenly Palaces 2004-2015* [Installation].
Pirelli HangarBicocca, Milan.

Appendix F - Detail images of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* (2019–20)

The following images are details of the sculpture entitled *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise*. A video clip showing the complete work could be viewed on <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UI-0ixz4iP0RSqefaaybFXRyoyH12lGG/view?usp=sharing>.



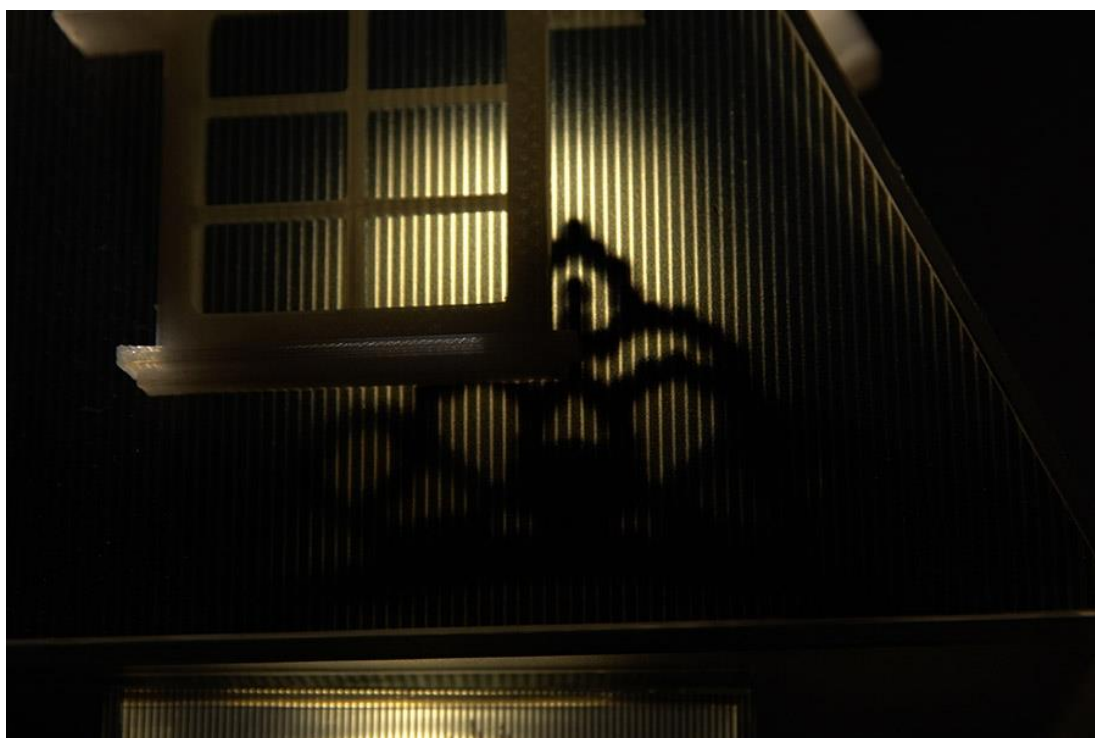
174. Catania, A. (2019-20). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photo: Jean Pierre Gatt.



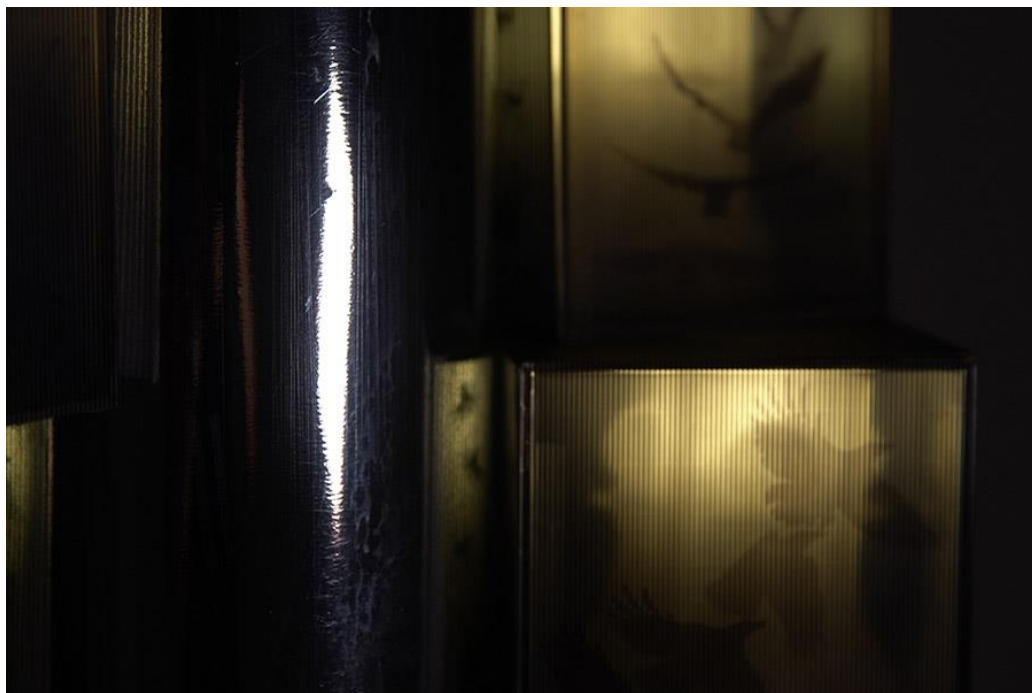
175. Catania, A. (2019-20). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photo: Jean Pierre Gatt.



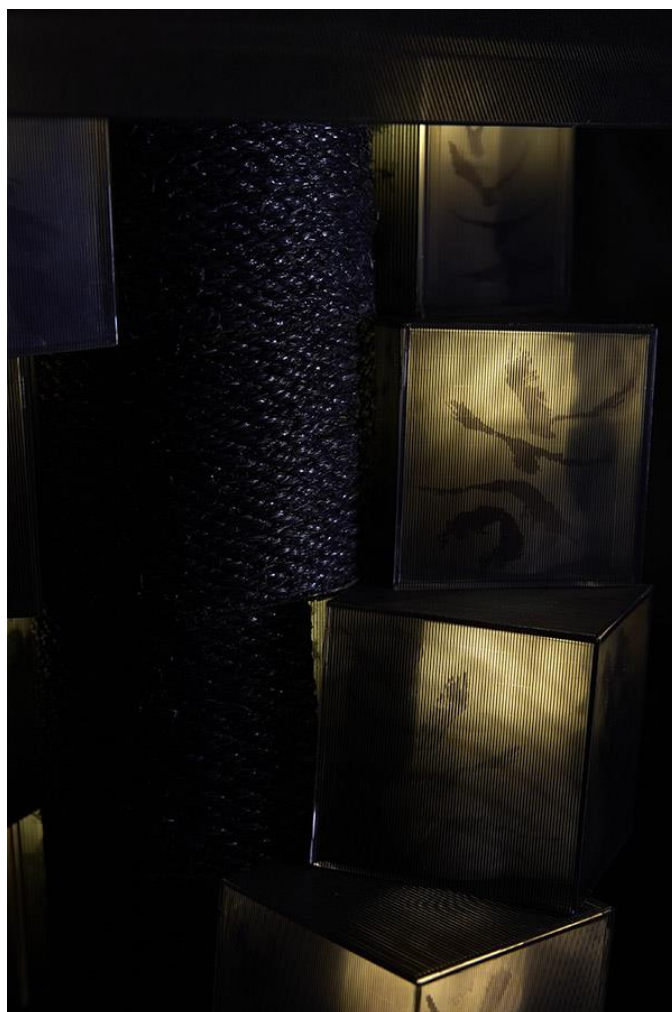
176. Catania, A. (2019-20). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photo: Jean Pierre Gatt.



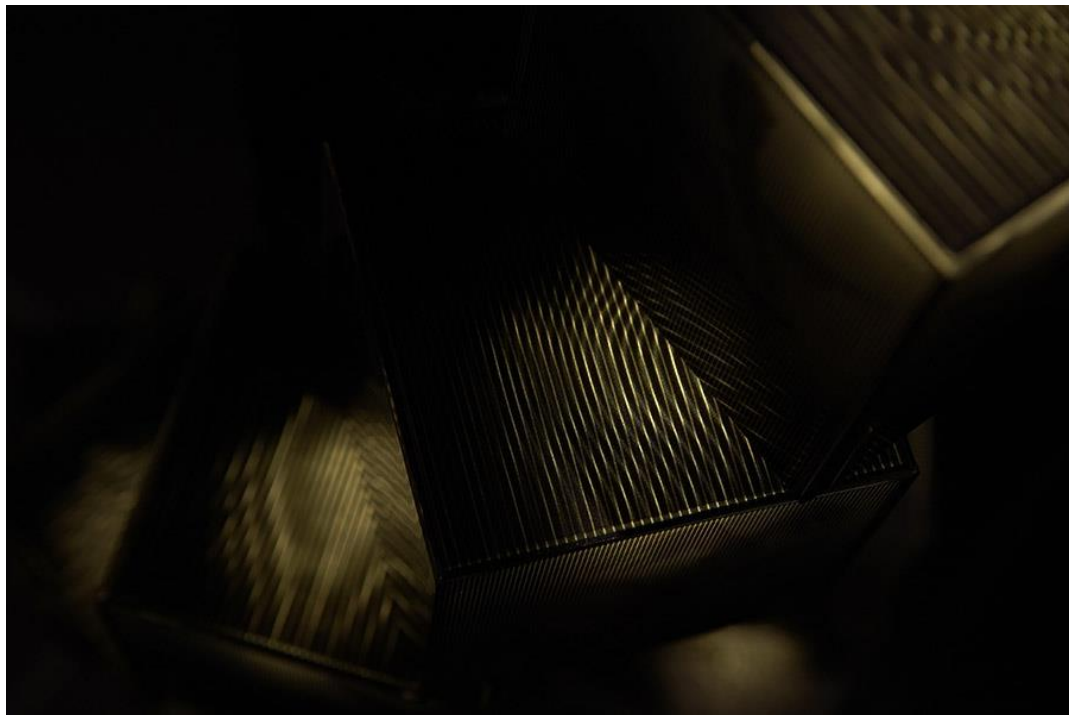
177. Catania, A. (2019-20). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photo: Jean Pierre Gatt.



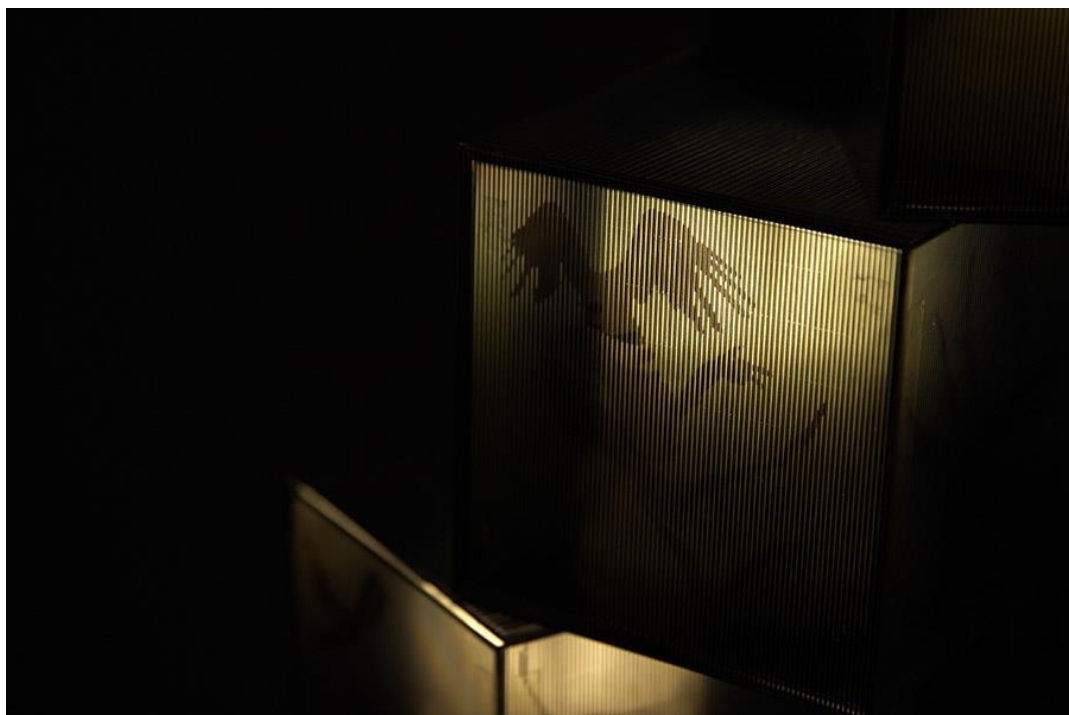
178. Catania, A. (2019-20). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photo: Jean Pierre Gatt.



179. Catania, A. (2019-20). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photo: Jean Pierre Gatt.



180. Catania, A. (2019-20). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photo: Jean Pierre Gatt.



181. Catania, A. (2019-20). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photo: Jean Pierre Gatt.



182. Catania, A. (2019-20). *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photo: Jean Pierre Gatt.

Appendix G - Script for video clip apropos of the *Half-Dreaming*

Phantomwise project

The following script was written for a video documenting the project entitled *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* (2019-20). This short documentary feature may be viewed on -

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UI-](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UI-0ixz4iPORSqefaaybFXRyoyHl2lGG/view?usp=sharing)

[0ixz4iPORSqefaaybFXRyoyHl2lGG/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UI-0ixz4iPORSqefaaybFXRyoyHl2lGG/view?usp=sharing)

Mirror, mirror on the wall unveil my masks that I may gaze upon what I would wish as true. Hereafter I glanced at a little pawn playing along corkscrew paths in the uncanny shadow of a ghost queen. Let each moment of this unfolding stop and stretch. Let us have all the time not in the world.

In Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice gazes at a distorted reflection of herself merged with that of her black cat, seeing *another* Alice. The glass barrier between the doubles dissolves and the mirror gazer is neither here nor there, neither human nor animal, neither one thing nor the other, though at the same time, she is all of these at once. *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* speculates on the equally curious form of Alice's hypothetical doll's house once we see it from this *out of joint* perspective.

Making use of 3D printing technology, moiré animated acetate transparencies, and polymeric materials that have transparent, translucent, and reflective properties, *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* is elemental in its experience, with light, motion, and reflectivity being important stimuli to cross a threshold that is beyond its borders. Amalgamating the physical appearance of a Victorian doll's house with those of the twisted-ladder structure of DNA and a cat's scratching post,

this hybrid architectural framework probes into a creaturely otherness in the child that holds a potential for rethinking the human.

This work may be viewed in more ways than one. Whilst drawing us into Alice's fairy-tale chamber, one is enticed to read a birdcage metaphor symbolizing the protagonist's sense of confinement. At the same time, the corvid animations in this work allude to a Quixotic deceptiveness that verges upon the visionary space of a dreamed dreamer – a White Spectre whose perpetual farewell haunts the past and the future with the melancholy present. This kind of irrational and fluid temporality reiterates the spatial model of child-time which stands against a foundational principle of the social order - that humans are persons and the remaining animals, vegetables, minerals, and molecular sequences are things.

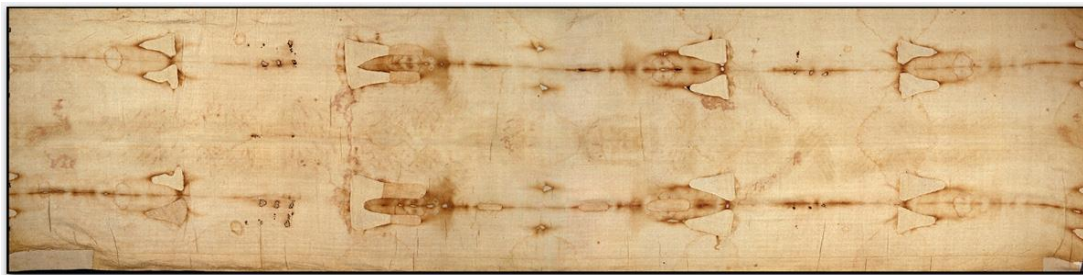
Mirroring the curious heroine, poised between object-hood and subject-hood, innocence and disenchantment, this sculpture sustains paradigmatic shifts in a dream we half-haunt with her.

Appendix H - Discarded moiré animated projects prior to the *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* project

Prior to the sculpture *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise*, the first proposed project that made use of moiré animation was entitled *Kinoptical Blot*. This symmetrical work, planned to be hung on a wall (fig. 183), intermeshes the form of the White Knight saddling his horse in the *Gallant Stain* series (2015; figs. 34 - 35) with the Rorschach ink blots used in psychoanalysis and the Shroud of Turin (fig. 184) bearing the negative image of the presumed Christ. This spiritual undertone is not only projected in the visualization of the White Knight but also in the vertical line, gash or band which is a central visual motif for Barnett Newman, a gesture he terms as the “Zip” (Cernuschi, 2012, p. 243). In *Stations of the Cross* (1958 – 1966; fig. 185), Newmann eliminated colour, painting directly with both hard and soft edges of black and white paint on raw canvas, aiming in capturing the emotional and despairing cry of the Passion - “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Matt. 27:46, NKJV) (Kennicott, 2017).

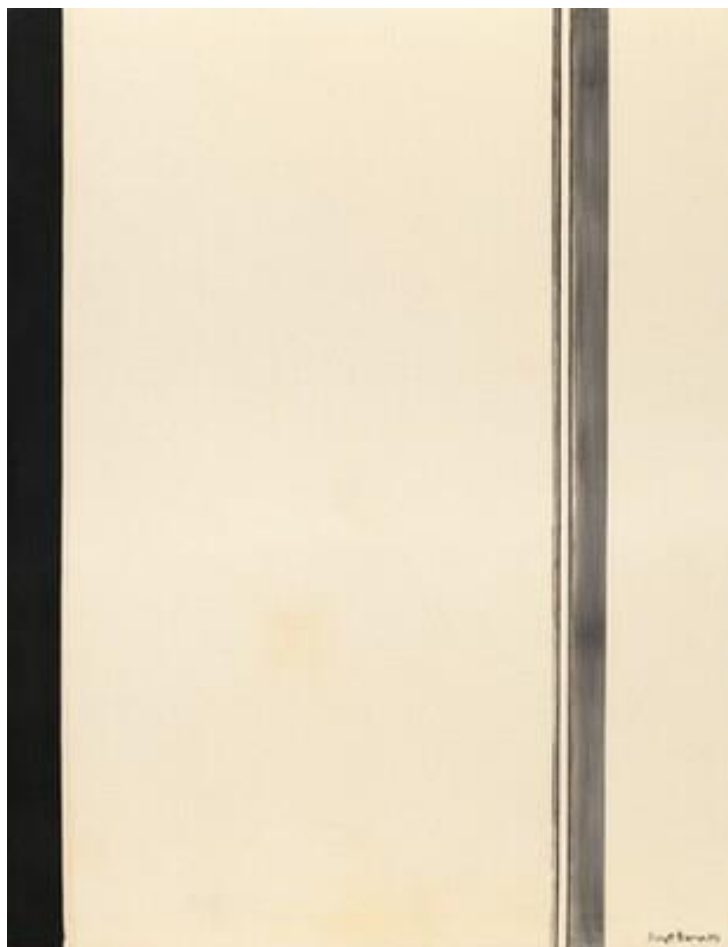


183. Catania, A. (2019). *Kinoptical Blot* [Proposed concept].



184. *The Shroud of Turin* [Linen]. 440 x 110 cm. Turin: Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist.

“Newman construes the human condition in terms of tragic helplessness. Having no explanation for God’s withdrawal and sensing “waiting” for a response, “we cannot but recognize the fundamental incommensurability between humanity and divinity” (Cernuschi, 2012, p. 244).



185. Newman, B. (1958). *The Stations of the Cross: Second Station*. [Magna on exposed canvas]. National Gallery of Art, Washington (DC). 198.4 x 153.2 cm.

The project entitled *Kinoptical Room* (fig. 186), presented as the second proposal, differs from the previous proposal as it attempts to apply the moiré animation technique on a much larger scale and in a fundamentally different context and viewing conditions than its precursor. This second prototype consists of a moiré animated room in which the pictograms were projected on all walls including the ceiling and suspended floor forming a sequential art project. This idea was developed further into a physical 3D model (fig. 187) with three adjoining rooms where the central room is entirely coated with mirrors and two of its opposite doors lead to moiré animated rooms as those envisaged in *Kinoptical Room*. The floor of the immersive environment *Kinoptical Room* might have been constructed out of a video wall which might have created a problem in the homogeneous lighting of the whole project. Moreover, there are some reservations to be made upon the efficacy of the grid structure on the walls and ceiling which would have been printed on vinyl, and tie-wrapped or roped on steel pipes with key clamp connections.



186. Catania, A. (2019). *Kinoptical Room* [Proposed concept].



187. Catania, A. (2019). Model for *Kinoptical Rooms* [Proposed concept]. 23 x 23.5 x 85cm.

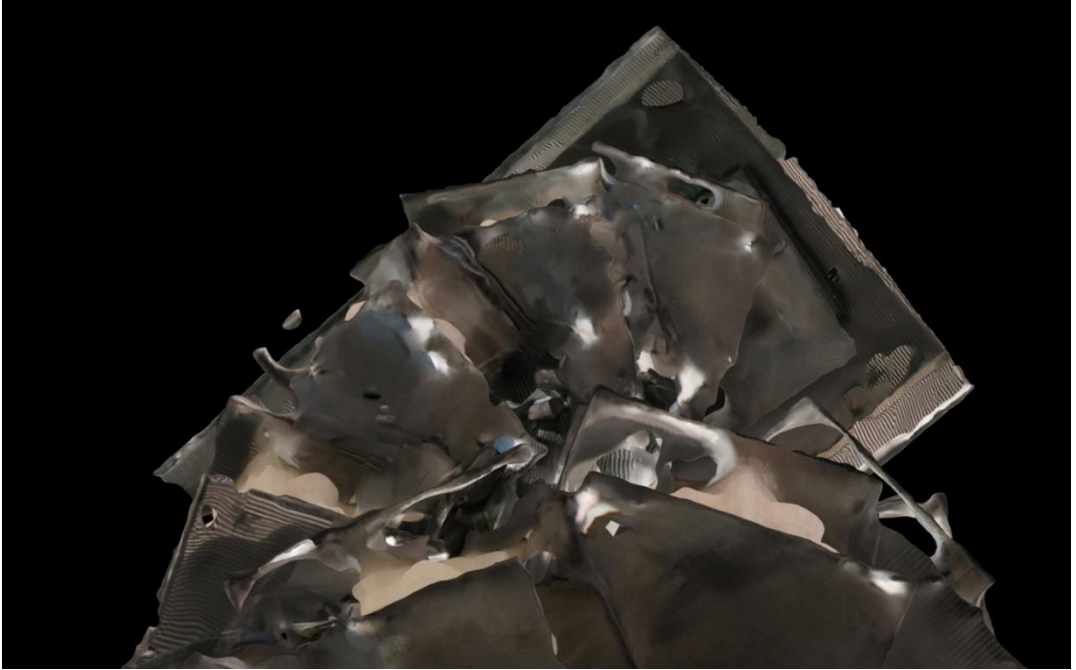
Appendix I - Still images from a 3D model rendering of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise*

The following still images are from a 3D model rendering of the sculpture entitled *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise*. For an interactive experience of the overall structure and material used in the sculpture please view this 3D model by following the link –

<https://sketchfab.com/3d-models/alice-2-e153dd62e7004f6191ebd8dcc4bcfb75>

In this 3D model rendering of the sculpture, the scratching post and base parts aligned and rendered well, but there were difficulties with the reflected surfaces and the moiré animated blocks since the software needs to have static points of reference. Due to their moiré animation, the sides of the blocks were removed leaving the ‘pawn’ bulb diffusers showing. The lid of the rooftop attic was also removed to expose the materials used in creating the illusion of a dead crow (figs. 175 and 191) and a tiara (figs. 177 and 191).

In its rough state, this 3D model shows the anatomy of the sculpture. In a way, its distortions and black patches which result from missing data in the model create what looks like unexpected trapdoors within the work itself!



188. 3D Model of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photogrammetry and 3D rendering: John Wood.



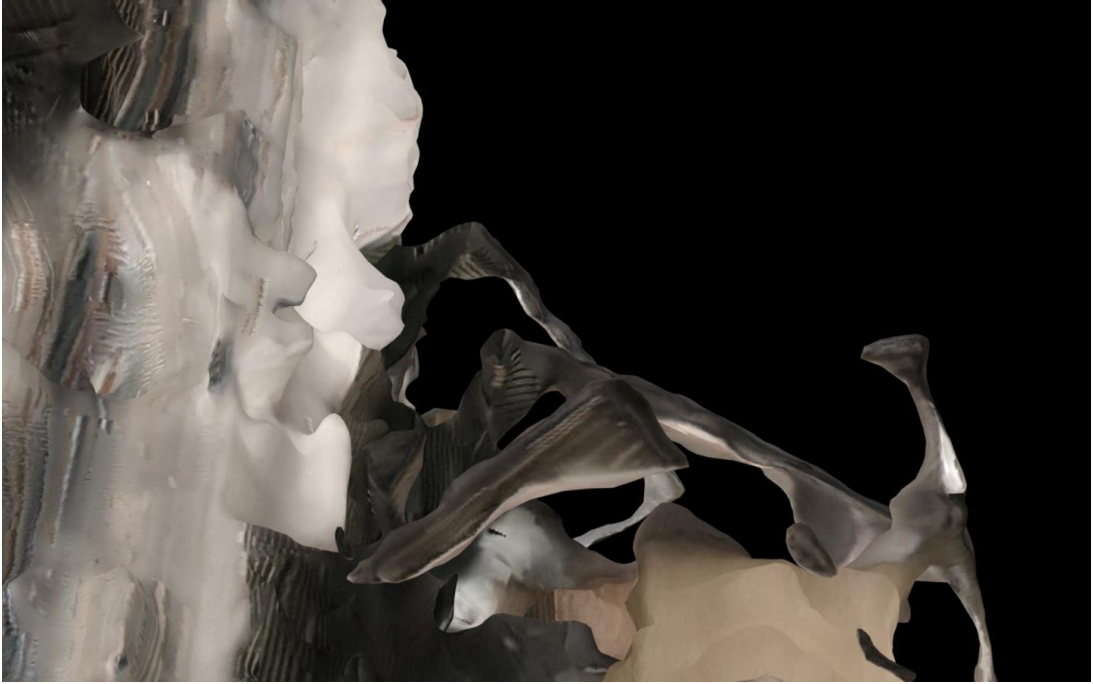
189. 3D Model of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photogrammetry and 3D rendering: John Wood.



190. 3D Model of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photogrammetry and 3D rendering: John Wood.



191. 3D Model of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photogrammetry and 3D rendering: John Wood.



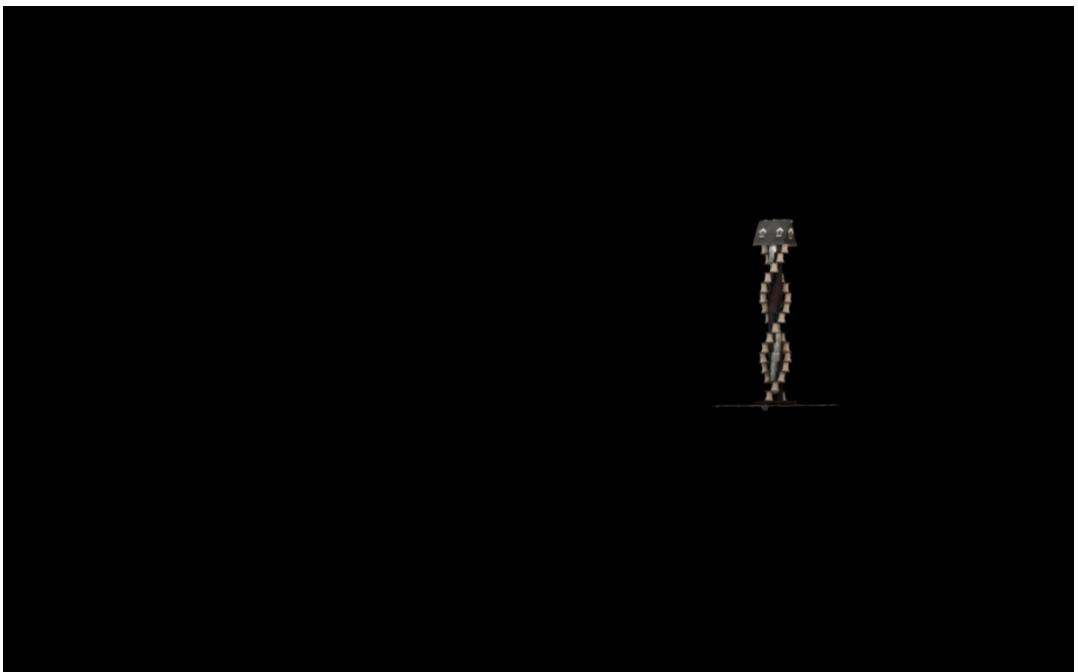
192. 3D Model of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photogrammetry and 3D rendering: John Wood.



193. 3D Model of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photogrammetry and 3D rendering: John Wood.



194. 3D Model of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photogrammetry and 3D rendering: John Wood.



195. 3D Model of *Half-Dreaming Phantomwise* [Detail]. Photogrammetry and 3D rendering: John Wood.

