Marko Teodorski

NINETEENTH-CENTURY MIRRORS: TEXTUALITY AND TRANSCENDENCE

INSTITUTE FOR LITERATURE AND ART

Studies and Essays
BOOK LVI

Edited by
dr Bojan Jović

MARKO TEODORSKI

NINETEENTH-CENTURY MIRRORS: TEXTUALITY AND TRANSCENDENCE

CONTENTS

ABYSMAL

In his 1864 novel *Quite Alone*, George Sala articulated the central problem of 19th-century mirrors: semantic endlessness.

> Richard's [a restaurant] is very brave indeed, in looking-glasses. There are mirrors on every side of you. Though ever so solitary at a table, you need never, if reflexion can help it, be alone. You have the company of yourself. Eyes right and eyes left, and then turn volte-face: so you are quadrupled. You become twins twice over: quins, if I may coin such a word.
>
> The person discoursed of, however, was satisfied with using the knife, fork, and plate before him as a plane of perspective, and looked straight before him without changing his base. In front of him was a very large looking-glass in a very gay gold frame. Naturally, in this he saw himself. Naturally, also, he saw reflected in the looking-glass which was at the other end of the dining-hall, another self of his, taken dorsally. And, in equal obedience to the immutable laws of nature, the starting-points of reflexion and refraction being once established, there stretched before him an interminable vista of mirrors that were before and mirrors that were behind, of front selves and back selves, of table-knives, forks, and chandeliers over and over again, to infinity. […]

> The looking-glasses, then, went on for ever and ever.
> There could not be an end to them, for they had two ends.
> There could not be a beginning, for there were two begin-
> nings, or rather the beginning was the end, and the end was
> the beginning, for the foremost mirror did no more and no
> less in glancing back its fellow than did the hindermost one.
> It was the old story of the serpent with its tail in its mouth.
> (Sala 1864: 260-2)

"Richard's" is the mark of the times, the mark of an unprecedented moment in the history of representation when a previously expensive and exclusive item – the mirror – found its way into the public sphere and could be encountered literally everywhere. Sala's description of the infinity mirror game metastases, thus, into a wider cultural issue. By the mid-century, capitals such as London and Paris emerged as cities of glass and mirrors, pushing the urbanscape into a vertiginous scopic spiral of reflectivity. "Egoistic," says S. F. Lahrs in 1837,

> that is what one becomes in Paris, where you can hardly take
> a step without catching sight of your dearly beloved self. Mir-
> ror after mirror! In cafés and restaurants, in shops and stores,
> in haircutting salons and literary salons, in baths and every-
> where, 'every inch a mirror'! (Lahrs 1837: 206; Benjamin
> 2002: 539).

In 2020, surrounded by screens and mirrors to the point of obliviousness, we tend to take the proliferation of our reflections for granted. For Georgians and Victorians, however, this was a fascinating, fairy-like, confusing, exhausting and, above all, novel phenomenon, that produced profound effects on their self-perception as well as that of the world around them. The moment when mirrors become ubiquitous witnesses the beginning of the city-dwellers' endless exposure to their reflected selves, over and again, pulling

them into a game of representation in which the subjectivity dissipates into twins, quins, multiplying, always different, always from another angle, so after a while I, the spectator, start looking for a different one, one that will present me in a better light, I look for another phantasm I am willing to believe in – a phantasm I desire to believe in. Due to this omnipresence of the self's reflection, the 19th-century mirror texts manifest two contradictory attitudes: realization that every reflection is illusory, different, dislocated and postponed as to that which represents, and simultaneous *belief* in it, a certain *wanting to believe* in this illusion (*simulacrum*, *forma*) of the self's totality. As a spectator, I internalize the image I see, take it for the integrality of my self, while at the same time being aware that the image I internalize (the self I accept as mine) has never been there in the first place but keeps slipping away, always already elsewhere. These two attitudes constitute the primary grid of 19th-century mirrors (textual and material), seen as libidinal scripts that organize desire. They historicise Jacques Lacan's (2006) "mirror stage" and produce the effect of what Michel Foucault (2005: 259-65) calls the "transcendental subject": the subject whose metaphysical existence depends on a space beyond language, representation and meaning, and whose impossibility becomes the condition of its possibility. Lacan's "mirror stage" has been heavily criticized, and rightly so, mostly for its factual insubstantiality and presupposed universality.[1] I do not, however, use 19th-century mirrors in order to prove Lacan right, but use the mirror stage merely as an inspiration for thinking about a very particular historical event – the inception of a world heavily mediated by mirrors. In this manner, this concept proves an interesting ally. In the 19th-century mirror one

---

[1] See, for instance, "The Mirror Stage: A Critical Reflection" in Tallis 1988.

can find, on the one hand, the willingness to accept the illusion in the mirroring act: a desire for wholeness, for the coherence of the self, for the logos that petrifies meaning and potentiates semantic stillness, the end of desiring, semantic death – a desire not the desire, a libidinal transcendental utopia. On the other hand, there is an awareness of the constant postponement of logos, an awareness of the kinesis of meaning and of the immanent textuality of existence – a deeply disturbing realization of the prosthetical nature of the self and the world, a semantic paranoia.

These two moments – textuality and transcendence – constitute the conceptual grid of this book. Georgian and Victorian imagination appropriates mirrors in many ways: as places where wishes come true; as portals to other realms, faraway places, different times, wonderlands; as sources of dread that reflect the spectator's double or a stranger; as places of the subject's exhaustion by the textuality of the image; as ontic borders between the animate and the inanimate. But no matter the trope, the anxiety of the exposed textuality and a desire for ending that anxiety are persistent, because the mirror embodies the topography of *différance* – a sameness that is not identical, a semantic postponement of the self in the reflective surface. As that which constitutes the border between the signifier (the image) and the signified (the "integral" self), mirrors open the rift of textuality both within and without the subject, exposing it to the dread of logos-less existence. Therefore, mirrors discussed in this book serve a double, contradictory purpose: they play with this anxiety by *exposing* it (bringing it to the surface of the object or the text), only to repress it once again, over and again simulating that endless postponement in Sala's *Quite Alone* – the bouncing back and forth between the reflection and the reflected, between the subject and the object, between the signifier and the

signified, that goes "for ever and ever." As places where the anxiety of textual awareness simultaneously erupts and is repressed, they are strong expressions of the self's struggle with itself, an attempt at overriding this cyclical dance of returns and repressions, a search for the way out of the circle of representation that is effectively a circle of desire as much as it is a dissemination of meaning. They are places where awareness of textuality and desire for transcendence collide and in which the spectator – one that stands in front of the mirror and participates in an introspective narcissistic act of facing his own internal, incoherent self – desires not to desire, desires not desires, desires not to desire, desires not desire.

Writing about the cyclical nature of mirror reflection – about the inevitably narcissistic act of looking at oneself in which what I see always comes back to me, imposes itself on me, changes me so I can come back to it different, postponed – writing about it demands cyclicality in language as much as it demands my own involvement. In this respect, these mirrors are places of my own personal introspection, the long gazes at the bottom of the Narcissus's pool where all the mud resides, so I write this book to liberate myself from the illusion of reflection, to break my willingness to this illusion. Like the authors I discuss, I write it to liberate myself from my mirror image, to displace it, send it off, kill it by translating it into words; to kill Narcissus or surpass him. As long as I write about it, as long as this text moves forward, no matter where, I am free from myself, my fantasy, my illusion, I am free by displacement and transcription, free, finally, by metamorphosis, like Narcissus I just cannot pass because I keep looking at myself in this text, a text about 19th-century mirrors, and realize that it is about an "I," whose "I" is yet to be determined (or not), "I" as I imagine it, about a self that gains integrality and focus in the mirror,

but loses as much as it gains, that is stilled (chained to logos) precisely as much as it is differed, textual as much as transcendental. I liberate myself from the image by writing about it and in that act – in the exactly same act like William Gilbert, Charles Collins, Oscar Wilde, Edgar Taylor, Lewis Carroll or any other author I invite into this text – I imprison myself again. I use this text to deal with textual anxiety, and like them I suffer the incessant tide of struggling awareness in the mirroring act, struggling because cyclical, cyclical because defined by the pacification of that awareness, by the violence of the sign, so I wake to myself only to grow numb again, digest my self only to vomit it, the circle and the abyss of reflectivity, the mark of "Richard's" and of the Victorian era on me.

It's enough to say: the abyss and the reflection of the abyss.[2]

_____

2 See Derrida 1987.

GEORGIAN PRELUDE
Semiophagy and the Democratization of the Spectaclist Culture

To say that the world has been turned into a spectacle whence the escape seems impossible, might come across as a self-evident observation today: one has only to look at the cornucopia of images and witness a world devoured by representation. In 2020, the mediation of objective reality through advancements in information technology is for the (post)modern subject a state of being/becoming that all but evades the reflective faculties of mind, sinking into the condition *sine qua non*. In its unrelenting insistence on visuality as the quintessential mechanism of participation in the environment, the world has truly become a picture: what is at stake here is whether the spectator has, consequentially, become an artist, an art piece, or a commodity.

When, in his 1967 *Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord attacked the notion of spectacle as the result of the autocratic reign of the market economy, he addressed its 20th-century form that had "barely forty years behind it" (Debord 1998: 3), postulating it as a fairly new and contemporary phenomenon. Though profoundly insightful in its minute dissection of the mediated/represented reality, and having a paramount influence on the present book, I

propose a much earlier date for the inception of the scopic regimes *Society of the Spectacle* explored. Indications of what Debord calls the "pseudo-world" of the "autonomous image […] as the concrete inversion of life" (Debord 1983: 2) could be traced back to, at least, the turn of the 18th century – to upper-class dandyism and material culture of mirrors. These two phenomena that intersect in the aristocratic milieu of Regency England, laid the ground rules for the Victorian game of appearance – the dialectic of *être* and *paraitre*, as Brian Nelson (2007: 141) calls it – that has, so far, been recognised only as exhibitionistic (Bennett 1988; Mitchell 1989; MacCannell 1976), while its voyeuristic underside escaped a wider recognition. There are studies that deal with Victorian voyeuristic tendencies, focusing on the female body (Willis 2003) or scandal (Ross 1996: 103). However, the notion of voyeurism as the blueprint of Victorian scopic regimes mainly remains unexplored.

The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to introduce the 19th-century mirror culture and establish the ground rules of the scopic loop I intend to put respective writers/artist through in the following chapters. I want to show that the historical convergence of the silvered mirror (as an available, though exclusive and highly expansive, artefact) and the dandy (as a leisurely, body-centred, non-productive human artefact) in the first decades of the 19th century produced the blueprint of the "spectaclist" (Debord's (1983: 14) term) culture, appropriated, by the mid-century, by the middle and working classes. The essence of this blueprint was an eclipse of objective reality by its represented/mediated/reflected image.

For this process in which the world becomes a sign that progressively digests "objective" reality, and in which the concept of reality itself is at stake, I would like to propose the term *semiophagy*. By evoking metabolic connotations

of the combining form -phagy (from the Ancient Greek φαγεῖν (*phagein*), "to eat"), the term stresses a temporal dimension of the process – time needed for the object of devouring to be digested and, by the metabolic process, turned into something new. In the present text, thus, the term not only denotes the digestion of "objective" reality by representation, but it also stresses the temporal progression of the spectaclist worldview, which began blooming in isolated places at the beginning of the century, only to fully blossom by its middle.

The Georgian Prelude.

However, it is important to note that *semiophagy* must stand in close connection with the term *ontophagy*, depending on the theoretical position one takes on the issue of objective reality as such, and concerning the fact that compound nouns built with -phagy point to the eaten *object* and not to the *subject* of eating. Thus, preferring one term over the other essentially depends on whether the objective reality could be postulated as such (and thus devoured in its logocentric nature – *ontophagy*), or should it be understood as always already mediated by language/representation/sign (and thus devoured as a sign – *semiophagy*). In other words, the question that choosing between the terms poses is what exactly is devoured – unmediated/self-referential or mediated/represented reality, being or meaning. As the 19th century is the time when the -phagic process progresses in loops, mediating already mediated reality, (and when, as Heidegger (2002: 68) notes, "being of beings is sought and found in the representedness of beings"), I have decided to opt for *semiophagy* as the most appropriate term for describing the semantically labyrinthine nature of exhibitionistic/voyeuristic scopic regimes.

As a token of debt this paper owes to *Society of the Spectacle*, I would like to introduce it with the epigraph De-

bord chose in 1967, but apply it to the era historically much closer to its origin. So I start with Ludwig Feuerbach's preface to the second edition of *The Essence of Christianity*, published in German in 1843 (the English translation appeared forty years later, in 1881):

> [F]or the present age, which prefers the sign to the thing signified, the copy to the original, fancy to reality, the appearance to the essence […] illusion only is sacred, truth profane. Nay, sacredness is held to be enhanced in proportion as truth decreases and illusion increases, so that the highest degree of illusion comes to be the highest degree of sacredness (Feuerbach 2012: xi-xii).

Feuerbach addressed what he understood to be the condition of religion in general (and of Protestantism in particular), but its pertinence for the understanding of the scopic regimes dominant in the 19th century is undeniable: the Victorian era was one of the spectacle in which the world became a stage and the appearance of reality – its mediated/represented illusion – settled as the truth of its objectiveness.

The claim that the 19th century *Weltanschauung* clearly shows traces of an exhibitionistic nature is neither new, nor hard to profess and demonstrate. In the advent of world fairs that began with the Great Exhibition of 1851, as well as in the overall opening of cultural products and institutions to the prying eye and consumption of the widest possible audiences, Tony Bennett (1988) shrewdly noticed the phenomenon he named the "exhibitionary complex." Building upon the work of Michel Foucault on prisons and asylums, he perceived the thoroughly scopic nature of the human relation to objective reality, which had transformed the Victorian world into a public spectacle by opening previously restricted areas of culture, like museums and

fairs, to the public. Timothy Mitchell (1989: 221) adds theatres, zoos and botanic gardens to the list, which are all heterotopias where the world was put on display. However, these public spaces were not all there was to it: by the turn of the century, Dean MacCannell (1976: 57) notes, visitors to Paris "were given tours of the sewers, the morgue, a slaughterhouse, a tobacco factory, the government printing office, a tapestry works, the mint, the stock exchange and the supreme court in session."

It is important to note that this process of disclosing restricted spaces to wider audiences has to be understood as much more than an exhibition: by gazing at the intestines of the society and culture – into excrement, dead meat and decaying human flesh – the Victorian era became not only exhibitionary, but also morbidly *exhibitionistic*, *scopophilic* and *voyeuristic,* revealing a new desire to *see* and *be seen*. Bennett (1988: 82-87) himself perceives this phenomenon as a structural panopticon by concluding that the world on display at exhibitions was, in return, visually controlled by visitors who were also on display. However, the focus of his study being oriented more towards the visual exposure than towards the pleasures of witnessing, he failed to perceive a deep resonance of this panopticon with the voyeuristic pleasures of the age. "Exhibitionary complex" does cover one direction of the Victorian scopic regimes (to be seen), but it is important to acknowledge its opposite (to see) if the spectaclist substitution of reality by its representation is to be understood in its entirety. While the "exhibitionary complex" points to the world put on display in the form of theatre, pleasures taken by its audiences in the guileful nakedness of culture point to voyeurism as the inextricable reverse of exhibitionism. I say guileful, because this nakedness is just an illusion that is, in its revelatory nature, taken as the truth: in the society of the spectacle, the world

is mediated by the seeming of representation to the extent the culture is stripped naked for the audiences to consume it. In this novel sweep of scopic fantasy, the spectator, the tourist, the artist, the consumer, must inevitably be understood not only as a perceiver of things, but as a voyeur (since exhibitionism and voyeurism dialectically construct each other)[3], taking pleasures in this distance, inviting the culture he is peeping at into his own exhibitionistic fantasy.

On May 1, 1851, a monstrous glass project of Sir Joseph Paxton, the Crystal Palace, opened its doors to the public in Hyde Park. The Great Exhibition of 1851 began and in the six months that followed, about six million people visited the exhibition, which, at that time, corresponded to one-third of the British population (*Appletons' Annual Cyclopaedia* 1863: 412). The audiences were stunned. Inside the Palace the whole world was put on display. The bedazzled visitors wandered through the architectural giant and encountered new miracles of technology, experienced a new magic of Orient, or consumed a new commodity at every corner. The *Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue* of the event (a monstrously confusing one) lists exhibitors, not only from all over Britain, but also from its "Colonies and Dependencies" and 44 "Foreign States" of Europe and the Americas (*Official Catalogue* 1851: 1). An average rate was 42,823 visitors per day, culminating on October 7 with 109,915 visitors (*Appletons' Annual Cyclopaedia* 1863: 412). For an ordinary visitor, it must have seemed like the whole world was there

---

3   In "Three Essays on Sexuality" (1905), Freud established voyeurism as inseparable of its passive part, exhibitionism. "Whenever we find in the unconscious an instinct of this sort which is capable of being paired off with an opposite one, this second instinct will regularly be found in operation as well. Every active perversion is thus accompanied by its passive counterpart: anyone who is an exhibitionist in his unconscious is at the same time a voyeur […] (Freud 1981: 167).

within the arm's reach, contracted into one building, one single piece of space and time in which the whole history of human progress appeared to be enveloped. In this new visual spectacle, every spectator could find their own place in the general grid of things, which unfolded backwards into the past and forward into the future (Richards 1990; Hobhouse 1950; Greenhalgh 1988; Purbrick 2001; Beaverm1970; Davis 1999; Auerbach 2001; Fay 1951; Young 2008; Corbey 1993; Mitchell 1988 and 1989; Bennett 1988). "Reality" itself was represented in the Palace, exposing a uniquely Victorian worldview terrorised by the sign (a worldview in which the representation takes over the "reality"), the event that could not have happened in any other age except the modern one, because in no other age the world had ever been appropriated as a picture (Heidegger 2002: 71). The world exhibitions represented the world and constructed reality *as* a representation different and detached from reality itself, and this move from the reality towards the reality-as-representation is nowhere more obvious than in the eastern visitors' accounts of the exhibition. The epistemic incompatibility of their culture with the panoptic, yet semantically labyrinthine, ordering of the western fairs made them realise that, once they had left the exhibition, the rest of the city – and the western world for that matter – kept producing the same representation in circles: everything seemed as a model, reflection or signifier of something else, the whole western world presenting itself as an object or a picture (Mitchell 1989: 222). It seems that, by the mid-19th century, the West had already shifted towards a mediation of reality, where representedness became the condition of being (Heidegger 2002: 67-68), because the world had already been shrunk to a sign.

The Mirror and the Spectacle

While every analysis of the Victorian "exhibitionary complex" inevitably starts with the Great Exhibition of 1851 and, for the purpose constructed, Crystal Palace as the obvious and indisputable epicentres of the need for exposure, I believe that the eye in search of the origin of that need could certainly go some decades into the past. The Great Exhibition unquestionably materialized the spectaclist tendencies in a way that was to be remembered and analysed for centuries to come (Richards 1990); however, if we consider the close relationship between the spectacle and the mirror reflection it becomes possible to build a strong case for the mirror's role in the inception of the discussed semiophagy that characterised the Victorian scopic regimes.

The glassing of London was complete by the mid-19th century, thoroughly transforming the urban landscape (Armstrong 2008: 133-166). The Londoners began encountering their reflections at almost every corner, and as a consequence their self-perception radically changed: mirrors introduced a representational loop into the subject's understanding of the self-coherence that left it trapped within the reflection's illusion of totality (Teodorski 2016; Teodorski 2017). Between that moment and the mirror's origins in Egypt, Greece and Rome (Melchior-Bonnet 2001: 10) stretches an overwhelmingly complex history of this artefact (Barrington 1948; Goldberg 1985; Sennett 1987; Child 1990; Tait 1991; Gregory 1998; Sennequier 2000; Melchior-Bonnet 2001; Gerry and MacFarlane 2002; Pendergast 2003; Rasmussen 2012). What is important for this text, though, is their availability in the period I am interested in, namely at the turn of the 18th century. In the early modern period, French company Saint-Gobain lead the way in the mirror production (due to employment of famous Venetian

glassmakers through a series of events worthy of prime Cold War espionage-counterespionage novels), while the first glass factory in England was established as early as the beginning of the 17th century. In 1612, Sir Edward Zouche started glassworks at the Vauxhall site, off what is now the Albert Embankment in the Vauxhall area of Lambeth, London. A few years later, the works were taken over by Sir Robert Mansell who himself employed a few of the Venetian workers that had "a restricted output of small, often poor quality mirror-plates" (Child 1990: 59). However, the English mirror industry truly developed throughout the 18th century with the Vauxhall Glass Works established in 1701, and when Ravenshead works opened in Lancashire in 1773 (Melchior-Bonnet 2001: 66).

In spite of the development of the mirror-industry and access to new technology, mirrors remained extremely expensive and their availability remained equally limited. Margaret Ezell (2004: 324) notes that, in the 17th century, "the size of a typical [English] household mirror would be closer to that of the cover of a book than what we think of as a wall mirror today." However, she fails to note that this "typical household" would have to be of a considerable income (and owned by a wealthy upper-class individual) and could be by no means considered representative of the middle and working classes. She cites a story from Benjamin Goldberg's general history of the mirror in which Pepys records that, in 1664, his wife purchased a small looking-glass, spending the sum equivalent to hundreds of today's dollars, and that the mirror plate itself cost ten times more than the mirror-table and the stands together (Ezell 2004: 324; Goldberg 1985: 169, 172). Throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, mirrors remained expensive and exclusive objects, limited to only the best parlours and bed chambers, and even then they were generally quite small in size. As

Sabine Melchior-Bonnet (2001: 87) notes with regards to French households of the later 18th-century, mirrors large enough to reflect the whole person were statistically rare, even in Paris, and "were associated with a certain idea of life, taste for splendour and performance that only certain classes and professions could enjoy." In case the individual *was* of the right class and profession and *was* able to afford a mirror of that size, it would usually be a *psyché* or cheval mirror – an enlarged variant of the *miroir de toilette* or the grooming mirror – that was mounted on a stand or could pivot around the central axis adjusting the angle of vision. Other, less intimate, version would be an overmantel mirror, generally exhibited in guest parlours.

While the aristocracy enjoyed their body reflection in full-length, clean mirrors, the rest of the population had to wait decades before the mirror became an available and widely employed commodity. This is the reason why, when they *did* surface in the public space in an out of the ordinary size or form, they produced an effect of bewilderment and amazement. Such is the story of the Coburg mirror: in December 1821, the managers of the Royal Coburg Theatre, a small theatre on the south bank of Thames, installed in the proscenium of the stage an enormous plate-glass mirror, later to be called the Mirror Curtain (fig. 1). Since it had still been impossible to produce a sheet of mirror that would cover the whole stage, it was comprised of sixty-three panels carefully put together and enclosed in an extravagant gilded frame. On the evening of December 26, the mirror was lowered between the stage and the audience, inspiring awe, provoking a feeling of strangeness and causing commotion. It was so big that it reflected the majority of the perceiving subjects who waved at themselves and at each other. Thirty years before Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace, everyone in the audience became everyone else's reflection, surveying
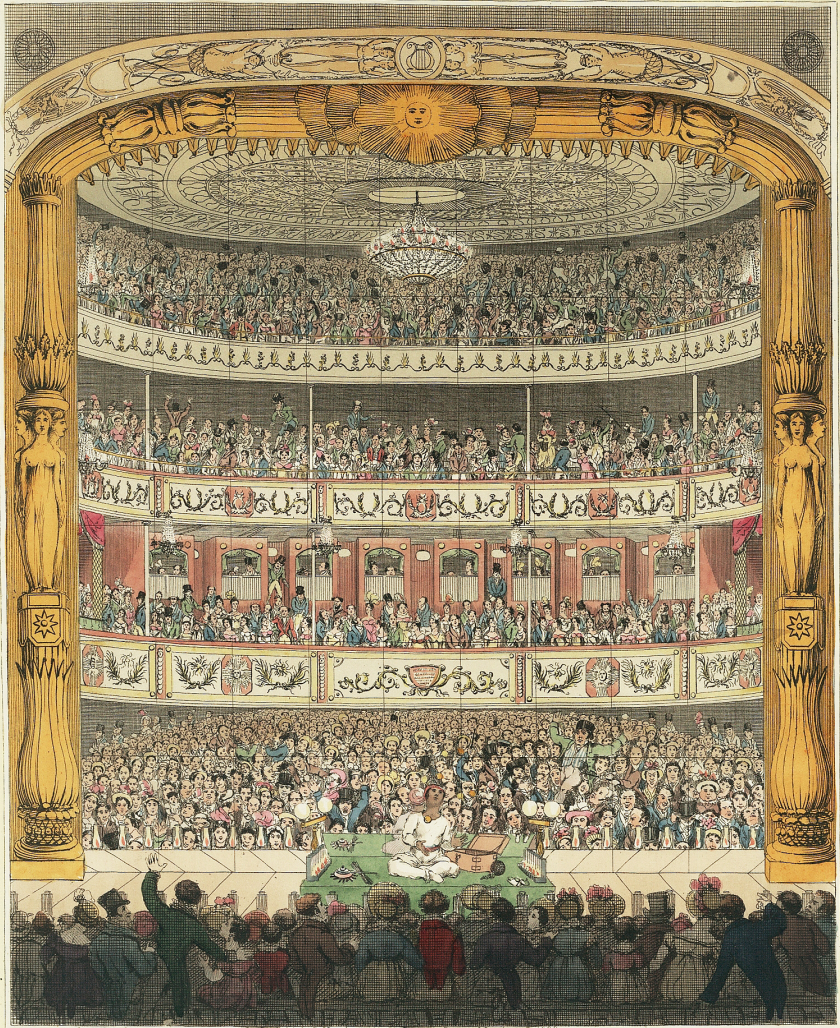
Fig. 1 The Mirror Curtain, Royal Coburg Theatre (1821)

one another. The mirror homogenized the crowd and erased the distance between members of the audience. In a single, discontinuous stroke of the sixty-three panels of looking-glass, the audiences could see themselves as participants in their own spectacle (Moody 2000: 152). The bill from the evening of the premiere summarized the new phenomenon of the mirrored curtain concisely: "the most NOVEL, SPLENDID & INTERESTING OBJECT ever displayed in a British Theatre" – the very definition of spectacle.

Apart from the fact that the Coburg mirror played upon the visual pleasures of the participants of the spectacle, where the audiences were unprecedentedly able to see that which previously escaped their line of vision (as Edward Fitzball (1859: v-vi) said, "every Form and Face in the gorgeous house, from the topmost seat in the galleries, to the lowest bench in the pit"), the mirror's true power resided in its absolute mediation of the perceived and experienced reality. In my previous analysis of this artefact (Teodorski 2016: 123-126), I agreed with Matthew Kaiser who argued that, big as the Coburg mirror was, it "was not large enough to swallow the world. […] [It] might have swallowed [it]; the signifier might have devoured the referent, existence might be irrevocably in play" (Kaiser 2012: 55). Considered, however, in the context of exhibitionistic tendencies that the Great Exhibition would highlight three decades later and that were undeniably blooming in other forms (such as dandyism) at the moment of Coburg's grand opening, I am inclined to think that Kaiser's opinion should be pushed to its extreme and that the testimonies of the event should be read differently. The mirror, as the embodiment of exposure tendencies not yet manifested in their true and monstrous form, *was* semantically large enough to swallow the world; the signifier *did* devour the referent and existence *was* irrevocably in play, just on the local scale of this

particular event: what was to become a national, then global phenomenon, had already manifested itself in this pocket of London's cultural life. The Coburg mirror mediated the totality of the audience's vision, turning their experiential world into a picture while they waved at themselves (Armstrong 2008: 99) and expressed "their delight at seeing themselves in this immense mirror, and for the first time 'on the stage'" (Foote 1824: 74). I should not think that even the marks and fingertips left on the mirror (Planché 1872: 127) that might be interpreted as that which refers to the world without the mirror, killing the proposed semiophagy in the process, could have competed with the power of the visually all-consuming spectacle of the reflected reality that left the audience feeling as "on the stage" and exhibited to the probing eye of everyone around them.

Moving forward a few years in time, we find ourselves in the late 1820s, when the Junior Crockford's Club opened in Bury Street, after the old Crockford's Club at 50 St. James's Street went under (Jerrold 1910: 370). St. James's was the seat of London gentleman's life at the time, crowded with exclusive clubs (such as White's, or Almack's) that hosted some of the most famous dandy faces, such as George Brummell, Prince Regent, Byron, or Lord Alvanley. Count D'Orsay, another 19th-century dandy (probably the most famous one after George Brummell), was a member of the committee and partner in the decoration: in addition to the general extravagance of the interior where "furniture [was] upholstered in the richest damask" (Jerrold 1910: 371), some of the ceilings were covered in mirrors. Judging by the public's reaction, this stroke of extraordinary design all but rivalled that of the Mirror Curtain. Firstly, some of the members complained that the ceilings gave them vertigo: they were unhabituated to the illusion of visual totality, spatial vastness and figural profusion that the mirrored

ceilings must have produced, therefore experiencing what one might call fainting in the face of semiophagy. Secondly, some ("a party of ladies," as Clare Jerrold (1910: 371) states) refused to enter fearing an indecent exposure of their reflections, all the while their hosts remained mighty proud of their stimulating scopic invention. It seems that while some were afraid of the reflected image because it, potentially, exposed them to the eye of the crowd, others took vast pleasures in its denuding effect and offered themselves openly to the public. In the centre of this twofold reaction to the mirrored ceilings resided a general anxiety about the exhibitionistic and voyeuristic tendencies apparent in the mirror reflection, a fear of and a desire for exposure that began stalking the spectacle of mirrors in the Regency public spaces.

There are, unfortunately, no first-hand accounts on Junior Crockford's "mirrored ceilings" like there are on the Coburg's Mirror Curtain: the only account we have comes from the Clare Jerrold's book *The Beaux and the Dandies*, written almost a century later. However, if we decide to give it historical credibility, it would not be a farfetched assumption that the visitors of the Junior Crockford's Club felt being "on the stage" as much as the audience of the Coburg Royal Theatre. Decades before the Great Exhibition of 1851, the world has already began being put on display and turned into a picture whose forceful and devouring representedness left the spectator vertiginous and anxious. Although unprecedented in its design, size, grandeur and idea, the Crystal Palace only thunderously articulated events and phenomena that had already sprawled in deeper and intimate pockets of the city life. Within the high-income parties of the Regency England, the discussed semiophagy had long begun: the 19th-century revolution was its *democratization*. In the cases of the Coburg theatre and

Crockford's Club it manifested itself as insular spectaclist tendency of the public sphere; however, as the full-length mirrors had already settled in parlours and bed chambers of the upper class, we shall see that the dandy replicated the same tendency in the private sphere.

The Dandy

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term "dandy" first came into use in 1780 as a shortened form of 17th-century *Jack-a-dandy* ("conceited fellow") and it was used to describe a man who pays exaggerated attention to his appearance. It was preceded by the "fop", "macaroni" and "Buck" of the 17th and 18th centuries, who were all, occasionally, called "Beaux" (D'Aurevilly 1897: 49; Jerrold 1910: 168; Laver 1968: 10). George Villiers (Duke of Buckingham), Robert Feilding, Richard Nash (The "King" of Bath) and many others, belong to this lauded and sneered at group that played with borderline masculine identities.

Although dandyism was certainly not a one-man phenomenon, George Bryan Brummell (1778-1840), called Beau Brummell, was its most known, celebrated and feared representative. Coming from a non-aristocratic milieu, he was fortunate enough to forge an intimate friendship with the Prince of Wales (later George IV) who shared Brummell's enthusiasm for grooming and fashion forwardness. Brummell dared at doing, at the time, unspeakable things: he rejected wearing wigs which were necessary parts of a man's attire; he abandoned the use of powder; he introduced trousers as the substitute for breaches and advocated for neatness, cleanliness and simplicity in men's fashion. He ruled the society of the Regency period, and (the rumour goes) could ruin one's social status with a simple comment or a gesture. Anecdotes about his life and social

relationships (his falling out with the Prince Regent; his connections with the Duke and Duchess of York; Byron's words that, along with Napoleon and himself, Brummell was one of the three great men of the 19th century) have become a commonplace in critical literature (Jesse 1886; Jesse 1886a; D'Aurevilly 1897; Boulenger 1907; Jerrold 1910; Beerbohm 1922; Moers 1960; Sima 1982; Nelson 2007). For two hundred years, his persona – as the pinnacle of the Regency dandyism – has been celebrated and demonised by writers, journalists and critics producing an enormous corpus dedicated to his looks and witticisms. Since Brummell's early years, the dandy has been a prominent figure in literature (Brent 2006: 128), gaining a considerable momentum throughout the century. In 1828, Edward Bulwer-Lytton wrote *Pelham, or the Adventures of a Gentleman* fashioning the protagonist on Brummell's image; Thomas Henry Lister dedicated to him a snobbish character in this 1826 novel *Granby*; Thomas Carlyle literally immortalized dandyism in his 1838 *Sartor Resartus*, while Barbey D'Aurevilly's 1845 book *Du dandysme et de George Brummell* introduced both dandyism and Brummell to the wider French audience and had a deep impact on the mid-century French interpretation and interest in dandyism. Thus, Charles Baudelaire's (2010) notions of dandyism as an "institution outside the law" with "rigorous code of laws that all its subjects are strictly bound by" (99) and as a "cult of the ego" (*culte de soi-même)* (101) remained the cornerstones of any analysis of dandyism, despite their tendency to universalise it and deprive it of historical context.

As a figure that exerted individualism and aesthetic autonomy and that perpetually contested the porous boundaries of both class and gender, Brummell was an important social figure for Georgians and Victorians. However, ever since his time there is a tendency in critical

literature (like with Baudelaire) to universalise the dandy as an aesthetically rebellious character devoid of cultural, national, class and historical context. The Regency dandyism epitomised in the figure of Brummell changed drastically in the decades after his death: the negative qualities attached to the unproductive upper-class dandy as the man whose only concern was the self-care and self-display, gradually shifted towards the middle-classes that partially appropriated dandyism as a new mainstream male consumerist behaviour (Brant 2006: 129). In their geneses, in what their respective rebelliousness entailed, in how it was perceived, understood and treated by their time, there is a stark difference between, for instance, the dandyism of George Brummell and Count D'Orsay and the aestheticism of Oscar Wilde and Max Beerbohm. Even within one historical period, dandyism could never be considered a monolithic and static phenomenon, due to its essentially borderline nature. This is one reason for limiting the scope of this chapter to the first decades of the 19th century and focusing on the public perception of the dandy who had most often been described by the middle-class commentators as a vain and idle upper-class gentleman, almost entirely reduced to his external appearance. In Carlyle's (1913: 195) words, "a clothes-wearing Man, a Man whose trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of Clothes […] [A]s others dress to live he lives to dress."

Semiophagy of the Dandy's Mirror Game

In 1832, Captain William Jesse of the 11th Regiment of Foot, had a rare and exhilarating opportunity to witness Beau Brummell's morning toilette. By the time the occasion arose, the famous dandy, who had ruled the social upper-class world of soirees, fashionable drawing rooms

and exclusive London clubs, had already fled the country and settled in France; he had grown old and exchanged his aristocratic English friends for the remnants of the less rich French nobility; his famous London quarters in James Street had been substituted for rooms in *L'Hôtel Angleterre* in Caen, and he was soon to experience one of his syphilis-induced strokes, that would eventually robe him both of his sanity and status. Nevertheless, the London's fashion icon and *arbiter elegantiarium* whose name had been on everybody's lips for more than two decades by no means lost his sense of neatness and grooming, firmly living up to his reputation. Inspiring a long line of writers interested in Brummell's life, Captain William Jesse became one of his first biographers, and probably the very first one to have had the privilege of actually meeting his object of adoration in person and of glancing at the enticing world of the late Regency dandyism first-hand.

After finally meeting him and being invited into his quarters, he was presented with a scene that captured the spectaclist, semiophagic nature of the dandy's grooming performance. This is what Jesse has left behind:

> After his shaving was over, two hours were consumed in ablutions that would have gained him a reputation for sanctity in a Mohammedan country. In the morning visits that I sometimes paid him at his lodgings, the door of his bedroom being always left a little open to carry on the conversation, the secrets of his dressing-table were, much to my entertainment, revealed in the glass upon the mantelpiece of his *salon*. I think I see him now, standing without his wig, in his dressing-trousers, before the glass, going through the manual exercise of the flesh-brush […]; when the strigil of pig's bristles was laid aside, he looked very much like a man in the scarlet fever, and ready for the *camisole*, and a flannel one was accordingly put on. All the hard work was now done; but, before "robing," the Beau took a dentist's mirror in one hand,

and a pair of tweezers in the other, and thus nobly armed, closely scanned his forehead and well-shaved chin, and did not lay them down till he had drawn, with a resolution and perseverance truly extraordinary, and totally regardless of the exquisite pain the removal of each elegant extract must have caused him – every stray hair that could be detected on the surface of his venerable mug! (Jesse 1844, 68-69)

Relatively soon after Jesse's visits, Brummell would get imprisoned for debts incurred by his lavish and financially extravagant lifestyle. He would start gradually losing his mind, slipping into utter poverty and – the horror! – into the most terrible neglect of his person and appearance. However, while he was still one of the dandies (or, should I say "the Dandy") who reshaped the London male fashion world, his persona was, obviously, one of the outward appearance. In this one passage dedicated to the details of Brummell's dressing table and his grooming techniques that critics for centuries would call "ascetic" (Adams 1995: 25), "monklike" (Brent 2006: 22) and "worthy of a Zen master" (Agamben 1993: 53) emphasizing their almost meditative nature, Jesse arrested a wider picture of the world that Brummell and dandyism as the *culte de soi-même* announced: a reality mediated by mirrors, reflections and exhibitions, or, put differently, by representations of representations.

Therefore, the importance of Jesse's account cannot be emphasised enough. If I am allowed to play with its content a little, we shall see that the artefact absolutely essential to the world and identity of the dandy – the mirror – conditioned the spectacle of the dandy's game of being and seeming and heralded the exhibitionistic and voyeuristic eclipsing of reality by its representation.

And so I play: at the moment of Captain Jesse's attendance to Brummell's morning grooming routine, he

did not witness it directly. Instead, his gaze roamed the interior of Beau's *salon*, until it landed on the surface of a mirror upon the mantelpiece. In all his "entertainment," excitement and curiosity, he could not approach the image of his desired object in its "flesh," but through a mediated image produced by the glass – he saw a reflection, presented to him through a slightly open door, and at an angle his body assumed in relation to the reflected one. However, this image – the one related to him by the mirror – was not the end of the game of appearances that enveloped the Beau's body: Beau himself was standing in front of yet another mirror adding an additional layer of representation to the already refracted image of reality. What Jesse perceived – what all those "secrets of his dressing-table" revealed to him as to a first-hand witness – were actually twice angularly distorted revelations of what he, quite justifiably, considered the "truth." However, this refraction of reality did not bother his mind, historically and experientially used to the tricks that reflective surfaces played on their observers. By the time of the encounter in question, mirrors had already become common places in the upper-class private chambers, allowing Jesse to appropriate the *appearance of reality* as *reality itself*: in the face of the mirror, Cicero's "to be, rather than to seem" and Machiavelli's "to seem, rather than to be" merge into the one proverb that defines the "truth" of the Regency dandyism: *to seem is to be*.

Now let me point to the voyeuristic nature of the description, where the observer is invited into the position of a peeping Tom: as we read the account, the intrusion into someone's privacy becomes palpable. The door of the Beau's room is left ajar so as to carry on the conversation, but the enquiring and restless look finds its way inside all the same, surpassing the attempts at (questionable) concealment and intimacy. Apart from being voyeuristic, the presented scene

is exhibitionistic as well, where the Beau's body and all its peculiarities – the colour of his skin, the ablutions, the minute search for irregularities in yet another, though smaller, mirror – become exposed and exhibited as a strange curiosity to be desired, looked upon and visually appropriated. At once being the object of a secret gaze, the artefact complexly refracted and mediated, and the performer on a stage, the dandy's body play the game of exposure and concealment, hiding and undressing itself in the scopic fantasy of the onlooker: its objective corporality disappears in the layers of reflective representedness, simultaneously being reconstituted and exposed by the process. There is no such thing as nature, or being, in the dandy's spectaclist body; or, rather, its nature is indirect, mediated and recomposed of its own mirror images. Beautiful in its unapproachability and strange in its natural artificiality, the reflected body assumes the role of a constructed object, exposing textuality of the reflected image and giving itself to Jesse's (and the reader's) voyeuristic gaze blind to the categories of seeming and being.

The Dialectic of *Être* and *Paraitre*

The game the dandy plays with the mirror points to their strong relationship: I would even go so far as to argue that without the mirror dandyism would not be possible. The connection they share was the Regency invention, in so far as dandyism in its historically specific sense had not existed before that time; it had not existed because the artefact that could make it happen – the mirror – had not been available, widespread and of the right properties yet, so as to make the dandiacal dialectic of *être* and *paraitre* possible. Men who paid attention to their dress existed throughout history, it is true; however, the Regency dandy's characteristic is that he projects to the public a rhizomatic and artificial image

created in long hours before a mirror and he creates a new phenomenon of the exhibitionistic/voyeuristic body-spectacle. If the discussed semiophagy could not have happened in any other age except the modern one, because in no other age the world had ever been appropriated as picture, than the dandyism could not have happened in any other age as well, because in no other age the mirror reflection had ever been appropriated as being.

As mirrors have been considered symbols of vanity since at least the Middle Ages (Schwarz 1952; Santore 1997; Werness 1999; Miller 1998), Beaux of the previous centuries were naturally associated with this artefact and with their narcissistic connotations. According to Jerrold (1910: 135), Beaux of the 17th-century carried small looking-glasses on the lids of their snuff-boxes, which allowed them to check their appearance and the image they projected onto society, and the world around them, at any time. As early as 1712, Joseph Addison wrote a sarcastic essay in his *Spectator*, depicting an imaginary *Dissection of the Beau's Head* and starting it with an epigraph from Horace's *Ars Poetica* that says: *tribus Anticyris caput insanabile* ("a head, no hellebore can cure"). "An imaginary operator opened [the Beau's head]," narrates Addison,

> with a great deal of nicety, which upon a cursory and superficial view, appeared like the head of another man; but upon applying our glasses to it, we made a very odd discovery […] The *Pineal Gland*, which many of our Modern Philosophers suppose to be the Seat of the Soul, smelt very strong of Essence and Orange-flower Water, and was encompassed with a kind of Horny Substance, cut into a thousand little Faces or Mirrours, which were imperceptible to the naked Eye, insomuch that the Soul, if there had been any here, must have been always taken up in contemplating her own Beauties (Addison 1891: 431-432).

Addison's account of the Beau's head is a satirical lash at narcissism in close conjunction with the idea of the mirror. At its razor's edge, it conveys a clear social critique and the public's generally derogatory view of the man who pays too great attention to his external appearance, showing us that the general perception of mirrors and the Beaux slowly began merging at the very beginning of the 18th century. However, this similitude is nothing compared to the Regency dandy that James Adams Eli (1995: 26, 138) described as the "hero of the spectacle" and a truly "theatrical being"; it is nothing compared to Brummell's hours-long grooming in front of the mirror; and it is nothing compared to the times when the mirror reflection managed to completely eclipse reality and beget voyeuristic exhibitionism (or exhibitionistic voyeurism) that would became the very nature of the age.

The dandy is the result of a gaze: he exists as long as there is an eye pressed at the peephole of his body. The dandy in public is the same as the dandy in front of a mirror. As he meditatively dwells on his own image in private, spending hours adjusting his tie, brushing his skin or plucking white hair from his "venerable mug," he performs the spectacle of his body, even if only for the audience of his own reflection: he gazes at the body turning it into an object, an artefact, an exhibit. As he walks in public, strolling the streets and sneering at the crowd, he acts out his desire to be seen, objectified and visually consumed. Whether passive or active, creating the body spectacle for his own pleasure or for the world's, the dandy is a master of performing arts: just as in the Coburg mirror, he mediates his corporeal existence so that he and others could gaze upon it. Switching between these different kinetic states, he manages to create a continual representational loop that envelops his figure in a labyrinth of visual pleasures. Since

essentially a "theatrical being," the dandy in the mirror eclipses the one standing in front of it, acting as the truth of his selfhood and projecting itself to the public as his nature. Since he exists entirely in appearances – without the game of appearances there would be no such thing as dandyism – the dandy is constantly "on the stage" even when the mirror is no longer there. The game he plays with himself in private is the one he plays with the world around him.

Faced with the heightened specularity of the contemporary body and fashion, critics generally agree that visuality and the dialectic of *être* and *paraitre*, of being and seeming, play the essential role in the idea of the dandy (Jerrold 1910: 10; D'Aurevilly 1897: 19; Nelson 2007: 136; Schmid 2002: 83; Adams 1995: 22; Fillin-Yeh 2001: 16). While some believe that it should be understood in terms of the rhetoric of performance (Brian 2007: 135), others emphasise that the dandy is a mask, a pure surface that presents (Schmid 2002: 83-84), implicitly equating the dandy with his mirror image. However, the reduction of the dandy to a surface, or to an object of the gaze, stretches all the way back to Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*, testifying to the early-to-mid-century concern with the specular politics that would, by the Great Exhibition of 1851, bloom into the society of the spectacle. "[W]hat is it that the Dandy asks […]?" asks Carlyle (1913: 196) ironically.

> Solely, we may say, that you would recognize his existence; would admit him to be a living object: or even failing this, visual object, or a thing that will reflect rays of light. Your silver or your gold […] he solicits not; simply the glance of your eyes. Understand his mystic significance, or altogether miss and misinterpret it; do but look at him, and he is contented.

As Carlyle points out, visuality is the source and the purpose of the dandy: take it away and he is reduced to

nothingness. He is an object to be looked at, but also a thing that, like a mirror, will reflect the rays of light. He invites the gaze of the spectator, but he also reflects it so as for the spectator to desire him even more. Turned into a mirror that seduces and reflects the gaze, the dandy embodies the need to expose himself without the acknowledgement of the exposure: he substitutes the self with its representation.

The spectacle by which the dandy presents himself to the public is exhibitionism that implicitly invites voyeurism. Although it is misleading to judge dandyism according to Brummell alone (since most of his contemporaries and successors perverted the strict rules of his performance), the king of dandyism avoided ostentation at all costs, playing with the audience in a profoundly sophisticated manner. In his opinion, a gentlemen should never draw attention by his outward appearance and simplicity in clothing is to be highly desired and appreciated. However, he wanted to be noticed, observed and admired, but so as not to obviously reveal his desire for it. The dandy discretely and implicitly exposes himself to his audience, never admitting it or acknowledging it, thus turning others into necessary, invited and unwanted spectators whose role in his game can be described only as voyeuristic. Just as Brummell in the Jesse's account leaves the door of his dressing room ajar so Jesse could look at his reflection in the mirror, the public dandy leaves the door of his body slightly open so that everyone could peep at him secretly, albeit in the open and at an angle, while he remains disdainful of the intrusive and obnoxious audience that he himself invites into the play. In this game of looks, gazes, appearances and lines of vision, the private mirror reflection turns into a public one, and Nelson (2007: 138) rightly observes that the "dandy needs a public […] as a means to shock and displease, as surface off which he can reflect." What dandy does, or what he tries

to do, is to create a spectacle by imposing his mirror image, the visual illusion of his bodily appearance, upon the social reality that surrounds him.

This dialectic of *être* and *paraitre* manifests itself superbly in the discourse of the famous and coveted Bow Window at White's. In 1811, during changes at the White's Club, one of the most exclusive gentlemen's clubs at the St. James's in London, the famous Bow Window was constructed over the entrance (Jerrold 1910: 211). As soon as it was finished, the dandies have made their residence in it, and the Bow Window became "an institution in fashionable life" (Jerrold 1910: 211), a place most desirable and coveted, as well as the epicentre of scopic anxieties. Since only those belonging to the inner circle of the club were allowed to sit there, George Brummell, naturally, presided over it. From this "self-raised pedestal," as Captain Gronow wrote about it in the 1860s (cf. Jerrold 1910: 215), the dandies could see passers-by and were plainly visible from the street. However, as they raised a serious issue of whether salutation should be passed to those in the street (only to finally come to the decision that it should not), the passers-by were equally perplexed whether they should salute those in the Window (Jerrold 1910: 211). This shows how the dandies plainly bared themselves to the viewers – they exposed their bodies to the gaze and intrusion of the society – inviting them into the game of exposure while expecting them not to acknowledge their desire to do so. If the dandy is truly a theatrical being and the hero of spectacle, than nowhere was this theatricality to be found more plainly than in the Bow Window that, through the transparent/reflective surface, exhibited them as objects on a stage, inviting and repelling the audiences to participate in the spectacle that would not be possible without them.

The spectaclist nature of the Victorian times, painfully obvious in the example of the Great Exhibition of 1851, bloomed decades earlier in localised, insular spots of the urban landscape that all had one thing in common: the mirror. In the public sphere, the mirror spectacle emerged in upper-class clubs (Junior Crockford's), or as experiment in pockets of London's cultural life (the Coburg theatre). In private, it manifested itself in parlours and bed chambers of the wealthy, spawning dandyism as the mirror spectacle focused on and appropriated by the body. The dandy, for hours ascetically standing before a mirror, introduced the game of appearance – the dialectic of being and seeming – to the gaze of the crowd he depended on, heralding the near future in which reality would be digested by the sign (semiophagy). By the mid-century, the appropriation of reflected reality would become the general theme of Victorian life and the appropriation of one's mirror image would stop being related to the idea, or the lifestyle, of dandyism. The production of mirrors would increase due to its lower costs and their general popularity among the Londoners, and mirrors would colonise the capital, heavily mediating not only the perception of reality, but the self-perception of the subjects themselves.

Despite the fact that mirrors, Beaux and narcissism already had shared space in the public imaginarium of the 17th and the 18th century, this coupling still could not have produced the phenomenon of the man whose reflected image became the incontestable reality of the self: mirrors were neither large, clear nor accessible enough. While the metal or small and blurry glass mirrors were common in the general population, large and clear ones were the sign of elevated taste, status and income. Considered from the perspective of dandyism – of its reliance on this piece of material culture – it is safe to say that the dandy's focus

on the reflected image of his body and the exhibitionistic/ voyeuristic spectacle that it produced for the public eye, was a phenomenon specific to a historical, industrial, semantical and class context. In their new and unique forms – mirrors clear, large and capable of producing the illusion of "reality" and "truth," and dandies appropriating this illusion – they created the background for the Victorian exhibitionistic/ voyeuristic scopic regimes.

I tried to mark some vital connections between these regimes, material culture of mirrors and dandyism in the Regency period. Regency dandyism, be it of the "original"/"true" (according to some, restricted to George Brummell himself) or of the "generic" type (practiced by those who surrounded and succeeded him), in its strong emphasis on the game of appearances announced the semiophagy of the Victorian (and post-Victorian) culture, a particular digesting of the spectator by the reflected image. In his fundamental dependence on the visual perception of the body – on the image reflected in the mirror, as well as on the social gaze that was his *raison d'être* – the dandy pointed to the simulated and visually mediated nature of being (textuality) and to a perpetual desire for totality in the face of a reflective surface (transcendence). Due to his early occurrence, the dandy could not have been the pinnacle of these phenomena; however, I suggest he stood at their *inception*, heralding the fast approaching times when the West would lose itself in the unyielding labyrinth of representation continually taking the mediated and distorted images for the truth of the world and of the self.

Just like Captain Jesse in front of the George Brummell's mirror.

NARCISSUS'S MUD
Dreadful Anxieties of the Mirror Short Stories

The fantasy of mirroring must start with Narcissus, so I start this chapter with Narcissus as well. Ovid's story is old and familiar; transcribed, transformed, adapted and commented on more times than there are transgression against the gods in *Metamorphoses* (8 AD). It is precisely on that familiarity, that feeling of the already experienced, that I count here to resurface Narcissus in his distorted 19th-century disguise. What I want is something uncanny, a summoning in the sense of the return of the repressed, a digging up of signs that have been buried in a too shallow grave.[4] I want to resuscitate him, animate him and invoke him in narratives where he is not, but should be, where there are mirrors and differences, mirrors and others, mirrors and reflections and doubles and fear, but he is absent, cannot be found because one is looking in all the wrong places, while every fantasy of mirroring starts with Narcissus and there are no mirrors, especially no *accounts* on mirrors, words on mirrors and mirrors-as-texts without a Narcissus as the Same or the Other, as the Same as the Other.

The groundwork: Echo is in love with Narcissus. Punished by Juno for protecting her husband's adulterous

---

4 See, Freud, "The Uncanny," 1981.

secrets, she cannot speak except mimicking the other's voice. She pines over Narcissus's love and her body fades until there is nothing left of her but voice – the echo. Narcissus has, on his part, spurned one fair face too many, and that face prayed to the gods for a punishment of reciprocity – for Narcissus to fall prey to an unrequited love. Rhamnusia, the goddess of revenge, hears the prayer and leads Narcissus to a solitary forest pool whose water is so still that it accomplishes perfect reflectivity; there he falls in love with his reflection in an outburst of passion that physically consumes and dissolves him, until there is nothing left of him but a flower – and an echo of the nymph that mourns him.

The translation: I stand in front of a mirror and while I perceive the doubled world and participate in its ontic displacement, I am aware that I exist in forefront, that the image revolves around my body as it stands for my self; I cannot, however, be sure whether the centre of the picture is the reflected body or this material one, but I know that it is the body, one or the other, that I must take as a starting point of my thinking about myself. The mirror, as long as I am in front of it, as long as I am the lead role in the event of mirroring, makes me turn upon myself, give up my claims to the rest of the world and appropriate that which is in its centre, which is coherent, which disguises as integral and non-referential, my body, myself.

The mirror is the tool of Narcissus. He looks at his reflection and cannot look away. His reflected image becomes a metastatic centre of his world, a centre that encroaches upon everything, swallows and digests everything.[5] When Narcissus looks at the pool and observes

___

5 "In such a maze of love my thoughts are lost:
And yet no bulwark'd town, nor distant coast,
Preserves the beauteous youth from being seen,
No mountains rise, nor oceans flow between" (Ovid 1826: III. 544-547).

the lines of his face, he gives up on the world, abandons it, forsakes it for the love-object that is himself.[6] It is a state of love, "a state suggestive of a neurotic compulsion" (Freud, "On Narcissism," 1981: 88), but it does not come from within, it does not emerge from inside him, it is not his own to project it and reattach it to himself. Narcissus is cursed by a goddess, so this fascination with his own reflection, with the semantically displaced image of his existence, comes to him from above, or from the side, or the outside; it comes to him as a punishment for his arrogance. Thus, the narcissistic event that drowns him, takes his life, transforms him, articulates humanity as a pattern, an easily manageable algorithm, a thing with a function and focus, a machine predictable in the choice of that focus. The narcissistic event is a curve in the libidinal path, the point where the desire recoils from the world, turns around and returns to where it came from, it is a return trip with a moral, ethical ground: a punishment that topographically goes against the rules, against the Law, Almighty Father, Other, superego, language, Signifier, Phallus; in short, that which is closest to *logos*. The narcissistic event is a bastard child, a punishment for a transgression, a punishment of

6 The opposite direction of semantic displacement (or replacement) is observable in George Meredith's *Modern Love* (1862):

"She has desires of touch, as if to feel
That all the household things are things she knew.
She stops before the glass. What does she view?
A face that seems the latest to reveal!" (Meredith 2012: XX, 44).

Mirroring here brings the world to the foreground, while the subject revels herself the last, creating a blind spot in the centre of the image. This displacement of the observer towards the background accentuates the textual openness of the mirror figure in nineteen-century narratives, as it articulates a dialectic relationship with mirroring as narcissistic event that in many instances establishes the subject as the fixed reference point.

being stuck with oneself for eternity.[7] Narcissus is not punished for being narcissistic, he is made narcissistic for being indifferent. There is a moral to be found here, and not one easily perceived: Narcissus's predicament does indeed preach against vanity and excessive indulgence in one's mirrored face, but it also professes the true nature of facing the self, of introspection, of a deep and penetrating gaze at one's own face, one's own mind, and of accepting (or going mad from) what one finds there; one's own demons.

---

7 The same trope of the other's image in the mirror can be found in the short story "A Horrible Reflexion" (1860) by an anonymous writer. The protagonist buys a cheap pocket mirror in an omnibus on his way to a party, only to realize that the reflection in it is not his. After an evening of running between mirrors and trying to solve this mystery, he awakes and realizes that he fell asleep in the bus and that the face in the mirror is the driver's. However, the story's main concern is the mechanics of dreaming and in this respect it anticipates Freud's much latter *Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).

On the condemnation to the self as mirror reflection see, for instance, Christina Rossetti's poem "A Royal Princess" (1866):

"All my walls are lost in mirrors, whereupon I trace
Self to right hand, self to left hand, self in every place,
Self-same solitary figure, self-same seeking face" (Rossetti 1979: 149).

It is also worth noting, as a historical illustration, the story from Otto Rank's *The Double: A Psychoanalytical Study* (1914: 73), about a trial in 1913 London, where husband imprisoned his unfaithful wife in a room full of mirrors for a week. She went mad and smashed them all; with nothing else to look at, that week must have felt like an eternity. That room, the mirror room, where there is nothing else but the infinite reflection of oneself is, moreover, the spatial articulation of the narcissistic event. Narcissus primarily suffers in time, he is physically impaired, petrified at the pool in the mirroring process – he pines away, like Echo. The adulterous wife, though also restrained, suffers in space, as well as in time. Her fate represents the modern amplification of the narcissistic event, the modern commentary on the myth, as well as the modern immersion with the reflected image. Everything is amplified here; it screams pathology, a paranoia of the mirror reflection.

If Narcissus is the face that perturbingly gazes at its own soul, than it returns through protagonists of mirror texts I am interested in in this chapter. In Charles Allston Collins's "No. 3. Branchline. The Compensation House" (1866) a modern Narcissus gazes at his reflection, petrified by the reflection that is not his, but of the man he murdered; in "The King's Ball" chapter of William Gilbert's *The Magic Mirror* (1865) Narcissus and her reflection switch places; in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1891), Narcissus remains forever young, while his reflection ages and decays. Connections between these texts exist primarily within my writing, this writing, this text that juxtaposes them and abuses that juxtaposition. Togetherness of their motives is a narrative glue of my own writing that appropriates the narcissistic event as its formative component: the event of looking into oneself, of transgressing against the reflective surface and unearthing what lies behind/beneath/beyond, on both ends, buried in the dark. In these texts (meaning in this text, my text), protagonists are cursed, sentenced, damned to live disillusioned, with eyes wide open and desires materialized; terrified by what they see, yet interlocked with these manifestations in a perpetual dialectic of becoming through one another. Narcissus could not look away from the apparition of his face in the pool's surface, but what we lack in his story, the knowledge the myth has robbed us of, is the *depth* of the reflected image, its messy and disturbing background, the *mud* of the pool's bottom that must be accounted for if we are to believe in it. So as much as I want to discuss Narcissus's reflection that, according to Ovid (1826: III, 531), is an "empty being,"[8] first I must *give* it a substance, flesh it out, make it human by pointing to Narcissus's horror of being perennially drawn not only

---

8 In the original Latin version *nil habet ista sui*, "has no substance of its own" (Ovid 1892: III, 433).

to his own beautiful face, but to the mud behind it. Ovid tells us that there is no such thing as mud at the bottom of the pool, that its surface is two-dimensional, unstained and uninterrupted both from above as from below:[9] his is the description of a virginal mirror, unsoiled by a human reflection, desire or emotion. But the moment Narcissus leans over this surface that casts a reflection with no history, the mud resurfaces in 19th-century mirror texts to show us that Narcissus did not die there, his body had dissolved but he persevered as a Sign, as the mud of the narcissistic event that incessantly echoes in the mirror, the repressed that comes back to light.

Introspection

I stay with the myth a while longer, to establish a thematic and semantic foundation for this discussion. Ovid's Narcissus is a complex, and yet unfinished, character: he stares into his reflection, but sees only love that burns him. There seems to be no development there, no fear, no mud. Everything is clean, the reflection is, for the most part, unbroken. This is where we need to push Ovid's story further and make it face its limits; because Narcissus exists in *time*, as does his gaze. Ovid's pool and protagonist are designed as two-dimensional, narratively bent on the idea of self-love, but the temporality I summon into this discussion undermines their flatness and establishes a current (or a narrative machine) that pushes them towards the 19th-century mirrors. Narcissus does not glances, he *gazes*; and since he gazes at himself, his eye articulates a

9 "There stands a fountain in a darksome wood,
Nor stain'd with falling leaves, nor rising mud;
Untroubled by the breath of winds it rests,
Unsully'd by the touch of men or beasts" (Ovid 1826: III. 499-502).

line with the fertile, muddy bottom of the pool and along this line his self-discovery progresses from the reflecting surface towards both the flesh of his observing body and mud of the pool. These two ends, like poles of an axis, are structurally the same, as there is no body of Narcissus (no content to his two-dimensional reflection) without the mud that fleshes it out. At first, he does not recognize himself, estranging his body instead; he projects it onto the surface and approaches it as someone else's, attaching himself to this Same as the Other. The reflection he sees is just a "shadow"[10] (Ovid 1826: III. 531): a form, contour, appearance without flesh, or substance; it is removed from fullness and cast into textuality. But time interrupts its hollowness and calls it into content, because Narcissus's self-recognition emerges. By the end of the story, Narcissus does becomes aware that he is in love with his own reflection, his *simulacrum* Ovid tells us, filling the contour (*formae*) with his once again discovered self, demonstrating that if one looks into one's own reflection long enough, if one is forced to face one's own image often enough (as was the historical happenstance of the 19th century), the mud is bound to rise from the bottom and fill the empty, two-dimensional image in the glass. Narcissus's story is one of enlightenment that, nevertheless, sinks him into darkness and oblivion. It is not the image that consumes him, but the return of the forgotten/repressed self.

My aim here is to establish the trope of returning, rising, resurfacing, coming back to light as the trope of the narcissistic act by the desire's necessity to come back to its source. The mud of the introspective act is the metaphor that matches it at the narrative register of this text (my text), while it changes form from one analysed mirror narrative

10 In the original Latin version *forma*, a "form," or a "contour" (Ovid 1892: III, 352), or *simulacrum* (Ovid 1892: III, 433).

to the other. In the mirror encounter something always comes back to liberate me, still me or perennially haunt me, inscribing introspection of the narcissistic libidinal turn into the very materiality of any and every reflective surface.

The horror of the introspection emerges in Charles Collins's short story "No. 3. Branchline. The Compensation House," where we find a character whose awareness of his deepest mud (memories, desires and fears) engulfs him in enduring darkness. Published as part of the 1866 Christmas edition of *All the Year Around*, along with many now famous short stories (such as Dickens's *The Signal Man*), it was designed to spook the reader by its description of eisoptrofobia – the fear of one's own reflection. In its intent to instil mystery, the story jumps forwards and backwards in time, piecing a puzzle of the protagonist's condition and mimicking the process of reflecting, as it continually returns to him from various sources (firstly from John Masey the butler, than from Dr Garden and finally from the anonymous narrator himself). Mr Strange, the character in question, killed his wife's lover some years ago, served the sentence and paid his dues (of sorts), but since than every mirror reflects the victim's face instead of his own. This results in his shunning away mirrors; they produce fits of rage or catalepsy in him. Incapable of coping with his obvious guilt, he shuts himself inside the Compensation House and withers away succumbing to a lung disease; but not before confessing his sins and, thus, finally regaining his reflection.

The theme that, in this story, naturally insulates itself is the power of conscience; Collins makes this perfectly clear.[11] What makes it invaluable for the present discussion,

---

11 "[I]t was not likely that an affliction, lifelong and terrible, such as this he had endured, would come upon him unless some misdeed had provoked the punishment" (605). And towards the end: "'The

however, is the use of mirrors and self-perception as the narrative and imagological vehicle of that theme. Conscience (as a special and separate capacity for self-observance), past (as the curve of the narcissistic event) and the trope of the return of the repressed are in "The Compensation House" tightly tied to the mirroring event, creating a spot from where to resurrect Narcissus through Mr. Strange's introspective horror.

Towards the end of "Narcissism: An introduction" Freud (1981) discusses the role of conscience in narcissistic object-choice. According to his theory, narcissism in adults is characterised by an attempt at recovery of childhood *primary narcissism*, the state in which ego-instincts and libido-instincts were working for the same cause (when the object of libido-instincts was the ego). The main cause for abandoning this "blissful state of mind" (89) is the development of *conscience* (that will in his later texts be rethought as the super-ego), an external agency that first embodies parental, than societal, criticism. Conscience is, thus, the seat of prohibitions impressed upon the individual (originally) *from without*, an institution that represses part of the individual's libido-instincts (because inappropriate) in the process of the development of the ego. These repressed instincts now must depart from their synchrony with ego-instincts and attach themselves to a new ideal created in the process (the ego ideal), as well as to the number of different objects. Satisfaction with respect to the objects, as well as with fulfilling the ideal, make the individual "whole" again. One might say that every love (every desire), in so far as it is a displacement of the primary narcissism onto objects, is narcissistic in a sense, because it involves unwillingness

chastisement of your crime," [the doctor] added, solemnly, "has been a terrible one. Let us hope in God's mercy that your punishment is over'" (606).

"to forgo the narcissistic perfection of […] childhood" (94) by sending object-cathexes to retrieve what was lost. Conscience in Freud is, thus, formative of narcissism, as an outside criticising and disciplinary agency that, if dissociated and exaggerated (as, for instance, in paranoia, or in mirror fantasies I am discussing), presents itself in "delusions of being watched" (96).

Mr. Strange is paranoid, for sure, but that is not my concern here: I am interested in the narcissism of the story as it parallels Ovid's version. The central episode of "The Compensation House" builds itself around one particular mirroring event, told by the doctor who witnessed it: as he enters the room, the doctor encounters Mr. Strange seated before a large mirror, deathly pale, speechless and motionless. As the psychological heart of the story, the episode is given importance in drama, as well as in detail and length of narration, stretching across one fifth of the story. The points I want to emphasise here are that of *time*, *scopic movement* and *corporal stillness*: Mr. Strange *gazes* at the mirror, at the face that is and is not his, at the face that he does not recognize despite the fact that it is his, is created by his mind, by the mud of his memory, fears and desire. In the fashion of Narcissus, he projects himself not onto the two-dimensional surface of the glass but *through* it in the act of visual penetration towards the mud that fleshes him out and makes him human; towards the final recognition of his self at the end of the story. This gaze is of a kinetic nature and it institutes a line in *time* towards the other end, while the horrific memory-material that it reaches (and that, literally, stands for his mirrored self) uses the same line to come back to him.[12] So conscience,

---

12 Another way of ascertaining the temporal dimension of Mr. Strange's encounter with his displaced self is by acknowledging his repeated cry: "'That face!' he cried, in accents of horror. 'That face' –

as an external agency made internal, establishes itself as the mirror's surface in all its hard materiality and by introspection (in time) develops depth.

What separates Narcissus and Mr. Strange is the reaction to the act: where before there was love, now there is fear, which puts into question the difference between the two. Both Narcissus and Mr. Strange are impelled to the act from without: Narcissus by Rhamnusia's will, Mr. Strange by conscience ("the spell which had held him […] enchained" (604)) and they both die at the end of it (the mirroring act), by the pool or the mirror, at the moment of final self-recognition that turns dying into liberation from pain, horror, self-awareness and introspection, from the horrible coercion/curse to live with eyes wide open and face oneself every step of the way. For the most part, "The Compensation House" is the resurrection of the Ovidian Narcissus in his 19th-century body made of fear, guilt and horror, made of "strangeness" that puts one always at the odds (odd angle, perhaps) with oneself. Collin's story is one of the return of the repressed self (strange to the observer even if recognized as one's own), of the Same as the Other, because what returns is familiar but never the same and it persist in the dislocated space that is fundamentally empty; nowhere, elsewhere, between traces. As Masey says, "Mr Strange is Strange by name, and Strange by nature, and Strange to look at into the bargain" (602).

"The Compensation House" (the story) relates the anxiety of perpetual self-awareness, but the Compensation House (the house in the story) articulates it in its textual materiality. Since the horror of the displaced reflection

_____

which is not mine – and which - I SEE INSTEAD OF MINE - always! […] His - only his - always his!' He stood still a moment, and then, with a loud and terrific scream, repeated those words, 'ALWAYS HIS, ALWAYS HIS,' and fell down in a fit before me" (605-6).

started, Mr. Strange has "seldom went out except at night" and when indoors, the "blinds were all closely drawn, and, when the door was shut, the dreary building gave no sign of life or occupation" (600). His awareness (of things that should stay buried) is so acute and his ability to repress the resurfacing mud so weakened, that not only he is consumed by darkness in every mirror encounter, but in every waking moment as well. The air in the house is stiff, dead, stilled, and every now and then the butler "would come forward and stand upon the doorstep, snuffing the air as one might do who was ordinarily kept on rather a small allowance of that element" (600). The Compensation House, thus, manifests Mr. Strange's inner state, it textually performs it, it substantiates the mud that rises in the narcissistic event; it dwells at the far end of Narcissus's introspective line where his reflection is fleshed out by that mud. In this act (of introspection) the house assumes the place and structure of his fears, enunciating the anxiety of his self-recognition, of his flesh that once awakened remained chained to him indefinitely. The Compensation House compensates; it compensates for the anxiety of the repressed memory that just won't stay repressed and buried. Paradoxically, yet, the house is also the place where the narcissistic process of mirroring ends (where Mr. Strange dies after finally regaining his mirror reflection), where facing one's demons is fully shaped and finalized, where the repressed is overcome and ultimate liberation is not only possible, but necessary. Therefore, the house enunciates *the topography of a mirror*, a configuration of its own polysemy, proclaiming the topography of the introspective act, of the line that crosses the mirror towards the mud, of the mud and of the mirror itself. Once risen, the protagonist's dreadful enlightenment rizomatically consumes the totality of the mirroring event in all its semantical postponements and dislocations and on

all textual levels: from that of his inner life, through the textual materiality of his dwelling, to the title of the story, the narrative that spreads around it like a mycelium, to the text I am writing about the subject, about the story, the title, and ultimately about myself.

But "The Compensation House" gives us even more than the importance of introspection in the mirroring, narcissistic event. It is a transcendental dream of return to a happy place of wholeness, libidinal utopia, semantic stillness and psychical death. As Mr. Strange stares into the mirror in the introspective movement towards the psychical bottom, he turns pale (colourless), speechless, motionless, "completely stupefied and lost," (604) "transfixed before the horrid image that turned him to stone […] as if attacked by catalepsy" (605). He is overwhelmed by what he sees, by the strangeness and disparity of the mirror image and by the memory that *is* that image, exhausted by the Sign he faces, by textuality that transposes him onto its fantastic (illusionary) background of the transcendental beyond. Petrification is the trope that stills the subject (like the suffocating air of the house), it kills it semantically and libidinously, it cancels its desire by promising the place with no motion. Freud's primary narcissism is that kind of place: the childhood (golden, projected into the past) state of libidinal wholeness, the "unassailable libidinal position that we ourselves have since abandoned" (Freud, "On Narcissism," 1981: 89), the place of "real happy love" that corresponds to "the primal condition in which object-libido and ego-libido cannot be distinguished" (100). Mirroring, in its petrifying effect as well as in its narcissistic nature is, in "The Compensation House," an attempt at failed forgetting, at becoming oblivious, numb, speechless, petrified, at making one's self whole again in the mirror, at returning to that place of stillness and real happy love, which is

the transcendental utopia of primary narcissism beyond textuality. Failed, because this utopia is non-existent, except in a (mirror) fantasy such as "The Compensation House," Ovid's two-dimensional Narcissus, Freud's primary narcissism or this text (my text) that recreates it over and again, looking for a way out of strangeness and duplication, and out of dislocation that leads nowhere. It also exists in a fantasy such as Plato's *Symposium*,[13] and in another one such as Aristophanes's speech about love in it, so we are back to myth, another one but the same, of the whole that becomes fragmented, one that becomes two and yearns to return to one, which makes "The Compensation House" a kind of commentary on Freud (and on Plato, Aristophanes, my text, itself) that comes before the text (in every sense). "The Compensation House" is the transcription of primary narcissism into the register of the anxiety of desiring and of the impossibility of attaining something (such as myth), or anything for that matter, something that never existed to begin with.

Re-repression as Semantic Cannibalism/Emesis

From everything said so far, it is clear that Narcissus is a double figure: not only is he in two different places at once (on the surface of the pool and next to it), but his double aspect emerges also from the narcissistic curve of the introspection. His reflected face is his obvious double, but what truly duplicates him (or, rather, multiplies him) is not this two-dimensional image, but the repressed and newly

---

13   Freud explicitly used the doubling myth from Plato's *Symposium* in the discussion of the death instinct as "a need to restore the earlier state of things" (Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," 1981: 57), as well as in the discussion of the deviations in respect of the sexual object in "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (Freud 1981: 136).

risen mud that fleshes it out. Dimensionality is once again at issue here, though this time, at the time of speaking about the double (the time of doubling) for a different reason.

The double, in various shapes and forms, is a frequent trope in literature, and not rarely connected with mirrors. Ever since Otto Rank's *The Double: A Psychoanalytical Study* (1914) and the somewhat later Ralph Tymms's *Doubles in Literary Psychology* (1949), the trope has received many in-depth analyses.[14] As early as 1914, Rank (an Austrian psychoanalyst and Freud's colleague) had established a connection between the double (in literature, film, folklore, "primitive societies") and narcissism, ascertaining that the double is a defence mechanism against a threat to narcissism, "which resists the utter immolation of the ego just as much as it resists its dissolution in sexual love" (85) thus pointing to the instinct for preservation of the self as the core of narcissistic desire. However, the trope of the double in Rank is a complex one, so we find that the erotic self-love is only possible "because along with it the defensive feelings can be discharged by way of the hated and feared double" (73). The double in Rank represents both the self-love and the repressed libido-instincts (in Freud's terms) that find release in the double's manifestation. But the curiosity that surfaces in many places in literature is that the double is the subject's active *pursuer* and not just an (evil) manifestation of its inner life (whether it be conscience ("The Compensation House"), vanity ("The King's Ball") or sin (*The Picture of Dorian Grey*)). Characters such as Lucy from Elizabeth Gaskell's "The Poor Clare" (1856), the narrator of Guy de Maupassant's "The Horla" (1887), or Yakov Petrovich Golyadkin from Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Double* (1866), to name only a few, are all haunted by their doubles, actively pursued by them. In Rank's view,

---

14 See, for instance, Herdman 1990 or Miller 1985.

this ambivalent estrangement, alienation, or detachment in the trope of a pursuing double (of the double that just won't go away) does not, paradoxically, signify a loss, but a "strengthening, a becoming independent and superiorly strong, which in its turn only shows the exceedingly strong interest in one's own self" (74). Therefore, the loss of one's image in the mirror (or the persecution by the other in the mirror, like in the case of Mr. Strange) is understood as its opposite, as "the recurrence of what is repressed in that which represses" (74).

Here I leave Rank. I have no interest in pasting his theoretical framework over the material at hand. I invoke his work because it is foundational for the topic (and is still highly relevant) and because of our mutual interest in the trope of *pursuit*. Thus I return to Narcissus, who, as I said, is a two-dimensional figure no more, but a character fleshed out by the mud of the introspective act. He is double by his reflected face, as well as by the mud. However, doubling in Narcissus exceeds these obvious points and extends far beyond his body, because Ovid's story is not about Narcissus exclusively, not about one character, but two, always about two, from the beginning to the very end, it is about Narcissus *and* Echo, about image *and* voice, doubling of the image *and* doubling of the voice, about the coordinating conjunction between them, the conjunction that coordinates their doubling, always in pairs and reflections and echoes through and through. Ovid's story coordinates a progressive duplication that starts long before Narcissus when Echo lost the ability of original speech and was reduced to repetition; it extends through her body's fading-out and its reduction to voice as the body's remnant and vocal double; it bounces over to Narcissus and the pool and the self and mirroring, just so it can bounce back to Echo who repeats, echoes, mimics, reflects, doubles his dying words. If this

is not enough to establish a parthenogenetic nature of their Platonic/Aristhophanian figures – if more is needed to elucidate the connection they share through the incessant splitting, multiplication and derivation – I am placing Narcissus's *body* against Echo's *body* so I can point to the structural doubling of their fates. As Echo's body withers in caves, secluded, alienated, detached, leaving behind nothing but bones and ultimately its echo, so Narcissus's melts "[a]s wax dissolves, as ice begins to run" (Ovid 1826: III. 599) isolated at the pool until there is nothing left of him but flower – and echo of his dying words ("Ah, youth, belov'd in vain! […] Farewell!" (Ovid 1826: III. 610, 612)). Echo is Narcissus's double that follows him around and is inseparable from him, she is his body made vocal, his image made vocal, she is where Narcissus begins as substantial anaclitic love-object and ends as vocal *forma* (or *simulacrum*), and where image and voice, body and echo, are interlocked in a semantic miscegenation through which they liberate and define one another. If I am permitted to follow this line of thought and push this argument to its logical conclusion, I should say that Echo is Narcissus's mud, that which he cannot escape summoning as soon as he looks into the mirror, she is the vocalization of his three-dimensional, fleshed out body that leans over the pool in horror, the voice in his head that just won't go away, the image that haunts Mr. Strange, the memory, fear, guilt.

So Narcissus has doubles; has them in front, as well as around him; it is in the nature of his love to make a curve, to bounce back, go back and forth, and to exploit the coordinating conjunction (but not to *be* that conjunction, not to settle, or dwell there). And it is precisely this kinetic aspect of Narcissus's doubling that serves as the ground for the pursuit trope, where he is being chased, haunted, continually visited (in the short-term meaning of a visit,

as in a visit of an unwanted visitor who ignores the rules of hospitality and keeps coming back after saying farewell time and again, even after being rudely kicked out of the house) by his Other that is Same, by the repressed that keeps coming back. But no matter the velocity of the bouncing back and forth, no matter the dynamics of the doubling event, its elements – the subject and the double – remain constant and fixed, logocentrically defined in their binary or/or relationship.

The 19th-century mirrors are, however, far more complex, and this or/or exclusionary relation is often hard to maintain due to the semiophagic effects of their cultural omnipresence. As I discussed in the previous chapter, mirrors participated in (if they were not directly responsible for) a historical semiophagic motion in the scopic register, where their proliferation seriously questioned the relationship between the reflection and the reflected, the "real" world and the visually mediated one. Mirrors participated in a sematic dislocation of the real and in its radical postponement by the always present looking-glass, and this postponement had implications for the narcissistic, mirroring event, for introspection, mud, the repressed, the double. These implications become truly visible once we substantialize them with a narrative, so in search of that narrative I turn to William Gilbert's short story "The King's Ball."

"The King's Ball" is a part of Gilbert's book *The Magic Mirror* (1865), that I will discuss in some detail in chapter 5. What is important to know at this point is that the eponymous magic mirror is an artefact with the power to fulfil wishes spoken in front of it, which implies (like every other "goldfish" narrative) that the result is (or should be) a manifestation and actualization of the subject's desires. The problem is, of course, that those wishing in front of it do

not know its powers and that the mirror fulfils wishes rather literally, illustrating the fact that one is rarely aware of the true nature of one's own desires.

"The King's Ball" is the last of the stories in the book and the last wish to be fulfilled before the mirror gets shattered, as is always the case with dangerous artefacts (mirrors especially). Bertha, the protagonist, is a young, vain and narcissistic girl, the daughter of a wealthy merchant in fifteenth-century London, sort of the Renaissance *nouveau riche*; her father just entered the court as the King's adviser. She prepares for the King's ball – her first – where she intends to dazzle the crowd by her appearance. Unfortunately for her, just before leaving the house she approaches the magic mirror "to catch one glimpse of herself" (236) and, impressed by what she sees, wishes the reflection could go to the ball instead of her so she, invisible, could follow it and hear the compliments that it cannot fail to receive. As the result, the reflection becomes alive, while Bertha fades to non-substantiality, incapable of doing anything but silently following it around. As it turns out, this reflection is Bertha's unhindered vanity, so at the ball it scorns everyone, insults a number of people and reaps more than a hand-full of hateful, sarcastic remarks; Bertha, helplessly trailing her double, hears (is aware of) every single one of them.[15] Back at home ashamed and devastated, she (still as the double) brakes the mirror in a fit of raging guilt, thus releasing herself from the spell and regaining substantiality (and becoming a humble, amiable creature in the future).

15 Apart from the obvious duplication as the result of mirroring, the parallel between Bertha/the reflection-as-Bertha and Narcissus/ Echo is discernible in the dichotomy between corporality and vocality: while the reflection-as-Bertha is a beautiful body that does not hear the comments during the ball, Bertha is her simulacrum (her body's echo) that hears and absorbs every single one of them.

This short story undeniably belongs to the large corpus of narratives in which the reflection (as a double) haunts the protagonist. But in Gilbert's version Bertha is not *haunted* by the double, but *substituted* by it; the reflection (as the double) does not materialize on the same plane with her, because she fades out into the reflection's role instead. Now the obvious question is precisely whose reflection is Bertha: is she a reflection of her reflection (that came to life and became she), or a reflection of herself (who became a reflection). What Gilbert gives us is a complete visual, material and semantic *perversion* in which the logos (the real) is postponed indefinitely; in the crudest possible sense, the Sign has swallowed reality and turned it not into a sign, but a trace of a trace of a trace *ad infinitum*. To translate it into the vocabulary of Narcissus I have developed so far, what we have here is the following: Bertha (from the beginning of the book depicted as a truly narcissistic person[16]) initiates introspection for "some moments regarding herself with an expression of great admiration" (236); this act turns her into her own reflection that manifests her inner desire and forces her to face herself as she is chained to the reflection she cannot control; the narcissistic event persist until the mirror is broken late at night, so the awareness of her inner self is her doom and she cannot avert her eyes from it until then. Structurally, not unlike in "The Compensation House" (or Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, that I left for the last chapter) most of "The King's Ball" is one long

16   "Master Walter descended into his counting-house, and was soon occupied with his business affairs, so much so as completely to forget the mirror for the moment. Not so Bertha: she retired to her chamber, and thought of nothing else. She had never appeared so beautiful in her own eyes as at the moment she saw herself reflected in it; and her image still remained on her mind. She considered also that she must appear to others as lovely as to herself; and if that were the case, what would ultimately be her lot?" (22).

self-encountering mirror gaze that binds Narcissus to her reflected image horrifying her by what emerges from the bottom, what resurfaces, comes back, bounces back from the double, disgusting her by the repressed impulses that rise to the surface.

Here thickens the story of Narcissus, fleshing out Bertha's Victorian body; here enters the problem of semiophagy and dimensionality. Upon coming home from the debacle of the King's ball, Bertha (the reflection, the double) gazes at herself in the mirror and everything she experienced rises vividly before her: "different scenes of the evening, the pleasure she had felt before the supper, the agreeable dances she had had, the ambitious hopes she had nourished, and lastly, the terrible insult and dissent she had experienced" (265). She "dwells" on the signs of the repressed things emerging (things omitted in her narcissistic self-focus, but actually heard by her double, the "real" Bertha), and "as she thought over it her passion rose in proportion, till at last, no longer mistress of her actions […]" she smashes the mirror "in a fit of ungovernable fury" (266).

I want to emphasise the fact that it is the *reflection* that gazes at itself here (not the "real" Bertha), a narrative twist that creates a scopic loop and throws the act of introspection into multi-dimensionality. At this point in discussion it becomes painfully impossible maintaining the distinction between the "real" Bertha and her reflection, between Bertha and the double, because the logocentric or/or binarism has long since began swallowing itself *ad infinitum*. Gilbert's truly Victorian imagination presents us with a scopic contraption in the manner of opposing mirrors in *Quite Alone*, in which the reflection encroaches upon the subject obliterating their ontic difference and reducing the subject to an always already displaced sign. The subject-as-

reflection consumes itself in the act of circular narcissistic introspection, invoking a sort of auto-digestion, a scopic/ semantic cannibalism indicative of the Victorian era.

What I want to propose here is thinking about this *semantic cannibalism* in terms of the introspective act and of Narcissus's mud. If Gilbert gives us an introspective act of mirroring as an act of semantic cannibalism, what does it swallow and what does it digest? The simplest answer would be that it digests *that which keeps coming back to the surface*: it re-represses it just so it can come back again. From the perspective of narcissism, semantic cannibalism (as the re-repression of the returned, its pushing down or holding back, as one pushes down/holds back the food that returns from the stomach) implies a kind of *semantic emesis*, in which what is swallowed by the Sign is digested and vomited in the narcissistic curve. One represses by digesting, pushes it towards the bottom, hides it from view and transforms it, but when it returns to the surface, when it emerges again in the mirror, as it would at the lips, it is distorted, disgusting, revolting, and muddy. Here I want to point out the semantic connection between Narcissus's pool and the stomach, between the mud, digested food and the unconscious, as well as between the inward gaze (that resurfaces the mud) and emesis (that resurfaces the contents of the stomach). So I focus on Bertha and her double, on the doubling of her double that is a potentially infinite simultaneity of cannibalism and emesis; and if I am permitted to push my argument further and say that semantic cannibalism/ emesis (as the re-repression of the returned and vomiting of the digested) is pointedly a pursuit of one's own image – of one's logocentric "reality," "corporality," "wholeness" that keeps receding, of the real – I choose to return to Freud's discussion on pursuit in connection with paranoia so as to arrive at the notion of *semantic paranoia* characterized by

a "fixation at the stage of narcissism" (Freud, "Psychoan-alytic Remarks," 1981: 72) to which corresponds typical megalomania, the sexual overrating of oneself created by the reflected image that lurks at every window shop, barber shop, restaurant, drawing room, bedroom, theatre, every 19th-century London public and private space, creating a full circle of Victorian narcissistic mirror fantasy, a fantasy in which the only possible escape from this perennial circling of desire – from the introspective act historically impressed upon the subject, bouncing back and forth between the subject and the double and the coordinating conjunction that keeps displacing the "real" in circles – is shattering the mirror as a destruction of that circle, as arrival at stillness, transcendental utopia, catalepsy or psychic death – *semantic suicide* in which a reflection kills itself because there is nothing else to be done; because the logocentric subject has been long gone.

The consequence of my argument for the semiophagy of the Narcissus's mud is that it transforms something previously understood as a two-dimensional event into a three-dimensional figure. I previously described introspection as a line connecting two poles – the subject and its unconscious, its mud, the pool's bottom – but "The King's Ball" capitalized on the historicity of the mirror's (reflection's) omnipresence, revealing its 19th-century nature of cyclical rising and re-repressing (always already re-repressing). The visual presentation of this process would look like an *Ouroboros*, the snake biting its tail, the one imagined by the protagonist of *Quite Alone*, with a slight difference that the snake never eats the entirety of its tail, because there is always a leftover, a semantic surplus to be found as a trace, which puts the snake's body in perpetual motion of displacement. Thus, the line of introspection that connects the subject and the mud is not two-dimensional (does not

connect two dots in space), but has its own lateral depth of the cyclical return in which a straight line is just a two-dimensional projection of a circle that is always already elsewhere, moved by the revolution of returns and re-repressions, of semantic cannibalism and emesis.

The Anxiety of Textual Awareness

In the cyclical revolution of risings and fallings, of re-awakenings and re-repressings, what precisely *is* the mud that will not stay put, but keeps resurfacing in mirror encounters. If we can agree that there is a connection (or a structural resemblance) between the stranger in the mirror, the double, the empty reflection, the reflection that comes to life and the subject that fades into reflectivity, what is it that pervades all of them manifesting as fear, horror, hate, rage, anxiety, as well as their affective opposites of speechlessness, motionlessness, colourlessness, petrification, or catalepsy. This antagonism, or contradiction, between seemingly opposite affects – duality that keeps returning throughout the mirror narratives and, by consequence, in my text (this text) on 19th-century mirrors (or it might, quite plausibly, be said that it is the other way around, since one can never be sure which text comes before and which after, my contradictory writing about mirror texts or their contradictions that my writing pushes to the point of visibility, the old question of the hierarchy of text and commentary) – is a translation of semantic cannibalism/emesis into the narrative structure of a work of art. Therefore, the issue of semantic kinesis, of a two-directional movement of the narcissistic event, is at the heart of this discussion, the issue that keeps breaking into dependable polarities and dialectics, not unlike that of Mr. Strange and the man he murdered, Bertha and her reflection, Narcissus and Echo, the bouncing back and forth

between the mud and the subject, digesting and vomiting, cannibalism and emesis, narcissistic and anaclitic love, and, ultimately, between semantic kinesis itself and stillness as wholeness/emptiness of a motionless utopia.

Due to the infinite openness of the sign, antagonisms of this kind multiply indefinitely and none of them has the power to settle the issue, or close the discussion since the discussion cannot be closed, in as much as a sign cannot be stilled, circumscribed, positively named or contained. Thus bouncing back and forth, resurfacing and re-repressing extends through all the registers of my argument, from the myth, to the 19th-century mirror narratives, to their protagonists, their titles, Freud's narcissism, my text about them all, this text. What I want to say is that the displacement that manifests itself on every register – the stranger in the glass, the uncanny familiarity of the unrecognizable self, the narcissistic curve, the perpetual recurrence of desire, the phantom desiring object – is the effect of the incessant postponement of the sign, of dissemination; it is the effect of textuality itself.

Narcissuses of the 19th-century mirror encounters gaze at their reflected selves and see radical displacements in forms of ghosts, strangers or doubles. In *Victorian Glassworlds*, Isobel Armstrong claims (208: 111) that the "language of phantoms haunts Victorian mirror poems," but the truth is that it haunts short stories, fairy tales and novels equally. I have already discussed Charles Collins's "The Compensation House," and I noted "A Horrible Reflexion" by an anonymous author. Among the "mirror poetry," Mary Coleridge's "The Other Side of a Mirror" (1882) is particularly interesting for this discussion: here we find a woman gazing at herself in the mirror and "conjur[ing] up a vision bare […] The vision of a woman wild / With more than womanly despair" (88). Throughout the poem, the conjured ghost is speechless, dreaded, mad, envious, completely

objectified and projected onto the glass in the emotionally potent narcissistic act of mirroring, while self-recognition comes with the very last line in the poet's exclaiming "I am she!" "The King's Ball" is just one example from William Gilbert's *The Magic Mirror*; the other would definitely be "Physician's Wife" in which the magic mirror brings the doctor's wife back from the dead. In Eliza Linton's "The Old Lady Story" (1854) the girl perceives a male image in the mirror that keeps haunting her, finally manifesting itself in real life and ruining her; in "The Late Miss Hollington" (1868), by anonymous author, the situation is reversed but same, as the protagonist looks at a girl in the mirror, only to realize that he is speculating about himself. "A little chill smile came to my lips at this discovery; but I felt hardly any surprise at seeing myself thus so different from what I had ever been before" (453); in Edward Bulwer-Lytton's "A Strange Story" (1862) the protagonist is placed before a mirror but he simply "did not recognize himself" (487); Edith Nesbit's "A Looking-Glass Story" (1887) give us mirrors that project first the future (in the form of a place to be visited) and then the past (in the form of an apparition of the murder victim); in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (to be discussed shortly), the picture as a reflection and Dorian stand at material, ethical, ontic and esthetical odds, betraying the play of kinesis (the ageing picture) and stillness (Dorian), as well as invoking the concept of animation regarding this play; in Elizabeth Gaskell's "The Poor Clare" (1856), the mirror finally reveals the evil double in a scene of horror.

> In the great mirror opposite I saw myself, and right behind another wicked fearful self, so like me that my soul seemed to quiver within me, as though not knowing to which similitude of body it belonged. My father saw my double at the same moment, either in its dreadful reality, whatever that might be,

or in the scarcely less terrible reflection in the mirror; but what came of it at that moment I cannot say, for I suddenly *swooned away* […] (539).

On a certain level, this displacement in the mirror is indicative of the tension between that which is, can be, or should be perceived in the glass and that which the subject expects. In the short story "My Father's Secret" (1861) by anonymous author, a boy internalizes his father's gaze manifesting conscience as the external agency made internal. "What about all caused this uneasy sensation on my part," says the boy, "was the consciousness […] that my father was constantly […] watching me. Watching me, woo with a sort of anxious, fearful expectancy, as if there was about me something alarming or unnatural, that should stamp me as a creature apart from the rest of my species." The boy keeps watching himself in the mirror, trying to find that which his father is afraid of, but the mirror keeps reflecting the familiar face in which he "could […] detect no incongruities calculated to justify the uneasiness" (515). What this story tells me is that once I face myself in the mirror, I realize that within me rests the host of people that raised me, protected me, instructed me, trained me and that what I see in the mirror, what I see in the wholeness of my body that I search for and libidinously invest in, are bodies of all these other people, as they inhabit me, populate me, are part of my flesh as much as of my mind, they are my bio-graphy, so to face the mirror I need to prepare myself not only for the encounter with many faces I might have wished away at some point, or brutally murdered within me, but prepare for the dissolution of myself, of myself as I, which is the hardest of all encounters, that encounter which knows no limits and have no rules, and once it starts it turns into an epitome of madness, like with Mr. Strange, like with Coleridge, like, at the sum of things, with Dorian

Grey, and I turn into Pandora but the box is mine while it is everyone else's, and once this starts, once the mirroring begins I am aware that I am nothing (just like Narcissus did), *forma*, *simulacrum*, that there is nothing left of me for myself, my flesh is devoured by others, but that happened long time ago I just didn't get the memo, no one told me, but it happens again and again in circles, because mirroring is enlightenment that kills me in order to revive me differently, a return of the repressed, flesh and bones, the uncanny.

However, there is an ideal in the mirror, a sort of ego ideal, so in mirroring I prohibit myself veering from it. That ideal becomes the mirror illusion of a semantic and corporal wholeness that in the libidinal register translates into a promise of the attainment of the desiring object (which is that wholeness), of return to wholeness of the childhood narcissism. The anxiety of the encounter – in the form of fear, anger, madness, speechlessness, or catalepsy – rises from the disparity between the mirror's promise of the transcendental utopia (that place beyond semantic kinesis, beyond dissemination, beyond text) and the immanent textuality of the reflected image. In looking in the mirror I fall for the illusion of my body's and my self's finiteness and integrality. Therefore, consequence of the mirroring event is the subject torn between the semantic impossibility of that integrality and the projection (that assumes logocentric self-referentiality) imbued with libidinal potential and turned into a love-object. Here are opposite forces of narcissistic and anaclitic love, of self-love and object love, of self-love through object love, of self-love through the objectified image, the love of the Self-as-Same through the Self-(in the image)-as-Other (the image). We can see, than, that mirroring is the process of establishing the image as love-object, as well as the process of repressing the awareness of its semantic incongruity –

the process of simultaneously inviting and re-repressing the disseminating, kinetic, textual nature of that image. What resurfaces and is re-repressed is the inherently postponed/displaced nature of logos, the *différance*, or the difference of differences. The horror of the mirror texts, than, that fear of the other that appears in the mirror, the doubling, is the fear of the self's innate incongruence in the face of textuality. The mirror offers a semantic/libidinal/psychic death residing between the traces, the emptiness within the sign that *différance* would embody if embodiment were possible, if there could be such a thing as embodiment (if the signification chain could be stopped and logos actually emerged to possess the emptiness I am trying to sketch), but this embodiment might be understood as just another insecure form, limitless in every direction, open on all ends and empty as the emptiness it embodies.

19th-century mirror texts that concern the uncanny, displaced images in the glass are points of Narcissus's return as the character fleshed out by the mud that is a peculiar sort of existential anxiety. Here textuality erupts in its denuded nature as that which is known but not recognized, and hidden in plain sight so that nobody can see it. If these mirror texts are eruptions of the repressed (of the differential nature of the self and the body, of arche-writing, "movement of différance" (Derrida 1997: 60)), the literary fantasies that manifest them are dreamlike floodings caused by destruction of psychical barriers; they are releases of the repression's pressure points. In these fantasies the subject faces the horror of semantic instability, the chaos of the existence without logos; it fears the uncertainty, looking for a way out of dissemination in the form of some magical or otherwise resolution of that-which-cannot-be-resolved, or as a final destruction of the self through physical or psychical death (such as the mirror-shattering or

painting-stabbing). But, more importantly, these fantasies orchestrate the desire for narcissistic transcendence and are points in which the desiring anxiety is *pacified*. From this perspective, the mirror texts are limited and controlled outbursts of anxiety (glimpses into the horror of logos-less existence) that simultaneously re-repress it so as to prevent the subject from experiencing the hopelessness and nothingness of *différance*. As much as they are libidinal outlets of existential angst, mirror texts are sedatives that put the consciousness, once historically awakened by the proliferation of mirrors, back to sleep; otherwise it would suffer exceedingly from a seemingly unresolvable conflict. Collins, Gilbert, Carroll, and Wilde – they all write about mirroring in order to free themselves from their mirror images, to endure the anxiety of the rising mud.

And here I am once more at Freud's doorstep, leaning against the woodwork of his theory, approaching anxiety as a sign of moderate psychic danger that prevents a large, life-threatening one,[17] such as the surge of semantic paranoia, that is nothing else but a re-repression of the repressed that keeps coming back, the experience of birth, separation from the mother, castration, the separation of the super-ego that comes back to ego as the internalized exteriority, and of the father that keeps looking at me, searching for something and not finding it, but repressing it nevertheless, populating and devouring me until I end up in front of the same mirror, doing the same damn thing, looking for an exit out of this anxiety, which is nothing else but textuality of my Self and the endless, horrifying dissemination of my projection in the mirror that I am not sure whether is my own or somebody else's, maybe of my wife's lover I murdered, in circles, over and again, rising and falling, like a tide, bouncing back and forth between textuality and the narcissistic utopia beyond it,

17 See, Freud, "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety", 1981.

writing about the mirrors while I write about myself in the act of textual cannibalism that vomits everything, returns it into the text so it can rise to me again, in loops, like this sentence that cannot be stopped, because cyclical, cyclical because it follows the only rule of the sign which is displacement, the endless semantic kinesis and infinitely numerous antagonisms that cannot resolve a thing, any thing, but also the Thing, but can discuss it, talk about it, about reflections and mirrors and selves, and push them further, nowhere. If I push this suicidal thought even further, pressure it to its logical limit, what is ultimately repressed and continually comes back to haunt me is the ontic emptiness of the sign, the blank space between the signifier and the signified, the coordinating conjunction that is the still space between traces of logos. This is where the text is dead, where language fails, where desire is satiated, because there is nothing that can signify it, it is the signified without a signifier; death as fullness, death as nothingness, as the ultimate *objet a* and the measure of every love-object. Saying that it is the semantic *nihil* that emerges in these text means stilling the kinesis of their infinite polysemy, but their movements, complexities, contradictions, antagonisms and anxieties must be considered: along with death as *logos* (as the self-referential backdrop) there resurfaces the textual nature of the self that must be separated from it, as they articulate different directions of the narcissistic event. While text continually moves (in that a sign refers only to another sign), death as the ultimate signified is a logocentric, transcendentalist notion that pulls text back to itself, in attempt at anchoring it and petrifying it, turning the subject into stone so as to kill the kinesis and prevent bouncing back and forth between the subject and the image, body and voice, body and word, sign and sign. So places of re-repressed textual awareness – the mirror texts – are both vehicles of semantic kinesis as well as of libidinal, orgasmic surges, of

small deaths which are one death over and over – *la petite mort* – the phantom points of desire's end, psychic death, salvation, transcendence. As the return of the repressed, the dead background of textual existence, the subject – the Narcissus – glimpses at the *nihil* of his own existence, and as a consequence dies, swoons away, or falls asleep once again.

PS: Mastery

One of the figures capable of withstanding semantic paranoia (of keeping it at bay) is the Dandy (the other, as I will show, is Alice). My entry point for the understanding of his resilience is Giorgio Agamben's interpretation (1993: 53): a dandy (in his analysis, Beau Brummell) exhibits "an asceticism that equals the most mortifying mystical techniques," through which "he constantly cancels from himself any trace of personality," reducing himself to a thing. Taking up his argument, I must note that these techniques are, however, innately narcissistic, as the dandy transforms himself into a thing, or a work of art, through long hours in front of a mirror. If the dandy is a "Zen master," as Agamben claims, he is a Zen master of introspection and psychical restraint against the dread of what returns from the bottom – he is the master of textuality. This mastery is, nevertheless, paid in ontic currency, because it is precisely his self-objectification and self-inanimation that allows him to resist the effects of textual awareness.

Throughout the 19th century, the dandy had constantly been perceived as "something" more or less than human, in that he (it?) produced an uncanny feeling of a miraculously awakened object or an inanimate living organism. "[T]he creature in question is no more a production of nature," says Polonious Pigtail in his three-piece satirical article/lecture *On the Classification of Dandies*, "than is a yew three clipped

into the form of a dumb waiter, or of a Bengal tiger; and that it is to be considered solely as manufactured article" (1821: 142). Another correspondent of Kaleidoscope, Charlotte, observed in the same tone:

> [A] strange being made its appearance in the room, which, I afterwards understood, was an ultra dandy from London. In speaking of this interesting object, I must use the impersonal pronoun, for it seemed to be neither man nor woman, but a spoiled resemblance of both. It was starched and stayed to such a degree, and its movements were so stiff, that nature seemed to have made its neck and backbone without a single joint (1822: 322).

Yet another: "The dandy puzzled us greatly. We could discern from the newspapers that it was a sort of natural curiosity" that "break[s] down the barriers which separate this remarkable non-descript from the human species" (A Village Beau 1824: 356-7). Observe that the dandy in public imagination is repeatedly referred as "it," an entity that exceeds not only binary gender oppositions but humanity as such, demanding the impersonal pronoun to designate the artificiality of its body, presence and existence. Walking along this ontic border, or accomplishing the feat of crossing to the other side, allows the Dandy to face with eyes wide open the innate semantic incongruity of his body, its semantically open, logos-less nature, and survive the encounter (keep the semantic paranoia at bay) longer than anyone else. This awareness of the artificial, arbitrary nature of the self, of the self as a sign, leads him to the possibility of constructing and reconstructing it at will, as one would do with a doll[18] or a mannequin.[19] The dandy's disturbing inanimation, that "something" uncanny about his appearance, is the price of

18 "[A]ll the short-sighted people who have risked their say upon Brummell, describe him as a sort of doll" (D'Aurevilly 1897: 69).

19 "Torriano, in his Italian Dictionary, regards it [the dandy] as 'a dwarf, a pretty little man, a manikin […]" (Jerrold 1910: 277).

the insight into artificiality of Life that the dandy enjoys, plays with and exploits to the fullest.

The best illustration of my argument comes from the other end of the 19th-century and is, of course, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1891). Dorian Grey is the final dandy (the "ultra-dandy") of the Victorian era, the character that capitalizes on all the preceding dandies in literature and life. He is an "arbiter elegantiarium" to whom Life is an artificial creation, "the first, the greatest, of the arts," (Wilde 2006: 110) the *techne*. The mythical inspiration behind his character is made explicit from the beginning,[20] resuscitating the ancient Narcissus and fleshing him out in a 19th-century body of loveless terror. The importance I ascribe to him, however, lies with his picture, or more precisely with his attitude towards it. Unlike Mr. Strange who cannot bare the other's face in the mirror, Bertha who succumbs to her double, or the protagonist of "A Horrible Reflexion" who maniacally runs between mirrors attempting to reconnect with his lost reflection, Dorian faces his demon, his incongruous self, *head on*, finding pleasure in observing the horror of semantic displacement. "Often, on returning home from one of those mysterious and prolonged absences," says Wilde,

> that gave rise to such strange conjecture among those who were his friends, or thought that they were so, he himself would creep upstairs to the locked room, open the door with the key that never left him now, and stand, with a mirror, in front of the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him, looking now at the evil and aging face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure. He grew more and more enamoured of his own

20 "Why, my dear Basil, he is a Narcissus" (6), says Lord Henry Wotton.

beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul. He would examine with minute care, and sometimes with a monstrous and terrible delight, the hideous lines that seared the wrinkling forehead or crawled around the heavy sensual mouth, wondering sometimes which were the more horrible, the signs of sin or the signs of age. He would place his white hands beside the coarse bloated hands of the picture, and smile. He mocked the misshapen body and the failing limbs (109).

Wilde's Narcissus gives us what the Ovid's withheld from us and what we had to distil out of him, and that is the three-dimensionality of the narcissistic event of mirroring. The more Dorian grows enamored with his own beauty, the more he is interested in what returns from the bottom. He observes the mud of his inner life, but instead of going mad, fading out or experiencing fits of rage and catalepsy, he actually finds *pleasure* in it, and even taunts it. Voluntarily (unlike Bertha) switching places with his reflection so that the picture can change while he remains unaltered, Dorian arrests the logos-less chaos as something detached from the subject, something that happens outside of him, placing himself outside the text, in a transcendental utopia of narcissism where time stands still and the subject is whole, unaltered, inert, petrified, inanimate, while the picture changes, shifts, moves in motions that should otherwise produce madness, dread, fury, paranoia. As long as the picture is alive and Dorian possesses it, he participates in a mirroring event which unearths the repressed, ugly truth of corruption and decay, of "bloated arms" and the cadaverous "worm"[21] invoking muddy, putrefying contents of moist bottoms, such as the swamp or the stomach.

Ultimately, he does succumb to the dread, that is true, proving that the existential anxiety of the semantic

_____

21 "What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas" (101).

paranoia can be suffered only so far before the horror finally creeps in;[22] but in his turning into a work of art, in his killing himself so he could live longer, he articulates the possibility of the resistance to the semantic paranoia, the price of which is humanity, or, in other words, the capacity for love, emotion, desire. If he hadn't killed himself in the end, there would have been no more utopian character than he. Dorian is a master of emotions, of their movements and semantic potency, because he sees through their imposed and illusionary "realness" or "naturality";[23] he is a master of stillness, the self-created Stonemason. His predictable end by semantic suicide, by the murder of the Other as the Same testifies to the inevitability of the Law, the "truth," logos and libidinal primacy of blissful ignorance, but his resistance is that which makes the entire novel grand, the story of Narcissus that keeps gazing at himself, at the horror and putrefaction and bloated hands and everything that is he but is not, there, in the Picture, separated from him as the radical displacement of his self, his textual soul that keeps moving, shifting, changing, reflecting him in the misstep of rhizomatic spreading of semiosis, telling me that the only possibility of coping with the textual nature of my self and the world I perceive not only in the mirror but around me is the humanity of my emotions and of my desire that keeps me within text, spreading in all direction, exploring every possible avenue of the sign.

---

22 "Time stopped for him. Yes: that blind, slow-breathing thing crawled no more, and horrible thoughts, Time being dead, raced nimbly on in front, and dragged a hideous future from its grave, and showed it to him. He stared at it. It's very horror made him stone" (141).

23 "A man who is master of himself can end a sorrow as easily as he can invent a pleasure. I don't want to be at the mercy of my emotions. I want to use them, to enjoy them, and to dominate them" (93).

EXAHUSTED AT THE LAKE'S SHORE
William Potts and the Grand Boudoir Glass

Across the 19th-century, glass and mirrors more often than not provoked excessive emotional states such as awe, faintness or speechlessness. I pointed to this phenomenon while discussing the 1820s Coburg Mirror Curtain and the mirrored ceilings of the Junior Crockford's Club. Immense, visually overpowering mirrors were a novelty back then and general public was still not used to them. The abyss of mirror games (such as the infinity one from Sala's *Quite Alone*) was for most people still unbearably intense; the eye was not accustomed to the inevitable doubling of the world, of others and of the self, nor to their opening up to a new spatial dimension that was not really there. Over the years, a profusion of impressions – their multiplication and constant dissemination through public space – forced the eye towards places that many would have rather be left unaware of; for every mirroring event is implicitly narcissistic and the mud of the introspection resurfaces and the pressure points of repressions are released and one is sentenced to self-confrontation whether they like it or not.

By the middle of the century, walking the open streets of London and Paris, or enjoying the public spaces such as department stores and restaurants, deluged the city dwellers with reflections as walls covered in mirrors toppled them and

lower parts of buildings became transparent and seemingly suspended in the air. In a climate such as this, one would expect that the astonishment with the glass material, with its attractive properties of translucency and reflectivity, would subside, but exactly opposite was the case: by the mid-century glass and mirrors turned into wonderlands. The person partially responsible for this change was the architect Joseph Paxton.

When, from the 1950s onwards, scholars regained interest in everything Victorian, Paxton, the Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition became heavily exploited topics. The immensity of the structure and complexity of the Exhibition; the effort put into organizing and producing an event of such scale at that time; the astonishment of the national and foreign public; all that transformed the Crystal Palace and its content into an almost omni-explanatory chart of the mid-Victorian culture.[24] For that reason and more, the Crystal Palace seems unavoidable for one interested in mirror fantasies as I am, even at the cost of being repetitive or unoriginal.

The Palace was made of 300,000 plates of glass covering a 92,000 m^2 area, its size and its effulgence unprecedented, creating a glass/mirror fantasy visually manifested by the effect Agamben (1993: 38) calls a "bluish halo." As a giant reflective/translucent structure, constructed so as to play

24 The literature on this topic is so vast that it would be impossible to cover it completely. Some of the more important and comprehensive studies are, Hobhouse 1950; Ffrench 1950; Greenhalgh 1988; Purbrick 2001; Beaver 1970; Davis 1999; Auerbach 2001; Fay 1951; Stocking Jr. 1987; Young 2008; Buzzard et al. 2007 is an excellent, relatively recent, compendium of important issues on the Crystal Palace, including an analysis of The Grand Boudoir Glass by Isobel Armstrong; Richardson 1990 is an extraordinary, in-depth analysis of the Exhibition as a consolidating point of the Victorian society of spectacle; I follow Armstrong 2008 in understanding the Exhibition and the Crystal Palace as part of the wider context of the Victorian glass and mirror culture.

with the observer's senses and conjure up a phantom of lightness and non-presence, the Palace was considered an epicenter of Britain's economic, historical, industrial and civilizational progress. The Exhibition it housed, said *Eliza Cook's Journal*, was "to industry what galleries of painting and sculpture are to art – what a library is to literature – what a museum is to science – what a zoological and botanical garden is to natural history – a chart of the progress of mankind" (Jericho 1850: 217). But more importantly for my present discussion, the Crystal Palace was the object of desire, an edifice that by its very translucent/reflective structure invited the observer to participate in its architectural design that projected a psycho-emotional wonderland. Across numerous accounts, the Palace, glass and mirrors emerge as libidinous non-spaces of wholeness beyond desiring, narcissistic fantasies of cutting the ties with the outside world and redirecting desire towards the inside (the reflection, the flesh, the mud), obliterating the distinction between the self and the world in an act of implosion that promises contact with something non-changing and real.

In "Languages of Glass," Isobel Armstrong marvels at "how often representations in the Exhibition portray states either steeped in sleep or reverie or else galvanized into startled and violent life" (2007: 71). These states of sleep/reverie and violent life apply particularly well to the fantasy of reflective/translucent surfaces, where the experience of solid or transparent reflection is always more or less than expected, like depression and rage in Coleridge's "The Other Side of a Mirror." The language of excess can, for instance, be seen in *Sharpe's London Journal* where the Crystal Palace is described as if "stolen from the golden country of the 'Thousand-and-one-Night'" (1851: 250); or in a description from the *Times*:

> The vast fabric [...] *an Arabian Nights structure*, full of light, and with a certain airy *unsubstantial character* about it which belongs more to *enchanted land* than to this gross material world of ours. The eye, accustomed to the solid heavy details of stone and lime or brick and mortar architecture, wanders along these extensive and transparent aisles with their terraced outlines, almost *distrusting its own conclusions on the reality of what it sees*, for the whole looks like *a splendid phantasm*, which the heat of the noon-day sun would *dissolve*, or gust of wind *scatter* into fragments, or London for utterly extinguish [...] The vast extent of area covered, the transparent and brilliant character of the structure, the regular and terraced elevations, the light airy abutments, the huge transept, with its arched and glittering roof shining above the vitreous expanse around it, and reminding one of *nothing that he has ever heard of before* (1851: 5, emphases are mine).

These daily news reports use the language of experiential and emotional excess in the encounter with the translucency and reflectivity of the Crystal Palace. Through orientalising metaphors (such as "an Arabian Nights structure" and "stolen from [...] the 'Thousand-and-one-Night'") the Palace becomes a wonderland of pleasure, an "enchanted land" of promised ecstasy. The observers wander along its unsubstantial and transparent aisles, and lose their way physically, visually and emotionally, like in a maze that exhausts you, closes upon you, drains your energy, your libido and your trust in reason. In its reflective surfaces all that is solid melts into the air, hard materiality dissolves in a mirror fantasy. In the *Times* account, materiality is "dissolved," "scattered," "extinguished"; the Palace is a "splendid phantasm" that invites you into a fairy tale of emotional excess that can never be delivered, leaving you exhausted instead. "Nothing can strike us as more preposterous than an attempt to convey by language any adequate description of the Crystal Palace," says *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal*.

"Everyone who has seen it will have felt the *impossibility of giving the account* of either the fabric or its content […]" (Chambers 1851: 337, emphases are mine). The Crystal Palace articulates the relationship between the observed object, limits of language and the enjoyment of approximating these limits, because it is ineffable, literally *beyond* words. But the subject tries (desires) to express it nevertheless; it reaches for the fullness of the experience, for an enclosed and self-sufficient system projected onto the glass. The final satisfaction, however, is unachievable because "of the difference in amount between the pleasure of satisfaction that is demanded and that which is actually achieved" (Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," 1981: 42). The Crystal Palace, as well as other glass surfaces around London reflect a world beyond materiality, an epistemic limit, and within that limit a possibility of transgression and of an excessive experience – of pure, unattainable, mythical pleasure of the void, the pleasure of semantic death.

Richard Sennett wrote that plate glass is a "material which lets [one] see everything inaccessible to desire" (1987: 1). What spectators see while looking at a reflective surface is what they cannot get, but they desire it all the same, because the amazement of the jouissance is that which is promised. We can see that, for example, in *Jude the Obscure* (1895), the last novel by Thomas Hardy, where Jude experiences an emotional excess due to the impossibility of approaching the barmaid's face directly, but only as a reflection:

> At the back of the barmaids rose bevel-edged mirrors, with glass shelves running along their front, on which stood precious liquids that Jude did not know the name of. The barmaid […] was *invisible to Jude's direct glance*, though a reflection of their back in the glass behind her was occasionally caught by his eyes […] when she turned her face for a moment to the glass […] he was *amazed* (Hardy 978: 236, emphases are mine).

Commenting on glass shop windows, Charles Eastlake (1869: 23) said that iron columns "are furtively introduced, and as carefully concealed […] by craftily contrived mirrors, so that when all is finished the upper portion of the building seems absolutely suspended in the air." Glass and mirrors summoned a new vision of materiality that inversed the architectural principles of solidity and void. This fantasy is always accompanied by the language of wonder and awe, by an ineptitude of expressivity. "Silvered mirrors of polished plate glass, in gilded frames cannot be too profusely employed in a drawing room," advises John Claudius Loudon, "[…] and when the cut-glass chandeliers are lighted at night […] the scene becomes fairy-like and brilliant *beyond description*" (1838: 102, emphasis is mine). In the libidinal utopia promised by mirrors, everything "sparkles," "flashes," is "brilliant," "magnificent," "fairy-like," "beyond imagination," "beyond words," "beyond description." The readers are invited to "suppose" the completeness of that experience, to "imagine" or "assume" it, because to the writers this totality of textual pleasure is being denied.

At the end of the century, though mirrors sank to a cultural *status quo*, the awe of reflecting surfaces was still occasionally encountered. In *The Arcades Project* we find Walter Benjamin citing Julius Lessing and his memory of the Exhibition's marvels:

> […] At the center stood an imposing crystal fountain. To the right and to the left ran galleries in which visitors passed from one national exhibit to the other. Overall, it seemed a *wonderland*, appealing more to the imagination than to the intellect. "It is with sober economy of phrase that I term the prospect incomparably *fairy-like*. This space is a *summer night's dream* in the midnight sun" (Lothar Bucher). Such sentiments were registered through the world. I myself recall, from my

childhood, how the news of the Crystal Palace reached us in Germany and how pictures of it were hung in the middle-class parlors of distant provincial towns. It seemed than that the world we knew from old *fairy-tales* – of the princess in the glass coffin, of queens and elves dwelling in crystal houses – had come to life…, and these impressions have persisted through the decades (Benjamin 2002: 184, emphases are mine).

Thanks to the reflective fantasy of transgressed materiality, the dream and ecstasy of the Crystal Palace were almost indestructible. Glass transformed everything behind it and anyone in front of it, offering extreme pleasure. As Anthony Trollope said, "[t]o that which is ordinary, [the glass] lends grace; and to that which is graceful it gives a double luster" (1870: 37).

I want to point out here that the language of glass and mirrors is the language of an exhausted subject whose expressive inaptitude becomes the sign of his fantastic longing for something beyond text, thus real. These accounts talk about glass, but they also contour a subject thoroughly exhausted by its incapacity to reach that beyond and whose only option in the face of emotional inaptitude is potentiality; to *suppose* a release, to *potentiate* the way out. "The tired has only exhausted realization, while the exhausted exhausts all of the possible. The tired can no longer realize, but the exhausted can no longer possibilitate" (Deleuze 1995: 3). For Deleuze to be right, the exhausted would have to be psychically and libidinously dead, released from possibilitating thus from desiring. It is, nevertheless, paramount to give the exhausted a chance and theorize their exhaustion not as a permanent state of psychic death, but as a temporary station at the apex of desiring, as the emotional response between the traces of signs, or between re-repressions – between semantic can-

nibalism and emesis. Topographically, exhaustion emerges at the apex of the desiring curve. In the narcissistic event of mirroring, in which the libido is indirectly re-appropriated by the ego though the reflection as an external object, exhaustion emerges at the curve of this boomerang-shaped flight; the flight takes the turn and begins the returning trip at the moment of the subject's realization that the congruity in the mirror is non-existent, at the moment of the horrific introspective enlightenment that wreaks the illusion of wholeness and self-presence exposing the textual nature of the self and the world. Thus, exhaustion as the libidinal disappointment/disenchantment of the subject is the psycho-emotional reaction to the awareness of textuality that emerges while simultaneously being re-repressed, producing a new desiring circle. Exhaustion is the interval of rest – of disappointment, but rest – of the disempowered but still (unfortunately) desiring subject. From this position, opposite to Deleuze, all the exhausted can do *is* possibilitate, for non-possibilitating (as in non-desiring) is desirable but unrealizable: all the exhausted can do is imagine possibilities and open doors they cannot go through. The impossibility of these possibilities is what characterizes their libidinal state – imagining of blissful ignorance at the end of desiring, somewhere at the end of the infinite signifying chain, and investing in that fantasy, in Plato and Aristophanes, in the myth that is different from Echo and Narcissus but is actually the same script of a self-sufficient wholeness in the form of a *raison d'être* or a punishment.

From Coburg mirror and Crockford's ceilings, to Crystal Palace and the Exhibition; through the stream of mirror poems and stories about characters amazed by what they see in the mirror, enraged and maddened ("The Other Side of the Mirror," "The King's Ball"), rendered speechless ("The Glass Brain"), motionless, colourless, cataleptic

("The Compensation House") or ageless (*The Picture of Dorian Grey*), glass and mirrors keep pushing the observer, the participant in the mirroring event, Narcissus, to search for words that would express it all, all that emotional tension dwelling at the inevitable limits of language, at the inaptitude of words to capture something whole, static, non-referential and logos-less, the psychic utopia that establishes itself in the mirror image and that instead of delivering itself just keeps slipping through the "movement of différance," through the continual tracing and postponement that drives desire in circles and through repetition, generating the disappointment in the self's congruity over and over again but still wishing for it because the desiring animal knows no better, cannot move away from it all, cannot just leave desire before first desiring not to desire, desiring not to desire, desiring not to desire, *ad infinitum* or *mise en abyme* whichever suits your perspective better, so what comes about is exhaustion as the consequence of emotional excess that is never enough but still tiring and needy of stillness and peace and silence. As long as the subject is exhausted, as long as it moves in desiring circles or bounces back and forth from one trace to another, all equally displaced and elsewhere, it can project itself in the glass/mirror as in that which plays on that displacement and which perpetuates it and transforms it into a psycho-emotional wonderland that "sparkles," "flashes," is "brilliant," "magnificent," "fairy-like," "beyond imagination," "beyond words," "beyond description." Though it is beyond words, one cannot but try to express it – the humanity's ironical lot as if anything real can be expressed – so *Tallis's* commentator of the Crystal Palace tries, tries really hard despite and says: "It was like – like nothing but itself, unsurpassable, indescribable, unique, amazing, *real*!" (1852 vol.1: 100, emphasis is mine).

I, Narcissus

Exhaustion is the trope of this chapter, because Narcissus must be tired. That is immanent. When faced with one's reflection for so long, one is driven to a choice (if being driven to a choice is still considered choosing) between madness, numbness or metamorphosis; in this respect, Narcissus's final metamorphosis into a flower reads as a substitute for the actuality of his psychological state: he cannot go mad, so the anxious awareness of that which perpetually returns becomes a metamorphic vector of his body. The exhaustion of his introspective process is sublimated in this metamorphosis, so the flower presides over its end, over that which should have been the final return but turned out to be a regression to the organic simplicity of a plant instead. This simplicity is not enough, though, for the promised metamorphic return (and the accompanying enjoyment) should have been total, back to the beginning, a particular springing back to inanimation (as a desire for thingness), or non-corporality of the echo; but desiring is the other side of exhaustion, that kinesis of wanting, of the sign that is never there, so the flower disseminates further, leaving the myth and passing into history, changing, metamorphing, postponing its presence from Theophrastus's *Historia Plantarum* (Enquiry into Plants) (VI.6.9) to Carl Linnaeus *Species Plantarum* (1753: 289-90), searching for a steady ground to strike roots and regain stability (no matter how fragile), looking for a name for Narcissus's sublimated exhaustion – *Narcissus poeticus*.

I want to invoke this exhausted Narcissus – the sublimated, metamorphed one – into my text on 19th-century mirrors once again; I want to inscribe him into their materiality, because accounts on mirrors and awe and amazement and fear and speechlessness convey that energy

particular to the exhausted Narcissus that is at the same time a desiring character, a flower and an echo – humanity, flora and the simulacrum of a sound. With his metamorphosis, Narcissus has reach the limits of possibility; he has exhausted them, went over (so to speak), and continued signifying, thus articulating the always dreaded artificiality of meaning. His absenting corporality dictates the disseminating nature of the body and the self, and the disenchantment of the logocentric presence by its projection and postponement. What overwhelms him and transforms him is the desire for the self, but that self is not there, or anywhere else, it can be desired but cannot be attained, this narcissistic "whole individual" as Freud ("Beyond the Pleasure Principle," 1981: 50) would say, hence my indefinite stretching of his character and of his body across juxtaposed, disparate, potentially contradictory forms, across the human, flower and sound, and the continual movement of the meaning of his body and of his reflection, of the very introspective process of mirroring that exhausts him like in all the mentioned accounts on mirrors and glass and reflections. And I want to stretch his body even further, to kill its form completely and expose him as an indefinite sign, open in all direction, flat, empty and spreading rhizomatically towards all the possibilities until I try the impossible and there are no more possibilities, until I impossibly exhaust them all, until I, Narcissus try to possibilitate no longer, because I desire not to desire, desire not to desire, desire not to desire. In order to do that, in order to exhaust Narcissus and show his exhaustion by text, his textual exhaustion which is consequently mine, I summon him at a lake's shore, at the shore of his pool, loving his self, staring at the rising mud, suffering desire's cyclical repetition, bruised by the metamorphosis that is forced upon him from the above.

As part of his contribution to the Exhibition of 1851, the flamboyant manufacturer of ornamental products, William Potts, showcased The Grand Boudoir Glass (as the *Official Catalogue* named it) (fig. 2-4). According to both the *Official Catalogue* (1851: 1493) and the *Reynold's Weekly Newspaper* (1851: 4), Potts made it for the Duchess of Sutherland; *The Crystal Palace and its Contents* – one of the guides to the *Official Catalogue* – stated that this "toilet-glass" was one of the "largest mirrors cast in bronze manufactured in England and that its design and workmanship reflect[ed] the highest credit on its spirited manufacturer" (1852: 407-8).

It is, however, not the mirror *per se* that is praised; the reflective surface itself is anonymous and uninspiring, as silent as it is smooth and uneventful. It does not speak in these mentions and it is not spoken about. Its purpose *is* fundamental, though: as a dome of potentially infinite visual depth, it connects all the spatially peripheral elements of its structure and consumes within itself all the differences that spread through the mirror's semioscape. It is like a buffer, or a silencer, and an amplifier at once; a semantic middle ground for what exhausts the observer. Nevertheless, the praise bestowed upon Potts's work concerns that which surrounds it – the frame. In the *Reynold's* text, as well as in this text, my text about Potts's Grand Boudoir Glass, the implicit focus initially rests on the reflection (since it is a mirror), but then moves away from it, away from doubling, mimicking, bouncing back and forth, semiophagy and Narcissus and Echo; and then it lands right beside it, in the first and closest narrative field – the frame; and this movement articulates the first of many differences/tensions to be found in this artefact, that between the reflective surface and the frame. The story of Potts's mirror is, like any other text, a story about differences that keep multiplying
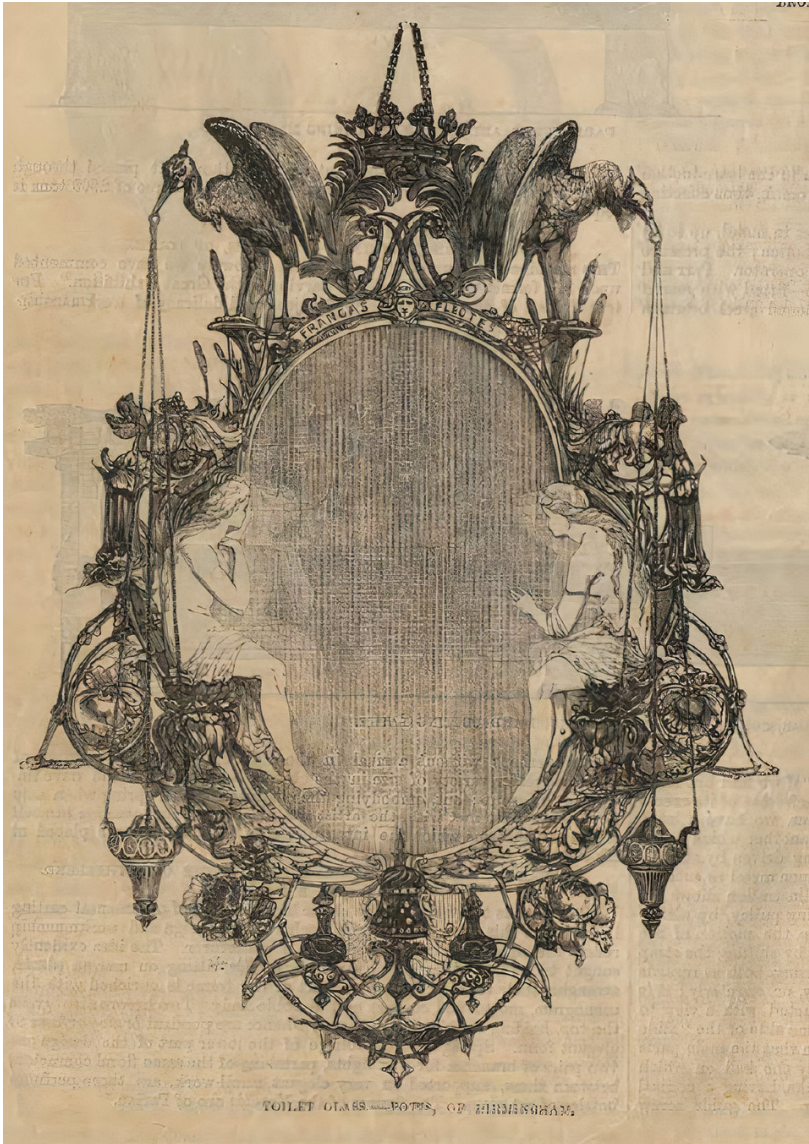
Fig. 2 The Grand Boudoir Glass
(The Crystal Palace and its Contents, 1851)
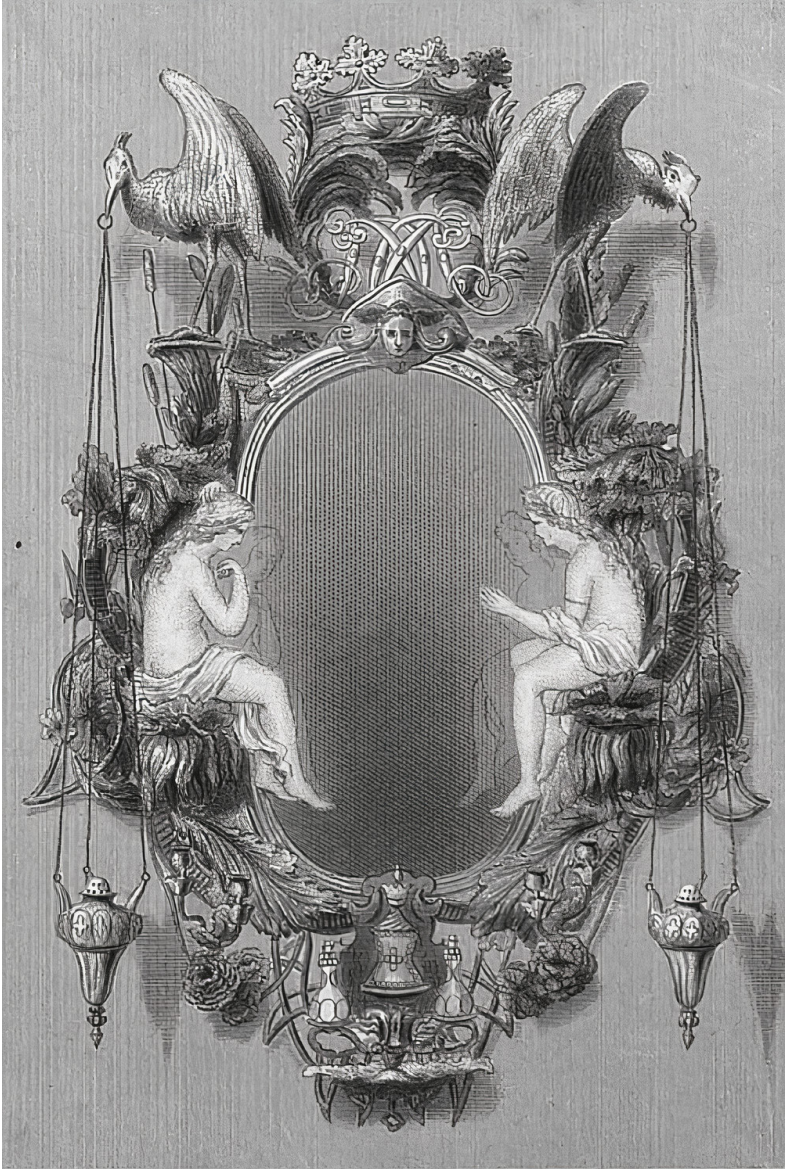
Fig. 3 The Grand Boudoir Glass (Tallis's History, 1851)

312.   CL. XXII., 323.—GRAND BOUDOIR-GLASS, BRONZED FRAME. W. POTTS, BIRMINGHAM.
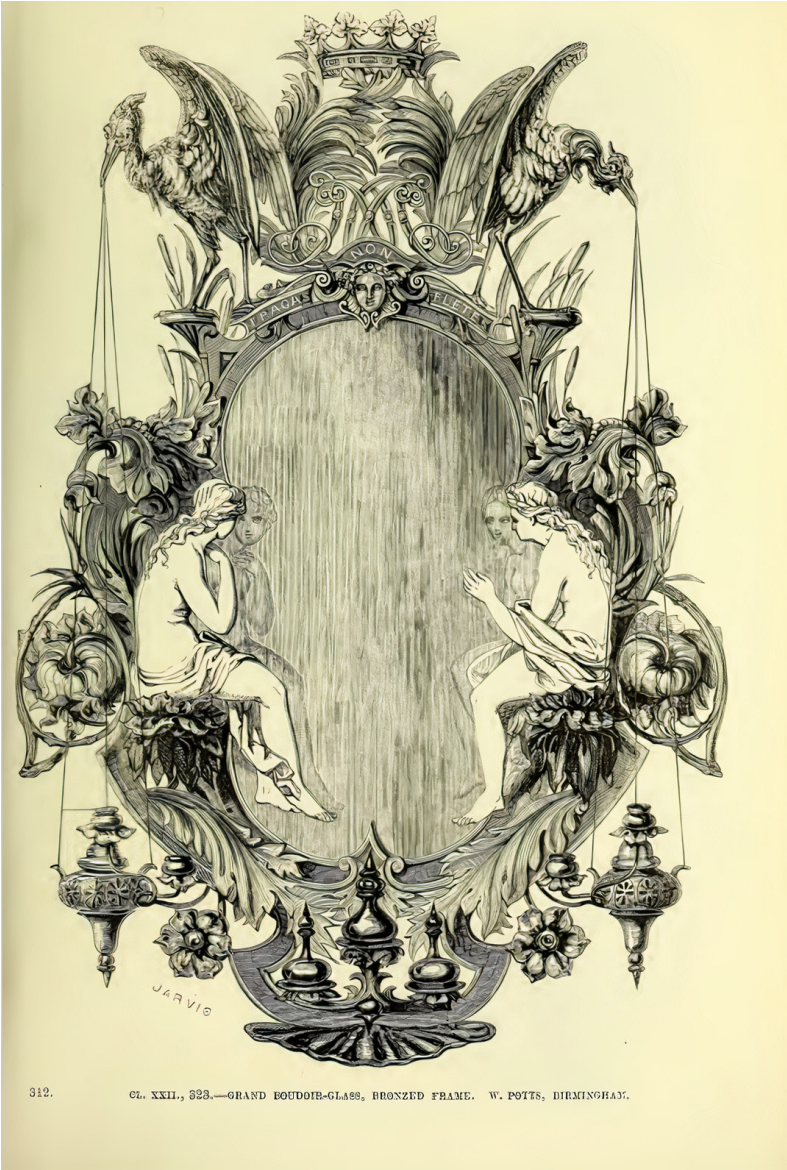
Fig. 4 The Grand Boudoir Glass (Official Catalogue, 1851)

and spreading in all directions until there is nothing left of the mirror but this infinite play of traces. One that plays this game and stares into the mirror, ends up exhausted by this incessant motion, *I* end up exhausted by the parthenogenesis of tensions.

The frame of the Grand Boudoir Glass is elaborately cast in bronze; other materials, such as porcelain and glass, accentuate the hardness of the metal. Two nymphs are idly seated on both sides of the reflective surface; the one on the left languidly rests her chin on the back of her hand, while the one on the right is caught touching her reflection in the glass, interrupted and forced into a slightly unnatural position. The first one projects tranquillity, or boredom; the second seems interested, even amazed by the reflection she studies. They both, however, gaze at the surface of the glass and their pale porcelain bodies make a compelling contrast to the rest of the mirror's architecture. All around them, dark bronze twists and twirls in the shapes of a lentic fantasy, water lilies underneath the nymphs' bodies mimicking a lush shore of a fairy-tale lake. At the top of the frame a pair of herons holds two candle-burners whose long, straight chains visually cut the spirals of the mirror's plant life and the curves of the nymphs' bodies. Both nymphs are nearly naked; only their thighs are covered with silky drapery. Reed springs from the wild floral undergrowth and hard lines of cast bronze form the mirror's bottom. There is a sign at the top of the reflecting surface, flanked by the herons, that reads: *frangas non flectes*: "You may break me, but you shall not bend me." The words *frangas* and *flectes* flank a small, hardly perceptible, face.

The characteristic of Potts's mirror I am interested in the most in this chapter is that, unlike the other mirrors showcased at the Exhibition, it deliberately tells a *story*. In fact, it tells more than one, or as many as we are prepared to read from

its frame, the most obvious one being the designer's: a Romantic scene of rest at a calm, mythical lake, a heterotopia with rules off its own.[25] There is almost a successful totality in the execution of this idea: all the elements are present, from the virginal stillness of the lake's surface represented by the glass, through the abundance of plant and animal life at its shore, to the fantastical creatures – the nymphs – that transform the scenery into a mythical one.

If it has not become obvious by now, the narrative I see in this frame, the semantic motion I want to make by stepping ever slightly out of Potts's obvious intention (and inasmuch as I am talking about a mirror that represents a mythical lake's shore) is that here Narcissus returns as the insuppressible element of the mirroring event. This is the first thing to establish in my reading: as soon as one steps before Potts's mirror one becomes a letter in this lentic script, where the myth, one that just won't stay put, resurfaces in the architectural and ornamental narrative of the object. Potts's lake is Narcissus's pool "[n]or stain'd with falling leaves, nor rising mud; / Untroubled by the breath of winds it rests, / Unsully'd by the touch of men or beasts; / High bow'rs of shady trees above it grow, / And rising grass and cheerful greens below" (Ovid 1826: III. 500-504) and this figural and thematic overlap articulates an archetypal nature of the mirroring event. The myth emerges as a blueprint of the mirror's design, resurfacing as mud of the mirroring event. What Potts gave us is a secluded lentic ecosystem, ridden with lush flora and centred on a static surface which is

---

25 *The Crystal Palace and its Contents* have their own reading of the scene which is close to mine, but diverges in some details. "The idea evidently sought to be carried out is, couple of Nereids sitting on marine plants, arranging their toilet" (1852: 407). The plants they refer to as "marine" have, however, been identified (Armstrong 2008: 172-175) as *Victoria regia* lily (now *Victoria amazonica*), that served Joseph Paxton as inspiration for the design of the Crystal Palace.

simultaneously water and glass. The surface seems virginal and accompanied by two figures whose relationship could be read in many ways, depending on the role given to the spectator, the role that I as a spectator am ready, or eager, to assume.

The premise I want to emphasize is that in the mirroring event someone always assumes the role of Narcissus; his presence is the foundation of the event and is implicit in the very act of looking at and libidinously investing in oneself. That being said, this mirror presents us with options (and problems) that are created and circumvented by its narrative space, as well as by the structural arrangement of the figures, so I, as the mirroring subject, can chose to become a part of the story, part of the architectural re-enacting of the myth, of the resurfacing that precludes me by the introspective nature of the event; or, due to the very physicality of the artefact (due to the fact that my body can assume different positions regarding the artefact, even those from which I cannot perceive my reflection in spite the fact that it is there) I might opt-out and allow the story to unfold without me, passing Narcissus's role to someone, or something, else.

I, Narcissus: I give myself the role of Narcissus and assume the position prescribed by the mirror, so the nymphs flanking the water-glass open their otherwise hermetic relationship and invite me into the narrative that unfolds in front, above, behind, beneath and *beyond* them. Beyond, because the story I am writing here, the one about the exhaustion of Narcissus and Echo, about mimicking and doubling, of transformation and uncanny connection, the story of the coordinating conjunction that moves them around like empty forms, simulacra that have no essence and can be morphed from corporality to auditivity, from humanity to florality, this story, once inscribed by me into

the structural architecture of the mirror's bronze and glass, spills beyond onto other reflective surfaces of the time.

The scopic rapport of the nymphs is hermetic: both of them are consumed by what comes from the lake; if I am Narcissus (meaning that I am standing in front of the mirror and am the mirroring subject) I can see them only in profile, their bodies being turned away from me and disconnecting my bodily presence from the fantastic narrative they formulate. It seems that they are not interested in me or my reflection (though their postures are clearly exhibitionistic, which is part of the lure, that exposure that denies itself as such), but in their own reflections in the glass. But no matter whether they are interested in their reflections or mine, they participate in the mirroring event and they face that which returns from the bottom to disturb and displace them, an incision in the material construction of the mirror through which the myth finds its way into the picture, the mud, their mud, my mud, mud of my consciousness and awareness. As signs of Echo's double nature and her material manifestation, they are interested in me, Narcissus, but can approach me only in doubling and visual repetition that is both their mythical nature and my reflection proper. If I am Narcissus and they are Echo, the lentic, static, soothing scenery articulates the mythical narcissistic event in which each figure doubles, repeats, and bounces back and forth in an attempt at utopian libidinal self-sufficiency, an attempt at creating the bubble of wholeness that cuts all the object cathexes and sends them back onto the self. It is interesting that this same scene provoked Armstrong to exclaim (2008: 236, emphasis is mine) that this is "a strangely social and *non Narcissistic* glassscape," while the fact is that it can be considered non-narcissistic only in so far as its architectural, aesthetic and semantic overlap with the myth is neglected and my role as Narcissus in the mirroring event is denied.

As long as I am before the mirror and participate in the act of looking at myself, nymphs are relegated to the role of the double, the double of me, Narcissus, the double of each other, and the double of their reflections. As long as I am standing before the mirror, what they are invested in is my reflection as that which they cannot escape, and by the necessity of it the mud that introspection brings to the surface, the myth, the textual awareness, the semantic paranoia. As long as I assume the role of Narcissus, the mythical narrative creates a ripple that starts from the bottom, passes onto the frame and animates the metal/porcelain non-life into narrativity of the introspective awareness of my reflected self.

Reading of Potts's mirror could go in any direction, even the one, for instance, in which I am *not* Narcissus; I assume the position at an odd angle with the mirror, so the right nymph, the interested one, becomes Narcissus and the other tranquil one Echo; that way I orchestrate the roles but do not participate in them, cut away by the physicality of the mirror's structure and reduced to organizing blankness with no body, reflection, or meaning. Possibilities are endless, but the experience of the Potts's mirror is, as we shall see, exhausting in more ways than one, so all the options are ultimately reduced to my power to possibilitate, to imagine and play the game of "suppose" or "as if" that exposes libidinal fantasy as a text/script and compensates for the impossibility of the final rest in the disappointment-free beyond-wonderland. And if "supposing" – as in creating possibilities beyond possibilities, or, rather, possibilities that are impossible in their realness – can be postulated as the character of the exhausted, the discussed language of excess that uses wonderland as its script is the language of the exhausted Narcissus. "Suppose the frame of a mirror modelled after aquatic objects," says *Reynold's* reporter,

such as the lotus, with fowl congenial to the watery element, and so arranged that they convey to the mind an outline of the performance in question; again, suppose two Naiads, sculptured in porcelain, seated on aquatic foliage on each side of the mirror, whose beautiful forms are reflected in its surface, while in the act of trimming their locks after bath. Just above these nymphs are two herons, sculptured boldly out, supporting in their beaks pastille burners, and around the rim of the mirror are represented plants, flowers, and fruits, in all their peculiar characteristics. The toilette bottles rest, on a metal scroll, while their contents are presumed to run through the mouth of a mask into a shell below. The frame, foliage, and figures are metal, of a dark bronze hue; the Naiads are white porcelain, and form a beautiful contrast to the colour of the metal, and the clear reflective surface of the mirror, while their elegant forms, in all the graceful and innocent abandon of nature, impart a charming interest to the general conception of the work. There is also a dignity and boldness in the design and execution, which strike at once the mind of the spectator, and excite the impression that the spirit of art, in its highest condition, is but yet in its infancy as applied to the manufacturing industry of the country (1851: 4).

The description by the *Reynold*'s reporter is the moment in which the exhausted Narcissus presents himself in script. We put our imagination at work and assume that, since he was a contemporary and tasked with commenting on the Exhibition, he had the experience of mirroring himself in the Potts's mirror. So one time at least he had physically assumed the role of Narcissus that provoked the following description. As we can see from it, the reporter's fantasy starts with possibilitating, with a "suppose" that open up the space of wonderland onto the subject, the pacified and beautified space of textuality in which meaning can go in any direction and where, for instance, inanimate things come to life. Re-

enacting the Victorian male obsession with women's hair,[26] the reporter sees the Naiads in "the act of trimming their locks after bath," while, in fact, there is nothing in the physicality of the design that points to that conclusion (neither are the nymphs holding combs, nor do they appear like they just had a bath). In his account, however, a movement in the otherwise still physicality of the mirror seems palpable: the figures *move* to plunge into the surface of the mirror/lake, they *move* to comb their hair. In the reporter's fantasy, the mirror becomes alive. Though faced with the hard matter of the mirror, we are invited to "suppose *a* mirror" (some indefinite, fantastic one), as in "assume" or "imagine." The language of excess (as the language of wonder(land)) employed here and in other discussed accounts is the language of the horrifying awareness of the exhausted, whose only possibility at the apex of the desiring curve (at the moment when the subject is being exhausted by disappointment of the very curve, by the fact that desiring made a turn) is to possibilitate a (pacified) wonderland (of textuality) that actually signifies its impossibility of non-desiring.

William Potts

William Potts was a designer whose work created many tensions. His products were bold, new and bent on satisfying the mid-Victorian public's need for a recognisably English design; therefore, he was bound to ruffle the feathers of contemporary critics and (as is the case with any novelty) push their critiques toward extremes. *The Art Journal Illustrated Catalogue of the Industry of all Nations*, for instance, calls his works "exceptions to the comparative inferiority of this department of manufacture" and is full of praise for his

---

26 For the Victorian male obsession with women's hair, see Gitter 1984.

"elegant and varied taste" (Nicholson 1851: XV###). What *The Art Journal* truly admires, though, is the introduction of

> a new combination of artistic media, which have since been followed up by others with no little success, though Mr. Potts has still kept the lead in his hands. We allude to the application of the ceramic substance, for ornamental purposes in conjunction with metal, in chandelier lusters, lamp brackets, and numerous other objects of utility and decoration (1851: 25).

Potts's work, thus, exemplifies innovation and boldness of a new type of design that is not afraid to step into relations of materials not previously used together.

Interestingly, however, it is precisely this character of his work, this differential boldness in ornament and material that forms the hearth of the critique from the opposite pole. Henry Cole's and Richard Redgrave's *The Journal of Industrial Design and Manufacturing* was for years particularly harsh on Potts. In 1850, they declared experiencing "unpleasant sensations" watching the design of his Flower Stand, so much so that they felt the need to extensively comment on it as the example of how things should *not* be done. "[The Flower Stand] typifies violations of principles so common nowadays, that we have thought it worthy of this examination" (*The Journal of Industrial Design*, "Miscellaneous: Salt-Celar, &c." 1850: 134). Their problem with this particular Flower Stand (the problem that carries the emotional response of unpleasantness) is that it creates an uncanny tension between the coldness of the used material (metal) and organic delicacy of the represented object (the flower): "The exact limitations," says *The Journal*,

> which should determine the degrees of verisimilitude, with which nature should be imitated in Ornamental Art, have, like all "boundary questions," become subject of hot and almost

undeterminable discussion. If we may venture an expression of opinion where "doctors disagree," we must confess a very great dislike to see a plant, the chief beauty of which consists in its vegetable character, its delicacy, evanescence, elasticity, texture, and identification with the sense of growth, sweet scents, and happy summer hours, reproduced in a material the conditions and associations of which are diametrically opposed to those of the vegetable kingdom. Thus, in metal-work, the more closely the forms of plants are copied, the more strikingly do we feel the absence of all their other and peculiar charms ("Miscellaneous: Salt-Celar, &c.," 1850: 133-34).

Just a year before, they objected yet another Flower Stand of his, which featured a combination of human heads and chimeras. "[W]hat is the meaning," asks *The Journal*,

of the heads stuck upon the upper part and the chimeras at the base? We cannot discover any connection, however remote, between them and the object of this article. The details look as if they had been borrowed from various designs without possessing any special business here as they ought to have ("Metals – Guns and Pistols – Flower Stand," 1849: 38).

The critiques of Potts's design have for years been directed to his attempt at symbiosis of the unsymbiotical and at applying ornaments that have no business in the particular design; in the first example, the issue is the representation of organic life by means of dead metal, which creates a tension between inorganic signifier and organic signified resulting in an object inadequate for the accommodation of both. In her interpretation of Potts's work, Armstrong builds upon Shelagh Wilson's concept of the grotesque in Victorian design and explains his work in terms of "the 'encounter' that belongs to Grotesque experience" (2008: 236). Potts's work (as well as many works at the Great Exhibition) presents different species forced onto each

other, collided and merged into "double bodies" that blur taxonomic categories.[27] In The Grand Boudoir Glass, this doubling is evident in the "fusion of [the nymph's] reflected and reflecting bod[ies]" that makes the onlooker "aware of the limits of gazing" (2008: 236).[28] That is, however, only the surface of the semantic issue in Potts's work: firstly, his designs trigger tensions of art versus nature issue innate to all "boundary questions," the age old one but still hotly debated within the mid-Victorian art context;[29] secondly,

27 On Armstrong's analysis of the grotesque in Victorian design at the Great Exhibition, see Armstrong 2008: 215-221 and Armstrong 2012.

28 The grotesque "double body" is present throughout Potts's whole oeuvre, provoking some seriously heated reactions of the critics. On the Dolphin Inkstand in *The Journal of Industrial Design and Manufacturing*: "How much more sensible it would seem to make a simple dish and two prettily-formed vases do duty as an inkstand, than to heap, in deference to the present morbid craving after novelty of name and form, such incongruous subjects together as we find combined in the present instance! Why should there be a "Dolphin" inkstand? What has that poor over-worked fish got to do with the matter? "Qu'est-ce qu'il fait dans cette galore?" And why, in the name of fortune, should his tail be turned into a tulip? Why should heaven-born innocence dwindle into a mermaid, and an "unfortunate attachment" to a very heavy shell?" ("Review of patterns: miscellaneous," 1850: 200).

29 In 1843, John Ruskin (1843: 418) declared in *Modern Painters* that "[the artist] should go to Nature in all singleness of heart, and walk with her laboriously and trustingly, having no other thoughts but how best to penetrate her meaning, and remember her instruction; rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scoring nothing; believing all things to be right and good, and rejoicing always in the truth." His views in general, and this work in particular, strongly resonated with the Pre-Raphaelite painters, creating the environment for a new attitude towards composition, a way of divulging reality to the eye of the viewer by an exhausting overload of details. This impossible attempt at "rejecting nothing, selecting nothing, and scoring nothing" that is discernable in, for instance, Holman Hunt's *Awakened Consciousness* (1853) or John Millais's *Ophelia* (1852), represents the articulation of artificial, prosthetic connections between details, their mutual (dis)connection within the overdetailed image.

the (dis)attachment of art and nature (as all dialectical polarities) is a prosthetical articulation of otherwise mutually inarticulable elements, a connection, or collision, that disrupts as much as it brings together. This prosthetic articulation, or "unfortunate attachment" as *The Journal* ("Review of patterns: miscellaneous," 1850: 200) terms it, is a deconstructive process, in that it disturbs primacy of one element over the other exposing their differential nature. For a publication such as *The Journal* that departs on the journey of industrial design with a "systematic attempt to establish recognizable principles" ("Preface to volume I," 1849: viii) this kind of semantic insecurity must have seemed unwelcome, preposterous even. Obedience of one element to the other is of the paramount importance for the stability of meaning, as the epigraph, citing Bacon, at the title page of the very first issue of *The Journal* states: "[a]rt hath not the power to conquer nature and by pact of law of conquest to ill and destroy her; but, on the contrary, it falls out, that art becomes subject to nature, and yields the obedience, as a wife the husband."

Potts's Flower Stand, thus, troubles by its prosthetic, impossible articulations that get progressively heightened and more disturbing (as in creating more tension) the closer the elements approach one another: the smaller the gap between the juxtaposed elements the more visible the difference between the represented organic life and inorganic material, between animation of the imagined, ideal flower and the inanimation of the metal. This exhausting difference, or this difference that exhausts the observer (the critic) by its unpleasantness of the constant movement of elements, or, rather, of their traces (the semantic kinesis between animation and inanimation, organic life and dead matter, flower and metal, evanescence and permanence, growth and stagnation, art and nature, original and copy, self-presence

and imitation, object and commentary), becomes the butt of the critique once the utilitarian purpose of the object is invoked and its architecture compared with the experiential animation of a previously ideational flower:

> To further define [the unpleasant sensations experienced in looking at this design] let us call attention to the great mistake made in using this direct imitation of nature in opposition to nature herself. Directly the vase is filled with flowers the deformity of the metal plant will be exhibited and emphaticised most strikingly (*The Journal of Industrial Design*, "Miscellaneous: Salt-Celar, &c.," 1850: 134).

The Flower Stand, for critics, represents the tension between the idea and execution (the concept of the flower and the flower stand), as well as between the execution and the thing itself (the flower stand and the real flower), which implies the difference between the idea and the thing. These differences are in *The Journal* not merely theorized as inappropriate to ornamental design, but are actually felt through flesh, "emphaticised most strikingly," resulting in "unpleasant sensations in looking at this design." So the issue that surfaces at both poles of the critique is the overabundance of visibly prosthetic relations, of differences, or, rather, the *exposure* of these differences that results in an exhausting and disturbing disenchantment of the observer as to the stable, self-referential, still nature of life, body, organism and meaning.

I, Exhausted

The exposure of artificial relations that articulate seams of meaning gets translated into the language of visuality as a sensory overload that exhausts the eye. Within the context of the Exhibition, that in my text

keeps dialoguing with Potts's work, Agamben (1993: 39) described it as an "elephantiasis of ornament," but, in the light of the language of excess discussed here, the (exhausting) "wonderland of ornament" might be closer to the point. I am broadening the scope of my inquiry here once again in order to observe the context of Potts's work, as the same exhaustion appears over and over again in the accounts dating from the year of, and years after, the Exhibition. My argument can, for instance, start from the visual overload induced by the textual representation of the Exhibition itself. A quick glance at the *Official Catalogue* shows pages and pages of numbers and names and lists attacking the eye of the reader in an incomprehensible jumble that was supposed to help one digest the Exhibition, but all it did was make one tired. The spatial, graphic relations between these names and numbers and lists on any given page seem impossible to the eye which tries to grasp the totality of it, to cut the dissemination of meaning at the paper's edge and enclose it within a self-sufficient economy of the sign; as a response to this mess, a number of guides to the *Official Catalogue* emerged, systematizing the plethora of names, artefacts and texts, thus introducing supplementary material and artificially attaching it to the already present body of text. I want to point out that until 1851 there had *never* been an occasion that induced such a proliferation of discourse and such an overwhelming juxtaposition of disparate elements (which is the nature of every catalogue), all in an attempt to survive the semantic anxiety of impossible connections, of differences, that only kept producing more differences, more anxiety and more exhaustion. At the level of mimicking, reflecting and doubling, the story in *Household Words* by Henry Morley (intended to be sarcastic and funny) captured

this discursive maze of textual exposure by conjuring the image of a talking catalogue giving an account of itself, making itself its own double. "I am the Catalogue of the Great Exhibition," begins the catalogue:

> […] I, as a celebrated Catalogue had much to go through with ere I lernt that which I reach now in the illustrated edition, the official edition, the French edition, the German edition, and the twopenny edition (1851: 519).

Through the insurmountable chaos of the Exhibition's visual and semantic overload, the language that is supposed to describe things becomes the object of its own description. This language turns upon itself, in the familiar semiophagic loop of cannibalism and emesis, consuming itself as an object and returning as the subject of speech, in circles that simulate the postponement of presence of the sign that, in spite of the libidinal fantasy of wholeness, simply cannot close upon itself. And then, finally, there is *Tallis's* report on the Exhibition that connects the language of excess and the language of glass, possibilitating of a wonderland, the sensory overload and the final exhaustion.

> Fountains were *sparkling* and *flashing* in the subdued sunlight: in *living sculpture* were suddenly seen the grand, the grotesque, the terrible, the beautiful; objects of every form and colour imaginable, far as the eye could reach, were *dazzlingly* intermingled; and there were present sixty thousand sons and daughters of Adam, passing and re-passing, ceaselessly; bewildered charmingly; gliding amidst bannered nations – through country after country renowned in ancient name, and great in modern: civilized and savage. […] The soul was approached through its highest senses, *flooded with excitement*; all its faculties were appealed to at once, and *it sank for a while, exhausted, overwhelmed* (1852, vol.3: 1, emphasis is mine).

If there is an account that describes the exhaustion by impression of juxtaposed elements pretending to experiential wholeness, this is the one, because here we find all the elements of the excessive experience, as well as the subject's reaction to it: the objects are seen as both "grand" and "grotesque" and "beautiful," in "all forms and colors imaginable." In the visual experience of the reporter, they are all "intermingled" together in the grotesqueness of their overwhelming juxtaposition. This intermingling is artificial, unnatural in its attempt to grasp and connect the unconnectable, and there are too many things, too many colours, too many people; the subject suffers an overload it cannot bear. The eye is excessively invaded and is "flooded with excitement," it sees "sparkling and flashing" of fountains. The observer is promised a transgression against the fragmentedness of meaning that is supposed to be brought about by the crudely connected objects, but all it gets is the wonderland of textuality where objects morph into each other. In the promised emotional excessiveness, everything appears as elevated and enchanted, like Henry Mayhew's description of the crystal fountain at the entrance to the Palace: "shining, as the sun's rays came slanting down through the crystal roofs, as if it had been carved out of icicles, or as if water streaming from the fountain had been made solid, and transfixed into beautiful forms" (1851: 134).

What I just described by taking the circuitous path through the Exhibition, is the premise of Potts's work – that which he is both praised and criticised for: the collision of materials, bodies and species into unnatural, "unfortunate" relations. These relations are perceived as tensions (that induce unpleasantness) due to the critics' need to establish stable principles of design and still the movement of meaning within a work of art. But there are no "natural" relations

between bodies, materials and species, because there are no "natural," uninterrupted relations between signs, or between the signifier and the signified. At every possible register, two juxtaposed elements presume artificiality immanent to the cut that separates them and that their juxtaposition attempts to bridge, erase, or make invisible. Therefore, the process behind the need to make any connection "natural," or "fortunate" to use *The Journal*'s term, enacts the attempt at a utopia of wholeness, of uninterruptedness, it enacts the process of possibilitating that utopia by the exhausted subject. The effort to connect or bridge what is unbridgeable, to smooth the immanent rupture of the text, is an exhausting process in that it promises a satisfaction at the end, a narcissistic libidinal fulfilment that cuts the ties with the world for the sake of ecstasy, small death, extinguishment of desire. The exposure of textuality, as the semantic emesis that resurfaces the repressed content, is the other side of the fantasy of anti-textual wholeness that re-represses it, so with every exposure there is a surge of pleasure in the approximation to utopia as the desire for death, the primary conservative drive that pulls back, all the way back, back to the beginning, to inanimation as original and ultimate stillness, so with every new difference, with every postponement of presence the subject makes a desiring turn, falls in it so it can desire more, the fall after fall, with every trace, with every difference immanent to impressions that invade the mind of the perceiver. Viewed in the wider context of the Exhibition, Potts's work in general articulates a theme of constant textual exposure through uncanny connections that multiply with every new (dis)attachment, that exhausts with every new juxtaposition which attempts to erase the difference, and these are abundant in his work, one could say that his work is completely made of them, like any other work, product, artefact, text, just more visibly,

so the observer experiences this invasion of disconnected forms, animals, plants, humans, nymphs and is exhausted over and again.

The Grand Boudoir Glass exemplifies this exposing/ exhausting aspect of Potts's work. In a relatively small space (small comparing to the abundance of details) we encounter a plethora of species – plants, animals, fairies – the fairies, by their humanoid nature, bringing a human element into the frame, though unnecessarily since I, Narcissus, am also there before the mirror reflecting and participating. We are all forced into the narrative of the mirror, simulating calmness of the shore; but, in fact, we are pushing one another around and into the silvered surface. Its conspicuous emptiness seems to be the centre of the representation, but it emerges as the fissure through which the myth resurfaces, the archetypal self-love and mud that moves differences within the reflection around. In the light of the *fabula* that unfolds around it, the surface becomes the instable centre of the image. The stillness of its surface highlights the saturation of the frame, creates a contrast, a connecting disconnection, while all around it species battle for representational space. While I reflect in glass (and by that reflecting participate in the narrative of the mirror as a whole) ornaments are running loose on this calm shore, enveloping the bodies of the nymphs, pushing them towards the mirror's surface. Every single element, every ornament is thus claustrophobically forced towards the only open space left – the reflecting surface – but that is where I, Narcissus, dwell, so every difference between species, bodies, ornaments, materials is differenced both with the reflective surface and with my own reflected face. I, Narcissus, am exhausted and overwhelmed by the abundance of relations, of uncanny attachments that are part of my mirroring, part of my looking at myself, they are

part of what I see through the narcissistic event, part of the mud that rises and disturbs me, the semantic paranoia of the recurrent realization and re-repression of the artificiality of these connection, of meaning, of my body and my self. Like Narcissus who is exhausted at the lake's shore, Potts's mirror exhausts me by the aggressive juxtaposition of details; my constant need to make an organic whole out of them exhausts me, the need to turn unfortunate attachments into fortunate ones, like that could ever happen, like there is some arche-organicisity to text, so I possibilitate, imagine and project like the *Reynold's* reporter who "supposes" a mirror, some mirror, an indefinite one, because they are all the same, they are all made of differences and postponements, while Potts's is just obvious and mythically literal and gives me an opportunity to assume the role of Narcissus not only by the presence of a reflecting surface, but by the narrative of the frame. The ornaments of this mirror frame are so abundant and so densely packed, the connections between them so incapable of establishing themselves in any other way than prosthetically that, as it gazes at the mirror, my eye is invaded by the uncanny cornucopia of unfortunateness and semantic misstep; it experiences exhaustion by elephantiasis/wonderland of ornamentation, exhaustion that literally drowns my reflection at the bottom of the lake that I, by the might of the higher power, cannot abandon: drowns it or metamorphoses me into a flower.

Frangas, non Flectes

As long as I am surgically opening up the body of the Grand Boudoir Mirror to view, and to the exhaustion by its immanent sutures and seams, I will go back to the role I have assumed in this narrative, the role of Narcissus, for the pure pleasure of destabilizing it – for destabilizing the

myth of a stable Narcissus. I want to point to other ways through which the text exposes itself in this mirror, or ways through which it *gets* exposed in places no one expects, and for that purpose I will do what Potts does best and create unfortunate attachments (which is all that anyone can hope for) hoping for an argument to emerge. I want to play with the fact that the Grand Boudoir Glass exists, or persists, only through a very limited number of *traces*. To my knowledge, these include three illustrations (printed in *The Crystal Palace and its Contents: An Illustrated Cyclopedia* (fig. 2), *Tallis's History* (fig. 3) and the *Official Catalogue* (fig. 4)), descriptions from the *Official Catalogue* and *Reynold's Weekly Newspaper* report, one Isobel Armstrong's analysis made two[30] and this text I am writing that disseminates its meaning further; the mirror, as an artefact, is (presumably) not preserved.

Organizing all these known traces of the absent mirror in this way – putting them all in the same sentence, same narrative space and creating a mosaic out of them, one that can be (or gets) rotated or reconfigured with every new reading – questions the validity of some statements I made, such as "as long as I am present [in front of the mirror]" and "as long as I stand before a mirror." In truth, there is no mirror to stand before, or be present in front of, there is no phenomenological strata to this sentence, no flesh that consumes or experiences the object, but only illustrations and comments that stand for it. As much as the mirror potentiates an architecturally structured artefact (an artefact structured by the basic architectural principle of the dome) it persists solely through the exhaustion of possibilitating, through supposing an

---

30 The analysis first appeared in her essay "Languages of Glass" (Armstrong 2007) and was reprinted a year later in her book *Victorian Glassworlds* (Armstrong 2008).

object that is, in truth, a series of images and texts that, in this particular juxtaposition, fight for representational space. What I am trying here is to expose the unfortunate connections between these elements – between the absent thing, images and texts, between the text and comments, supplements – connections that might be, that have a right to be, established; so if I choose to be Narcissus, it must be understood that I choose to simultaneously stand before the mirror's absence, before the drawing that is its postponement (semantically removed from the architecturality of the artefact as much as it is removed from the comments describing it), before the *Reynold*'s comment as a postponement of the absent mirror, before Armstrong's analysis as a postponement/displacement of the illustrations (and not of the mirror itself), and before this text that plays with their juxtaposition, disseminating the mirror's meaning further. By choosing to stand before the mirror, however semantically de- and re-constructed, I enter the game of desiring, exhaustion and textuality revealed firstly by the sutures between the traces themselves, and secondly by discrepancies/differences/displacements between the representations of the mirror *within* these traces (within traces within traces).

It is by now non-debatable that something is lost in every translation, whether one translates from a language to language, or from one medium to another, so instead of discussing the obvious movement of meaning between illustrations and texts I will focus on the movement between illustrations that should represent the same mirror. The most obvious difference is the style of representation, which is the result of various artists drawing the same object, so that from one image to another its proportions seem disturbed (general ratio of ornaments and the glass, for instance); as the consequence, one mirror seems elegant and thin,

the other more robust and ungraceful, while with the third the metal has a certain fullness to it; and the same goes for porcelain nymphs, bronze herons, plants, etc. But the textual centre of the mirror (textual in the sense of referring to written words) is where the cut between the traces I am playing with becomes obvious, because it concerns the *motto* inscribed at the apex of the mirror.

In the illustration from *The Crystal Palace and its Contents* (*Cyclopedia*) the face at the apex of the mirror is small and hardly recognizable, while words *frangas, non flectes* are legible and, more importantly – present. Meanwhile, in the illustration from *Tallis's History*, the face is strongly emphasised, but words are omitted, gone. The situation of the disappearing words is complicated once we understand that in the third illustration from the *Official Catalogue* they are present but written differently, as *fragas, non flectes*. To make it even more complex, this discrepancy between written words, this difference in the (dis)appearing "n" in *fra(n)gas* (which is really too close to Derrida's inaudible "a" in *différance*)[31] is commented on by Armstrong in her analysis, where it is inscribed with the difference between the "right" and "wrong" Latin (the inscription from the *Cyclopedia* represents the proper Latin, while the other one is "eccentric and looks to be a corruption of the words inscribed by the *Cyclopedia*" (2008: 237)). From the (non)presence of the inscription, to its content, to the (dis)appearing "n" and between the *Tallis's History*, the *Official Catalogue*, *The Crystal Palace* and Armstrong's analysis, differences keep multiplying as the mirror's meaning is disseminated over different media and different centuries, articulating the non-temporal dimension of text that might and might not be this one I am writing.

31 See, Derrida 1982.

112

As for the inscription itself, apart from the fact that, by its very presence, it participates in the introspective event of mirroring, the words *frangas, non flectes* are actually the language of mirrors, of their narcissistic and narrative kinesis characteristic for the 19th-century fantasies. *Frangas* is the second-person singular present active subjunctive of the verb *frangere* ("to break" or "to shatter") and shattering in the context of the 19th-century depicts the end of the line for so many mirrors (from Gilbert's *The Magic Mirror* to Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey*), the fantasy of establishing the beyond of the mirror's textuality by force; *flectes* is the second-person singular future active indicative of the verb *flectere* ("to bend" or "to curve") and its etymological approximation to *reflectere* ("to bend back" or "to turn around") points to the narcissistic recursiveness of mirroring, the reflecting curve of introspection, the premise of textual awareness of mirror texts and encounters. So the language *on* the mirror is actually the language *of* the mirror, of Narcissus, mythical language, my language, so if we arrange the traces as I did, in this arbitrary order and forming these unfortunate attachments, the language of Narcissus fades into nothingness (in the absence of words in *Tallis's History*), error (in the absence of "n" in the *Official Catalogue*), or corruption (in the "eccentric" Latin in Armstrong's analysis) and is replaced by the augmented face that, nevertheless, epitomises the introspective process of mirroring, stares back at me, returning, reproducing, re-flecting back what I want to re-repress by the process. The words are substituted for the face, cutting between the illustrations and establishing differences, but the final outcome is once again about Narcissus, because the mirror is always about Narcissus. These displacements of traces – differences in elements, style and representation of one

and the same thing – are places of exposure, incisions where the text erupts, becomes visible, where differences are formalized and where I suffer the textual awareness that leave me exhausted at the lake's shore. So my investment in the mirroring process is an investment in the multimedial ahistoricity of the mirror's text that appears different with every image and with every description, obliterating the idea of the original, of the one and only that was at the beginning (of time), of one that was the idea and ideal of the architectural resurfacing of the myth – Narcissus, myself.

THE MIRROR AND THE SOUL
The Queen's Mirror and Georgian Physiological Debates on Life

"Snow White" (originally "Snow Drop"), the English translation of the Brother Grimm's 1812 fairy tale *Sneewittchen*, first appeared from the pen of Edgar Taylor in 1823, and, sharing the fate of their many stories, instantly became a Georgian (and than a Victorian) classic. It told the story of a young maiden in distress learning how to stay indoors and do housekeeping, and thus superbly resonated with the male patriarchal society. Being in the Georgians' heart of hearts, what they found in this originally German folkloric tale was their own idealized image of the woman, latter to be cherishingly immortalized in the Patmore's "angel in the house." Snow White ran from the viciousness and envy of her stepmother, and ended up living with the Dwarfs, cleaning their house and preparing their meals while they earned bread by digging for gold in the mountains. She was the embodiment of the 19th-century male's domestic dream.

Although the central theme of the story is vanity and struggle between two 19th-century female archetypes – the evil, conniving and artful (step)mother against the pure, innocent and incredibly naïve daughter – the plot is actually fuelled and orchestrated from elsewhere: from the magical

properties of a solitary piece of material culture – a mirror. It is true that the Queen's rage is the one conducting the plot, but the mirror is the one that dictates its rhythm. In a different universe in which there was no magic mirror to perpetually aggravate the Queen by the obnoxious intelligence about Snow White, there would be no plot whatsoever and consequently no "Snow White." Thus, the mirror, in its materiality and magical loquaciousness, is the central and ineluctable element of the story.

It is precisely this magical loquaciousness that makes "Snow White" so special for me here: apart from its intense popularity, it is an example (maybe even the first one) of a talking mirror in 19th-century literature. Written at the time when glass mirrors were still rare even in the middle-class parlours, and translated at the time when the industrial change in their production started pushing them into the public space, "Snow White" featured a trope with a significant semantic, symbolic and narrative potential. While narratives in which mirrors facilitate animation of otherwise inanimate objects would sprung occasionally throughout the century (Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* being, of course, the central title), this particular mirror – the Queen's mirror – absorbed the trope into its own inert materiality. It did not make other objects talk across or beyond its silvery surface – it started talking itself.

I look into this mirror more keenly, and what I find there is a culture. Just like in so many 19th-century mirror stories, the Queen's mirror is a gateway to a new, different world and it is my intention to step through it and see what lies beyond. But this stepping through is regressional: instead of taking me from the 19th-century Britain into a fairyland (which is usually the case), this mirror leads back from the fairy tale straight into Georgian London. What I intend to show is that, if we let

this magically animated mirror talk and attentively observe its expression, we shall perceive an epistemic configuration of early 19th-century scientific debates on life. The analysis of the mirror's powers will take us straight into the discipline of physiology, full of disputes over, uncertainties of and anxieties at the nature, function and origin of (in)animate matter. How can a mirror speak? What lends it the power of agency? And, awkwardly, does it have a soul?

But I must not outpace myself. Before stepping through the glass into Georgian London, I will look more closely into "Snow White" mirror fantasy and reveal the intricacies of the mirror's magical power. After all, it is the fantasy that I am interested in, that spectacular blueprint for shaping and banding of desire in the most incredible and unexpected ways.

The Exterior of "Snow White" Mirror Fantasy

The scenario of this fantasy is fairly known to anyone who lived in the West anytime since 1939, and had means of procuring a cinema ticket or, later, a television set. This was the year when Disney's version of the "Snow White" hit the big screen, and when the audience fell in love with this gentle character (again). As will consequently be the case with all Disney's fairy tale adaptations, "Snow White" was the sanitized version of an already sanitized version of the Grimm's tale, initiating the process that Jack Zipes (2014: 49) calls "[d]isneyfication, trivialization, infantilization, and commercial exploitation of […] tales."[32]

32 Disney did exactly the same thing Edgar Taylor had done in 1823: while Disney revised and trivialized Taylor's translation, Taylor had previously cleansed the original Grimm's story. If we are to be completely honest, the tale has been sanitized trice: first the Brothers reconfigured the morals of the original tale (Zipes, "Fairy Tales," 2006: 66-67), then Taylor sanitized the Brother's version, and finally Disney

"Snow White" first appeared in the book *German Popular Stories*, which was Edgar Taylor's selection and translation of 55 Grimm's tales from their first two volumes (1812 and 1815) of *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen*. It was titled "Snow Drop." Taylor's book was ground-breaking in both its popularity and its impact: it set the framework and standard for the fairy tale genre both in Britain and America and it lived long enough to see countless (credited and uncredited) reprints. Although it competed with Hans Christian Andersen's tales, by the end of the century it became a classic of the genre. Taylor's rendition completely conformed to the feel of English language, and even the Brothers agreed, after reading the book, that "[t]he succinct, nice English in itself suits the storytelling children's tone much more than the somewhat stiff high German" (ref, Zipes 2014: 33).[33]

The appeal of the Taylor's translation was, however, in the fact that it was not actually a *translation*, but an *adaptation*. While the Grimm's version of the tales was educative, serious and intended for adult audience (most of all scholars), Taylor's version downplayed it to the realm of children and adapted it to suit the bourgeois middle-class family values. The Grimm's interest in folklore was mainly scientific, as they emphasized the tales' linguistic and cultural importance; Taylor's adaptation, though partly resonant with the Grimm's vision, often turned them comical and fun, bed time stories, suitable for entertainment and education of children. In adapting them, Taylor not only translated them loosely, but he took it upon himself to rewrite many of them, merging them together, renaming

sanitized Taylor's.

33 After reading Taylor's translation of their tales, the Brother's took notes from it and readapted some of them, creating a translation/adaption spiral (Zipes 2014: 44). That is how influential Taylor's rendition of the tales was.

characters and adding new ones (a few of which were fairies, completely absent from the original), as well as purging any notion of religion, sex and extreme violence. Although he included number of notes to his collection, *German Popular Stories* created a profound misunderstanding of German folkloric tales, until Margaret Hunt's 1884 more literal translation. Thus, what was during the 19th century in Anglophone countries known as "the Grimm's tales," was actually a thoroughly anglicised version of them.[34]

Compared to some other tales (such as "Hansel and Grettel" and "The Frog King"), "Snow Drop" suffered only minor revisions. The most obvious one is the final fate of the Queen who, after quadruple attempted murder of Snow White, comes to her wedding, only to be forced to dance to death in red-hot iron shoes (the Grimm's version), or simply choke with passion, fall ill and die (the Taylor's). However, there are some changes in the figure of the mirror as well. In the light of Taylor's general freedom of adaptation, these seem minute and insignificant: 1) the mirror seems to know more details about Snow White's whereabouts, and 2) it is incapable of lying. If compared fleetingly, these changes do not really feel like an adaptation, but as a rather loose and free translation. They neither concern the main characters, nor does it seem that they change anything within the plot, narrative-, ethics- or aesthetics-wise. They are trivial, incidental and inconsequential. But as it is often the case, these are exactly the places where the reader is invited to step through the looking-glass, leave the fairy tale and visit the early 19th-century culture that created them. Georgian London is what I am aiming at, but in order to get there I

---

34   Taylor's translation was so popular and compelling, that even the first translation of the Grimm's tales in French (*Vieux Contes pour l'Amusement des Grands et des Petits enfans* (1824) by Antoine Boulland) was, actually, a translation of the Taylor's version (Zipes 2014: 57).

need to turn to Taylor's adaptation of the mirror's figure: its power of speech and the nature of its animation.

The Queen's Mirror

The Queen's talking mirror teaches the reader about the world of objects and insecurities regarding their ontological status. Within the Taylor's adaptation of the Grimm's tale, it inconspicuously presents itself as just another magical object, as another loquacious thing that, by its fantastical element, spices up the Snow White's story, while revealing the aspects of an ever more commodified materiality that England dreaded at the time.

The magic mirror is deeply embedded into the structure, narrative and meaning of the story, and its role as a plot-driving *machina* is far greater than it might seem to an uninterested eye. Firstly, it perpetually fuels the Queens anger, making it ever stronger and viler; secondly, it orchestrates and dictates the Queen's desire and narcissism, and by that the narrative as a whole; finally, it facilitates the plot first by disclosing Snow White's existence, and then her location. At the level of character motivation, the mirror is constantly at the centre of the story, the Queen returning to its words as in an act of perpetual litany. One might rightly ask whether the Queen's interest lies in the content of those words, or in the words themselves; is she in love with the idea of her being "the fairest in the land" or with the mirror's cyclical recital of it. Whatever the case, the fact remains that it is because of the mirror that the plot moves forward.

Since the accent of the story is on the Queen and Snow White, we actually know very little about the mirror itself. It appears to be only a functionary object that reveals to the Queen what could not be seen by a human eye. It is not

depicted as the subject of the story, and we do not know its size, clarity or any of its material properties. Taylor's book, illustrated by George Cruikshank, does not show it, and its shape and fashion in the illustrations of latter translations and adaptations change depending on the period.[35] We do not even know whether it is properly alive; but what we do know is that it has the power of speech: it *talks*. It is precisely this power that will eventually let me step through its surface into Georgian physiological debates. Just like the Queen, I will ask it questions knowing that it cannot lie.

"Mirror, mirror on the wall, tell me how's that you can speak at all?"

The nature of the conversant power of the mirror is, in the extant interpretations of the story, completely neglected. Most of the seminal analyses of the tale are psychoanalytic (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: 36-44; Bettelheim 2010: 133-145; Zipes, "Why Fairy Tales Stick," 2006: 133-136) and focus, quite expectedly, on the conflict between the Queen and Snow White; some are interested in the patterns of initiation into womanhood (Girardot 1977); some investigate the differences between the Grimm's and Taylor's versions (Sutton 1996: 22-47), or are structural analyses (Jones 1990). Some of them do include the mirror in their analysis, it is true: Gilbert and Gubar's forceful comment on its fusion with the King's patriarchal voice follows the footsteps of Bettelheim's reading of the mirror's voice as the daughter's (Snow White's). However, no one tries to problematize the fact that the mirror *speaks in the*

---

35 Thus, in Andrew Lang's 1890 *The Red Fairy Book* it is depicted as a huge cheval glass, with curly-tailed dragons fusing their bodies with the mirror frame in the fashion of the Victorian grotesque, while in Marian Edwardes's 1912 *Grimm's Household Tales* and Joseph Jacobs 1916 *Europa's Fairy Book* it gets progressively smaller, signalling the modernist love of minimalism and abstraction, as well as revolt against the Victorian obsession with ornaments.

first place: its verboseness *per se* seems uninteresting and unworthy of a comment. Even in discussions that explicitly aim that feature, such as Dan Fang's truly remarkable and recent doctoral dissertation entitled *Magical Objects in Victorian Literature. Enchantment, Narrative Imagination and the Power of Things* (2015), the peculiarity that Fang sees in this mirror is not its power of speech, but its ability to reflect hidden truths, namely the existence and location of Snow White; something out there, out of the Queen's reach (Fang 2015: 139-149). Even here, the very specificity of the Snow White's mirror, its magic, the reason why it is so special in the first place, remains unnoticed.

Although it is in a mirror's nature to reflect, is that precisely what the mirror in "Snow White" does? Is the game it plays the one of appearances, of right and wrong reflections, of reflected hidden truths? Although this could be one way of interpreting it (since it is undeniably what mirrors do), I would like to draw attention to the fact that this mirror (as far as one can tell from the story) does not *show* anything, but *tells* it.[36] The verbal power is what lies in the core of its figure: not the *image* that the Queen *sees* in it, but the *conversation* that she *has* with it. There is a sharp difference between reflecting and vocalizing, as there is between the image and the word, or the image and the sound. This mirror does not reflect what is in front of it, or show a faraway place of truth, but it conjures the words (seemingly) on its own accord. Apart from the fact that the semantic structure of an image must necessarily differ from that of a word, this shift in emphasis from the visual to the vocal brings a whole new set of questions to the table.

---

36 The first illustration where the mirror is not blank, but it actually reflects the Queen's face comes very late in the century, in Andrew Lang's 1890 *The Red Fairy Book*, illustrated by H. J. Ford and Lancelot Speed.

The mirror does not show, it tells: it has appropriated the human ability of speech and now it fully participates in the consequences of that speech. It is not just another mirror, magical or not, that unearths what could not be seen; it is a loquacious object involved in the conversational aspect of human affairs, it is involved in *language*.

How does this changes things and what are those new questions that this emphasis shift brings to the foreground? The first concerns the *nature of the mirror's animation*, while the other concerns *the mirror's subjectivity*. In other words, the issues I want to discuss are that the mirror is *alive*, and that it has certain *power of agency*.

The mirror's agency in "Snow White" seems straightforward. It seems like it is all-knowing, and it seems that there are no limits to its powers of divination. It sees everything, and it knows everything. When the Queen asks it who the fairest lady in the land is, it reveals secret, inapproachable facts that fuel the Queen's anger. The mirror divines, reveals and tells and its powers seem omniscient and unquestionable.

This is where the translation/adaptation issue kicks in. Adapting the story for English audience, Taylor felt compelled to add some details to the mirror description, and those details, those discrepancies with the Grimm's original, lets us see the anxieties of the time incessantly, silently, epistemically working in the background. Translation of a text is always translation of a culture, and choices made, like Freudian slip of the tongue, rest on a wider cultural pool of desires, fear, anxieties, paranoias, needs and wants.

So what are these discrepancies? Firstly, the mirror seems to simply know *much more*. Allow me look into that more closely. We all know that Snow White's troubles begin with the mirror, and that the mirror just keeps making them.

She escapes death at the hand of the servant (the Huntsman in latter translations), and runs into the wilderness in a dire need to literally save her skin from the Queen's jealousy and rage. Alas, there is nowhere to hide, really. The all-seeing eye of the mirror is on her throughout, haunting her like a reflection inseparable from the object reflected. There is no safety from it anywhere, since its omniscience rests upon the Queen's recurrent question. That question, in turn, perpetuates the insatiate desire for wholeness that could come only at the expanse of Snow White's death. It seems that the Snow White's fate is sealed from the start, since the obliteration of her existence, her deduction from the mirror conversation, is the aim of the drive that pushes the Queen's desire ever forward. Snow White is for the Queen a perfect object of desire, one that has to be obtained in its absence, and one that has to be destroyed if the Queen is to reach the wholeness of peace, the transcendental utopia beyond the mirror's speech. There is something in Snow White more than herself, so the Queen has to destroy her to obtain it. And the mirror, the talking mirror that knows everything and sees everything, is the spark and the instrument of that destruction. It is precisely within the register of the Queen's desire that the animation of the magic mirror comes to the fore: in order to satisfy it, in order to answer the question that keeps provoking its conversant, animate nature, the mirror reveals the truth hidden from the eyes of humans.

However, the way it produces this truth, the way it shapes it into words, the extent to which it is necessary to show its omniscience, differs between the Brothers and Taylor, and thus between the needs of German and English audience. While the original Grimm's story is satisfied with the mirror revealing Snow White's location, "over the

seven mountains"[37] and "with the seven Dwarves,"[38] the English translation adds, seemingly unnecessary, a detailed description of the location. The Edgar Taylor's 1823 translation tells us that "over the hills, in the greenwood shade, / Where the seven dwarfs their dwelling have made, / There Snow-drop is hiding her head" (84). This detailed elaboration of the Snow White's location might seems insignificant, just an ornament in a less tight/literal translation. However, as an act of both cultural appropriation *and* revision, the translation exposes the structure of the English 19th-century anxieties. Thus, the mirror's widened competencies are not just an ornament: they are a figure, a letter in the "Snow White" mirror fantasy. There seems to be a need in English culture for the mirror not only to be more loquacious, but to exhibit its magical, omniscient nature more strongly, or more fully, making it a profoundly knowledgeable agent of the story. It might be possible that Taylor simply slipped into the assumption that magical artefacts are to possess unlimited powers, but my point here is that this change, this emphasis on the mirror's powers of observation and speech is the statement about the *nature of its animation*. The English magic mirror simply knows more and talks more, it is more human and less inanimate, and it creates a narrative structure that shows a strong interest in the question of *difference between animate and inanimate matter*, hotly debated among the physiologists (among others) at the time.

The second discrepancy builds upon the first one, and also brings the question of the mirror's subjectivity into the conversation. Literary every 19th-century English

37 „[…] [Ü]ber den sieben Bergen ist […]" (Brüder Grimm 1812: 243)

38 „[…] Sneewittchen bei den sieben Zwergelchen ist […]" (Brüder Grimm 1812: 243)

translation insists that, once asked, the mirror is under the obligation to tell the truth: not only that it is omniscient, but it is infallible as well. However, with the Grimm's original that is not the case.[39] While the Grimm's mirror leaves the nature of the mirror's power unspecified (at least) or unlimited (at best), the English unequivocal insistence on the mirror's infallibility constructs an epistemic frame around it, dictating the rules under which the knowledge of the spoken truth is possible. Something happened to the mirror in its turn to the English audience, something fuelled its transition from a boundless concept to an epistemically structured one. The only way for the mirror to divine, the only way for it to see and relate its knowledge, is through the epistemic blueprint of the posed question, the one that interpellates it as a subject. And the act of posing that question concerns the very limits of possibility of the knowledge the mirror produces, as well as its relationship to the human subject.

The fact that it is *bound* to *tell* the truth, makes the English mirror doubly dependable on the human agent. Firstly, it cannot tell whatever it wishes and, secondly, it can (presumably) speak only in response to the posed questions[40]: answers to how, when and what the mirror says are framed as depending on the spectating subject. This means that nature of its animation, verboseness and subjectivity relies on human agency.

In their feminist reading of "Snow White," Gilbert and Gubar (2000: 37-38) observed that the mirror's voice, its speech, is the voice of the absent King, "the patriarchal

39 "[W]ie die Königin das hörte erschrack sie und sah wohl, daß sie betrogen worden und der Jäger Sneewittchen nicht getödtet hatte", with no sign of the idea of the mirror's infallibility (Brüder Grimm 1812: 243).

40 I say presumably, because the mirror's inability to speak of its own accord is nowhere explicitly stated, but deduced from the complete lack of evidence that would tell otherwise.

voice of judgment that rules the Queen's – and every woman's – self-evaluation." The Queen has interiorized the King's voice that "now resides in her own mirror, her own mind." If we put the issue of patriarchy aside, one might say that the mirror *interpellates* the Queen, it pulls her into language, it incites and constitutes her rage and desire for an unfathomable and ungraspable object (*a*) whose attainment/loss leads only to the subject's fall (in her case, literally death). In this manner, this particular magic mirror is the boundary that ontologically blurs the participants in the act of looking, the act that is at the same time the act of speaking and the act of listening.

As we can see, this relationship between the talking mirror and the human subject (the Queen) is everything but simple. Moreover, the mirror (the thing) and the Queen (the human) cannot be dissociated. Not only that the line between the animate life and inert matter is collapsed in the mirror's materiality, but the mirror and the Queen keep colliding and semantically reshaping one another. As her narcissistic fantasy rests on the mirror's words, the mirror's subjectivity relies on the Queen's verbal agency. In its special powers, the mirror not only produces the Queen's desire, but, in a boomerang-shaped flight, it reappropriates the desire's verbal expression as the foundation of both its animation and subjectivity. Without the mirror, there would be no circular rekindling of the Queen's desire; but without her recurrent question, there would be no mirror's agency.

As I have shown, if we gaze in the Queen's looking-glass long enough and discern the specificities of its magical property, its speech, we can see a rising concern about the nature of (in)animate life. By asking whether the mirror has a subjectivity of its own (since it is incapable of lying) we arrive at far broader and abstract questions. What makes the living being different from inert matter? Where

is the line between the human and the thing? In its animate, verbal, on human agency dependent nature, the mirror opens up a space for discussion of what makes the thing "objective" (as in what makes it inert) and what makes the human human. Where is the dividing line between these areas, and if there is any, is it stable or porous and unclear? Is it possible to draw a clear line between an object and a person?

In order to answer these questions, we need to look elsewhere; we need to step through the Queen's looking-glass outside of "Snow White" and into Georgian London that created it. Yes, created, because Taylor's peculiar adaptation of the mirror's figure, his "Snow White" mirror fantasy, resonated with vehement debates on life in the discipline of physiology, debates in which what was at stake was not only the understanding of the nature of (in)animate life, but the existence of the human soul no less. Thus, I need to move the gaze away from literature for a moment and investigate the cultural/scientific background of the (in)animate trope just encountered.

Vitalism versus Mechanicism

Judging from the examples in literature, crafts, and science the question of life and its connection to (in)animate matter was at the beginning of the 19th century a very potent and troublesome one. In literature, the Queen's mirror negotiated it in cultural space already occupied by the Frankenstein's monster sawn together from pieces of inanimate flesh and brought to life by electricity; decade and a half later, while vitalist debates on life were drawing to a close, an amateur scientist Andrew Crosse thought that he created insects (thus life) by his electrochemical apparatus; at the same time, the taxidermy, the craft of

(in)animate illusion (of turning dead animals seemingly alive) was at its peak; in 1835, Madame Tussauds uncanny wax figures settled down in the Baker Street, London. If we take a closer look, the ontic uncertainty of the (in)animate matter's proper place could be detected everywhere, even in very odd and unexpected places, such as dandyism. However, while in the sphere of culture and art this question was posed implicitly, through expression of dread, anxiety or a fantasy of things coming to life and people turning into things, in the realm of science this question was rendered explicitly, and with no small consequences to politics, ethics and theology.

In order to account for the notion of life in Georgian science, one could go in many directions, since the problem of vital properties and forces involved diverse lines of inquiry: relationship between physiology and new discoveries in chemistry (since many believed that life could be explained through the concept of chemical affinity alone), man's place in nature (leading to some pre-evolutionary debates), comparative anatomy (that made observations of the phenomenon of life possible), etc. Though profoundly interesting, many of these lines are not directly pertinent to the "Snow White" mirror fantasy I started this chapter with. Therefore, I will focus on those lines that could be brought into dialogue with the fairy tale and could prove instrumental in better understanding Taylor's peculiar adaptation.

Firstly, it is of paramount importance to tackle the problem of the *difference between animate and inanimate matter*. This is the core problem of my analysis, because the line between these categories was everything but unanimously determined and its drawing involved serious physiological, as well as theological, issues. It is my belief that Taylor's peculiar choices in the adaptation of

"Snow White" rested on a wider cultural inability to un-alterably pinpoint proper places of (in)animate beings in a wider scheme of life. The controversy in science on the exact same point was an epistemic blueprint of that ad-aptation. Secondly, I wish to discuss *vital agency* (could inanimate matter possess it?) in the early 19th-century debates, which directly depended on the position regard-ing life. We have seen that the mirror's animation in both German and English versions was dependent on the sub-ject's (the Queen's) agency. Now we need to see how this choice resonated with the ongoing scientific debates. Thirdly, I need to briefly sketch the problematic *relation-ship between the brain (mind, thought), matter and life*, because it bare direct importance to the (fourthly) argu-ment regarding *the human soul*. The problem of life was such an abstract one, that many authors were compelled to conclude (Goodfield-Toulmin 1969: 284-285; Lacyna 1983: 312) that it was impossible separating it from the adjacent scientific areas as well as from ethics and reli-gion. And it is precisely here, in the theological repercus-sions of physiological debates, that we see what really was at stake for the Georgians in the adaptation of the Queen's mirror: the concept of stillness, transcendence and of the human soul.

I have separated these topics on purely instrumental basis: in the early 19th century, all of them thoroughly influenced one other. Depending on the definition of life (that rested upon the understanding of the animate in living beings opposed to the inanimate in inert matter), the notion of the vital agency changed, as well as the perception of mental phenomena, causing serious repercussions for the idea of the human soul, and consequently for religion, morality, politics, social life, etc.

At the beginning of the century, the semantic and conceptual web of life created a confusing and overloaded field. Most of it spread across the field of "life sciences," and it was up to physiologists, surgeons and anatomists to offer and argue for specific explanations of what life was, how it manifested itself and where it came from. There were many points that everyone (epistemically) agreed upon, but nuances between opinions were just as important and numerous.

Since 1960s there were attempts to systematize the debates, with every author giving priority to different criteria. Most of them, however, agreed that the opinions on life tended to gravitate towards one of the extremes: they either claimed that life came from the outside in form of an extraneous vital substance or a principle, or they claimed that it resulted from the organization of matter itself.[41] Foucault (2005: 292) showed that "organization" substituted "taxonomy" at the turn of the 19th century and the concept of "life […] provided the basis for the […] possibility of a classification" of beings. Having, thus, in mind the paramount importance idea of life held at the period, I must agree with L. S. Lacyna (1983: 312) that both mentioned extremes were essentially "vitalistic": "they [both] rejected the iatromechanical system of the mid-eighteenth century, insisting instead upon the unique properties of living beings."

June Goodfield-Toulmin and Stephen Toulmin offered a few different systematizations (Goodfield 1960; Toulmin

---

41   This polarization was striking and obvious even to the participants, deeply immersed in the fabric of the debates. Apart from the writings of William Lawrence and John Abernethy (to be discussed in some detail) who explicitly opposed each other, this awareness could be found in, for instance, John Barclays's *Inquiry into Opinions Concerning life and Organization* (1822: 21), or John Fletcher's *Rudiments of Physiology* (1836: 16-17).

and Goodfield 1962; Goodfield-Toulmin 1969), the latest describing the clash of the extremes as the "mechanist/vitalist controversy"[42] (Goodfield-Toulmin 1969: 283). Lacyna (1983) calls them "immanentist" and "transcendentalist," thus avoiding the pejorative connotations "vitalism" and "mechanism" assumed. On the other hand, E. Benton (1974) leaves this polarization behind and systematizes ideas of individual authors according to their epistemical presuppositions, forms of explanation and solutions to specific problems. Everett Mendelsohn (1965) analyses vitalist ideas within a broader space of physiological concepts, while Karl M. Figlio (1975) tries to reach the epistemic substratum of the debates and unravel their semantic background anchored in the complex concept of "organization," then prevalent in life sciences.

Vitalist doctrine was by far the predominant one, and it had a strong grip on the English physiological and medical imagination from, roughly, 1780 to 1830. After the 1830s, references to it slowly dissipated (Goodfield-Toulmin 1969: 290). The greatest point of dispute between vitalists/transcendentalists and mechanists/immanentists was on the ultimate cause of life: where did it come from? For the former, life and matter were radically discontinuous, since life vivified matter and put it into motion; for the latter, their relationship seemed uninterrupted, since life was the consequence of matter and its result. At the bottom of the problem was the inability to explain the cause of differentiation between animate and inanimate matter. Both vitalists and mechanists were aware that differences

42 Goodfield-Toulmin (1969: 283) further distinguishes between "descriptive" and "explanatory" mechanists and "descriptive" and "explanatory" vitalists. "Descriptive" are those whose explanation of life stops at the description of its properties, while "explanatory" are those whose explanation tries to account for the final cause or source of life.

existed, but the problem was how to account for them: if there was a difference (as there perceptibly was) between the animate and inanimate matter, where and how have the vital functions of living beings came to be in the first place? Are all the parts of a living organism alive, or is there an extraneous force, substance or principle that animates them in parts or as a whole? Animate beings live in the world of inanimate matter, yet still, they consume it in order to survive.[43] Where is the line between the two?

Though for the general population this line might have seem obvious and clear, those tapping in life sciences felt compelled to deal with the issue in some detail. If they were to describe (and possibly explain) life, they had to do it comparatively, by juxtaposing it with what it was not. Thus, most of the treatises on life from the period start with a detailed description of differences between the animate and inanimate matter.

The general consensus was that unlike the inert matter, living bodies resisted the destructive nature of the environment (mainly oxygen). Branching out of this consensus towards different and opposite conclusions could be seen in comparing, for instance, William Lawrence's writing with that of John Hunter, whose vitalistic doctrine Lawrence explicitly criticized. Hunter professed his opinions in 1786, thus one generation before Lawrence, but the consensus on the preservative powers of life survived the time.

Lawrence (1816: 123) observed that "we employ the term life to designate what is at least an apparent exception

---

43 The question was how could a living being's life depend upon consumption of inert matter, unless it transformed it into the same kind of matter the being itself was made of (namely, into animate matter). The consequent question was even more problematic: how this transformation from inert to animate matter happened? To answer that would have meant to give the final answer to the question what life (in the form of animate matter) really was.

to general laws." Hunter ("Works, vol. 1," 1835: 219) would have concurred; and he would also add that "if those [animal, animate] substances had not reverted into common matter by their decomposition, it never could have been suspected that they were originally composed of the same materials [as the inert matter]." Further, both of them described the differences in types of matter at some length: Lawrence (1816: 121-148) considered living bodies necessarily heterogeneous and inherently active, having fixed forms and being able to grow and reproduce, to exhibit sensibility of senses, contractility of muscles and irritability of nerves; inert matter possessed only its physical properties of density, elasticity, magnitude, remaining (mainly, but not necessarily) homogeneous and passive. Thus, he juxtaposed and contrasted *vital properties* of living beings with *physical properties* of inert matter. For John Hunter, the *principle of action* was the next to the principle of preservation in importance, so he contrasted the mechanization of inert matter (its physical properties of attraction, cohesion and, possibly, repulsion) in need of an *external* impetus with the *inherent* possibility of action of animal matter. "[W]hat is simply mechanical," says Hunter, "that is made of inert matter, must have, as it were, a soul to put and continue it in motion" ("Works, vol. 1," 1835: 213), while "[a]nimals and vegetables have a power of action within themselves" (215).

So far, their views seem to be in agreement: the split between the two types of matter must have occurred, because it was observable. However, the issue of the cause of this split was the junction were they parted ways. Though thoroughly elaborated, Hunter's philosophy of life ended being a bit self-contradictory: he believed that "animal and vegetable substances differ from common matter in having a power superadded, totally different from any

other known property of matter" ("Works, vol. 1," 1835: 215), thus professing a radical separation between the inert and alive matter. On the other hand, he envisaged the split between them in the form of a "*transformation or passage* of common matter […] to living matter" (219, emphases are mine). There is a clear sense of continuity in this statement, followed by the elaboration that "[s]o far as observation has gone, the steps of this transformation are gradual and complicated; the products of each successive process always advancing from a lower to a higher degree of animalization."[44] Hunter perceived the shift from inanimate to animate matter as *transformation* or *passage* from "below," from the inert matter, establishing a continuity between life and inert matter and contradicting his own views on the extraneousness of the vital substance. For Lawrence, on the other hand, the break between the animate and inanimate matter was sharp, because he claimed that life was the result of the organization. To speculate about the cause of this break is to "wander into the regions of imagination and conjecture [which is] the poetic ground of physiology" (1823: 72). Even more, he believed that "[t]he science of organized bodies should […] be treated in a manner entirely different from those, which have inorganic matter for their object" (1816: 160). A completely different language should be created, "since words transposed from the physical sciences to the animal and vegetable economy, constantly recall to us ideas of an order altogether

---

44   Animalization is, for Hunter, the process of animation of common matter that increases proportionally with the capability of matter to receive the vital substance. "[C]ertain conditions of the recipients of life," continues Hunter ("Works, vol. 1," 1835: 2019), "seem necessary before it can be communicated, and the higher the manifestations of life the higher are these conditions. The manifestation of intellect in proportion to the development of the brain presents an example very analogous."

different from those which are suggested by the phenomena last mentioned." The break between vital and physical properties is and should be clear-cut: no organization, no vital properties, no life.

But where does one consider organization of matter to have occurred? At the beginning of the 19th century, the prevailing structure of and metaphor for the order of nature was still the Great Chain of Being, so the separation of animate beings from inert matter meant focusing on the lower parts of that chain.[45] Somewhere in their murky fields, life emerged and vital functions ensued. Lawrence never explicitly answered this question, since that would have implied knowledge of the cause of life, which he fervently rejected as possible.[46] However, another physician, Thomas Charles Morgan, answered it in an unexpected fashion: he argued that the difference between living and non-living matter is "purely formal; in the lowest species of living things, the forms are so simple and the functions so circumscribed, that no firm line of demarcation can readily be drawn between them" (1819: 29). Even more, he opposed that which seemed to unite "vitalists" and "mechanicists": the opposition between the *vital phenomena* of animate and the *physical properties* of inanimate matter. "It seems highly probable," says Morgan, "that there is no basis for the theory, which assigns the movements of organized species to a cause different from the general laws

45 For the history of the concept of the Great Chain of Being, see Lovejoy 1936 and Bynum 1975.

46 That was his explicit problem with vitalism: since no one could factually prove life as such, but only through description of its functions, he believed it better not to suppose an answer than to offer a hypothesis such as the subtle, invisible, vital matter that he considered profoundly theological because founded on faith instead on facts. "Ignorance is preferable to error," says Lawrence, "he is nearer to truth who believes in nothing, than he who believes what is wrong" (1823: 12).

of matter; and which considers the phenomena of life as of another order, from those of inanimate matter" (1819: 30). Even among "mechanists" themselves, the question of distinction between the animate and the inanimate could not be solved.

The Vital Agency and the (In)animate

The second problem I am interested in is the one of vital agency in conjunction with the (in)animate debate. In both Grimm's and Taylor's versions of the "Snow White" the mirror is a thing, and yet it speaks. It has a power of omniscience, and yet it can respond only to the speaking subject's verbal demand. And then, Taylor's adaptation further problematizes the mirror's power of agency, since it can only speak the truth. In the analysed debates on life, the issue of the vital agency became a major consequence of the stance on the relationship between life and matter. In the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century, matter was prevalently understood as a destitute, silent, inert thing, with no capacity of generation, thought or sentience. In 1749, David Hartley (1791: 31) wrote in *Observations on Man, His Duties and His Expectations* that "[m]atter is a mere passive Thing, of whose very Essence it is, to be endued with a *Vis Inertiae*; for this *Vis Inertiae* presents itself immediately in all our observations and experiments upon it, and is inseparable from it, even in idea." And it is because of that premise that views of physiologists such as William Lawrence or Thomas Morgan were considered highly controversial. To argue that life is the result of organized matter (or that the thought is the result of the functioning of the brain) seemed incredible, paradoxical and even blasphemous to many.

In the "immanentist" corner, Lawrence's stance on the vital agency consistently followed his division between in-

animate and animate matter: animate, organized matter is active and capable of action (1816:147), while the inanimate is passive and capable only of reaction (like in the case of elasticity) (1816: 151). Morgan's view was more complicated, since he rejected division between alive and inert matter. He agreed that vital agency results from organization, but since there was no clear break between "organized" and "simple" matter, there was no clear break between "vital" and "physical" agency (1819: 30).

In the "transcendentalist" corner, agency had to, logically, come from the vital substance, but the situation was not that simple. In his Introduction to *A Treatise on Blood, Inflamation and Gun-Shot Wounds*, Hunter ("Works, vol. 3," 1835: 3) defines life as the power that renders the body "susceptible of impressions which excite action," meaning that vital substance (*materia vitae diffusa*) is responsible for the body's vital agency. This means not only that vital action is a consequence of the life force, but that is the consequence of the division between "common" (inanimate) and "animal" (animate) matter. As we have seen, "common" matter is mechanical, it needs an initial extraneous power in order to move; "animal" and "vegetable" matter has the power of action within itself.[47] The machine cannot do anything more than the added power allows it; animal

_____

47 However, Hunter's animate/inanimate division did not necessarily coincide with the organic/inorganic one. In *A Treatise on Blood, Inflamation and Gun-Shot Wounds*, he describes blood not only as the conduit of vital substance, but as alive *per se*. "Our ideas of life," says Hunter, "have been so much connected with organic bodies, and principally those endowed with visible action, that it requires a new bend to the mind to make it conceive that these circumstances are not inseparable" ("Works, vol. 3," 1835: 105-106). This adds a new complexity to the issue of animate matter: not all the parts of a living being need necessarily be alive, nor all the parts need necessarily be active.

has a principle of action in every part […] and whenever the action of one part […] becomes the cause of an action in another, it is by stimulating the living principle of that other part, the action in the second part being as much the effect of the living principle of that part as the action of the first was of the living principle in it ("Works, vol. 1," 1835: 223).

Animate matter acts through the living principle, which "is a property we do not understand" ("Works, vol. 3," 1835: 117); thus live matter, in the heterogeneity of its tissues and aggregate states proves incessantly unpredictable and mysterious. On the other hand, inert matter is mechanical, because unlike life it follows the rules of physics and possesses one more crucial property: "the matter of the globe […] in its common actions […] *cannot err*" ("Works, vol. 1," 1835: 213).

Just as the Queen's mirror cannot lie.

The Brain, Matter and Life

The debates on life – on the nature of animate matter, on vital agency and the final cause – had a profound impact on adjacent areas, such as morals and religion. The notion of inert matter, incapable of thought or generation, served as a firm ground for the existence of the human soul. In the world of destitute matter, no living, earthly, material creature could have generated life on its own: life, spirit, thought, the soul – all the immaterial phenomena – were necessarily considered the God's work. In order for the soul to exist, it had to be of a different, ethereal quality than crude matter: the soul and matter had to be separate and discontinuous. Therefore, to argue against that dualism could have easily been perceived as arguing against the separate existence of the soul and, consequently, against God.[48]

---

48   However, the exactly opposite argument was also possible.

The theological repercussions of the physiological concepts can best be illustrated and explained through now legendary case of William Lawrence.[49] His argument with John Abernethy started as a physiological debate on vitalism and the notion of life, and ended up a serious theological controversy. As the participants gradually became ever less polite to each other, the argument quickly left the field of physiology and attached itself to public ethics and social wellbeing. For my analysis of the Queen's mirror, this controversy bares strong importance, since the vehemence of the participants' arguments, the public outcry and legal sanctions that ensued, all testify to the importance the issues recognized by the mirror played in the eyes and minds of Georgians.

The debate officially started in 1816, with the publication of Lawrence's *An Introduction to Comparative Anatomy and Physiology*, based on the two introductory lectures he had delivered to the College of Surgeons in March the same

In order to establish the omnipresence of God, Joseph Priestly argued in 1777 that the common matter/spirit dualism implies that something (namely matter) is independent from God. "Exclude the idea of Deity on my hypothesis," he says in the second (improved and enlarged) edition of *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit* (1782: 42), "and everything except space necessarily vanishes with it, so that the Divine Being, and his energy, are absolutely necessary to that of every other being. His power is the very life and soul of everything that exists; and strictly speaking, without him, we are, as well as can do, nothing. But exclude the idea of Deity on the common hypothesis, and the idea of solid matter is no more excluded than that of space. It remains a problem, therefore, whether matter be at all dependent upon God, whether it be in his power either to annihilate or to create it; a difficulty that has staggered many, and on which the doctrine of two original, independent principles was built." See, also, McEvoy and McGuire 1975.

49 The case of William Lawrence has received a wide coverage so far. See, for instance, Darlington 1961; Temkin 1963; Goodfield-Toulmin 1966; Goodfield-Toulmin 1969; Mudford 1968; Wells 1971; Figlio 1976.

year.[50] While the first lecture was "On Objects and History of Comparative Anatomy," the second was simply entitled "On Life" and it strongly rejected vitalism as a viable physiological, as well as methodological, explanation of life.[51] What ensued was a series of back-and-forth responses between him and John Abernethy, with every new response drifting further away from physiology. Abernethy was a fierce promoter of John Hunter, whose vitalist perspective he somewhat tweaked (stating that the invisible vital substance resembled electricity in its effects), elaborated and perpetually disseminated both in press and in front of the College. So to go against him, and in not so light a wording, meant for Lawrence a clean and public break with his mentor, his professional past and vitalism all at once.

The main victim of his attack was not Abernethy by name, but vitalism in general. He rejected the existence of a vital substance (material or immaterial), arguing instead that "organization, vital properties [such as sensibility and irritability], [their] functions, and life are expressions related to each other; in which organization is the instrument, vital

50 The clash of opinions between William Lawrence and John Abernethy has certainly existed even prior to Lawrence's lectures. Goodfield-Toulmin (1969: 296) suspects that the anonymous depreciating review of Abernethy's 1814 book *An Inquiry into the Probability and Rationality of Mr. Hunter's Theory of Life* might have been written by Lawrence.

51 He had just been installed as the professor of Comparative Anatomy and Physiology and these were his first two official public appearances in front of the College. He had been John Abernethy's apprentice at St. Bartholomew's Hospital since he was sixteen, and became the assistant surgeon there in 1814, after Abernethy got promoted to the chief surgeon. Just a few years before his addresses to the College he became the Fellow of the Royal Society. Lawrence's whole carrier had institutionally been tied up with Abernethy's. That is why, when he did appear in front of the College, the choice of his lectures was considered unfortunate, to say the least.

properties the acting power, function the mode of action, and life the result" (1816: 120-121). The logical consequence of this stance was that mind, matter and life were not separated, but that mental functions of the brain were the result of the brain's vital properties – they were properties of the cerebral matter. The vital principle was, in his opinion, untenable, because it was invisible, unverifiable and could not "be received as a deduction of science, but [had to] be accepted as an object of faith" (1816: 168). The final cause of life could not be explained: "how the living forces in one case, or attraction in the other, exert their agency" (1816: 165) was mystery. But for Lawrence, it was better to acknowledge incapacity of science to provide an answer than to offer a hypothesis that could not be fact-checked.

The real trouble for Lawrence started two years later, in 1819, after the publication of his second book *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology and the Natural History of Man*. There he dealt not only with Abernethy's response to his previous book, but he perused the vitalist doctrine to counter-argue his views further. Showing a parallel in complexity between mental capacities and development of the brain, Lawrence concluded that there could be no thought, perception, sensation, reasoning, memory, judgement, or any intellectual function without matter.[52] "We are entirely ignorant how the parts of the brain accomplish these purposes," he says (1823: 91), "[…] experience is […] our sole, if not sufficient instructress; and the constant conjunction of phenomena, as exhibited in her lessons is the sole ground for affirming a necessary connection between

---

52   As we have seen, Hunter's concept of "animalization" expressed the same connection between the development of the brain and life ("Works, vol. 1," 1835: 219). That is one of the reasons why he considered the vital substance (*materia vitae*) as being part of the brain, sent to the blood through nerves and then diffused (now as *materia vitae diffusa*) throughout the body ("Works, vol. 3," 1835: 115-117).

them." He could not understand how anyone could believe that an organ such as the brain, could be left unaccounted for, all the mental phenomena instead being attributed to an invisible, immaterial, unverifiable substance. The brain

> receives one fifth of all the blood sent out from the heart, […] is so peculiarly and delicately organized, nicely enveloped in successive membranes, and securely lodged in a bony case, [and] is left almost without and office, being barely allowed to be capable of sensation. It has, in deed, the easiest lot in the animal economy; it is better fed, clothed and lodged than any other part, and has less to do. But its office – only one remove above a sinecure – is not very honorable one: it is kind of porter, entrusted to open the door, and introduce new-comers to the master of the house, who takes on himself the entire charge of receiving, entertaining, and employing them (1823: 92).

This was an argument bound to be condemned and ostracized at the time. By denying the opposition between thought and matter, he inadvertently laid an attack on the most sensitive issues of conservative and clerical quarters. Consequentially, he tapped into the general anxiety about the (in)animate matter that, as we have seen, rested at the bottom of every attempt at explaining the riddle of life.

Lawrence has often been perceived (and correctly) as a victim of religious persecution. After the publication of *Lectures in Physiology*, the public outcry against him was so severe that, in order to keep his practice, he had to pull the book from the press. He was accused of materialism, a label which was a serious prelude to blasphemy at the time. In that manner, Reverend Thomas Rennell, Lawrence's most heated critic claimed that Lawrence was little aware of the consequences of his teachings. "Materialism and Atheism go hand in hand," says Rennell (1819: 64),

they were united as early as the days of the old Ionic school, and the partnership will not be dissolved, even to its latest posterity. For when once we have argued ourselves out of the existence of our soul, which is a spirit, by the very same process we argue ourselves out of the existence of the Almighty, who is a spirit also."

Two most influential literary journals of the day, the *Quarterly Review* and the *British Critic*, followed Rennell's lead calling Lawrence a "mere copyist" (*Quarterly Review* 1819: 4) of French philosophy who turned "the lecture room of the College into a school of materialism" (*Quarterly Review*, 6) and thought that, like his role model Xavier Bishat, could teach "atheism to his pupils, and treat the religion of Christianity with contempt" (*The British Critic* 1819: 96). However, Lawrence was well aware of the possible implications of his work, and he tried in vain to explain that theology and physiology are two separate things, and that the physiological evidence is irrelevant to the question of the separate soul. The doctrine of the human soul, he claimed, existed for millennia before the physiological and anthropological investigations and is far beyond their influence. "Theological doctrine of the soul," he argued (1823: 7), "and its separate existence, has nothing to do with this physiological question, but rests on the species of proof altogether different. […] An immaterial and spiritual being could not have been discovered midst the blood and filth of the dissecting room […]." However, Britain of the time had no sensibility for that kind of argument. It reeked too much of atheism, French intellectual decadence and revolutionary spirit that Britain dreaded at the time. Until the 1820s, vitalism was the leading doctrine of life and Lawrence was just one of its few explicit critics (others being, for instance, Thomas C. Morgan, Joseph Priestley and, later James Prichard). Lawrence's supporter's such as

Richard Carlile and Thomas Forster, quite expectedly, had to publish mainly anonymously, and in order to save his practice he had to pull the publication from the press.[53]

Abernethy's part in shaping the discussion in theological terms was tremendous and the public outcry drew heavily on his writings. A year after Lawrence's *An Introduction to Comparative Anatomy and Physiology* was out, he vehemently responded with a publication of his own, *Physiological Lectures, Exhibiting a General View of Mr. Hunter's Physiology and of his Researches in Comparative Anatomy* (1817). However, his argument took a rough turn and landed way outside of physiology. He claimed that just because something was imperceptible, it did not have to be impossible or non-existent (1817: 42) and accused his opponents (and everyone knew who he meant) of being the "Modern Sceptics" who would wish him to "consider life to be nothing" (1817: 37-38). These Sceptics, he believed, were under the influence of French physiologists, tightly associated with the French revolutionary philosophy (1817: 52). However, their motives were not only unpatriotic, but blasphemous as well. "The very term of superaddition is discordant to their ears," says Abernethy (1817: 46),

> the supposition that there may be any thing which is not an object of sense, or actual demonstration, torments them; they themselves perceive, that the superaddition of life to structure may, indeed, warrant the supposition of a substance having the properties of perception and volition being superadded to life; and that there may be 'more things in heaven and earth, than they in their philosophy dreamt of.

53 *Lectures in Physiology* continued being published repeatedly for decades. According to the English law, copyright did not apply to books proclaimed blasphemous, which enabled publishers to continue publishing Lawrence's book without his approval. See, Goodfield-Toulmin 1969: 307-308.

The Modern Sceptics want to persuade everyone "that when the brains are out, the man is dead" (Abernethy 1817: 47). Contrary to the Sceptics' views,

> the belief of the distinct and independent nature of mind, incites us to act rightly from principle; to relieve distress, to repel aggression, and defend those who are incapable of protecting themselves; to practise and extol whatever is virtuous, excellent, and honorable; to shun and condemn whatever is vicious and base; regardless also of our own personal feelings and interests, when put in competition with our duty (1817: 50).

Abernethy thus stretched the physiological question of life so fiercely, that it became not only a theological issue, but an ethical one as well.

From the onset, the controversy was bound to stray towards religion not only for the reasons of Lawrence's writings being controversial and blasphemous. Contrary to Abernethy's, his style was analytical and his attempts to assert the autonomy of physiology and its "immunity from extraneous claims," to use Lacyna's (1989: 312) expression, have become paradigmatic of the divestment science claimed from religion. However, it could be said that it was Lawrence who turned to theology first, thus unintentionally inviting the theological argument. Timidly, but consistently, he accused vitalism of being more a religious belief than a serious scientific argument. He claimed that vitalism depended on faith instead on facts and that belief in invisible, mysterious fluid was an example of that "propensity in the human mind, which has led men at all times to account for those phenomena, of which the causes are not obvious, by the mysterious aid of higher and imaginary beings" (1816: 1714). After Abernethy's attack, these comparisons and accusation became explicit and sarcastic. By calling the whole controversy *odium*

theologicum (theological hatred), "ugly fiend" with a "venomous breath" and "the most concentrated essence of animosity and rancor" that should not be allowed into the "garden of Science" (1823: 7), he poked the eye of the predominantly religious public who took the opportunity to retaliate. The reviewer of *The Quarterly Review* (1819: 6) explicitly scorned that particular statement, turning it back to its creator with words that *odium theologicum* could only be found in "a sceptic, who found himself thwarted and exposed by one who felt the full force and value of sound religious principles."

It is not my intention to argue that Lawrence's writings were unintentionally religious, because they were not. However, his own religious references show us how hard was to separate religion from science in the first decades of the 19th century, and how profound were the effects of scientific debates on theological issues, such as the existence of the human soul.

The Mirror and the Soul

Armed with cognizance of the Georgian physiological controversies, I will return to the "Snow White" mirror fantasy. What I find there now, is the Queen's mirror growing out of the epistemic blueprint of the 19th-century debates on life. It stands in the centre of a semantic net composed of problematic, controversial scientific/theological concepts, capitalizing on the pervading unease about the epistemic and ontic position of things (and, thus, necessarily of man as well).

Both the nature of its animation and power of its agency reach towards the shaky and irksome uncertainties of (in)animate matter. At the time of its creation (the time of Taylor's adaptation) vital agency could have come from the *inside*, as the result of the organization of matter, but the

question remained where in the Great Chain of Being do we consider the organization to have taken place; it could have come from the *outside*, as the result of the vital substance independent from it, but the question remained where did the substance come from and how and where in the chain the transmutation of the inert matter into the animate one happened; it could have been the exclusive power of animate beings, but the question remained whether one could differentiate between the animate and inanimate beings in the first place.

The script of the "Snow White" mirror fantasy, as well as its libidinal response, relies on the epistemic premises of the time. The inability to ultimately differentiate between inert and living beings according to their vital agencies is reflected in the mirror's surface. It is dead, yet it conveys animation and subjectivity by its verboseness; it is common matter in that it can only react to the spectator's verbal demands, while at the same time says on its own much more than it is asked. It resembles a Hunterian machine: it needs an impetus in order to come to life, it needs the Queen's question, so it seems inert, the matter of the world. But once animated, the mirror resumes living on its own, telling the Queen far more than it was supposed to, acting like animal, live matter.

As a piece of material culture, thus obviously inert, yet with the power of speech, the mirror is a figment of imagination that taps into a wide and intense scientific controversy on the vital agency in (in)animate beings. In its hazy ontic status, somewhere between the animate and the inanimate, the mirror articulates the collision of semantic movement and stillness in relation to the Queen's narcissism. Apart from the fact that Snow White emerges as the Queen's mud – that which constantly returns to haunt her and keeps her conversationally chained to the glass – the mirror itself

is the apex of the Queen's desiring (the place where the Queen is exhausted and from where her desire returns to her) as well as of its own ontic uncertainties. The mirror's matter articulates the constant semantic motion within the (in)animate trope, bouncing back and forth between animation and inanimation. As an animate being it participates in the kinesis of language, but it also articulates the desire for stillness, the springing back of the drive, its return to the beginning, all the way back over the troublesome and controversial border to inanimation. This ontic dichotomy is a cultural question and the differences between the Grimm's and Taylor's versions embody it. Within the German mirror semantic movement is free, because its epistemology is open and it offers it the possibility to potentially create its own narrative, to create itself, to be an (in)animate object. Within the English, however, the semantic movement is constricted or stilled, suffocated by the ethical frame of ineffability, and, consequently, by the theological frame of the soul.

The ultimate problem of the mirror's life and animation (just as it was with life and (in)animate matter in life debates) is where does its voice – its vital agency – comes from: is it the mirror's voice, the Queen's, the King's? Judging by the William Lawrence controversy that was still fresh in the minds of Londoners in 1823, the answer to this question was for Georgians a theological one: to conceptualize animation as coming from the matter itself, was taking the God's work away from him and denying the existence of a separate soul. Thus, to allow the mirror to have an independent voice, to act freely as an unbound concept with no epistemic framing, was a troublesome cultural and theological reference to the Godless freedom of vital agency. The Grimm's mirror had no epistemic limits: it could have, theoretically, said whatever it wanted, it could have twisted the truth, it could have lied. In the freedom of this (vital) agency, it expressed the subjectivity

of its own. Bound to the incentive of the Queen's words, it could have still created itself out of its own words, moving from an initially inert object capable of only *reaction*, to a fully animate being capable of an *action* of its own and back.

But, due to the epistemic limits in the discourse on (in)animate beings, Taylor's mirror tells a different story. The Queen's mirror came to Britain as a highly problematic entity, with no epistemology and with its (in)animate ontology running loose, which were blasphemous and dangerous grounds on this side of the Channel. This blasphemy rested on the fact that the unsettling vital agency is, in its very nature, textual; it moves incessantly, always already elsewhere, elusive and without referent, fundamentally logos-less, approachable only through description, through textual supplementation, without the possibility of being positively fixed. The soul, as that with comes from the outside and which is bequeathed by the higher power is precisely that logos that stills the matter and petrifies its meaning. Therefore, if we look at the Queen's mirror through the physiological debates, we see that their complexity (the murky ground between immanence and transcendence) formulate the same play of textuality and transcendence, of movement and stillness, of animation and inanimation. However, due to Taylor's adaptation that tried to sanitize the mirror's semantic troublesomeness, just as it otherwise sanitized the tale of its extreme violence, the mirror became a place where the text is perpetually exposed and re-repressed. Adapting the *talking* mirror into the one that *cannot lie*, just as the Hunter's "matter of the globe [that] cannot err," Taylor put it in an epistemic frame and tied an ontological stone around its neck: it conditioned the possibility of its speech and it anchored it to the position of the inert, destitute thing.

Until it speaks.
In circles.

DESIRE FOR THINGNESS
The (In)animate in William Gilbert's
The Magic Mirror

In the Renaissance London, the story goes, wealthy merchant Walter de Courcey desires a glass mirror. It is a novel, expensive and exotic item, one shrouded in fantasy. Walter, however, catches a rumour about it, about a certain Italian count (his correspondent in Venice tells him) who possesses this extraordinary item. As luck would have it, the Count is on his way to London, and Walter takes advantage of this opportunity and agrees to host him. The mirror proves spectacular in size and clarity, and its glass is embossed with an ominous inscription in a language no one recognizes. This inscription is somehow bound to the secret the mirror harbours: it fulfils wishes, and not always (or ever) as expected. Out of this curiosity emerges a number of unfortunate, and occasionally funny, events, involving Walter's family, friends, servants and acquaintances who all make wishes in front of the mirror, unaware of its magical potency: the self-centred, narcissistic daughter who switches places with her reflection; the bereaved doctor whose dead wife comes back to life as an animate, senseless corpse; the lazy swineherd who wishes to be served by others, thus becoming obese and incapable of leaving the

house. William Gilbert's book *The Magic Mirror: A Round of Tales for Young & Old* (1865) is a puzzle of fantastical mirror tropes all squeezed into its textual frame (which is, in a different register, the frame of the eponymous mirror). Gilbert offers a wide range of material on which to study 19th-century mirror imagination. Yet, beyond and above every particularity that individual stories possess (apart from all the variations of the mirror's dialogue with its wishful spectators), Gilbert's overarching fantasy, the one that encompasses the book as a whole, is of the "transcendental" subject caught within the mechanisms of desire/language.

No story in *The Magic Mirror* illustrates, or manifests, this fantasy better than "The Glass Brain." There are two reasons for this: one is the book's organization, the other is the peculiarity of its character's story. "The Glass Brain" recounts Walter's own experience with the mirror, but it also serves as an introduction to the mirror itself. The first half of the story is reserved for the account of the mirror's arrival, of its original owner and its obscure background, so it tackles Gilbert's overarching mirror fantasy of the subject, language, desire and mirror reflection before proceeding to Walter's transmogrifying wish. Walter is the story's twist: what he wishes of the mirror is for his brain to gain its properties of *clearness and transparency*. He wishes to become an inert object, *the mirror itself*, "calm, cool, and collected, utterly unimpressionable to external sensations [...]" (20). In the fashion of "Snow White," "The Glass Brain" problematizes the ontic boundary between the subject and the object, the human and the thing: it adopts the (in)animate trope; in the fashion *opposite* to "Snow White," this (in)animate trope concerns the human, not the thing. Instead of the mirror's inertness, it pushes Walter's humanity over this fragile line, while being concerned with its immanent fading. Gilbert's "The Glass Brain" mirror fantasy (which I consider a version,

or a trope, of his *The Magic Mirror* overarching fantasy) calls attention to the mechanisms of desire in its dependence on language: what Walter desires – what he verbalizes as a wish before the mirror – is *to become a thing himself*. Walter is enchanted by the mirror's perfect transparency, its ability "of having everything reflected truthfully upon it" (20). Therefore, in the core of his wish, prior to and beyond the transformation of his brain, the desire for thingness and the (in)animate trope, lies the issue of the consumption of reality by the reflected image – the issue of semiophagy, of semantic cannibalism/emesis.

At this point in my text – after introducing both concepts of semiophagy and the (in)animate trope – I want to show how exactly they correlate, how the (in)animate ontic uncertainty becomes a semiophagic mirror effect. In order to do that, I plan on hermeneutically staying within Gilbert's text as much as possible (since the text itself keeps pushing me without) and constructing the argument through previously devised analytical framework. The opposition that the story plays with is the one between *desire and inertness* (libidinal kinesis and psychic death): as Walter's sight becomes clearer, his desire wanes. Wanting is, thus, postulated as that which constitutes humanity and differentiates it from inert objects. Walter's wish opens him up for a process of semantic displacement of these categories, inviting the mirror's inert physicality into his libidinal existence. He wishes to become the mirror; he wishes for "everything [to be] presented to him without disguise" (20), yet the mirror is not just a material object capable of perfect reflectivity, but also a web of perpetually displaced meanings whose centre of referentiality (logos, the "truth")[54] lies outside "The Glass Brain" text. Instead

54 Although here they could be used interchangeably, I chose to speak of "truth" instead of logos, because the book's narrative is

of the centre, what Gilbert presents us *within* the text is a semantic shape of radical otherness that orchestrates the mirror's image: by appropriating the mirror's properties, Walter appropriates this otherness as well, disappearing in the semiophagic loops and turning into a difference himself.

This kind of argument demands elaboration of two ostensibly separate issues. The first it the displacement of the mirror's "truth" (which is, narratively, the truth of/about the mirror) outside the "The Glass Brain" text and its substitution by the semantic shape of otherness; or, rather, the semantic shape of otherness articulates itself as a trace. By semantic shape I mean the textual form of the "truth's" absence, the form created by *traces* of the "truth" left inside "The Glass Brain" text. This means that what falls outside the text is as important as that which falls within. The second issue is the mirror's semiophagy that results in Walter's ontic instability – the (in)animate trope.

Narratively, these two issues belong to different parts of the text. The mirror participates in two events, each characterized by different owners: it initially belongs to the Count, before he gives it to Walter as a token of his gratitude. In the first event, the mirror is concealed: after a great anticipation, the Count finally arrives, but the mirror is enclosed in a box "about six feet long and four feet broad, with a depth of perhaps eight inches, carefully bound with iron bands" (5). This *concealment* visually bars the access to the mirror's surface, but since this surface is what Walter desires to *see*, the first event is that of an impeded desire. In the second event, the mirror is exposed to view and its magical power manifests itself on Walter. This *exposure* is the precondition for the mirror's power, for the formulation of Walter's object of desire (clearness

---

organized precisely around the absence of it – no one knows what the mirror is and what it does.

and transparency), as well as for his invitation of otherness, via the mirror's semiophagic process, into himself. The first event is about the mirror's *physical properties* and the subject in charge of the mirror's semantic delineations is the Count; the second is about its *magical properties* and it relates to Walter. Gilbert's mirror consistently shows itself as inseparable from the subject, and "The Glass Brain" creates one on both ends of its social history. The mirror and the Count share the same textual "truth": the Count's role is to delineate the mirror's figure and disperse traces of its "truth," thus textually becoming a part of it, a part of the mirror-as-text. Contrarily, once the mirror is exposed and its magical property comes to the fore, it becomes a conduit for Walter's desire, thus textually becoming a part of the subject, a part of the subject-as-text.

Both events are necessary if we are to understand a complex play of the mirror's semantic traces and expound Walter's desire for thingness in the face of the mirror's reflecting surface.

The Semantic Shape of Absence: The Mirror

From the perspective of desire and meaning, Gilbert's mirror is a complex and convoluted figure. Similarly to the Queen's mirror (or to any text for that matter), it rests on a fluctuating web of traces without centre. Textually, the mirror's centre eludes us; what we find instead is a cultural prosthesis, otherness, difference, postponement. We perceive that the mirror is magical, but we are not properly told so; the embossed inscription might tell us something about it, but, alas, it is in a script no one recognizes; we might get to its "truth" if we understood the dispersed hints about its origin, but hints are all we get, so we fall in attempt to grasp it. The "truth" of the mirror is consistently somewhere

else, postponed indefinitely, making the narrative of "The Glass Brain" a collection of mirror effects merged into an incidental mosaic whose traces lead outside the text.

There is a reciprocity in the economy of text, desire and representation in Gilbert's mirror fantasy, particularly in the first half of the "The Glass Brain." What Walter is systematically denied in its script (the mirror's "truth") is precisely what he desires; but what he desires is absent because it exists only outside the text. This correlation in the textual, libidinal and semantic economy leads to a persistent intertwining of these registers, so that their differentiation seems hopeless. For that reason, it is impossible to disentangle the subject from the mirror; they both belong to the same narrative economy that relies on the former in order to describe, differentiate and give meaning to the latter.

One of the reasons the magic mirror is such a captivating object is because Gilbert introduces it gradually, building suspense in both characters and readers. The atmosphere of anticipation permeates the early pages of "The Glass Brain," forecasting the arrival of something extraordinary to overwhelm and orient Walter's libidinal economy. Walter is no stranger to possession of things: he collects "whatever [is] valuable, and at the same time new and uncommon, to adorn his own mansion" (2-3). And yet, "there [is] one article of luxury after which Walter especially sighe[s], of which he [have] heard a great deal, but which he [have] not seen, and that [is] a glass mirror" (3). Therefore, magic mirror arrives to the narrative as an object present in its absence (anticipated but never seen) – an object of desire.

Considering that its libidinal dominance is established so early, it is only natural it cannot be approached directly. The narrative guards the mirror so fiercely that its textual box seems as impregnable as its material one. At the outset,

the mirror is absent and there are only rumours of its magnificence; then, when it arrives, it is enclosed in a box that prevents it from being seen; next, the Count is gravely ill, so he cannot open the box immediately; he finally agrees to open it the next day, but insists on being present at the opening, since there is "a mystery […] attached to it, which renders the possession of it by no means the treasure […], at least to those who do not follow the advice inscribed upon it" (17); the Count dies that night, never explaining the mystery the mirror entails. Over and again, access to the mirror is denied, every obstacle a fragile frame imposed on its continually postponed meaning. Even when the visual access to the mirror is granted, that which explains its power – the nature, origin and meaning of the inscription – is postponed indefinitely, taken beyond text by the Count's death.

"The Glass Brain" abounds in these visual, textual and libidinal impediments that come in the form of the box/frame trope, creating a structural point of bared vision that leads to a broken and obstructed worldview. Both the mirror and the Count arrive to London enclosed in boxes that protect, limit and frame them: the Count's figure is contained by a litter (his material box being sturdier than his "invalid" (11) body), while the mirror is bound by wood and iron bands. Their figures are made obscure, and the view of them is hindered or impossible. The boxes establish the object of desire by obstructing the access to it, and create a material and textual frame around both the mirror and the Count. The illusive "truth" of both comes as the result of these frames. Since the "truth" – that which is constantly hinted at, but never explained or named (the meaning of the inscription) – is an objectified absence and it cannot be spoken of directly, the frames seemingly stabilize the mirror's and the Count's meaning by exposing

them to an *a priori* voyeuristic perspective and providing them with clearly defined boundaries. The box/frame trope is the substitute for the "truth," it is the "truth's" semantic simulation, so as long as there is a frame, the "truth" is secured and projected outside of it; it falls outside the text, reinforcing the textual framing that created it.

As far as it subdues and limits them, the framing/ boxing trope mediates between the mirror and the Count. There is a reciprocity in their frames, an exchange of their semantic potencies. "Next morning," says Gilbert, "the Count was no more. He had expired in the night, and his servants were employed in placing him in his coffin […]" (18). The Count has arrived in a box, and departed in one as well. Contrarily, the day the Count returns to the box is the day the mirror is taken out of its own. There is a sense of final reciprocity in their figures: as if the mirror is born out of the Count's death, the former's revelation a result of the latter's final concealment. The unboxing of the mirror is constantly being postponed, as if, in order for it to emerge, the Count had to die. The box, then, establishes more than a textual framework or a perspectival point: it is a trope of their inseparability, of their belonging to the same libidinal register, as well as the establishment of their semantic symbiosis.

This also proves true for Walter, who is the subject of the second part of the story. As the token of his gratitude for hosting him in his last days, the Count bequeaths the boxed mirror onto Walter, but only upon his own death. The box once again becomes the mediator of the Count's semantic potency, whose secret (the inscription, the mirror's magic) becomes Walter's sin: that which the Count has stored in the mirror (presumably his magic, though we will never know for sure) eventually causes Walter's ontic displacement. The mirror, the Count, the magic and

the inscription all share the same mysterious background whose perpetual veiling (avoidance of disclosure) creates that peculiar absence the shape of which I am trying to delineate. If we agree that to unveil it is to stabilize their figures (to semantically petrify them), the Count's final box – his coffin – manifests his ultimate incapability of revealing the "truth" about the mirror. The "truth" went into the box with him: narratively, it escaped understanding; libidinously, it escaped the possibility of attainment; textually, it got framed and postponed once again. The box is a semantic instance that postpones the "truth" of the mirror indefinitely – a materialized difference, a trace, a net of endless differentiations, radical otherness.

The Semantic Shape of Absence: The Count

As we can see, prior to its unveiling somewhere in the middle of the story, the mirror is bared by a number of instances and framed as an object of desire. Its "truth" eludes us. The mirror first appears as rumour in a letter from Walter's correspondent in Venice; as rumour, it is a trace of a disputable *verbal* act caught and graphically tamed by a *written* correspondence, framed by the paper. It arrives enclosed in a box that *materially* protects it from view and knowledge; when finally revealed, it is framed by a *written* discourse of the mysterious inscription once again. The mirror is presented as a fourth-hand knowledge and its legitimacy is questionable; its "truth" is many times postponed. As a consequence, we are narratively pushed towards the Count's figure that circumscribes it and gives it meaning. In order to understand that which is hidden (the origin of its magic), it is necessary to understand the Count, because the mirror's "truth" is referred to him. However, once we turn to him for the answer, we perceive that the

"truth" is displaced even further. If we are, however, to persist in this hunt we need to analyse the figure of the Count whose narrative purpose is simply to define the mirror and die.

The mirror's "questionable" nature – its simultaneously being a rumour and a fact – is a possible entry point into its semantic dependence on the Count. It is a fact because "according to all accounts [metal mirrors] were not to be compared in beauty to those made of glass at Venice" (3), so Walter is aware that these magnificent artefacts truly exist; it is a rumour because Walter is able to approach it only indirectly, through a number of textual frames. The first frame, of the written correspondence about the Count, is the most interesting one: little is known about this nobleman, but "some said he was partially insane, while others considered him an expert in the black art" (3). The mirror, thus, comes to Walter as an instance of unverified and uncertain verbal act(s) disseminated by the written discourse of the letter. Through this double-layered text that comes a long way from Venice and whose certainty and reliability is highly questionable, we are hinted at the origin of the mirror's power. We are provided with these "hints" in order to understand that the source of the mirror's mystery lies elsewhere than the mirror itself, namely in the socially liminal status of its owner: in his insanity, or, more likely, his experience in black arts – in his epistemic or ontic disobedience. Before it truly arrives to the story, the mirror is an unstable text that dissipates in the far-removed, shadowy zones of broken reason or suspended natural laws.

The Count himself is a mysterious figure whose origin is constantly hinted at, but never clearly stated. However, it is precisely the issue of his origin that occupies most of his portrait, assuming the role of his "truth." From the moment he arrives in London, Walter perceives him as a curiosity,

a radical cultural/religious difference. "[T]here was a slight Hebrew expression in his countenance" (6) Gilbert says through Walter's eyes, but no matter how cunningly Walter tries to get to the bottom of the issue, the Count's origin remains a guess to him. There is a myriad of hints, though, through which Gilbert signals the answer: the Count dines with Walter, but he has his food cooked separately, under the excuse that his illness demands it; he wears a little velvet cap, under the excuse that the draught is strong; he prays without "uncovering his head or crossing himself" (9) which scandalizes Walter "who [is] a pious Catholic" (10); his servant bears the "expression of countenance […] of a strongly Jewish cast" (9); the Count asks for Mendez, a Jewish merchant, whose connection to him remains unexplained. But in spite of all these hints, when the mirror is finally revealed Walter, "who is an excellent linguist" (19), does not recognize that the inscription is in Hebrew, remaining puzzled over the Count's personal and cultural background. Through all the hints it becomes obvious that Judaism is the missing piece in the middle of a larger puzzle; an absence that gives meaning to all the other pieces. The Count's cultural heritage is narratively, as well as semantically, established as the "truth" of his portrait, that which would finally explain his enigma if named – but it never is.

It is important to explicate that it is not Judaism in particular that I am interested in here (an interest that would immediately take me outside of Gilbert's text and to his distinct philo-semitism), but the *semantic shape of its absence* in the text. The fact that the Count is Jewish is inconsequential till the very last page of the book, after the ending, when we are presented with the mirror's inscription in Hebrew. What is of importance, however, is the *shape* of Judaism's non-pronunciation within the text and the kind of

connections it articulates between the dispersed pieces of the puzzle. Judaism is the "truth" of the Count, and therefore of the mirror (and therefore of the inscription), the word that explains them, but it must not (cannot?) be named if it is to keep its logocentric potency. We approximate it through the inscription visible to us only *after* the text, beyond its frame, outside of it, but without proper linguistic and religious knowledge its meaning is postponed even then. Moreover, Judaism as the "truth" is not meant for Walter or any of the characters, but for *me, the reader*: its ineffectual further approximation (its further tracing) comes only *after the reading act*, therefore for the characters of the book, for Walter, it is postponed to metatextuality. Judaism as the "truth" of the mirror (of its magical powers delineated by the inscription) and of the Count (of his incomplete portrait) rests outside of the textual frame imposed on the mirror, outside of the mirror's frame, the Count's litter or the mirror's box, it rests outside "The Glass Brain" and *The Magic Mirror*; it is *radically* outside, as in *always-already-outside*, so that the mirror and the Count can remain framed and epistemically contained by the semantic shape of its absence – by otherness, a *difference*.

The Semantic Shape of Absence: The Inscription

The incompleteness of the Count's portrait refers us to the inscription and there is a possibility (or hope) that we will get to the bottom of the "truth" if we understand it. It appears that it is the last instance of this semantic hunt. However, once we finally get to the inscription at the last page of the book, we are referred once again – this time not outside "The Glass Brain," but outside *The Magic Mirror*, because knowledge necessary to understand it (linguistic competencies of Hebrew) is not provided within the book.

This means that the "truth" we are after, the logos of the mirror, resides outside of Gilbert's mirror fantasy proper.

The fact that the "truth" is postponed indefinitely should not prevent us from following its traces, since these traces sketch what is of importance for us here. There are few issues to reflect on concerning the inscription that will provide us with tools for better understanding of Walter's ontic displacement. Once we leave *The Magic Mirror* and move onto the metatextual register, we realize that the mirror's puzzling inscription is, actually, a paraphrase of Pirke Avot 4.1, the ninth of the forth order of the *Mishnah*, the first major work of rabbinic literature. It is an incomplete sentence that says "makes him satisfied with his portion," referring to the passage: "Who is rich? He who rejoiceth in his portion"[55] (*Mishnayoth* 1954: 516). Thus, Judaism is, once again, that which in the text remains hidden/implied/unnamed. However, since no one in the book can understand it, its translation is of no importance at the moment. The semantic shape of its unnamed knowledge, on the other hand, is.

We can start by noting that the inscription is not "written" on the frame as it might be assumed, but that the reflecting surface itself is "embossed" with it. "On the top of the glass, just beneath the frame, and following its curve, were some characters or hieroglyphics embossed in ruby-coloured glass," says Gilbert (19), so the inscription is not just a superficial rhizomatic text, but a deeply rooted message that is a material part of the mirror. Further, it is written in unrecognizable and unintelligible *hieroglyphics* that imbue the inscription with radical cultural otherness.

55 "Who is rich? He who rejoiceth in his portion, as it is said, When thou eatest the labour of thine hands, happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. 'Happy shalt thou be' – in this world, 'and it shall be well with thee' – in the world to come" (*Mishnayoth* 1954: 516).

The mirror's semantic power, thus, resides in its words be they intelligible or not: the inscription is part and parcel of the mirror's effect, instilling its cultural and semantic difference into the observer. Its words might (not) matter, but the radical visual incomprehensibility does.

The inscription's position is where its radical otherness truly comes to the fore, where its semantic web complicates further and where we perceive its connection to the mirror's semiophagic potential: it is embossed "just beneath the frame" *into the reflecting surface itself*. This means that the materiality of the inscription is one with the reflecting image: the radical lingo-visual otherness (hieroglyphics) is made an inseparable part of the reflection, of the image that produces the phantom of the real. The essence of the mirror's physical properties (clearness and transparency) is the eclipse of that real by the (reflected) image, meaning that the inscription is part of the represented being of the world. What the inscription carries – a difference – becomes an integral part of the world as a picture, and of the observing subject as part of that world. Both its differential nature and its configuration in the scopic register are prosthetic: the inscription's visuality is alien to the reflected image, it is a prosthetic fragment grafted into the image. The embossing made it part of the mirror's materiality, it made it part of the same ontic register of inanimate matter and of the same phenomenological register of the perceived world. However, by being part of the reflection *but not of the object reflected*, the inscription is a point of radical difference in the field of vision: it is a visual prosthesis that destabilizes and dislocates the perceived image (as well as the act of percepetion itself) and turns the mirroring process into perpetual otherness, into differences of differences.

Semiophagy and the (In)animate

As the title establishes prior to any reading, the most interesting part of Gilbert's mirror fantasy is the mirror's magical potency. No one in the book truly suspects that there is something more to it than its astonishing clarity and transparency; nevertheless, the mirror makes the observer's wish come true. There are, however, some rules to be obeyed: in order for the magic to happen the wish must be spoken out load and in front of the mirror's surface. This means that the mirror and the subject are, once again, entangled in a complex, mutually dependable, relationship. There are several issues to consider regarding this relationship, before turning to Walter's wish that merges (or collides) the mirror's magical and physical properties in a truly vertiginous way.

Firstly, I need to stress the mechanism of desire and its reliance on the act of speech. The implicit message of the embossed inscription is that a "whole," "satisfied," or "content" observer/speaker does not instigate the mirror's magical power. In other words, only a non-desiring subject is absolutely safe from harm, the one who looks into the mirror and wishes nothing. Since desire is in "The Glass Brain" established as the characteristic of human condition, the only human being potentially safe in front of the mirror is the satiated, desireless one, or the one capable of reading its "advice" (and saying nothing). The "advice" is, however, written in an unknown language, so the mirror establishes a perpetual triadic rapport between the act of seeing, the act of speech and limits of/access to knowledge.

Secondly, unlike the Queen's mirror that was affirmative and informational, Gilbert's mirror is a *transformational* one. The former was able to conjure images of things beyond the observer's (the Queen's) reach and verbalize

them to her in the form of truth, while the latter's reflecting surface is but a stage on which the mirror plays with the subject's corporeal and libidinal existence. Gilbert's mirror holds a power to mould and shape the subject's (Walter's, for instance) *material* reality according to the reflection of his own verbalized desire.

The result is that the communication of Gilbert's mirror with the observing subject happens via four semantic instances: the act of looking that pulls the subject's desire to the surface; the wishing speech act where the mirror attaches itself to that desire; the written/visual act of the embossed inscription that manifests the radical otherness and invites it into the subject's desire (I say "written" because it is written in letters, but due to their illegibility the inscription's performative power is reduced to visuality); and the act of material transformation that reflects otherness (as the substitute for the mirror's textual "truth") back onto the subject's material reality.

As we can see, the magic mirror is a highly complex and convoluted figure that becomes properly labyrinthine once we turn to Walter's wish. Walter wishes for his brain to appropriate the mirror's physical properties and mirror fulfils it by magic, postulating semiophagy as the epistemic frame of the subject's interaction with the world. Walter unadvisedly invites the mirror to transform him, but since what he desires is to appropriate the mirror's semiophagic potency (perfect clearness and transparency) he is caught in a potentially bottomless dialogue with his own reflected desire.

Allow me to take a closer look at his wish. "[…] I sincerely wish my brain were made of glass as clear as that" (21) he says out loud, so that everything is presented to him without disguise, while he "calm, cool, and collected, utterly unimpressionable to external sensations, would

clearly judge of the question before him" (20). When the mirror obeys, Walter realizes that everything he approaches reveals itself as plain and transparent, his mind becoming astute, concise and insightful. He is a merchant and his goals are financial and social success, so everything he conceives of, every enterprise he undertakes pays off surprisingly well. As a price, however, he gradually loses sense of pleasure, so his achievements bring him no joy or content. He is indifferent to success, as he is indifferent to his daughter: although he desired the mirror, "he had now totally forgotten it" (32). It seems that for Gilbert clarity of the eye equals clarity of the mind (the inner sight, the mind's eye), whose enhancement is counter-balanced by the loss of humanity. He grows ever paler; his friends and family are alarmed, particularly by the fact that he cannot perceive the degree of his own physical and emotional deterioration. Finally, he confides to the doctor that he feels like his brain is "made of glass" (47). He sees everything perfectly, but his head is heavy and cold. "I have lost all sensation of sorrow," he declares, "excitement, or pleasure. I am no more capable of feeling than a mass of rock crystal" (47). Since no one suspects the mirror, the doctor is left in the blind: Walter's case seems incurable. And then, when all is said and done and the mirror has run its course with all the characters in the book, Bertha shatters it and Walter turns back to normal. Without the glass, the magic is gone.

These are general outlines of Walter's story. His figure stands at the same (in)animate junction occupied by the Queen's mirror in the previous chapter, but Gilbert's mirror fantasy shapes it differently and thus addresses different issues. The first and foremost is what exactly does Walter wish for.

Walter is completely taken by the mirror's physical properties. He stares at the image in the glass and cannot but

admire and eulogize about its clearness and transparency. The mirror's allure is "[s]imply in having everything presented to [him] without disguise" (20): a complete penetration of reality. The world in it seems real and true, transparent and denuded; clearness and transparency transform the world into a stage where nothing can hide from the eye of the audience. "The old may paint their wrinkles, but the mirror sees them" (20). Walter's fascination is in this respect thoroughly Victorian: to see and to conquer by seeing, to expose cracks and crevices of the world so they could be mastered by knowledge. It is a panoptic, scopic desire that emphasises the innate voyeurism of the Victorian era discussed in "Georgian Prelude."

The magic mirror's semiophagic nature is, in fact, the central idea of the whole book. It is because of the mirror's physical properties that everyone is so eager to see it. Even before the mirror enchants anyone, Walter's and Bertha's (his daughter's) desire is aroused by the very idea of its perfectly reflective surface. "Bertha took but little interest [in their guest, the Count]," tells us Gilbert of her desire, "till the mirror was spoken of, and then was excited to the highest degree" (11). Then, and only then, her curiosity intensifies, because "the news of the wonderful invention had reached her, and when she understood there was one in the house, great was her anxiety to see it and prove its powers" (11). Similarly, Walter tries to look indifferent and not impose on the Count, "but the subject of the mirror continually occupied the minds of [Walter and Bertha] both" (12).

What occupied their minds was the mirror's semiophagic power. "From the position you are now in," explains the Count the mirror's peculiarity to the impatient Bertha,

> you see the whole of the room before you clearly and distinct-
> ly enough. Suppose now my mirror were placed in front of
> you, the whole of your person as well as the back part of the

room would be as distinct as that part of the room you now
see, the colours perfect, the distance properly kept, and in fact
it would simply appear to you that you were looking into an-
other apartment in which there was sitting a perfect image of
yourself, so accurately presented that you would almost doubt
the reality of your presence in the spot you are now in (14).

Prior and beyond its magical power, the mirror possesses
physical properties that, for an unaccustomed eye, seem
magical in themselves. For the Count, the mirror is not the
"wonderful curiosity" (15) that it is for others; he finds it a
"trifling subject" (15) compared to the matters of the world
that occupy Walter. He understands the other's (especially
Bertha's) impatience to see it, but he has no desire to look
at it. For Water and Bertha, though, the mirror has an ability
to produce an image so pure and real that they will "doubt
the reality of [their] presence in the spot [they] are in" (14).
For the spectating subject, the difference between the world
and its reflection disappears; "The Glass Brain" suggests
that the reflection has swallowed the real world, leaving
the subject with the idea of the real as an aftereffect of
the reflecting process. So, the mirror's spectacularity, the
reason it has such a profound effect upon the viewer, lies
in its ability to represent the world so truthfully and clearly,
that the viewers find themselves in the state of disbelief
about the reality itself.

Bertha and Walter are consumed by this ability and, upon
approaching the mirror their desire turns into astonishment
and awe. "It appears almost too beautiful and pure for
mortal hands to have made" (20), exclaims Walter, elevating
the mirror's properties above the realm of mortals. Since
mortals are characterized by the infliction called desire, to
elevate it above the mortal world is to position it outside
the mechanisms of desire, and thus language. Walter's
statement is in this respect highly reminiscent of the lack/

excess trope discussed in "Exhausted at the Lake's Shore," in which the subject falls exhausted by wonder. One could almost predict that Walter's and Bertha's astonishment will result in inability of language to express their emotional state and, indeed, a few sentences back we observe that, in the moment of the mirror's revelation, Bertha and Walter "are struck speechless with astonishment" as soon as "they cast their eyes on the mirror" (20). The mirror's spectacularity, its power to enchant and create the illusion of reality, is literary beyond words, beyond language and beyond representation.

Clearness and transparency are at the centre of this issue, because Walter is "simply *struck* with the exquisite clearness and transparency of the mirror" (20, emphasis is mine), a description that surpasses visual adoration and ventures into the terrain of a physical impact. And clearness and clarity are exactly those mirror qualities that spark, facilitate and condition the semiophagy of the reflection; they are that which conveys the digestion of reality by image, as well as that non-postponed real which is the object of desire, cause of the subject's anxiety and a projection of the desire's final destination. The mirror properties that Walter desires are defined by visual absence and suspension of distance, so they manifest the beyond of language and articulate the fantasy of sameness without difference, the stillness of the transcendental utopia and of the real that is the measure of all things and to which nothing can measure up. In Gilbert's vision, they are the preconditions for, means and the results of semiophagy; the past, present and future of the semiophagic event all structurally collapse in this fantasy of absolute sameness, which is the fantasy of the objet *a*, "psychic death," as well as the fantasy of *logos*. Here, in the mirror's surface, the language seems to be perpendicular to itself and the representation represents everything, no traces,

no leftovers. Clearness and transparency of the mirror are thus the metaphysical conditions of Walter's identity, as well as of Gilbert's text – of his libidinal script that surges through his text – so Walter's story is, once again, the story of the "transcendental" subject in search of *logos*, the non-existent semantic centre, the absolute identity.

There are at least two ways to interpret Walter's wish. The easiest would be to emphasize the reflected image: through the properties of clearness and transparency, Walter's desire formed a circle around the *image* of the world in the looking-glass. The world has been shrunk to a sign in the mirror and the distance between the world-as-sign and the world-as-being disappears in the mirror's transparency. More precisely, the world-as-sign (the perfectly clear, reflected world) produces the effect of world-as-being and world-as-reality, surpassed and supressed by the reflecting process in which the representation becomes the "truth" of the world. Therefore, what Walter desires, what he invites into himself, is to be eaten by the Heideggerian world as a picture whose condition of being is to be represented.

Another possible reading, closer to Gilbert's text, emphasises the (in)animate trope I am interested in: Walter invites the mirror's semiophagy into his own materiality by desiring the mirror's *physical properties* – not the image these properties facilitate. This shift in interpretation carries two different considerations: one that addresses the issue of semiophagy and desire and the other that addresses the (in)animate trope. Speaking of the former, we arrive at a complex nod of Walter's desire: Walter does not desire his own reflection (so we cannot say he has been consumed by it); instead, he desires *properties* that, in the scopic register, kill the distance between the mirrored image and the real world relative to that image. Walter's desire is to be consumed not by the world-as-sign, but by the mirror's

semiophagy and he unknowingly opens himself up to its effects of semantic digestion; he invites the transformation by verbally projecting his desire towards the mirror. I want to point that the emphasis here is not on the mirror's reflective properties, but on its power to *represent* reality without acknowledging the process of representation; the emphasis is on the mirror's semiophagic potency. Walter wishes to be digested by and turned into the mirror whose properties are the object of his desire, so he becomes the part of its simulacrum (or, rather, its simulacrum becomes the part of him). He is swallowed by the sign, but the sign does not refer to the mirrored image, but to the mirror's *inanimate physicality*.

The physical properties Walter desires are properties of inert matter, the matter of the world, so the moment he wishes them the ontic border between animate and inanimate starts crumbling. It is important to note, however, that Walter's transformation is a gradual, aphanistic process. The clarity of vision and the loss of humanity (as two reciprocal events) are instantaneous, but their effects are incremental: the more he achieves (by the enhanced vision) the more he turns into a thing. "A more miserable wretch does not exist," he confesses to the doctor, "my life is hateful to me. I receive every blessing, and yet I am not grateful for it. The King honours me extremely, and I care not for it. My daughter loves me affectionately, and I have no affection for her in return […]" (47). He has been eaten by the mirror in the verbal instance of the wishing act, but turning into an inanimate object takes time. Here the phagic aspect of semiophagy (as a protracted metabolic process of digestion and absorption) comes to the fore: the mirror swallows Walter and continues to gradually decompose his animate nature, turning him into itself, making him absorb its inertness. On the other hand, through the mirror's

magic whose "truth," as we have seen, is indefinitely postponed and replaced by radical otherness (*différance*), Walter absorbs the mirror, appropriates its semiophagic potency and thus, by the wishing act, initiates an auto-semiophagic event of his own devouring; he willingly enters the semiophagic disappearance towards thingness, towards radical ontic otherness. Once in front of the mirror he becomes the protagonist of Sala's *Quite Alone* who disappears on both ends. The only difference is in the source of the aphanistic dislocation: instead of the mirrors, the source of disappearance is the subject himself, namely Walter-as-mirror. Walter wishes to become the mirror and we can see now that when he does this fusion inevitably moves the source of semiophagy *into himself*, so Walter keeps visually devouring the always-already-represented self in the reverse scenario of *Quite Alone* where the world (with the subject in it) is digested between mirrors, to infinity. Semiophagy now originates in and returns back to Walter, so his gradual disappearance into thingness – his ontic displacement towards radical otherness – happens inside a mirror frame that is Walter himself.

Due to its ontic consequences, this disappearance (the transition towards inertness) is finite. If the corporeal opening up to the mirror's semiophagy robbed him of his humanity, the process is consequential only while it lasts. However, once Walter will have left the ambiguous transition zone and completely turned into a thing, the process still moves further, objectifying the already objectified thing to infinity. It seems interesting juxtaposing Walter's and *Quite Alone* mirror experiences, because they comment on each other. On the one hand, Walter's humanity (desire, animation and subjecthood) disappears in the act of self-eating that gradually diminishes him to microscopic traces and towards the non-existent ultimate objectification act; on the other,

in *Quite Alone* the protagonist's humanity is digested by the ever smaller reproductions of his self, every replica multiplying and commodifying his identity. If we are to believe the protagonist of *Quite Alone* that he is alone among the infinitesimal reproductions of himself (twins, quince, etc), than Walter disappears completely within the infinite auto-semiophagic process that postpones his "truth" indefinitely, replacing it with the semantic shape of otherness. Walter turns into a prosthesis: a visual, corporeal and libidinal (in)animate hybrid, an auto-digesting otherness that strives towards the phantom of sameness. He turns into a difference itself.

Desire for Thingness

The core of Gilbert's mirror fantasy – its reaction to the prevailing modern anxiety about the ontic positioning of humans and things – is the subject (Walter) who desires to become an object. The source of dread – that which disturbs and irks the subject – formed as the object of his desire. This desire for thingness, for the subject-as-thing, is the ultimate escape from the bonds and terrors of language, from its semantic dissemination, and incessant and unavoidable lapses of desire. Walter's story (as well as all the other stories in *The Magic Mirror*) are anxious manifestos of the subject's inability to leave that crazed labyrinth that keeps eating him, keeps turning him into something else, every time, all the time, it is a textual message in a bottle and the expression of the deepest Victorian anxieties concerning the materiality of the "real" world. It is a need to leave the circle of desire that tells the subject that the next loop, the next representation, the next impression is the one that will end it, that will satisfy it, that will make it whole, that will deliver it that image it sees in the mirror, the one that is coherent and clear and transparent.

It tells the subject that transcendence will end the anxiety of textuality.

Further, Walter's appropriation of the mirror's properties and his gradual loss of desire make a statement about discursive and essentially semantic nature of materiality, about the fact that even the notion of life (in terms of its animate/inanimate differentiation) is not stable and fixed, but lost in constant representational loops. Thingness, in its ontic otherness, is the haunting real created, projected and hinted at by the mirror, the final stilling of dissemination. Walter's desire circles around a non-existent object, around the real as outside of text, language and meaning, where everything is clear, transparent, perpendicular to itself, and where "there is no deception" (20).

To that effect, the ending of the book is important (already discussed in the context of Bertha's story, "The King's Ball"). After all the characters have fell deep into the mirror's hole, the last of them – Bertha, Master Walter's daughter – destroys the mirror in a feat of rage, disappointment and guilt, breaking the mirror's spell and releasing everyone from its grip. Having in mind Taylor's epistemic framing and ontic anchoring of the Queen's mirror, the mirror's breaking is a fundamental, and highly expected, part of this 19th-century mirror fantasy. Just as the Queen's mirror proved too problematic in its German epistemic looseness, the magic mirror is too tantalizing if left unchecked and unhindered. A mirror whose "truth" escapes the text is a troublesome concept. Its potency has to be epistemically framed and controlled by characters; they have to be able to impose their will, or force, on it and be the mediators of its final destruction. The fear of the mirror's potential is evident in its boxing and framing that gives the mirror an air of semantic stability. The box replaces the "truth" of the mirror, just as the Count takes it

to the box with him. Gilbert's mirror text wrestles with its central object, desperately trying to contain it by any means necessary. When everything else fails, break it.

Further value of the mirror's final shattering lies in its articulation of the mechanisms of desire. On the one hand, since everything is back to "normal," certain optimism about the fixed and proper place of humans and things pervades "The Glass Brain" story (as well as the whole of *The Magic Mirror*). But this optimism is countered by the implicit pessimism regarding the possibility of the subject's contentment; possibility of the desire's end, libidinal death, the final *aphanisis* (as an event, not a process). That which the subject searches for, what it desires, is always already lost in the perennial instability and postponement of meaning. Created by language and centred in it, the object of desire is fundamentally outside of it, so every attempt at its approximation ends in failure. The expected emotional excess never arrives (or, rather, it arrives, but is never enough), exhausting the subject by its falling in circles. This mechanism becomes clear in "The Glass Brain": Walter's wish is to become the mirror and visually appropriate and master the world through the absorbed properties. This perfection of achievements through the perfection of sight can come only at the expense of mortality, of human imperfection that is fundamentally related (could I dare say caused?) by desire. And it is this perfectual stillness and motionlessness outside representation (outside mirror reflection) that he will never achieve, because the glass always shatters at the very end and desire finds a new object to lead the subject towards that phantom place of semantic peace – nothingness, or death; death-as-nothingness.

WHO FRAMED ALICE?
Through the Looking Glass
and Charles Dodgson's Photography

As I prepare to face myself in a 19th-century mirror one last time, Guildford presses upon me, so I go: I look through my study window and see a house, a back garden and a sculpture. I might go there by train, going the "wrong way"[56] for sure; but I might also pretend to be someone else, more than one person perhaps, and step through a looking-glass. Moreover, as long as I am playing this game of connecting things by association (it's enough), I might as well take my window for a looking-glass, since all I truly need is a border: a frame (to step through) that will make it all happen. In this game of "let's pretend,"[57] Guildford emerges as (the other side of) my reflection, a certain imaginative utopia. Here, one foot inside Charles Dodgson's/Lewis Carroll's world and the most elaborate Victorian mirror fantasy of *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*, prosthetics of meaning are at once obvious and veiled. Obvious, because

---

56 "All this time the Guard was looking at her, first through a telescope, then through a microscope, and then through an opera-glass. At last he said, 'You're travelling the wrong way,' and shut up the window and went away. (Carroll, "Through the Looking-Glass," 1996: 151).

57 "And here I wish I could tell you half the things Alice used to say, beginning with her favourite phrase 'Let's pretend.'" (130).

"things flow about so here,"[58] because meaning flow about so here; veiled, because this flowing, this incessant kinesis of postponement, reads as a wonderland. And there is no dread in wonderland: only surprise and awe. Alice is no Mr Strange.

But before I go, before I step through, I stand before my window and look: the house, the back garden and the sculpture give themselves to me in a frame, so I feel I should not be there – I am trespassing, if only by sight. But I stay; and I enjoy. The house – The Chestnuts – and the garden are both accounted for in the facts of Charles Dodgson's biography. After the death of his father in 1868, Dodgson rented the house for his six unmarried sisters and it remained in the possession of the Dodgson family until 1919. Unlike other places that he frequented over holidays (such as Whitburn in Wearside, or Eastbourne in Sussex) he was somewhat of a resident here, making connections and participating in the local life. It is here that he wrote *Through the Looking Glass*;[59] and it is here that he eventually died and was buried. So Guildford and The Chestnuts became the phantasmagorical origin points of Carroll's looking-glass fantasy, attaching themselves – their topography and architecturality – to life and afterlife of both Dodgson, Carroll and *Through the Looking Glass*.

Finally, I step through; but, since I am the one making the rules of the "let's pretend" game, I can be as many characters as I want at once, or, rather, I can be "all the rest."[60] So I decide to double myself and stay here looking

58 "'Things low about so here!' she said at last in a plaintive tone, after she had sent a minute or so vainly pursuing a large bright thing that looked sometimes like a doll and sometimes like a workbox and was always in the shelf next above the one she was looking at" (177).

59 For the Guildford inspired episodes in *Through the Looking Glass*, see Banerjee 2005: 122-141.

60 "'Let's pretend we're kings and queens;' and her sister, who

through my study window while simultaneously stepping through into Guildford on the other side. In any case, that is the power of Carroll's mirror: to be *in* it and *through* it simultaneously.

Once on the other side, I find myself on a patch of green, surrounded by trees and shrubbery; the Great Tower of the Guildford Castle overlooks the garden on one side, while The Chestnuts – a Georgian-style residence romantically half-consumed (one might say digested) by creepers – peeps from above the trees on the other. This wonderland I look at/visit is, however, just a reflection of another, more mundane garden I am looking at through the window in Belgrade as we speak: a secluded, bushy, garbage-littered space overlooked by brutalist buildings and sieged by the big-city hum. Although the aesthetics differ, there is an elemental reciprocity here: a sufficient overlapping of forms, a doubling, necessary for the game of mirroring and pretending to be played successfully. And as in every mirroring act that makes attempts at sameness, between the forms in my garden and Carroll's, between geometricity on this side of the looking-glass and that, a noticeable difference occurs, a deferral in the doubled forms: in the garden a continent away rests a statue peculiar to Carroll's imagination only (as if he were there, on the other side, pretending to be me and dreaming about this dilapidated version of his home), a statue of a girl trapped in a frame not unlike my window's – the *Through the Looking Glass* episode brought to life. And this frame (that within the book facilities Alice's movement into the Looking-Glass House) is structurally the same as the window frame I am gazing through as I write this text, through which I

liked being very exact, had argued that they couldn't, because there were only two of them, and Alice had been reduced at last to say 'Well, *you* can be one of them, and *I'll* be all the rest'" (130).

179

move into Guildford and back, and through which I project myself onto Dodgson/Carroll, his home and his garden: it is a frame that frames a fantasy, that frames a desire for fear-free wonderland which is just over there, on the other side – on the outside of my apartment, on the opposite side of the continent and on the other side of the looking-glass in the Looking-Glass House. The fact remains, however, that this wonderland is discontinuous with me. I look at it *through* a frame.

The statue (fig. 5): In 1988, the Guildford Borough Council opened a competition for a commemorative statue the theme of which was "Alice." Mutual General Insurance Limited, a local business which had offices in the town, agreed to fund the casting as a publicity project, and a competition was announced to the sculpture department of the local Adult Education Institute. Several sketches were sent by students to the Borough Council offices, and three of these were selected to be realised as three dimensional maquettes (Rubin 2011).[61] The Council finally chose the idea of Jeanne Argent, a local artist who proposed an over-life-size figure of Alice in the eponymous moment of stepping through the looking-glass. Modelled in the plaster of Paris over a metal armature, and finally cast in bronze that incorporated a shield of bullet-proof glass, the statue was revealed two years later, on September 18, 1990.

The sculpture is conceptualized so as to illustrate not only the eponymous episode from *Through the Looking Glass*, but also John Tenniel's illustration of it. Here we encounter "Alice" in the act of reaching for the other side, her favourite game of "let's pretend" allowing her to explore the intriguing world of the Looking-Glass House. But due to the plasticity of the medium, this is where the narrative of this piece presumably ends. Alice is neither here, nor there;

61 See also, Rubin and Rubin 2010.

Fig. 5 "Alice Through the Looking Glass" by Jeanne Argent (1989)

she reaches for the other side and half of her body is already there, but the rest has yet to follow, or it follows (it would follow) if supplemented by Carroll's text and Tenniel's illustration. Argent's Alice is literally stuck within the glass, the same as I am stuck between my garden and Dodgson's.

I do not build my text around Argent's "Alice" simply because it is a material representation of Carroll's novel. *Through the Looking Glass* is, on its own, the most relevant Victorian mirror fantasy, one that incorporates almost every mirror trope I have discussed so far: strangeness in the mirror, permeability of the (in)animate ontic border, narcissism, semiophagy, exhaustion, the language of excess as the language of wonder(land), the mirror as the place where inner desires come true. Written in the second half of the century, it seems as if it appropriated every particle of the 19th-century mirror imagination, juxtaposing them and articulating their alliances in new and exciting ways. However, there are still tropes I have not discussed (or that I have abstained from discussing, keeping them selfishly for this one last mirroring) and it is these that Argent's statue epitomises.

On the literary level, we still need to consider the trope of the mirror as a *portal* to another realm, time or space. Many Victorian characters looked/stepped *through* mirrors, so *Through the Looking Glass* is just one of many texts that use this trope as a convenient method of transporting the reader elsewhere. Some mirrors are similar to Carroll's in that they are portals passable in imagination, or a dream: such is the black mirror of Doctor Dee's descendent in the short story "My Black Mirror" (1856) by Wilkie Collins, or Mr. Oldknow's dream-sequence mirror in "A Christmas Pudding" (1851) by Charles Knight. Others offer only visual access to other places and times, such as the Queen's mirror in the Edgar Taylor's translation of the "Snow

White" (1823), the mirror in Frances Trollope's "The Tale of Aunt Margaret's Trouble" (1866), Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott" (1833/1842), or the one in Edith Nesbit's "A Looking-Glass Story" (1887). What this portal trope invokes on the conceptual level though, is the mirror as an *opening*, a hole in the wall (or in the ground), an enclosed geometric space that offers a view of (or access to) something previously unseen, forbidden or hidden. The central figure of this chapter is, thus, the *frame* and the central issue to be discussed the *voyeuristic act* of looking/stepping through it.

Thus Argent's "Alice." What we are presented with is essentially a mirror frame commanding the reading of itself and of the sculpture. I might start by pointing out that the frame is the locality of this piece, as it indicates the space Alice occupies in the *Through the Looking Glass* narrative. Alice is raised on a pediment that renders her almost a performer, an artisan on stage. The mirror is the only piece of scenery on this stage, it is the totality of the *mise en scène* which explains and localizes both Alice and the episode in question. However, hierarchy of their roles in the performed piece is relative, because focus on the mirror, its centrality, is such – in respect to the act of "stepping through" and the title of the book it represents – that it is Alice who actually fades to the mirror's background, to the role of ornament, posing a question of what (or who) precisely is the frame in/of this sculpture and what (or who) precisely is being framed.

Some of the readings of the frame might emphasize the already mentioned issues. Like in the case of William Potts's The Grand Boudoir Glass, Argent's "Alice" articulates unfortunate attachments in the choice of the materials used, namely a phantasmagorical unification of semantically different components. Casting bronze only to push it through the sheet of bullet-proof glass, Argent

attempts an almost organic unison of materials, a utopian venture that charts a transcendental utopia somewhere beyond the differential fissure moving between the elements of the piece. This venture conceptually goes ever further, towards the (in)animate trope, as the "Alice" resonates with Victorian grotesque in that it merges two bodies, the human and the artificial. In a perversion of prosthetical procedures, it grafts a human onto an object (and not the other way around) as the mirror passively accepts Alice's intrusion in the way a human body would a mechanical leg, or a bypass. If I am allowed to push this argument of prosthesis further, both *Through the Looking Glass* and "Alice" (as its material formulation) assume Guildford as their historical place of origin, turning the town's physical space into their coordinating grid, or into a topography of their historical convergence. But while Guildford (where Dodgson lived) belongs to the outside of the book (that Carroll wrote) and expands beyond its frame (or as its frame), the "Alice" (that Argent made) is materially anchored in it while it narratively exists (and persists) outside of it. Between Guildford/ Dodgson and *Through the Looking Glass*/Carroll, "Alice"/ Argent is a borderline, the position of a frame, the space where the text breaks off from the town's topography; the place of difference, the seam of the text. In this respect, it performs one more unfortunate attachment – that of the topography, the book and history, as well as of the worlds on both sides of the glass. Burdened, thus, with this focal point of impossible merging, "Alice" exhausts the viewer with the unyielding proliferation of differences that spread from it across the town, across the inspirational text, its author and its illustrator, across the very viewer who is being pulled into a narcissistic introspective act before a mirror, an act that, due to the text it came from, digs deep down towards the bottom (of the rabbit hole perhaps) and

its mud, but unlike with "The Compensation House," *The Picture of Dorian Grey* or "The King's Ball" this mud is worded in the language of wonder(land), purified of dread and fear, pacified so as to amortize the intensity and danger of the rising awareness, re-repressing it so it can resurface again.

That is the real power of wonderland.

So we see how Argent's "Alice" acts as a frame in more ways than one and how it moves from the frame to that which is being framed, proving that "frame may be framed by what it appears to frame" (Barzilai 1990: 12). However, the very fact that "Alice" cannot be positively framed because her position shifts from exteriority to interiority of Carroll's text, poses a question of the viewer who stands *in front of it* not only as in front of a mirror that invites introspection, but first and foremost in front of an *opening* that may or may not allow stepping through, while certainly allowing the view across. The act of standing in front of "Alice" (with Alice and as Alice) is an extrinsically *voyeuristic* act, one that presents me with something previously forbidden or unknown, an act of peeping through the frame as one peeps through a key hole; so I look through it just as I look through the window of my study in Belgrade, the one I am sitting before right now, and what I see is a wonderland on the other side of my window frame, of Carroll's text and Argent's "Alice," a place where textuality runs obvious and naked, yet unrecognized and unfrightening. But there is more (as always is) because "Alice" is not just a frame, because no mirror is just a frame, it is a frame with a content, the material border that allows me to peep at the other side, but because it is a mirror what I see there is essentially my own bottom, the return of my own re-repressed awareness disguised as Alice, *an* Alice as we shall see, one of many that throughout Carroll's life bore that name, or *any* Alice,

for once she stepped *through* and reflected and became more than one, she left the craved logos and entered the perpetual, imminent, rhizomatic dissemination of the text. Just as Narcissus, Alice is (being) framed.

The Rules of Voyeurism: Looking/Stepping Through

The fantasy of mirroring starts with Narcissus, so I had previously started with Narcissus as well. But every mirroring act is also a voyeuristic one, so I conjure another character, another simulacrum, to point me in the right direction; I conjure Alice.[62] The line between them is thin and hazy as they both participate in mirroring acts. To distinguish them and create two where there previously was one means moving the focus away from the reflection and towards the mirror itself. Narcissus's destiny is to look at his reflection until it consumes him, burns him and metamorphoses him into a flower; through this process of introspection that faces him with his love the way it faces Mr Strange with his fear, Narcissus (as well as Mr. Strange) remains chained to the surface of the pool in an

---

62 The first time mirror appears in *Through the Looking-Glass*, it is formulated through the myth of Narcissus. Alice plays the "let's pretend" game with her kitten, but the kitten does not seem willing to participate. Like everything else in Carroll's "nonsense" writing, this game seems random (without structure or set of rules) while actually functioning according to various rules of inversion, substitution, association and reflection. In the game Alice plays with Kitty (the kitten) who is asked to imitate the Red Queen chess-piece put in front of it, all these rules apply: Kitty needs to double and reflect its form, to substitute itself for it, but in order to make it happen, there is *a priori* resemblance of forms, an initial association of simulacra that makes this endeavour possible. So Kitty is pressed with a demand, one that concerns its physical form (the form of that form), but she refuses it, scorns it by ignoring it, and gets punished for this indifference – by being, like Narcissus, faced with its reflection in the mirror.

act of petrified agony. Alice, on the other hand, goes over a different border and metamorphoses into an object, a chess-piece, but remains free to shift her position regarding the reflective surface; she is free not only to look at, but also to *move across* the border that separates her from the world beyond, the world which, in the light of the reflective nature of the mirror, also effectively *is* that border. Narcissus faces the pool's surface to drown in what he sees at the bottom, but Alice faces the mirror – and lives. What separates Alice and Narcissus, the place in their narratives that I want to accentuate and enunciate differently, is the thin line of their frames – the break, fissure, rift, border.

The contemporary idea of voyeurism stresses the *secrecy* of the act of looking.[63] This is, however, a relatively recent emphasis. In psychoanalytic texts on voyeurism from the first half of the 20th century the importance of the spectating subject's (the voyeur's) concealment is diminished: voyeur is the one who compulsively watches the nakedness and exposure of others, and not the self-forgetting spectator, hidden behind a bush, window or screen.[64] The secretive aspect of voyeurism gains immense popularity only in the second half of the century; it initially emerges within popular culture (from there to be acknowledged in the official psychiatry/psychoanalytic textbooks), and is consequently absorbed by the cinema.[65]

63 *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5)*, for instance, categorizes voyeurism as the "'recurrent' spying on unsuspecting persons" (2013: 687).

64 For an extensive review of psychiatric literature on voyeurism up to 1976, see Smith 1976. For a review of different contemporary approaches to voyeuristic disorder and connected literature, see Lavin 2008.

65 Jonathan Metz (2004: 418) compellingly shows how the psychiatric and popular concepts of voyeurism interacted through the second half of the 20th century: the idea, taken from Freud, that the voyeurs displace their interests from unconsciously suppressed objects

Film production and film theory took Freudian writings on "scopophilia" as their starting point and created the voyeur we are accustomed today: the creepy man behind a bush, window frame or camera, such are the characters of Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954), Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* (1960) and Michelangelo Antonioni's *Blow-Up* (1966).

Though he acknowledged it, Freud himself gave little importance to the reclusive position of the spectator, being primarily concerned with the general and all-pervasive role of looking in libidinal life; but he established the importance of a *barrier*. In "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905) he explored the roots of desire for visual gratification, and considered it a "perversion" only reluctantly and under specific circumstances (for instance, "if it is connected with the overriding of disgust (as in the case of voyeurs or people who look on at excretory functions)" (Freud, "Three Essays," 1981: 157)). Looking is a "component instinct" understood as "the psychical representative of an endosomatic, continuously flowing source of stimulation," (168) thus scopophilia (which in Freud charts a wider, more general territory of taking pleasure in the act of looking *per se*) forms the fundamental part of human experience. "In scopophilia and exhibitionism," says Freud, "the eye corresponds to an erotogenic zone […]" (169) and the very act of looking at something invests the object libidinously. The point, however, where Freud acknowledges the

to "those that may better serve as reassurances" was the basic assumption in psychiatric textbooks of the 1950s, but due to its promotion in popular print culture from the 1970s it delinked from any association between voyeurism and the unconscious. According to his reading, there is a connection between the psychiatry's growing insistence on symptoms that highlighted the voyeur's actions and paid no mind to his intentions, and the general normalization of the voyeurism in popular culture (visible in the prevalence of reality TV).

idea of barrier (thus, implicitly, of secrecy) in voyeurism – the idea that the voyeur looks over, behind or through a specific frame – is the importance he gives to the feelings of shame or disgust. In the formative years of sexuality, the child develops curiosity towards the other's genitals or excrement; this inclination eventually becomes repressed through the process of socialization (latter understood as the super-ego), so an *obstacle* is raised in the form of shame or disgust to pleasure in looking at that particular object (192). In search for gratification, the scopophilic instinct sends cathexes in order to find gratification everywhere else outside the forbidden objects; on the other hand, the pleasure in looking that serves the purpose to *override* the policing sense of shame/disgust makes scopophilia a perversion.

As before, I am not interested in the ontogenetic aspects of Freud's theory, but I invite him to my text for two reasons: 1) his theory remains foundational for the contemporary stressing of the visual obstacle in voyeurism, and 2) I want to peck bones of this theory and extrapolate the aspects I can exploit in the discussion of the text. Though he did not explicate it as pivotal in voyeurism, obstacle (as repression) imposed by the conscience/super-ego emerges as something that orients desire and organizes the general visual search for gratification in looking. The visual and physical overriding of that which separates me from the object of my gaze (the mirror surface) forms the central and most important idea of *Through the Looking Glass*. Not only that Alice looks at the mirror and finds pleasure in seeing the reflection, but she first looks *through* it and then steps *through* it, adding the "through" twist to the boomerang-shaped narcissistic fantasy of mirroring. From the perspective of a desire for looking, but also of a desire for visual or physical crossing of the frame, Alice's

adventure in the looking-glass world starts as a voyeuristic one. I am not interested so much in what she finds on the opposite side, as I am in the very act of looking/stepping through that both facilitates the penetrating introspective event (which is, more or less, the entire narrative of the book) and creates the frame/obstacle/barrier/window for an auto-voyeuristic act of taking pleasure in looking at oneself.

As Alice approaches the looking-glass, the world on the other side opens up to her, making her desirous and curious. "I'll tell you," says Alice to Kitty,

> all my ideas about the Looking-Glass House. First, there's the room you can see through the glass – that's just the same as our drawing-room, only the things go the other way. I can see all of it when I get upon the chair – all but the bit just behind the fireplace. Oh! I do so wish I could see that bit!" (130-31).

Visually, the room she looks at is the same as the room she lives in, but it "goes the other way" so she sees it as a different one. This difference in sameness, the inversion of spatial relations, makes it a wonderland to investigate, or inhabit (one is never sure where one might rest), but most of all a destination to reach by imagination, by the game of "let's pretend." This game can be seen as a "way around" the impenetrability of the barrier, a certain detour of the drive;[66] or, as a libidinal act of overriding the repressive, policing, "always watching" mechanism of the reflective surface, of violently going against it. But, for a moment I invite you to follow it, to follow this circuitous path of make-believe; forget we are discussing a mirror and engage it as just a frame – a doorway, perhaps, or a widow frame

---

66   In this respect, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) is one long voyeuristic detour that starts with her peeping at the beautiful garden through the small opening and ends with her finally getting there.

through which I am looking at Guildford, Argent's "Alice" and *Through the Looking Glass* at the moment. I invite you to this violence of Carroll's text, the violence of the "let's pretend" game I have been playing from the start, because the text violates itself at this same point.

The moment Alice declares that "there's the room you can *see through* the glass" (emphases are mine) is the moment the text breaks under the weight of her game and the mirror breaks *as a mirror*, becoming a frame instead.[67] This point establishes Alice's secretive and intrusive, voyeuristic, gaze. Her desire, as well as her ideas about the Looking-Glass House, is mediated by her *vision* and the act of looking *through*. Alice looks at the world behind the glass and sees the world detached from her by the mirror, the world she does not belong to and where she is a stranger. The space she cannot see, that behind the fireplace, will remain the border no matter what side she is on, and beyond that border, beyond her line of sight there will always be something she is denied, something "they" would keep from her. "I want so much to know," continues Alice, "whether they've had fire in the winter: you never *can* tell, you know, unless our fire smokes, and then smoke comes up in that room too – but that may be only pretence, just to make it look as if they had a fire" (131). Playing the game of "let's pretend" with Alice (and strategically forgetting that it is the mirror we are discussing, thus cancelling the reflective side of the game) we see that Alice faces not a reflective glass, but an opening defined by the frame that limits it, so her game of "let's pretend" is essentially a game of "looking through," as through a keyhole, at "their" space that is different and separated from her own.

---

67 The looking-glass "has got all soft like a gauze […] it's turning into a sort of mist now […] beginning to melt away like a bright silvery mist" (132).

The game of "over there," beyond the frame, continues on the other side as well. Once through the looking-glass, the first thing Alice does is look at the space previously denied to her (the fireplace), indulging the voyeuristic fantasy in an attempt at annulling the established barrier. But this barrier cannot be annulled no matter the side of the frame and it keeps imposing itself on her. She is within the looking-glass world, within her voyeuristic fantasy and she experiences the world she had felt as "theirs"; but crossing the looking-glass does not extinguish the feeling of disparity between her world and this one. If anything, it just makes it more intense and surprising (surprise, in the wonderland, being the pacified version of fear, or dread, the anxiety not experienced as such), as in hearing the Tiger-lily speak,[68] being exposed to living backwards,[69] or having to hand the cake around and cut it afterwards.[70] This sense of non-belonging and of experiencing things as if she was still on the opposite side of the glass results from the fact that, in the looking-glass world, Alice is one of the things that have not been reversed: many Tenniel's illustrations from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* show her right-handed and she continues being right-handed in the looking-glass world

68 "Alice was so astonished that she couldn't speak for a minute: it quite seemed to take her breath away" (140).

69 "I don't understand you,' said Alice, 'it's dreadfully confusing!'

'That's the effect of living backwards,' the Queen said kindly: 'it always makes one a little giddy at first –'

'Living backwards!' Alice repeated in great astonishment. 'I never heard of such a thing!'" (173).

70 "Alice had seated herself on the bank of a little brook, with the great dish on her knees, and was sawing away diligently with the knife. 'It's very provoking!' she said […]. 'I've cut off several slices already, but they will always join on again!'

'You don't know how to manage Looking-Glass cakes,' the Unicorn remarked. 'Hand it round first, and cut it afterwards' (210).

(Gardner 2000: 148).[71] Alice's voyeuristic experience of the looking-glass world, the experience of looking as through a frame (like "a little *peep* of the passage in Looking-Glass House if you leave the door of our drawing-room wide open" (132)) is the foundation of all her troubles and surprises, of all strangeness around her, so though she steppes *through* she actually remains on the other side as well, stepping through but taking the frame with her, the frame that frames everything she sees and everyone she talks to, doubling herself into the relative "here" and "there" and always looking at things as detached from herself. Because the reflective surface is also a portal, Alice perpetually gets stuck within the same frame that she cannot but carry with her, and this point materializes more than a century later in a back garden in Guildford which is also the double of another, dirty, urban one in Belgrade, as the frames overlap and the game of "let's pretend" moves on, until I realize that it is stuck (the game, I mean) in the indefiniteness of the act "through," that the game of "let's pretend" *is* the voyeuristic game of "look through" that opens and closes the book. Alice's adventure in the looking-glass world is a voyeuristic one throughout because the border that makes it happen, the difference libidinously overridden in order for the wonderland to ever happen, is the difference that constitutes Alice within and without the looking-glass world. Stuck at the border, doubled within and without a frame, in a voyeuristic gaze that cannot cancel or satisfy itself as such, Argent's "Alice" frames Carroll's (and *vice versa*) like two mirrors in Sala's *Quite Alone* that I keep coming back to over and again, pointing to the fact that *Through the Looking Glass* is an infinity text, because

---

71 Also unreversed are "DUM" and "DEE" on the collars of the Tweedle brothers, the label on the Mad Hatter's top hat, and "Queen Alice" over the door in Chapter 9 (Gardner 2000: 148).

What Alice Found There is through the looking-glass where through the looking-glass through through the looking-glass and where, yet, through the looking-glass, *mise an abyme*, a frame within a frame within a frame within a frame, through and through.

The Frames of Alice

Charles Dodgson spent twenty-four years looking through a camera lens. He became interested in photography in 1850s, when the photographic camera was considered a wondrous piece of technology, and, according to many of his biographers, it remained his hobby until 1880.[72] He has taken more than 3000 photographs in his lifetime, the feat which, considering the complexity of the wet-colloid process, demanded an extraordinary amount of time.[73] Although it did not constitute either his source of income or his primary vocation, looking through the camera lens, through a frame that cuts and reinvents (or hides so it can penetrate) became the *modus operandi* of his visual attitude towards the world. "Through" marks Dodgson's gaze as much as it marks Carroll's narratives: *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* might have easily been called *Through the Rabbit Hole, and What Alice Found There*, while *Through the Looking Glass* could have been *Through the Camera Lens*.

In 1852, Dodson visited his uncle Skeffington Lutwidge, a barrister and the Commissioner in Lunacy, who

---

72   Dodgson's nephew Stuart Dodgson Collingwood and Isa Bowman, his later-in-life child friend, are his initial biographers. See, Collingwood 1898 and Bowman 1900. 20th-century biographies are numerous, but some of them became cornerstones of Carroll scholarship, such as Lennon 1945 or Clark 1979. Scholarship on the photographic aspect of Dodgson's life is equally extensive but, see Gernsheim 1969 or Taylor and Wakeling 2002.

73   See, for instance, Wakeling 2015: 240–75.

happened to be interested in new technologies and gadgets. Dodgson was taken by a "lathe, […] crest stamp […] a beautiful little pocket instrument for measuring distances on a map, refrigerator, etc., etc.;" but he was also drawn to a "telescope stand" and "microscope" (Carroll 1979: 19) that reinterpreted reality in new and previously unimaginable ways. These early experiences of the world mediated and reconstructed by framed glass remained with Dodgson for life and constituted the frame of his creative writing. Apart from the obvious parallel between micro/telescopic lenses and the looking-glass (and the even more obvious one between them and the photographic camera), these experiences established a visual grid for Carroll's interaction with the world and continued echoing through his letters and writings. The most famous example, for sure, is the train episode from *Through the Looking Glass*, in which "the Guard was looking at [Alice], first through a telescope, then through a microscope, and then through an opera-glass" (151) finally concluding that she was going the wrong way. However, these same optical frames emerge in other places as well. "I was sorry to miss you," says Dodgson in his letter to Margaret Millard from December 15, 1875,

> but you see I had so many conversations on the way. I tried to explain to the people in the street that I was going to see you, but they wouldn't listen; they said they were in a hurry, which was rude. At last I met a wheelbarrow that I thought would attend to me, but I couldn't make out what was in it. I saw some features at first, then I looked *through a telescope*, and found it was a countenance; then I looked *through a microscope*, and found it was a face! I thought it was rather like me, so I fetched a large *looking-glass* to make sure, and then to my great joy I found it was me. We shook hands, and were just beginning to talk, when myself came up and joined us, and we had quite a pleasant conversation (Carroll 1989: 66, emphases are mine).

In this game of selves that keep multiplying throughout the letter (ending with the arrival of Lewis Carroll and Charles Dodgson to see off me, myself and I to the train), Dodgson frames and voyeuristically consumes himself first through a telescope and then through a microscope; but it is precisely by this framing that he separates himself from himself, intruding upon his selves through lenses that continually postpone sameness. Finally, Carroll's auto-voyeurism becomes double-reflective as the looking-glass faces him with his self that is not his, and if the letter and the occasion had allowed he might have continued doubling, echoing and multiplying, while that which is Lewis Carroll, or Charles Dodgson, or "I," slides between the copies, pointing to the fact that there is no such thing as "Lewis Carroll," no identity on either side of any lens (microscopic, telescopic or otherwise) but only within the in-between signified by the "through" that charts and establishes differences between me, myself and I, between Carroll and Dodgson, between Dodgson who writes the letter and all those who emerge as the effect of his writing.

In March 1856, Dodgson bought his first camera; and in April he met Alice.

Alice Pleasance Liddell, the daughter of the Christ Church dean Henry Liddell, has never left Carroll's frame. Robert Douglas-Fairhurst's supposition (2015: 81) that he might have first seen her through the window of the Christ Church library seems particularly appealing in this respect. Dodgson occasionally worked there as a sub-librarian from 1855; but he might as well have seen her from the window of his office on the top floor that had a view on the garden of the Deanery. According to his diaries, on April 25, 1865, he went to the garden looking for a spot from which to photograph the cathedral, but his visit paid off in new acquaint-

ances instead. "The three little girls were in the garden most of the time," he noted, and they became "excellent friends" (Carroll 1993: 65). The three little girls were Lorina, Alice and Edith Liddell, and though they were not in the mood for being photographed that day, the importance of that camera-mediated meeting was, in the diaries, noted with a "white stone," the mark Dodgson put on important events. During the following years (especially between 1858 and 1860) and up until still obscure break in their friendship (marked by the missing pages in his diary), Dodgson photographed Alice on numerous occasions, creating some of the most popular Victorian photographs today, such as "The Beggar Maid" (1860).

For Carroll, however, framing of Alice did not stop with Alice Liddell. There were so many Alices in his life one can hardly count, and most of them have been framed by his camera in one moment or another: Alice Jane Donkin, Alice Emily Donkin, Alice Constance Westmacott, Alice Ellen Terry, Alice Murdoch, Alice Raikes, Princess Alice (later the Countess of Athlone), the list goes on and on. I understand this fact as the point of Alice's emptying and of her turning into a signifier cut lose from its signified. Alice disseminates; she becomes "Alice," an open sign, stretched so as to signify the general nature of Dodgson's voyeuristic worldview – Dodgson's and Carroll's frame. She turns into a frame that frames his photographic blindness to that which falls outside the frame.[74] One of his photographs is particularly interesting in this respect, as it faces Alice with more frames then one. On October 6, 1862, Dodgson took a picture of Alice Jane Donkin in which Alice has stepped through the window (frame). Alice's face is turned towards the rope-ladder that hangs from the window and articulates

---

74   "They say that we Photographers are blind race at best" (Carroll, "A Photographer's Day Out," 1996: 1056)

the downward composition of the picture. Her intentions are clear: this is no ordinary jump, but an elaborately planned escape. The picture is titled "Elopement" (fig. 6) The title, however, creates tension with and within the picture's frame. "Elopement" means "to slip away," "to run away secretly (with the intention of getting married usually without parental consent)" (*Merriam Webster*), so Alice is in the act of slipping away down the ladder and out of the frame. Her body, however, resist; her left foot is not on the ladder but on the window pediment and her left hand is holding on to the window frame. Though she means to escape, Dodgson's frame (the internal one) holds her back, stilling her resolution and keeping her within the external one. Alice must remain within the picture, because she is the frame that gives it its limits and protects it from what lies beyond. Just as in *Through the Looking Glass*, the "Elopement" Alice is damned to carry its frame with her, to *become* that frame for Dodgson.

This frame that Dodgson imposed on Alice Liddell never truly left her; or, rather, she never truly managed to get rid of it. Seventy years later, on the centenary of Dodgson's birth in 1932, Alice Liddell (now Hargreaves) ceremoniously arrived in New York on *Berengaria*, eliciting a storm of publicity as the press announced her as "Alice in a New Wonderland: The Same "Alice" Who Fell Down a Rabbit Hole 70 Years Ago and Landed in "Wonderland" Has Visited America and Written This Added Chapter on Her New Adventures" (*New York Herald Tribune*, 1932). As Robert Douglas-Fairhurst (2015: 3-23) shows, then eighty-year old Alice was at pains to play the part that framed her seemingly since the "golden afternoon" of July 4, 1862. That frame, however, was established years before this mythical moment when Alice inspired Dodgson to create Wonderland; it was established by Dodgson's window frame

Fig. 6 "Elopement" by Charles Dodgson (1862)

and camera. "She disliked having her photograph taken all her adult life," one of her neighbors recalled, while she confessed to her son "oh, my dear I am tired of being Alice in Wonderland! Doesn't it sound ungrateful & is – only I do get tired" (Douglas-Fairhurst 2015: 4-5). Through the books, plays and merchandize,[75] the frame named "Alice" became the frame of the myth of Lewis Carroll, and the American press insisted on imposing it on her by depicting her as the "dreamchild" (no matter her old age) who came to the States exclaiming popular references such as "the buildings are opening out like the largest telescopes" upon arriving on the thirty-first floor of a skyscraper and "I had to grow neck long [when she was young] in order to get up to these heights" (Douglas-Fairhurst 2015: 7). From the very first moment, then, Alice has been framed – by the window frame, the camera or the space reserved for camera – but through that framing she became the frame that kept framing itself *mise en abyme*.

Dodgson understood the world as an object to be gazed upon from a distance and through a frame. This voyeuristic attitude intensifies even more with knowledge of the one who looks, of the one who hides behind the frame. In this respect, it seems particularly interesting (though not very surprising), that Dodgson had a great dislike (to say the least) of having his picture taken. According to Isa Bowman, one of his child friends from later life, Dodgson "had a horror [of being photographed], and despite the fact that he was continually and importunately requested to sit before the camera […]" (Bowman 1900: 15). He felt uncomfortable with exposing his image and possessed "shyness that made him nervous in the presence of strangers [and that]

75 Dodgson designed, or had designed, a number of object with the theme of *Through the Looking Glass*, such as umbrellas and biscuit tins.

made the idea that any one who cared to stare into a shop window could examine and criticise his portrait extremely repulsive to him" (Bowman 1900: 18).[76] Dodgson loved penetrating other's privacy with camera lens and exposing them in albums he carried around wherever he went, but hated the idea of being exposed himself preferring, instead, the reclusive, hidden spot behind the camera or within the dark room. Alice stayed petrified on the opposite side of the lens, though, where Dodgson's frame kept transforming her from one photograph to another, while Carroll's frame kept using her from one book to another. This insight throws a completely different light on the train episode from *Through the Looking Glass*, where the Guard's gaze scrutinizes her through a telescope, microscope and opera-glass, imposing frames on her, and consuming her through Carroll's voyeuristic gaze; and it paints the very idea of *Through the Looking Glass* in voyeuristic colors.

The popular myth about the looking-glass idea for the book (as every single aspect of Dodgson's life has become mythical by now) goes that looking-glass, as a concept, arrived late in the process of writing. In 1932, Alice Raikes, one of many Alices to pass through (or in front of) his camera, shared a recollection about *Through the Looking Glass*.

---

76 The letter to F. H. Atkinson from December 10, 1881 illustrates the extent of Dodgson's dislike of exposure. "[A]s to my photo," says Dodgson, "I must still beg to be excused. Possibly your book of poetry has not brought on you all the annoyances of one who, having been unlucky enough to perpetrate two small books for children, has been bullied ever since by the herd of lion-hunters who seek to drag him out of the privacy he hoped an "anonym" would give him. I have really had much persecution of that sort, since I wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, and I so much hate the idea of strangers being able to know me by sight that I refuse to give my photo, even for the albums of relations" (Carroll 1989: 113).

As children, we lived in Onslow Square and used to play in the garden behind the houses. Charles Dodgson used to stay with an old uncle there, and walk up and down, his hands behind him, on the strip of lawn. One day, hearing my name, he called me to him saying, "So you are another Alice. I'm very fond of Alices. Would you like to come and see something which is rather puzzling?" We followed him into his house which opened, as ours did, upon the garden, into a room full of furniture with a tall mirror standing across one corner. "Now," he said, giving me an orange, "first tell me which hand you have got that in." "The right," I said. "Now," he said, "go and stand before that glass, and tell me which hand the little girl you see there has got it in." After some perplexed contemplation, I said, "The left hand." "Exactly," he said, "and how do you explain that?" I couldn't explain it, but seeing that some solution was expected, I ventured, "If I was on the other side of the glass, wouldn't the orange still be in my right hand?" I can remember his laugh. "Well done, little Alice," he said. "The best answer I've had yet." I heard no more then, but in after years was told that he said that had given him his first idea for *Through the Looking- Glass*, a copy of which, together with each of his other books, he regularly sent me. (cf. Gardner 2000: 141)

The historical value of Raikes's recollection is questionable, since Dodgson's first recorded encounter with the Raikes's family was in June 1871, which was very late for *Through the Looking Glass* that was published for Christmas the same year (Douglas-Fairhurst 2015: 198). The importance of the recollection, however, lies in this "Alice and the mirror (frame) encounter" and in Dodgson's acknowledgement of his relationship to Alice-as-a-sign, which by then became completely detached from its original mythical space, and disseminated through Dodgson's life so as to formulate not a character to be framed, by the very frame he has been imposing on Alices and the world.

Raikes's recollection establishes the connection of this frame with *Through the Looking Glass* which frames Alice physically and narratively, while that same Alice-frame frames the book by Carroll's/Dodgson's voyeuristic gaze she cannot get rid of and that keeps haunting her within and without the book.

Through Alice

The centrality of Carroll's voyeuristic frame in *Through the Looking Glass* is such that once I acknowledge it I find it hard to move on. It imposes itself on me, on my perspective; it forces me to map myself as Alice; and like Alice, I find myself stuck at "through"[77] that articulates the title, the protagonist, Argent's "Alice," but also the "let's pretend" game I have been playing, thus my relationship with the window frame, with the brutalist garden, Guildford, Carroll and Dodgson. I find myself stuck at it, with it and within it. In this text, just as at my window frame, I want to move forward – I want to pass through the frame; but I am stuck neither here nor there, or, rather at both places at once. My earnest intention was to talk about familiar things, about the narrative of *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There*, about the exposed/re-repressed textuality and desire for thingness. But "through" haunts me, frames me, and keeps me petrified within this text, opening a parergonal abyss upon me.[78] In order to move on I have to address the book's content, but to do that I need to say, write down or otherwise enunciate its title, and once I do I just cannot pass the beginning of it – I cannot pass "through."

77 This pausing on "through" creates a certain tension between the proposition's kinesis and my resting, or pausing, on it. How does one rest on a movement? How does one rest "half way through"?

78 See, Derrida 1987.

As a title, the function of the phrase *Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There* is that of a frame and localizer: it anticipates, or economizes, the book's famous content (the journey through the looking-glass wonderland), localizes it (anticipating what Alice found "there") and creates its narrative edges ("there" being a defined space). Attached to the content it titles, the phrase refers to the looking-glass as its focus: I know I am to read about a world on its other side, and I am to learn what Alice found there. But it is precisely in this focus, or in this lemmatical opening towards the focus, that the one of the abysses opens: the title, as a frame, frames the work that follows it, but that work has as its focus another frame (that of the looking glass) that frames the work's narrative and lends the title its meaning. The phrase of the title, thus, narratively simulates and performs the mirror's frame that, paradoxically, frames the title that frames it. As soon as I say *Through the Looking Glass,* as soon as I write it, I cannot move forward or pass through it, because Derridian "circle and abyss" opens, making the title swallow my writing and digest the phrase I enounce in order to discuss what follows it.

So I remain at the border, within Alice's frame, the frame of my window and the bullet-proof glass of "Alice." Since it deals in differences of differences (since it deals in *différance*), the parergonal abyss can potentially be opened at any of the words (or between them),[79] but I am stuck at the

---

79 Apart from the general differential nature of any frame, in this case both "through" and "looking glass" are transitional concepts, especially within the Carroll's fantasy. It is almost as if the whole idiom "through the looking glass" is a pleonasm, a kinesis upon kinesis or kinesis through kinesis. With the respect of the looking glass is there anything which is not always already "through"? In the mirroring act, in which kinesis establishes itself as the *modus operandi* of the looking subject (the going back and forth between the subject and the mirror) is there anything that is strictly on this or that side of the glass, in it or outside of it, something, anything that is logocentric and static?

first one because I cannot pass "through" to the next; because it epitomises the abyss it creates; and because it substantiates not only Carroll's *Alice* books, but also Alice-as-a-sign – over and beyond the "real" Alice Liddell. Whether we are interested in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *Through the Looking Glass*, *and What Alice Found There*, *Alice's Adventures Under Ground*, *The Nursery "Alice"* or in Alice Liddell, Alice Hargreaves, Alice Murdoch, Alice Ellen Terry, Princess Alice, or in any other "little girl bearing the name of Alice who has read the book and has anything of an imagination" (Moses 1910: 88), "through" charts the topography of all the frames that within Alice's semioscape assume forms of the rabbit hole, looking glass, window frame, illustration, text or camera lens.

Used as a "function word to indicate movement into at one side or point and out at another and especially the opposite side of" (*Merriam Webster*), "through" anticipates a line, barrier, surface, or frame to be crossed. The idiom "through the looking glass" moves between Alice's and the looking glass world, charting at least one of their edges, those bordering on/within the mirror; at least one, because in Carroll's book the looking glass world exists *within* which is also its *beyond*, so one never knows when "through" ends, when one is through with it. This charting assumes a kinetic force, a capability to move, or to look, to send energy over in one form or another, so "through" is an intrusively voyeuristic, penetrating word that immanently violates these lines, frames and borders, and establishes kinesis as the face of every frame: frame is a frame in so far as it possesses interiority to be passed through from the outside, by permission or force.

Seemingly contrary to its kinetic, nomadic nature, "through" actually possesses locality of its own. Used as a "function word to indicate passage from one end or

boundary to another" (*Merriam Webster*), "through" charts the interiority – inner structure and expanse – of the border it trespasses. As an indicator of this internal space, "through" emerges as a word delimited and contained by its own movement, enclosed within the space it opens.

Having in mind both these meanings, the preposition "through" becomes a topography of the border as well as of the spaces on both sides. Its nature is transitory, it is neither here nor there, it acts as a frame; but it is also paradoxically localizing, in that it localizes the space between elements, within the rift, between words, or traces; it is both outside and inside. "Through" manages to capture that which is in motion, and does that by that very motion; since it rests between this and that, that and that, this and this, between the mirror and the reflection, between the words of a text, "through" represents the topography of *différance*. For this very reason I find it difficult to pass *Through the Looking glass* title, to move forward or step through; the nature of "through" is abysmal. I am stuck half-way through, like Argent's Alice, but the idiom "half way through" is a pleonasm: "through" is always already half way, at the border, it always already "boards" (to borrow Derrida's word-play). It plays across that border, transitioning in both directions, it evades, eludes, re-flects, bounces back and forth. As a proposition that cannot stand on its own, "through" articulates both its object (the frame to be crossed, the looking glass) and its subject (the person in front of the mirror, the impatient foot, the extended arm, any half of my body as I climb the window frame). But, as I have shown, Alice is both framed and the frame, she frames herself, so the subject/object dichotomy dissipates in the abysmal "through" of *Through the Looking glass*.

The centrality of "through" in *Through the Looking glass* is tantamount. From the completion of the manuscript

Fig. 7 *"Looking-glass House" (this side) by John Tenniel (1871)*
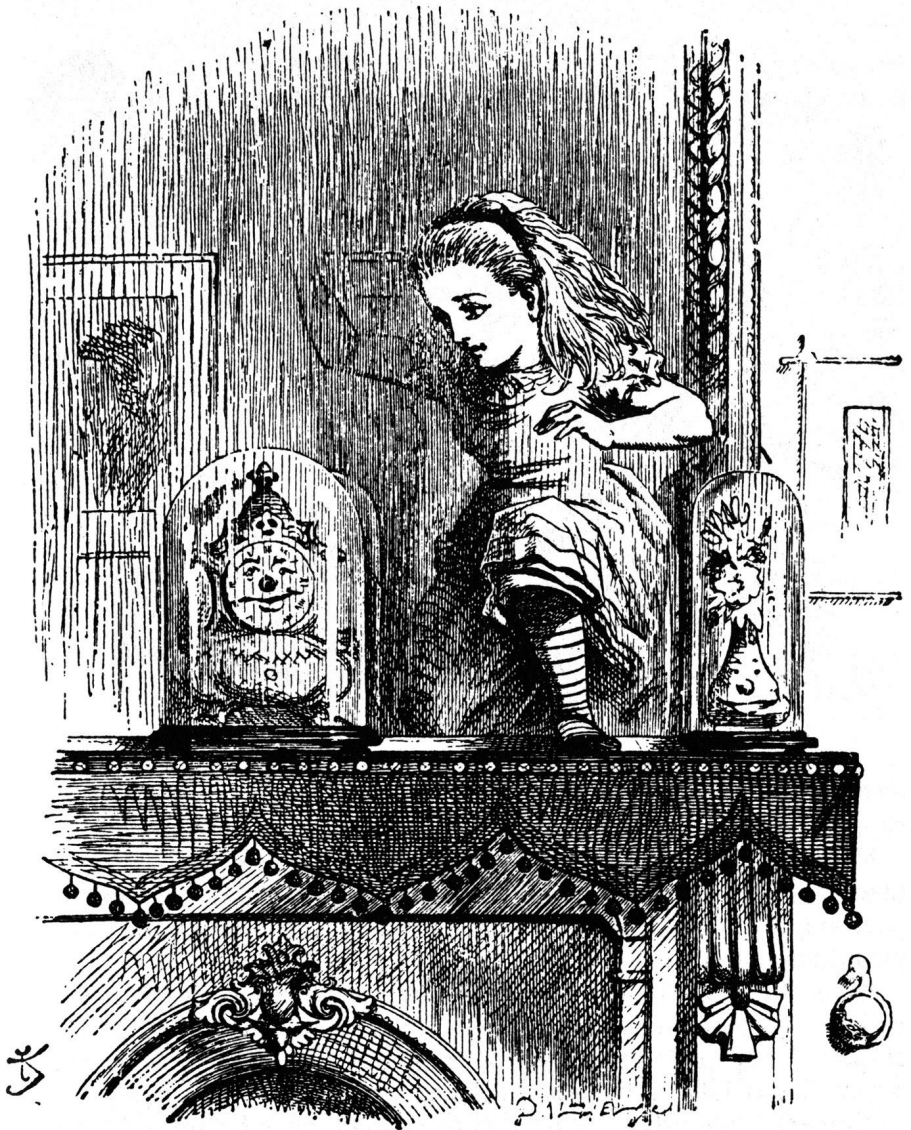
Fig. 8 "Looking-glass House" (that side) by John Tenniel (1871)

in 1869 through his diary entry for June 25, 1870, Carroll titled it *Behind the Looking glass*, only to change it after a suggestion of his acquaintance Henry Parry Lindon (Ronald Reichertz 2000: 239), because it represented the narrative better. From the title, across the narrative to the illustrations, "through" emerged as the semantic centre. In the original edition of *Through the Looking glass* from 1971, John Tenniel illustrated the moment of Alice's stepping through the glass. This illustration is particularly important for the argument I am making here because it further establishes the centrality of "through" in Carroll's mirror fantasy: instead of one, Tenniel made *two* illustrations, showing Alice *from both sides of the mirror* (fig. 7 and 8). He could have easily made only one illustration depicting Alice from one side of the mirror or the other, but Carroll and Tenniel emphasised this moment to the full extent of the book's materiality. With illustrations on opposite sides of the same page their positions and dimensions matched completely, so on turning the page one gets the impression that Alice steps through the page itself, that the page *is* the looking glass. The page itself, its thickness – the width, structure, and matter – articulates the topography of *différance*, of "through" that enters and exits the same page, all the while remaining within it. Carroll and Tenniel succeeded in print what Argent did in bronze and glass: they mapped the inner structure of the Alice's frame, of the frame framed by Alice, anticipating Argent's collapsing of Tenniel's illustrations in matter and establishing dissemination not only from the text to the image, but also from textuality to sculpturality and from the book's materiality to that of the bullet-proofed glass.

But the question arises: if the page is the looking glass, is every page so, or just that page, or maybe just that part of the page? How does one go about its frame? How does

one establish the border of Carroll's (now Tenniel's too) voyeuristic frame? The problem arises because of the fact that Tenniel's illustrations have no margins, no frame: the images merge with the page and the text, they literally spill into it. We are again at the problem of a border: where do the images end? Do they stop at the end of a continuous line, at the end, for instance, of the line that constitutes the hanged picture frame at the far left side of the first image? But, then, this picture frame is also cut, incomplete – its left border is missing – so between its upper and lower border, this picture, as well as the whole illustration spills onto the page. As long as the line survives, as long as there is continuity in paint, the image is contained and it resists dissipation; it is possible to distinguish it from the text and to define its edges in respect to the page. But in all other places – in white areas that make half of the illustration, and especially in white border areas that should narratively be part of the illustration but are incapable of that – in all these areas the image textualizes, turning into displacement and artificiality.

This irksome relationship between the page, looking glass and framing is, in a certain way addressed within the text of *Through the Looking glass*. Alice has just stepped through the looking glass and she is now on the opposite side of the page. "Then 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" (133). On this side of the frame, within the looking glass world, the frame of the looking glass keeps reproducing itself, drawing an invisible line around what constitutes the view from the other side, line that creates a frame within the already crossed frame. But this frame, the one taken into the looking glass world by Alice, is precisely the frame she cannot get rid of – the Carroll's voyeuristic

"Alice" frame that keeps imposing itself on her, on the reader, on me and my text, the frame that incapacitates me within my own text and makes me stuck at "through," at the beginning of the title and at Tenniel's illustration, the frame that prevents me from moving on and passing "through" that opens itself upon me, swallowing and digesting me. This impossibility of passing "through" is the central point of Tenniel's illustration as it creates a frame where the frame is lacking, a frame framed by itself that articulates the "let's pretend" game as the only possibility of my exhausted self in the face of the Carroll's mirror, but that mirror is the frame of Alice, of Alice Liddell, Alice Hargreaves, Alice Donkin and all the girls by the name of Alice who have ever read the book, or, further, have ever been born, the Alice frame spreads in all directions, cut lose from the dreamchild of the "golden afternoon" like an independent root spreading, emptying itself, disseminating, charting the interiority of the mirror frame that is its own exteriority, so when I look through the window of my study and see Guildford all I can do is possibilitate and face myself in that long, exasperating introspective act that is *Through the Looking glass*. Here, within Dodgson's Guildford and Carroll's text, within "through" which is Argent's "Alice" and Tenniel's illustrations, stuck at the in-between of "through," Alice faces herself, her own frame, she faces Carroll's voyeuristic gaze; so in my game of "let's pretend" I look through the window of my study that is the Carroll's mirror and see myself here and there simultaneously, both in my study and in Guildford, gazing at myself in the act of auto-voyeurism that breaks the rules of narcissism by both coming back to me and passing through, preventing the escape to my transcendental utopia of "primary narcissism" and Aristophanes' speech on love and rupturing the reflective fantasy by caging it at the border, within the

frame, in a page and a sheet of bullet-proofed glass – within the parergonal abyss.

As every introspection inevitably breaks the surface of a pond, lake or a mirror, what Alice finds there, on the other side, what I find there on the other side is an awareness of the timeless dissemination of the self within the logos-less chaos of textuality. In the wonderland through the looking glass, "things float about so here" where Alice "pursues a large bright thing that look[s] sometimes like a doll and sometimes like a workbox," signifiers step over one another exposing the signification for what it is: unstable, non-centred, kinetic. When I look in the Carroll's mirror, I see the immanent textuality rising, I become aware of it: but this time, I survive – Alice does not die, so I do not die either. In contrast to all the Victorian characters that have paraded before the mirror and through my text like there is only one mirror, like there could be only one mirror, Alice gazes at herself and lives by the malediction to be her own frame by which she pacifies the awareness of textuality that keeps coming back to the surface. In *Through the Looking glass* there is no final destructive, or otherwise fatal, scene – at least not fatal for her. Narcissus dies, Mr. Strange dies, Dorian Grey dies, the Queen from "Snow White" dies. Even Bertha, who survives, does that only by destroying the mirror, incidentally preventing Master Walter from dying like others. But Alice's mirror remains intact. On the one hand, this is the power of the language of wonderland: to expose dissemination of things that flow about so, to expose the prosthetical nature of cause and effect, of "living backwards" and "first handing the cake around and then cutting it," but without inducing dread. The purpose of this language is to bring to the surface that which it is to re-repress, preventing the unbearable awareness of the essentially arbitrary nature of existence, and simulating

the abysmal cycling of semantic cannibalism and emesis, the desire for textuality as desire for transcendence, their play localized in the always already postponed in-between traces, in the framed frame of *différance*, of "through." But it is precisely because of this frame that Alice lives: as this frame, she always already lives "through," and no matter how open her semioscape she remains framed by Carroll's voyeuristic gaze which imposes limits on the dissemination within wonderland, pacifying it – framing it within the wonder(land) language – stilling the unbearable anxiety of infinite possibilitating, of reflecting, bouncing back and forth, echoing, mimicking, replicating, of the return of the re-repressed, cannibalism and emesis, and escaping semantic paranoia by desiring not to desire desiring not to desire desiring not to desire desiring not to desi

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abernethy, John. *Physiological Lectures, Exhibiting a General View of Mr. Hunter's Physiology, and of his Research in Comparative Anatomy*. London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Bees, Orme and Brown, Paternoster-row, 1817.

Adams, James Eli. *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1995.

Addison, Joseph. "Dissection of a Beau's Head (January 15, 1712)" *The Spectator, vol. 2*. Edited by Henry Morley. London, Glasgow, Manchester and New York: George Routledge and Sons, 1891. 241-243

Agamben, Giorgio. *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture*. Minneapolis and London: Minneapolis University Press, 1993.

All the Year Round. "A Horrible Reflexion." *All the Year Round* 74 (September 22, 1860): 571-74.

All the Year Round. "My Father's Secret." *All the Year Round* 98 (March 9 1861): 514-19.

All the Year Round. "The Late Miss Hollingford." *All the Year Round* 469 (April 18, 1868): 451-6.

Appletons' Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of the Important

Events of the Year: 1862. New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1863.

Armstrong, Isobel. "Languages of Glass." *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace*. Edited by James Buzard, Joseph W. Childers and Eileen Gillooly. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2007. 55-83.

Armstrong, Isobel. *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination 1830-1880*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Armstrong, Isobel. "Bodily Things and Thingly Bodies: Circumventing the Subject-Object Binary." *Bodies and Things in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture*. Edited by Katharina Boehm. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 17-41.

Auerbach, Jeffrey. *The Great Exhibition and Historical Memory*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

Banerjee, Jacqueline. *Literary Surrey*. Headley Down: John Owen Smith, 2005.

Barclays, John. *An Inquiry into the Opinions, Ancient and Modern, Concerning Life and Organization*. Edinburgh: Printed for Bell & Bredfute; and Waugh and Innes, Edinburgh; and G. & W. B. Whittaker, London, 1822.

Barrington, Haynes E. *Glass*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books. 1948.

Barzilai, Shuli. "Lemmata/Lemmala: Frames for Derrida's Parerga." *Diacritics* 20.1 (1990): 2-15.

Baudelaire, Charles. *The Painter of Modern Life*. London: Penguin Books. 2010.

Beaver, Patrick. *The Crystal Palace 1851-1936: A Portrait of Victorian Enterprise*. London: Hugh Evelyn, 1970.

Beerbohm, M. "Dandies and Dandies." *The Works of Max Beerbohm*. Edited by J. Lane. New York: Dodd, Mead and

Company, 1922. 3-34.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.

Bennett, Tony. "The Exhibitionary Complex." *New Formations* 4 (1988): 73-102.

Benton, E. "Vitalism in Nineteenth-Century Thought: A Typology and Reassessment." *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 5 (1974): 17-48.

Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment*. New York. Vintage Books, 2010.

Boulenger, J. *Les Dandys*. Paris: Société D'Éditions Littéraires et Artistiques. 1907.

Bowman, Isa. *The Story of Lewis Carroll*. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1900.

Brent, Shannon. *The Cut of His Coat: Men, Dress and Consumer Culture in Britain, 1860-1914*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006.

British Critic. "Review of Remarks on Scepticism, especially as it is connected with the Subjects of Organization and Life. Being an Answer to the Views of M. Bichat, Sir T. C. Morgan, and Mr. Lawrence, upon those Points. By the Rev. Thomas Rennell, A. M. Vicar of Kensington, and Christian Advocate in the University of Cambridge. Third Edition. 8vo. Rivingtons. 1819." *The British Critic* 12 (1819): 89-105.

Bulwer-Lytton, Edward. "A Strange Story." *All the Year Round* 147 (February 15, 1862): 481-91.

Buzzard, James, et al (ed.). *Victorian Prism: Refractions of the Crystal Palace*. Charlottesville and London, University of Virginia Press, 2007.

Bynum, William F. "The Great Chain of Being after Forty Years:

An Appraisal." *History of Science* 13 (1974): 1-28.

Carlyle, Thomas. *Satror Resartus: Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh*. London, Edinburgh, Glasgow, New York, Toronto and Melbourne: Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1913.

Carroll, Lewis. *The Letters of Lewis Carroll, vol. 1*. Edited by Morton N. Cohen. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Carroll, Lewis. *The Selected Letters of Lewis Carroll*. Edited by Morton N. Cohen. London: The Macmillan Press, 1989.

Carroll, Lewis. *Lewis Carroll's Diaries: The Private Journals of Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, vol. 2*. Edited by Edward Wakeling. The Lewis Carroll Society, 1993–2007.

Carroll, Lewis. "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland." *The Complete Illustrated Lewis Carroll*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1996. 15-113.

Carroll, Lewis. "Through the Looking glass & What Alice Found There." *The Complete Illustrated Lewis Carroll*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1996. 115-238.

Carroll, Lewis. "A Photographer's Day Out." *The Complete Illustrated Lewis Carroll*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1996. 1056-62.

Chambers, William and Robert. "A Glance at the Exhibition." *Chamber's Edinburgh Journal* 15 (May 31, 1851): 336-340.

Charlotte. "Correspondence (To the Editor)." *Kaleidoscope* 93 (April 9, 1822): 320.

Child, Graham. *World Mirrors, 1650-1900*. London: Sotheby Parke Bernet Publications, 1990.

Clark, Ann. *Lewis Carroll: A Biography*. London: J. M. Dent, 1979.

Coleridge, Mary. "The Other Side of a Mirror." *The Collected*

Poems of Mary Coleridge. Edited by Theresa Whistler. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954. 88-89.

Collingwood, Stuart Dodgson. *The Life and Letters of Lewis Carroll*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1898.

Collins, Charles. "No. 3 Branch Line. The Compensation House." *All the Year Round Christmas* (December 25, 1866): 600-607.

Collins, Wilkie. "My Black Mirror." *Household Words* 337 (September 6, 1856): 169-75.

Corbey, Raymond. "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930." *Cultural Anthropology* 8.3 (1993): 338-369.

D'Aurevilly, J. A. B. *Of Dandyism and of George Brummell*. London: J. M. Dent & Company. Boston, Copeland & Day, 1897.

Darlington, Cyril Dean. *Darwin's Place in History*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961.

Davis, John R. *The Great Exhibition*. Sutton: Stroud, 1999.

Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black & Red, 1983.

Debord, Guy. *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*. London and New York: Verso, 1988.

Deleuze, Gilles. "The Exhausted." Translated by Anthony Uhlmann. *SubStance* 24.3.78 (1995): 3-28.

Derrida, Jacques. "Différance." *Margins of Philosophy*. Translated by Alan Bass. Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982. 1-27.

Derrida, Jacques. *The Truth in Painting*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak. Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press. 1997.

Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fifth edition. Washington, DC and London: American Psychiatric Publishing. 2013.

Douglas-Fairhurst, Robert. *The Story of Alice: Leis Carroll and the Secret History of Wonderland*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015.

Eastlake, Charles. *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and Other Details*. London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1869.

Edwardes, Marian. "Snow-Drop." *Grimm's Household Tales*. Edited and translated by Marian Edwardes. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd; New York: E.P. Dutton & Co. 1912. 206-215.

Ezell, Margaret J. M. "Looking Glass Histories." *Journal of British Studies* 43.3 (2004): 317-338.

Fang, Dan. *Magical Objects in Victorian Literature. Enchantment, Narrative Imagination and the Power of Things*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University. PhD thesis. 2015.

Fay, Charles Ryle. *Palace of Industry, 1851: A Study of the Great Exhibition and its Fruits*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951.

Feuerbach. Ludwig. *The Essence of Christianity (2nd Edition)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

Ffrench, Yvonne. *The Great Exhibition of 1851*. London: Harvill Press, 1950.

Figlio, Karl M. "The Metaphor of Organization: An Historiographical Perspective on the Bio-Medical Sciences of the Early Nineteenth Century." *History of Science* 14 (1976): 17-53.

Fillin-Yeh, Susan. "New Strategies for a Theory of Dandies." *Dandies: Fashion and Finesse in Art and Culture*. Edited by Susan Fillin-Yeh.. New York and London: New York University Press, 2001. 1-28.

Fitzball, Edward. *Thirty Five Years of a Dramatic Author's Life, vol. 1*. London: T. C. Newby, 1859.

Fletcher, John. *Rudiments of Physiology*. Edinburgh: John Carfrae & Son, 62. South Bridge; Longman, Bees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, London; and Hodges and Smith, Dublin, 1836.

Foote, Horace. *A Companion to the Theatres and Manual of the British Drama*. London: William Marsh & Alfred Miller, 1824.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences*. London and New York: Routledge, 2005.

Freud, Sigmund. "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII* (1901-1905). Translated by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and Institute for Psychoanalysis, 1981. 125-248.

Freud, Sigmund. "Psycho-Analytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII* (1911-1913). Translated by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and Institute for Psychoanalysis, 1981. 3-84.

Freud, Sigmund. "On Narcissism: An Introduction." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV* (1914-1916). Translated by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and Institute for Psychoanalysis, 1981. 67-104.

Freud, Sigmund. "The Uncanny." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVII* (1917-1919). Translated by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and Institute for Psychoanalysis, 1981. 217-265.

Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund*

Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-1922). Translated by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and Institute for Psychoanalysis, 1981. 3-144.

Freud, Sigmund. "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XX* (1925-1926). Translated by James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press and Institute for Psychoanalysis, 1981. 77-178.

Gaskell, Elizabeth. "The Poor Clare." *Household Words* 352 (December 20, 1856): 532-44.

Gernsheim, Helmut. *Lewis Carroll, Photographer*. Dover: Dover Publications, 1969.

Gerry, Martin. and MacFarlane Alan. *The Glass Bathyscaphe: How Glass Changed the World*. London: Profile Books, 2002.

Gilbert, Sandra M. and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000.

Gilbert, William. "The Glass Brain." *The Magic Mirror: A Round of Tales for Young & Old*. London and New York: Alexander Strahan, 1866. 1-48.

Gilbert, William. "The King's Ball." *The Magic Mirror: A Round of Tales for Young & Old*. London and New York: Alexander Strahan, 1866. 233-271.

Girardot, N. J. "Initiation and Meaning in the Tale of Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." *The Journal of American Folklore* 90.357 (1977): 274-300.

Gitter, Elisabeth. "The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination." *PMLA* 99.5 (1984): 936-954.

Goldberg, Benjamin. *The Mirror and Man*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1985.

Goodfield, June. *The Growth of Scientific Physiology*. London: Hutchinson, 1960.

Goodfield-Toulmin, June. "Biology and Blasphemy." *Rockefeller University Review* (1966): 9-18.

Goodfield-Toulmin, June. "Some Aspects of English Physiology: 1780-1840." *Journal of the History of Biology* 2.2 (1969): 283-320.

Greenhalgh, Paul. *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibition and World's Fairs, 1851-1939*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.

Gregory, Richard. *Mirrors in Mind*. London: Penguin Books, 1998.

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. "Sneewittchen (Schneeweißchen)." *Kinder- und Haus-Märchen, Band 1, Große Ausgabe*. Berlin: Realschulbuchhandlung. 1812. 238-250.

Hardy, Thomas. *Jude the Obscure*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1978.

Hartley, David. *Observations on Man, His Frame, His Duty and His Expectations, vol. 2*. London: Reprinted for J. Johnson, St. Paul's Church-yard. 1791.

Heidegger, Martin. "The Age of the World Picture." *Off the Beaten Track*. Edited by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 57-85.

Herdman, John. *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*. London: The Macmilliam Press, 1990.

Hobhouse, Christopher. *1851 and the Crystal Palace*. London: John Murray, 1950.

Hunter, John. *The Works of John Hunter, vol. 1*. Edited by James F. Palmer. London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Bees, Orme and Brown, Paternoster-row, 1835.

Hunter, John. *The Works of John Hunter, vol. 3*. Edited by James F. Palmer. London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Bees, Orme

and Brown, Paternoster-row, 1835.

Jacobs, Joseph. "Snowwhite." *Europa's Fairy Book*. Edited and translated by Joseph Jacobs. New York and London: The Knickerbocker Press. 1916. 201-211.

Jericho. "Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations." *Eliza Cook's Journal* 2.40 (February 2, 1850): 217-219.

Jerrold, Clare. *The Beaux and the Dandies: Nash, Brummell, and D'Orsay with their Courts*. New York: John Lane Company, 1910.

Jesse. William. *The Life of George Brummell, Esq., commonly called Beau Brummell, Vol. 1*. New York: Scribner and Welford, 1886.

Jesse. William. *The Life of George Brummell, Esq., commonly called Beau Brummell, Vol. 2*. New York, Scribner and Welford, 1886.

Jones, Steven Swann. *The New Comparative Method: Structural and Symbolic Analysis of the Allomotifs of Snow White*. Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1990.

Kaiser, Matthew. *The World in Play: Portraits of a Victorian Concept*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012.

Knight, Charles "A Christmas Pudding." *Household Words* 39 (December 21, 1850): 300-304.

Lacan, Jacques. "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience." *Écrits*. Translated by Bruce Fink. New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2006.

Lacyna, L. S. "Immanence or Transcendence: Theories of Life and Organization in Britain, 1790-1835." *Isis* 74.3 (1983): 310-329.

Lang, Andrew. "Snowdrop." *The Red Fairy Book*. Edited and translated by Andrew Lang. London: Longmans, Green and Co.; New York: 15 East 16th Street, 1890. 329-339.

Laver, James. *Dandies*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968.

Lavin, Michael. "Voyeurism: Psychopathology and Theory." *Sexual Deviance: Theory, Assessment and Treatment, 2nd Edition*. Edited by D. Richard Laws and William T. O'Donohue. New York and London: The Guilford Press. 2008. 305-319.

Lawrence, William. *An Introduction to Comparative Anatomy and Physiology; Being the Two Introductory Lectures Delivered at the Royal College of Surgeon, On the 21st and 25th of March, 1816*. London: Printed for J. Callow, Medical Bookseller, No, 10, Crown Court, Princes Street, Soho, 1816.

Lawrence, William. *Lectures on Physiology, Zoology and the Natural History of Man, Delivered at the Royal College of Surgeons*. London: Printed for James Smith, 165, Strand, 1823.

Lennon, Florence Becker. *Victoria Through the Looking Glass: The Life of Lewis Carroll*. New York: Simon and Shuster, 1945.

Lineai, Caroli. *Species Plantarum, Exhibentes Plantas Rite Cognitas, Ad Genera Relatas, Cum Differentiis Specificis, Nominibus Trivialibus, Synonymis Selectis, Locis Natalibus, Secundum Systema Sexuale, Digestas. Tomus I*. Holmiae: Laurentii Salvii, 1753.

Linton, Eliza. "The Old Lady's Story." *Household Words* 198 (February 18, 1854): 581-585.

Loudon, John Claudius. *The Suburban Gardener and Villa Companion*. London: privately printed, 1838.

Lovejoy, Arthur O. *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea. The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University, 1933*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press, 1936.

MacCannell, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of Leisure Class*.

New York, Schocken Books. 1976.

Martin Gardner. *The Annotated Alice: The Definite Edition*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2000.

Mayhew, Henry. *1851: or, The Adventures of Mr. and Mrs. Sandboys and Family who came up to LONDON to enjoy themselves and to see the GREAT EXHIBITION*. London: George Newbold, 1851.

McEvoy, J. G. and J. E. McGuire. "God and Nature: Priestley's Way of Rational Dissent." *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences* 6 (1975): 325-404.

Melchior-Bonnet, S. *The Mirror: A History*. Translated by Katharine H. Jewett. New York and London: Routledge, 2001.

Mendelsohn, Everett. "Physical Models and Physiological Concepts: Explanation in Nineteenth-Century Biology." *The British Journal for the History of Science* 2.7 (1965): 201-219.

Meredith, George. "Modern Love." *Modern Love and Poems of the English Roadside with Poems and Ballads*. Edited by Rebecca N. Mitchell and Criscillia Benford. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012. 21-72.

Metz, Jonathan. "From Scopophilia to Survivor: A Brief History of Voyeurism." *Textual Practice* 18.3 (2004): 415-434.

Miller, Jonathan. *On Reflection*. London: National Gallery Publications, 1998.

Miller, Karl. *Doubles: Studies in Literary History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985.

Mishnayoth (vol. 6). *Order Nezikin. Pointed Hebrew Text, Introductions, Translation, Notes, Appendix, Supplement, Indexes*. Translated by Philip Blackman, F. C. S. London: Mishna Press (L. M. Sghoenfeld), 1954.

Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonizing Egypt*. London: Cambridge

University Press, 1988.

Mitchell, Timothy. "The World as Exhibition." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31.2 (1989): 217-236.

Moers, Ellen. *The Dandy: Brummell to Beerbohm*. London: Secker and Warburg, 1960.

Monvel, Roger Boutet de. *Beau Brummell and his Times*. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. London, Eveleigh Nash, 1908.

Moody, Jane. *Illegitimate Theatre in London, 1770-1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Morgan, Thomas Charles. *Sketches of the Philosophy of Life*. London: Printed for Henry Colburn, Conduit Street, 1819.

Morley, Henry. "The Catalogue's Account of Itself." *Household Words* 74 (August 23, 1851): 519-23.

Moses, Belle. *Lewis Carroll in Wonderland and at Home: The Story of His Life*. New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1910.

Mudford, Peter G. "William Lawrence and The Natural History of Man." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 29.3 (1968): 430-436.

Nelson, Brian. "Dandies, Dandyism and the Uses of Style." *Moderne begreifen: Zur Paradoxie eines sozio-ästhetischen Deutungsmusters*. Edited by Christine Magerski, Robert Savage and Christiane Weller. Wiesbaden: Deutscher Universitäts-Verlag, 2007. 135-144.

Nesbit, Edith "A Looking glass Story." *Our Corner* (March 1887): 156-167.

Nicholson, Ralph Wornum. "The Exhibition as the Lesson in Taste." *The Art Journal* (1851): I###-XX###.

Official Descriptive and Illustrated Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, 1851. London: Spicer Brothers, 1851.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Translated by various authors. London: J. F. Dove, 1826.

Ovid. *Metamorphoses*. Edited by Hugo Magnus. Gotha: Friedr. Andr. Perthes, 1892.

Pendergast, Mark. *Mirror Mirror: A History of the Human Love Affair with Reflection*. New York: Basic Books, 2003.

Pigtail, Polonious. "On the Classification of Dandies, Lecture II." *Kaleidoscope* 71 (November 6, 1821): 142.

Planché, James Robinson. *Recollections and Reflections: A Professional Autobiography, 2 vols*. London: Sampson Low, 1872.

Priestly, Joseph. *Disquisitions Relating to Matter and Spirit. To which is added the History of the Philosophical Doctrine Concerning the Origin of the Soul, and the Nature of Matter; with its Influence on Christianity, Especially with Respect to the Doctrine of the Pre-existence of Christ, vol. 1, Second Edition, Improved and Enlarged*. Birmingham: Printed by Pearson and Rollason, for J. Johnson, no. 72, Church-yard, London, 1782.

Purbrick, Louise (ed.). *The Great Exhibition of 1851. New Interdisciplinary Essays*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001.

Quarterly Review. "Art. I" *The Quarterly Review* 22 (1819): 1-34.

Rank, Otto. *Double: A Psychoanalytical Study*. Translated by Harry Tucker Jr. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971.

Rasmussen, S. C. *How Glass Changed the World: The History and Chemistry of Glass from Antiquity to the 13th Century*. Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer, 2012.

Reichertz, Ronald. *The Making of Alice Books: Lewis Carroll Uses of Earlier Children's Literature*. Montreal & Kingston, London, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000.

Rennell, Thomas. *Remarks on Scepticism, Especially as It is Connected with the Subject of the Organization of Life. Being an Answer to the Views of M. Bichat, Sir T. C. Morgan, and Mr. Lawrence, upon those Points*. London: Printed for F. C. and J. Rivington, no. 62, Paul's Church-yard and no. 3, Waterloo-place, Pall-mall, 1819.

Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper. "Opening of the Great Exhibition." *Reynolds's Weekly Newspaper* (May 4, 1851): 4.

Richards, Thomas. *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914*. London and New York: Verso, 1990.

Ross, Marlon. "Scandalous Reading: the Political Uses of Scandal in and around Regency Britain." *Wordsworth Circle* 27.2 (1996): 103-112.

Rossetti, Christina. "A Royal Princes." *The Complete Poems of Christina Rossetti*. Edited by d. R. W. Crump. Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1979. 149-150.

Rubin C. M. and Gabriela Rubin. *The Real Alice in Wonderland: A Role Model for the Ages*. Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2010.

Rubin, C. M., "A Stunning Sculpture on Guildford Castle Grounds." https://cmrubinworld.com. February 04, 2011. https://cmrubinworld.tumblr.com/post/3111036623/the-real-alice-in-wonderland-inspires. March 15, 2020.

Ruskin, John. *Modern Painters: Their Superiority in the Art of Landscape Painting to all the Ancient Masters, Proved by Examples of the True, the Beautiful, and the Intellectual, from the Works of Modern Artists, especially From those Of J. M. W. Turner, Esq., R.A*. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1843.

Sala, George. *Quite Alone, vol. 2*. London: Chapman and Hall, 1864.

Santore, Cathy. "The Tools of Venus." *Renaissance Studies* 11.3 (1997): 179-207.

Schmid, Susanne. "Byron and Wilde: The Dandy and the Public Sphere." *The Importance of Reinventing Oscar: Versions of Wilde During the Last 100 Years*. Edited by Uwe Böker, Richard Corballis and Julie A. Hibbard. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi. 2002. 81-90.

Schwarz, Heinrich. "The Mirror in Art." *The Art Quarterly* 15 (1952): 97-118.

Sennequier, Geneviève. *Miroirs: Jeux et reflets depuis l'antiquité*. Paris: Somogy éd. d`art, 2000.

Sennett, Richard. "Plate Glass." *Raritan* 6.4 (1987): 1-15.

Sharpe's London Journal. "A Journey around the World in the Crystal Palace." *Sharpe's London journal of entertainment and instruction for general reading* 14 (1851): 250-256.

Sima. Godfrey. "The Dandy as Ironic Figure." *Sub-stance* 36 (1982): 21-33.

Smith, Spencer. "Voyeurism: A Review of Literature." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 5.6 (1976): 585-608.

Stocking Jr, George W. *Victorian Anthropology*. London and New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987.

Sutton, Martin. *The Sin-Complex: A Critical Study of English Versions of the Grimms' Kinder-und Hausmärchen in the Nineteenth Century*. Kassel: Schriften der Brüder Grimm-Gesellschaft, 1996.

Tait, Hugh. (ed.) *Five Thousand Years of Glass*. London: British Museum Press, 1991.

Tallis, Raymond. *Not Saussure: A Critique of Post-Saussurean Literary Theory*. London: Macmillan Press, 1988.

Tallis's History and Description of the Crystal Palace and the Exhibition of the World's Industry in 1851, vol. 1. London and New York: The London Printing and Publishing

Company, 1852.

Tallis's History and Description of the Crystal Palace and the Exhibition of the World's Industry in 1851, vol. 3. London and New York: The London Printing and Publishing Company, 1852.

Taylor, Edgar. „Snow-drop." *German Popular Tales*. Edited and translated by Edgar Taylor. Chatto and Windus, Piccadilly, 1856. 87-94.

Taylor, Roger and Edward Wakeling. *Lewis Carroll, Photographer*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002.

Temkin, Owsei. "Basic Science, Medicine, and the Romantic Era." *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 37.2 (1963): 97-129.

Tennyson, Alfred. "The Lady of Shalott." *The Complete Poetical Works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Poet Laureate*. New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1884. 19-21.

Teodorski, Marko. "Reflection as Commodity: A Short Ethno(historio)graphy of Victorian Mirrors." *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography SASA* 64.1 (2016): 121-132.

Teodorski, Marko. "Kultura Stakla: transcendentalni subjekat na raskršću teksta i materijalne kulture." *Književna istorija* 160 (2017): 221-245.

The Crystal Palace and its Contents: An Illustrated Cyclopedia of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Warwick Lane: W. M. Clark, 1852.

The Journal of Industrial Design and Manufacture. "Preface to volume I." *The Journal of Industrial Design and Manufacture* 1 (1849): vii-viii

The Journal of Industrial Design and Manufacture. "Metals – Guns and Pistols – Flower Stand." *The Journal of Industrial Design and Manufacture* 1 (1849): 33-39.

The Journal of Industrial Design and Manufacture.

"Miscellaneous: Salt-Celar, &c." *The Journal of Industrial Design and Manufacture* 2 (1850): 131-35.

The Journal of Industrial Design and Manufacture. "Review of patterns: miscellaneous." *The Journal of Industrial Design and Manufacture* 2 (1850): 199-206.

The Port Folio. "A Village Beau. "Signs of the Times." *The Port Folio* 18 (1824): 356-7.

Theophrastus. *Enquiry into Plants, and Manor Works on Odours and Weather Signs. Translated by Arthur Hort, vol. 2*. London: William Heinemann; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916.

Times. "The Crystal Palace." *Times* 20699 (January 15, 1851): 5.

Toulmin, Steven and June Goodfield. *The Architecture of Matter*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962.

Trollope, Anthony. *The Struggles of Brown, Jones and Robinson*. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1870.

Trollope, Frances. "The Tale of Aunt Margaret's Trouble." *All the Year Round* 379 (July 28, 1866): 25-30.

Tymms, Ralph. *Doubles in Literary Psychology*. Cambridge: Bowes & Bowes, 1949.

Wakeling, Edward. *The Photographs of Lewis Carroll: A Catalogue Raisonné*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015.

Wells, Kentwood D. "Sir William Lawrence (1783–1867): A Study of Pre-Darwinian Ideas on Heredity and Variation." *Journal of the History of Biology* 4 (1971): 319-361.

Werness, Hope B. *The Symbolism of Mirrors in Art from Ancient Times to the Present*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999.

Wilde, Oscar. *The Picture of Dorian Grey*. Edited by Joseph Bristow. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Willis, Chis. "From Voyeurism to Feminism: Victorian and

Edwardian London's Streetfighting Slum Viragoes." *Victorian Review* 2.1 (2003): 70-86.

Wills, David. *Prosthesis*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.

Young, Paul. *Globalization and the Great Exhibition: The Victorian New World Order*. New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Zipes, Jack. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

Zipes, Jack. *Why Fairy Tales Stick. The Evolution and Relevance of the Genre*. New York and London: Routledge, 2006.

Zipes, Jack. *Grimm Legacies: The Magic Spell of the Grimms' Folk and Fairy Tales*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014.

INDEX OF NAMES

INDEX OF TERMS