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## JE(U): CARROLL, CADIOT AND THE PLAYFUL BECOMINGS OF A DELEUZIAN SUBJECT

Caitlyn Doyle  
*Western University*

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JE(U): CARROLL, CADIOT AND THE PLAYFUL BECOMINGS OF A DELEUZIAN  
SUBJECT

(Spine Title: Je(u): Deleuze, Carroll and Cadot)

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Caitlyn Doyle

Graduate Program in Comparative Literature

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

**CERTIFICATE OF EXAMINATION**

Supervisor

Examiners

\_\_\_\_\_  
Călin-Andrei Mihăilescu

\_\_\_\_\_  
Carole Farber

Supervisory Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Anthony Purdy

\_\_\_\_\_  
Marilyn Randall

The thesis by

**Caitlyn Doyle**

entitled:

**Je(u): Carroll, Cadiot and the Playful Becomings of a Deleuzian  
Subject**

is accepted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lucca Pocci  
Chair of the Thesis Examination Board

## Abstract

This project employs a theoretical framework drawn from Gilles Deleuze's *Logique du sens* in order to examine the potential for literature to make permeable the thresholds of the subject. Using Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*, and French author Olivier Cadiot's irreverent rewriting of Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, called, *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé*, I argue that it is through play, and in particular Deleuzian ideal play, that fixed identities are transformed, without resulting in either a return to the traditional limitations of the subject or a complete deterioration into a state incapable of producing meaning.

**Key Words:** *Alice's Adventure's in Wonderland*, *Alice Through the Looking-Glass*, Lewis Carroll, *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé*, Olivier Cadiot, Gilles Deleuze, Logic of Sense, Contemporary French Literature, Play, Subject and Language

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## List of Abbreviations

Gilles Deleuze, <i>Logique du sens</i> .....	LS
Gilles Deleuze, <i>Critique et clinique</i> .....	CC
Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, <i>Mille plateaux</i> .....	MP
Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, <i>Qu'est-ce que la philosophie?</i> .....	QP



## Introduction: Je(u)

*“il n’y a plus que des victoires pour ceux qui ont su jouer”  
(LS 76)*

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Propelling the I (*Je*) of a unified subject across its own thresholds, beyond the protective enclosure of a fixed identity and into the play (*jeu*) of pure becoming, the literature examined in the following pages disrupts and undermines the integrity of the subject of common sense by initiating experimentations with foreign roles, distant worlds, and creative languages. I argue that it is this *play* that allows a challenge to the subject to be posed in a manner that does not result in its complete deterioration.

Literature plays in a realm apart from reality and common sense, a realm of its own creation in which identities, worlds, and language can be experimentally disrupted and reconfigured. This would be a limited and unproductive play if this realm were entirely isolated from reality, but because literature is “always engaging the actual world in its becoming” (Bogue DL 190) its play poses a real threat to the restrictive structures of common sense. The extent and permanence of the transformations affected is dependent on the kind of play that is initiated.

The common understanding of play, as limited in space and duration and safely excluded from reality, will be contrasted with the more intensely disruptive play of the Deleuzian *ideal game*. Through an exploration of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, which test the limits of the first form of play, and French author Olivier Cadiot’s irreverent rewriting of Carroll’s *Alice in*

*Wonderland*, called *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé*, which experiments with the latter form of play, I will examine the disruption of the subject that is created by each. One challenges common sense, but allows for its reinstatement, while the other fundamentally disrupts and reconfigures it.

Deleuze's *Logique du sens* not only provides a basis for this second theorization of play, but its extensive examination of Carroll's work informs my approach to the *Alice* texts. I do not attempt to *add* one other interpretation to the many explanations of Carroll's work, because, as Hélène Cixous writes of her own engagement with Carroll: "the territory is so well studied, its stratifications uncovered in every direction, that it seems bold or even impossible 'to add' anything. That's why we're going to play at this reading..." (Cixous 231). I too will *play* at reading Carroll, drawing out the potential of his own play and the play that Deleuze's reading discovers in his work.

Cadiot's work is an important addition to this study because not only does "l'oeuvre de Cadiot...occupe une place singulière et forte dans le champ de la littérature contemporaine de langue française" (Game 407) without having been studied adequately in English but, furthermore, his work explores an interesting combination of Carrollian and Deleuzian play. Through this double engagement with Carroll and Deleuze, Cadiot develops a playful writing that refuses to confine itself to any rules, even those of its own invention. This comparison is not intended to privilege one writer over the other, but to elucidate the distinctive possibilities of play, and to trace the development of a certain kind of play, and its ramifications for the subject, through Carroll, Deleuze and Cadiot.

Before proceeding with this comparison it is necessary to briefly lay out, first, the characteristics of the subject of common sense that will be used throughout this study and, second, the two theories of play that will form the basis for my analysis.

### **The Subject of Common Sense:**

Common sense both presupposes and contributes to the organization of a unified subject. “Expressed in the formulation ‘Everybody knows’, [common sense] assumes the existence of a universal *cogito*: a knowing subject whose rational thought displays a natural affinity for truth” (Poxon 65). But this *knowing subject* is not natural, it is produced by common sense and participates in the perpetuation of the shared logic from which it is derived. Common sense subsumes “des facultés diverses de l’âme, ou des organes différenciés du corps, et les rapporte à une unité capable de dire Moi,” (LS 96) creating a uniform subject out of diversity. As Deleuze writes, “on le dit commun, parce que c’est un organe, une fonction, une faculté d’identification, qui rapporte une diversité quelconque à la forme du Même” (95-96). It is this coordination and restriction of the many divergent functions of thought and the body, and not a natural unity, that makes it seem that “c’est un seul et même moi qui perçoit, imagine, se souvient, sait, etc.; et qui respire, qui dort, qui marche, qui mange...” (96). The subject, therefore, is a result of drawing static unities out of multiplicity, and this *moi* that narrativizes differences as parts of a whole “functions as the foundation of our faculties, as the principle that unites them in...harmonious accord” (Smith 30).

It is not only the subject, but also the world and its objects that are organized and bound by the fixed identities of common sense, which takes “la diversité donnée et la rapporte à l’unité d’une forme particulière d’objet ou d’une forme individualisée de monde” (LS 96). A stable subject requires that its world and the objects that fill it remain consistent and it is common sense that ensures that, “c’est dans le même monde que...je veille ou dors” (96).

This process of identification and recognition, however, requires that “la qualité soit à la fois arrêtée et mesurée, attribuée et identifiée” (96). Without such stops to measure and identify the same, common sense is impossible. If these stops were released and the differences that they held in place set into motion once more, the subject and its world would be lost in a play of creative possibilities. It is exactly in escaping the unity of common sense and its tendency toward “foreclosing the possibility of difference and the production of the new” (Bryant 17) that play offers the opportunity for a new formulation of the subject. Rather than working within the logic of common sense, play introduces “change, flux, metamorphosis, [and] becoming, [which] are the paths of creation” (Bogue DW 23). Carroll and Cadiot’s experiments with the possibilities of play create new “ways of living, of surviving, resisting, and freeing life” (Marks 125).

This conceptualization of the subject does not reflect an exhaustive description of its genesis or its characteristics, but it is an apt model for a comparison between the transformations of the subject created by the different kinds of *play* invented in the literature of Lewis Carroll and Olivier Cadiot.

### **Carrollian Play:**

Carroll's texts are thoroughly infused with play. Games "provide actual events in the plot" (Parsons 39) such as the caucus race and croquet game of *Alice in Wonderland*, the chess game of *Through the Looking-Glass* and the many games of 'make-believe' that are invented by Alice. Play is "also structural to a degree," shaping the fantastic worlds that Carroll creates and the narratives themselves. In *Alice in Wonderland* "many of the characters are cards" and, in *Through the Looking-Glass*, Carroll "even includes a play-by-play diagram of the chess game structure" (39). Finally, Carroll's nonsense language games inundate his texts with a proliferation of word plays that make each word a site of upheaval and transformation.

Often criticized for "never advancing beyond playing, and playing with everything," (Blake 15) Carroll's work is often mistaken for a trivial escapist's game. The insinuations of such criticisms, that play is of limited importance and that not everything should be played with, belong to the logic of common sense that seeks to preserve itself from disruptive influences. This "idea of play as a directionless activity is pervasive, lying at the heart of the establishment of play's inverse—the activities of work" (Stewart 119). The belief that because in play "nothing has been harvested or manufactured, no masterpiece has been created, no capital has accrued...[it] is an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often money..." (Caillois 5-6) frequently results in its rejection as unproductive and limited in scope.

It is because play escapes the ordinances of capital and material production, however, that it is able to challenge the underlying structures that presuppose the

necessity and superiority of the working subject and its productions. Moving “outside the antithesis of wisdom and folly, and equally outside those of truth and falsehood, good and evil,” (Huizinga 6) play traverses the boundaries of the fixed oppositions that structure and arbitrate the actions and passions of unified subjects. Discredited and construed as directionless, play is argued to be unprofitable and in excess of the situation in order to protect these organizations from the transformative impulse that it initiates.

The “attribution of fakeness to games because they are games, is something we have to drop [however] if we want to understand Carroll’s fiction,” (Blake 15) and, moreover, it belongs to a conception of play that has been long problematized by scholars in the field. There is a tradition of scholars, notably: Johan Huizinga, Roger Caillois, and Donald Winnicott, who seek to reclaim play from this limited position, arguing instead for a view of “play as the fount of creativity and origin of all civilization” (Bates ii). To briefly summarize:

For Johan Huizinga, writing in *Homo Ludens* (1938), play embodies the human will to order...For Roger Caillois, writing in *Man, Play and Games* (1958), competitive play productively channels man’s otherwise self destructive rivalries...for Donald Winnicott, writing in *Playing and Reality* (1971), the playing child is father to the civilized man... (Bates ii-iii)

To this list Susan Stewart, in her book *Nonsense: Aspects of intertextuality in Folklore and Literature*, adds theorist Gregory Bateson who “contends that play and its paradoxes are necessary for the survival of organisms, since adaptation occurs by loosening up the rules for communication” (Stewart 31). This tradition retrieves the value of play from the inferior position that common sense relegates it to, but it is also the expression, as Catherine Bates argues in her book *Play in a Godless World*, of “those

who celebrate order as an unquestioned good” (Bates iii). The play lauded by this tradition describes a more dynamic ordering than that of common sense, but its disordering potential is minimized.

Bates argues that a different tradition, belonging to thinkers such as Shakespeare, Nietzsche and Freud takes up a more rebellious and disruptive play that does not contribute to a narrative of progress and order. For the moment, however, what is of importance is that:

through all its diversity there runs a common thread...play creates another world, one which, bounded and complete, stands at one remove from the world of reality...play engenders its own space, its own momentum and time...The play-world might correspond to the real world but it does not coincide. It exists in some relation to the real world, though the nature of that relation can vary widely. (i)

Throughout all of the very different conceptualizations of play run a few common threads. Beyond the alternative space that Bates describes, Johan Huizinga also lists “a voluntary participation...a separation from ordinary life...a limitedness in terms of time and space...the creation of order and a tension or uncertainty about play’s ultimate outcomes...” (Parsons 39).

Normally, therefore, play is understood as voluntary, it does not insinuate itself in the inflexible organizations of the reality that excludes it, or draw unwilling participants into its experimentations. The separation between its inventive transformations and the subjects of *ordinary life* is strictly maintained, preserving the space of common sense from threats to its dominance and stability. Limited in time and space, this play ends so that common sense can be reinstated and it is bordered so as not to intrude on *serious* spaces. Finally, this kind of play focuses on an outcome that results in a winner and a

loser, creating a simple structure of victory and defeat. It takes “the sheer open-endedness of things- the simple experience of not knowing what is going to happen- and resolves it with an outcome: a clear and unambiguous either/or, which, however arbitrary, is characterized by its decisiveness and irreversibility” (Bates ii).

Carroll’s play negotiates between this traditional form of a clearly determined play and an untamed nonsense that does not abide by all of these rules and “[that] *always* ends in a draw” (Parsons 39). Although the form of play that he creates often cannot be resolved into a winner or loser, the unrelenting tension of nonsense is alleviated because the “game is rejected, violated in some way – [by] Alice...at the end of both of Carroll’s books”. In allowing for Alice’s safe return to an undisturbed reality, Carroll’s play ultimately adheres to the safe delimitations of traditional play.

Although Carroll preserves Alice’s reality, within the borders of his fantastic realms play is a threatening and unruly enterprise because “when balls turn into hedgehogs and mallets into flamingos, when caterpillars, Cheshire cats, and mad hatters mix indiscriminately with cards of the standard deck, it is very hard to keep terms straight, let alone figure out the rules regulating their interplay” (Blake 105). Even this strange and disorderly play, however, remains roughly within the definition listed above because “enough terms and rules are in evidence to suggest that if just a few more could be ascertained, they must make up comfortable logical systems” (105).

The play depicted and carried out in Carroll’s texts presents a tension between the standard definitions of play and a new kind of play that strains at these limitations and that Carroll gestures toward, but ultimately refuses to fully engage. In games, like the



Caucus Race, that have no object, no rules, no definite beginning or end and no winners or losers, Carroll creates a new kind of play. As Deleuze writes, “Non seulement Lewis Carroll invente des jeux, ou transforme les règles de jeux connus (tennis, croquet), mais il invoque une sorte de jeu idéal dont il est difficile à première vue de trouver le sens et la fonction” (LS 74). But Carroll refuses to allow the ideal play that he invents to infiltrate and recreate reality because “quite the reverse of wanting a realm unconstrained in the rules of the social game, Carroll wishes that human activity could be better formalized and bound in by game constraints...” (Blake 20). Voluntarily curtailing the potential of the ideal play that he has created, Carroll struggles to return it to the boundaries of a more traditional play. It is, therefore, only in Deleuze’s theorization and later in Cadiot’s experimentation with the concepts developed therein that this ideal game escapes the protective framing techniques used by Carroll, and begins to irrupt into playful movements of transformation that infiltrate common sense and disrupt the structure and identity of the subject that it organizes.

### **Cadiot Plays an Ideal Game:**

In a public reading of his book *Retour définitif et durable de l’être aimé* Cadiot once offered a humorous synopsis of the text as though it conformed to the usual structure of a novel: “le héros, qui s’appelle Robinson, se trouve invité à une soirée, les gens sont bizarres ou ennuyeux, il les fuit en passant de longs moments sur le balcon, mais il fait froid, il a peur de mourir, etc.; à la fin du livre, désireux d’être un saint, il commence un stage de vie érémitique” (Renaud 763). As Jean Renaud comments in his

article “Le monologue extérieur d’Olivier Cadiot,” the author, “[faisant] évidemment la part du jeu,” (763) mockingly plays interpreter to his own text, immediately highlighting the impossibility of restricting its volatile meanderings to a succinct plot summary.

Cadiot must *play* at explanation because the ludic irruptions that permeate the text dictate the manner of its interpretation. Texts such as this “carry instructions for their own reading...Like play, they increasingly rely on metaphorical thought, and, often humorous, they reveal contradictions in the very processes of interpretation by which they are accomplished” (Stewart 39). Prohibiting a serious dredging of its material for deeper interpretive significance, *Retour* infects common sense with its disruptive energy, inventing a more dangerous kind of play than that of Lewis Carroll.

Spontaneous and inventive; this play puts at risk everything that it encounters, preserving nothing that would promise a safe return. It troubles and disrupts the organizations and delimitations that seek to exclude it because it operates outside of spatially and temporally limited parameters. This is the ideal play that Carroll invents, but refuses to pursue. In Cadiot the more disruptive elements of Deleuze’s theorization of this play are engaged. The *Dixième série du jeu idéal* of Deleuze’s *Logique du sens* will, therefore, inform and structure my approach. As Renaud writes: “les écrits de Gilles Deleuze nous accompagneront. Ils paraissent éclairer ces livres d’une lumière très vive. Et, en retour, l’entreprise d’Olivier Cadiot leur donne une singulière illustration” (Renaud 764).

Unlike the *normal* play outlined above, *ideal games* “sont très mouvants, ils semblent n’avoir aucune règle précise et ne comporter ni vainqueur ni vaincu” (LS 74). This is neither the play of strictly ruled social games, nor of ‘make-believe,’ which are

“separated from real life where there is no activity that literally corresponds” to them (Caillois 8). Ruled games fix chance in order to produce winners and losers, while, in the play of ‘make-believe’ nothing is genuinely at risk because it “is accompanied by the knowledge that the required behavior is pretence, or simple mimicry” and that as soon as the game comes to an end any disrupted identities and organizations will be reinstated (8). This ideal play, however, is unbounded and moves toward no final goal.

Ideal play produces continual movement and incessant variations that release differences and begin, not to pretend, but to create. To begin to understand *ideal games*, therefore, “il faut imaginer d’autres principes, même inapplicables en apparence, où le jeu devient pur” (LS 75). Let us now consider more closely some of Deleuze’s imagined principles of this pure play and draw out some of their resonances with Cadiot’s work:

“1) Il n’y a pas de règles préexistantes, chaque coup invente ses règles, il porte sur sa propre règle” (75). Rather than the fixed rules of normal play that mark off the play space as separate from the real world and ensure that each player, and every move, is bound by the same laws, ideal play is unbound. It is not entirely without rules, and so avoids deterioration into lawless entropy, but invents fresh rules at each moment, for each new move that it discovers. Cadiot’s text, in an unmarked play between reflecting, bending and completely breaking with reality, reinvents its own rules with each move. It references, art, cinema, photography, literature, but each time according to a new system that prevents the reader from knowing if it is an accurate, inaccurate or invented reference. His text develops in different directions in accordance with continually changing rules and, because these rules are inconsistent and are never established in

advance, the directions followed are always unexpected and their potential is never subordinated to a predetermined end.

“2) Loin de diviser le hasard en un nombre de coups réellement distincts, l'ensemble des coups affirme tout le hasard, et ne cesse de le ramifier sur chaque coup” (75). Instead of dividing and apportioning chance to particular moments in the game, so as to imitate and then control the instability and open-endedness of the world, the ideal game affirms the presence of chance throughout, opening its players onto more, rather than less uncertainty. “Most gamblers are bad players who want to control chance. They throw the dice only to affirm the outcome that they like,” but players of the ideal game, like “Nietzsche’s good players... avoid the *ressentiment* of finding the world guilty of frustrating their desires, and thereby genuinely affirm the play of the world” (Bogue DW 8). Chance ceases to be something to control or escape and play is no longer a separate space in which to better force chance to yield desired results. Far from resolving chance into coherent solutions and endings, Cadiot carries fictional worlds, impossible worlds, past worlds, and historical worlds into an uninterrupted play that refuses to be temporally or spatially limited, opening his work up to the greater uncertainty of unconstrained chance.

“3) ... au lieu de partager un espace fermé entre des résultats fixes conformément aux hypothèses, ce sont les résultats mobiles qui se répartissent dans l'espace ouvert... *distribution nomade*, et non sédentaire” (LS 75-76). The ideal game produces nomadic distributions that do not conform to hypotheses, but releases the movements, differences, problems and questions of the original chaos that common sense covers over. Cadiot’s text participates in the creation of such a nomadic distribution; it does not abide by

predetermined laws of relations between identities, but precipitates flows and experiments between singularities. Like the ideal game, Cadiot's text engages a "jeu des problèmes et de la question, non plus du catégorique et de l'hypothétique" (76).

"4) Un tel jeu sans règles, sans vainqueurs ni vaincus, sans responsabilité... semble n'avoir aucune réalité. D'ailleurs il n'amuserait personne..." (76). But this game is not meant to be played in the traditional sense. It is not meant to be enjoyed as an escape, a safe place for amusement. "Le jeu idéal dont nous parlons ne peut pas être réalisé par un homme ou par un dieu. Il ne peut être que pensé, et encore pensé comme non-sens..." (76). It is a play of thought, of the work of art, "'a game of vapours,' unrealizable, a temporary illusion" (Stewart 4).

Having issued from a Carrollian invention it is appropriate that the *ideal game* be thought as nonsense, but it is in Cadiot that this nonsense reaches its most *ideal* purity, no longer concluding in the victorious escape of a reaffirmed subject who rejects the game, but in the work of art that is never closed. The temporary illusions and perfect surfaces of Cadiot's *ideal game* escape the structures of common sense, and do not reintroduce them in a return to their fixed identities, but setting them in motion, flee their contours and cross their thresholds.

*Ideal Games*, or anything resembling them, are not included in the extensive classification systems developed by scholars such as Huizinga, Caillois, Bates, and Stewart because "nous ne 'connaissions' pas de tels jeux, qui semblent se contredire eux-mêmes" (LS 74). It is a kind of play that needs to be invented, not played in a separate delimited world, but thought and created by the work of art, "et si l'on essaie de jouer à

ce jeu autrement que dans la pensée, rien n'arrive, et si l'on essaie de produire un autre résultat que l'oeuvre d'art, rien ne se produit" (76). Cadiot's *Retour* creates such an *ideal game*. It sets in motion a pure play that troubles and unsettles the structures of common sense and, although no one subject emerges as the victorious conqueror of the other players, in the loosened bonds of identity and the opportunities for producing new forms of subjectivity, "il n'y a plus que des victoires pour ceux qui ont su jouer" (76).

### **Roles, Worlds and Words:**

The first chapter of my thesis, 'Playing more than Oneself,' shows how Carroll and Cadiot challenge the idea of a unified subject, by examining the transformative potential of play at the level of the characters depicted in the texts. In her games of pretending to be more than one person, Carroll's Alice doubles herself into new roles, occasionally even forgetting the boundaries that separate the make-believe realms that she creates from her own reality. Disrupting her identity, these playful transformations force her to repeatedly ask: *who am I?* In response to this unsettling experience, however, she begins to act the part of an adult and struggles to limit her play to roles dictated by habit.

The play engaged in by the narrator of Cadiot's *Retour* is of a different kind, altogether. He does not experience a temporary escape by dressing himself up in the identities of other real or fictional people, but enters into becomings that transform him, permanently fragmenting the unity of his *I*. Entering into experiments not only with other humans but with the objects, landscapes and effects of his surroundings, the narrator,

Robinson, becomes a Deleuzian actor, playing roles that are not confined to particular characters, but that explore pre-individual singularities—elements and flows that pre-exist the structures of common sense and do not conform to the boundaries of its identities. Breaking with the contours of an identity made stifling by habit, he unfolds into creative experimentations.

The second chapter, 'Putting Worlds into Play,' focuses on the movement between worlds, or what Deleuze refers to as series, that disrupts the idea of a constituting subject who belongs to a consistent world. Carroll is famous for his invention of the fantastic worlds of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass realm, which his young character, Alice, physically crosses into and whose strange characteristics and rules repeatedly challenge her identity, but it is Carroll's rediscovery of the surface of pure becoming that Deleuze argues is his most daring and disruptive contribution. This surface, which I will describe in this chapter, is profoundly different from that of the fantastic realms that Alice passes into; here, Alice gradually discovers the flows of becoming and difference that will more profoundly trouble her identity. The loss of identity threatened by this transformative surface is however mitigated by the promise of a return that Carroll extends in both texts. Alice physically returns from her adventures, the stable identities of common sense are reinstated, and the dangerous double movements and slippages of the surface are forgotten.

Once again Cadiot's text reflects a less bounded and controlled play of worlds. Beginning from the Carrollian surface of becoming, his text does not cross back and forth over boundaries between worlds, preserving the integrity of their delimitations, but dissolves the fictional, real, created and referenced worlds that he evokes onto the surface

of his text. Creating interplays between the singularities that are unleashed from these worlds through the destruction of their frontiers, Cadot's text breaks up the identities of common sense and allows them to intermingle in an open undefined space. This is not to say that all of these worlds are dissolved and transformed into one indecipherable mass, but that the unique textures, possibilities and contours of each are released into interactions with those of the other worlds that are encountered, transforming the subject in their wake.

Finally the third chapter, 'Word Play,' examines the ways in which a language that plays fragments the order that gives meaning to a grammatical subject. Carroll's word play, renowned for its general appeal to both adults and children, discovers and revels in the inconsistencies of common sense. His playful miscommunications, the confused shifting between levels of meaning, and his puns and portmanteau words upset the categorizations that insulate and secure the subject.

Cadot's word play is at the level of language as a whole. He does not explore the irregularities of common sense in a single word, or phrase, but makes language itself succumb to its own creative movements. He draws language into contact with an anomalous outside, he inundates it with ambiguous, unmarked shifts between levels of meaning and he enters it into an ambivalent becoming with music. Ultimately, Cadot's experiments with a creative, unbounded language carry the subject into disruptive transformations.

Examining a different facet of play in each chapter, this thesis seeks to illustrate its unique potential to disrupt the subject of common sense, without propelling it into



empty destruction. The comparison of the different forms of play created in Carroll and Cadiot and theorized in Deleuze will enable me to explore the possibilities of a play that moves beyond the exuberant ingenuity of a child who plays, and into the enduringly transformative efforts of the artist or writer.

## Ch. 1 Playing more than Oneself

*"Il est relativement facile de ne plus dire 'je', on n'a pas dépassé pour ça le régime de subjectivation; et inversement, on peut continuer à dire Je, pour faire plaisir et être déjà dans un autre régime où les pronoms personnels ne fonctionnent plus que comme fictions." (MP 172)*

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The subject is not represented in the works of either Carroll or Cadot as self-present, consistent, or unified; instead, it is explored as a site for transformation, the crossing of thresholds, and the mapping of new borders. The potential of such a figure lies not in the violence of a simple abolition of the *I*, but in the transformative potential of seriously playing on and across its limits, of continuing to say *I* just *pour faire plaisir* (172). Both writers create a kind of play that exuberantly anticipates and pursues the unexpected, but while Carroll strains the safe enclosures and limited durations that characterize traditional forms of play, he ultimately resolves these tensions in the maturation and return to fixed identities undergone by Alice. Cadot, by contrast, almost entirely dispenses with the traditional limitations of play, slipping into pure and irreversible becomings.

Alice's role-plays disrupt her identity, but she always returns to the dominant reality and the static enclosure of her *I*. Robinson, on the other hand, having dismantled the boundaries that restricted his *I*, seamlessly enters into becomings with objects, landscapes, and animals. As Alice grows up, her experiments shift from games of pretend to a concerted effort to act the part of an adult. This conservative role-play not only protects her own identity, it restricts even the childish pretend of traditional forms of play. Robinson, by contrast, gradually perfects his ability to enter into becomings as he

develops into a Deleuzian actor, capable of playing many roles, in many directions, simultaneously. Finally, while Carroll's texts upset the habits that Alice relies on to secure her identity, Robinson, in a continual process of forgetting habits, invents new patterns for his play.

### **Role-play vs. Becoming:**

Play enables the subject to engage in a spontaneous escape from the identity that restricts it to the unchanging role of its own *I*. The difference between Alice's play, which ultimately confines itself to a limited time and space, and Robinson's, which plays on indefinitely and without limitation, is that the former produces role-plays or games of pretence that are bounded and impermanent, while the latter produces becomings that carry the subject outside of its boundaries and into transformative relations with foreign elements. Alice's games of pretend are primarily limited to human roles that carry her beyond the limits of a single self-identical *I*, but always end in a return to her own identity, whereas Robinson's becomings link up with anything that he encounters, profoundly contaminating his *I*.

**Games of Pretend:** Exceptionally adept at pretense, Alice frequently adopts multiple roles in games of make-believe that she plays with her sister or, more often, against herself. The doublings enacted when she plays several roles, talks to herself, competes in games against herself, and even sternly disciplines herself disrupt the unity of her *I* by initiating a threatening proliferation within its boundaries. Common sense binds the

subject to a single self-identical *I*, but within the realm of pretence, space is opened up for the creation of new roles, and Alice incessantly generates such spaces through the use of “her favourite phrase: ‘Let’s pretend’” (Carroll 122). Conscious of never pushing her transformations too far, however, Alice preserves a *genuine* self to return to when her games come to an end.

Most often limiting herself to human roles, rather than experimental or fantastic ones, Alice is “very fond of pretending to be two people” (9). She very rarely engages in forms of pretend that draw her entirely outside of the identities of common sense, but her role-plays are, nonetheless, always in excess of what her less daring sister considers permissible, even for this realm of pretend where the restrictions of common sense are more lenient. For example, Alice once proposed: “‘Let’s pretend we’re kings and queens;’ and her sister, who 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 then, and *I’ll* be all the rest’” (122). The inability of Alice’s older sister to even imaginatively transgress the limitations established by common sense, which restrict the subject to a single *I*, expresses both the rigidity of her organization and her unwillingness to genuinely play with her identity. Unlike Alice, she desires to play a single part, that of an authoritative Queen, for example, that will further prepare her for maturing within the limits of common sense. Alice, on the other hand, willingly multiplies herself into as many roles as she deems suitable to the game at hand. Disrupting the one to one ratio of self to *I*, she flippantly rejects the limitations of common sense, mapping a new landscape of multiplying identities through her role-plays.

The restricted form of play engaged in by her older sister will begin to appeal to Alice as her adventures draw her toward the threshold of adulthood. At this point, however, she is not only willing to divide herself into multiple roles, but challenges the traditional understanding of play in which “every child knows perfectly well that he is ‘only pretending’” (Huizinga 8). Alice often becomes so immersed in her game that she momentarily forgets that it is *only pretend*. Frequently scolding herself in one role for misbehavior in another, Alice once attempted to “box her own ears for having cheated herself in a game of croquet she was playing against herself” (Carroll 9).

By temporarily believing that her play actually transforms her into more than one person, Alice poses a genuine challenge to the organizations that deny the possibility of being multiple. What limits the potential of her particular rebellion against common sense is that she most frequently chooses to adopt a more authoritarian double for herself, who limits the actions and desires of the impulsive child. By the final chapters of *Through the Looking-Glass*, the girl that freely sprawls on the grass after a long adventure is suppressed by the Queen that Alice has become: “‘I never expected I should be a Queen so soon—and I’ll tell you what it is your Majesty,’ she went on in a severe tone (she was always rather fond of scolding herself), ‘it’ll never do for you to be lolling about on the grass like that!’” (219). This tendency to play the adult against herself arises from the same impulse to order that her preference for “games with rules,” (Blake 108) issues from. Although Alice eagerly enters into games of pretend that threaten the conformity of her identity, she prefers to play in a way that offers more, and not less structure to her world. There is a tension, therefore, between Alice’s impetuous experiments and her underlying desire for stability and rules.

Cautiously avoiding any games when her identity is too fragile to sustain them without being permanently put at risk, Alice thinks, after almost shrinking right out of existence: ““But it’s no use now...to pretend to be two people! Why, there’s hardly enough of me left to make *one* respectable person!”” (Carroll 9). She is willing to double herself, becoming *two* respectable people, but she will not chance irreparably fragmenting herself. If there is not *enough* of her, she will not risk herself in pieces that may not be capable of reforming as a whole *respectable* subject.

In the fantastic worlds that she visits, where “one game is imposed over another,” (Stewart 183) however, Alice is forced into roles that she neither initiates nor orchestrates, and this play of more than one self is more profoundly transformative than her voluntary games of pretend. In the croquet game that takes place in *Wonderland*, which “is being played by a pack of cards,” and in which “the inanimate elements of the game are animals... [and] the animate elements, the players, are inanimate objects made animate” (183) Alice is forced to take up a role that draws her into a shared identity with the pack of cards. Her secure sense of self is disrupted by her forced participation in this objectless game of confused identities that has no rules.

Furthermore, she suffers repeated challenges to her identity through the mistakes and contestations of the strange creatures that she encounters. The White Rabbit, mistaking her for Mary Ann, orders her to “run home this moment, and fetch [him] a pair of gloves and a fan!” and Alice, obeys “without trying to explain the mistake it had made” (Carroll 26). Unaccustomed to receiving orders as part of her own identity, Alice is temporarily forced outside of herself and into the frustrating role of a mistreated servant. Similarly, the Tweedles reduce her to tears when they insist that she is “only a

sort of thing in his [the Red King's] dream!" (162). Alice, finding herself no longer in control of her games of make-believe, but a figment of someone else's dreaming play, breaks down in tears. Finally, "Humpty Dumpty ne reconnaîtra pas Alice, car chaque singularité d'Alice lui semble prise dans l'ensemble ordinaire d'un organe" (LS 98). "You're so exactly like other people," he says, stripping her of her unique identity and making it interchangeable with anyone else's, with "two eyes...nose in the middle, mouth under..." (Carroll 191). Unrecognized, unreal, and someone other than herself, Alice is left unsure of her own identity. "The many different sizes Alice becomes, the roles she plays, the many cases of mistaken identity she experiences...all fracture her assumed unity of being" (Parsons 26).

Her voluntary games of pretend, however, do not only disrupt the frontiers that confine her, they also allow her to retrieve her identity from disruptive encounters:

In her favorite game, of being two persons, she enters into a rational discourse with herself in which she tries to convince herself that in her transformed body she can logically no longer be 'I' but must be an other. Through this paradoxical construction... Alice nonetheless secures her 'I' ...if Alice were right, the threatening changes in her new cultural environment would no longer affect her, but the 'other.' At the same time, however, Alice also manages to maintain herself linguistically, since the act of saying 'I am Not-I' presupposes within the logic of language an 'I' that sustains its linguistic boundaries. (Schwab 162)

Carroll creates a paradoxical play, therefore, that swings between disruptive role plays — after all, "il faut être deux pour être fou," (LS 97) — and a restorative, protected play that enables Alice to always return to herself. Ultimately, his play maintains "the boundaries between self and other or a word and its meanings—including those boundaries which his characters challenge for their own strategic purposes" (Schwab 169). He at once threatens

the limitations of traditional play, toying with the beginnings of an unbounded Deleuzian ideal play, and upholds them because whatever the truths of the disruptive games that Alice encounters in these fantastic realms, her “final, overt rejection of Wonderland, her flight from the frightful anarchy of the world underneath the grounds of common consciousness, is a symbolic rejection of mad sanity in favor of the sane madness of ordinary existence” (Rackin 65). Alice chooses to exist within the boundaries of the single *I* dictated by common sense so as to escape the transformative play that leaves no foundation upon which to build a stable sense of self.

**Pure Becoming:** In her games of pretend, Alice enters into a realm of make-believe where she can safely play new roles without risking the absolute dissolution of her *I*. Deleuze’s concept of becoming, on the other hand, describes transformations of the subject and its thresholds that are neither restricted nor temporary. Cadiot’s character, Robinson, engages in pure becomings, entering zones of indeterminacy with people, animals, landscapes and objects. Fundamentally upsetting the categories of common sense, this “devenir pur et démesuré des qualités menace du dedans l’ordre des corps qualifiés” (LS 192). Creating a continually shifting play of new linkages, these becomings draw the subject outside of the identity delimited by common sense and into experimentations with its own unexplored potential:

Deleuze is concerned with unfettering possibility to experiment with what a life can do and where a life might go. In other words, Deleuze affirms the possibilities of becoming something else, beyond the avenues, relations, values and meanings that seem to be laid out for us by our biological make-up, our evolutionary



heritages, our historical/political/familial allegiances, and the social and cultural structures of civilized living. (Sotirin 99)

Robinson's experiments release him from the bounds of "un moi, pour se vivre comme un flux, un ensemble de flux, en relation avec d'autres flux, hors de soi et en soi" entering into the *unfettered* possibilities of becoming (CC 68). The tumbling fragments: "Je suis le chat./Je longe le mur, je suis couleur mur, ton sur ton, je glisse, je ressemble, histoires sans paroles./ Je suis un mur./ Couleur statue : je suis une statue, Diane abandonnée dans un parc..." describe a series of transformative becomings that release the subject from the organizations of *civilized living* (Cadiot 235). The fluidity of Robinson's identity enables him to instantaneously perceive and link up with "des singularités nomades qui ne sont plus emprisonnées dans...les bornes sédentaires du sujet fini" (LS 130). His entire self extends into the world that his thoughts and senses caressingly explore, traversing radically foreign identities. When Robinson encounters the cat, unlike Alice, whose strange experience of a smile without a cat leaves her unchanged, he links-up with a singularity that carries him beyond himself into an exchange with it. The colour of the cat then draws him into a connection with the colour of a wall, and a becoming wall ensues. From the wall his imagination flows into a becoming statue, complete with the lush atmosphere, *Diane abandonnée dans un parc*, that this imagined transformation conjures. Robinson's participation in a singularity "qui parcourt aussi bien les hommes, les plantes et les animaux indépendamment des matières de leur individuation et des formes de leur personnalité," (131) overcomes the separations that common sense imposes in order to extract static identities. Between Robinson, a cat, a wall and a statue, a play between affects ("devenirs non-humains de l'homme,") and percepts ("des paysages non-

humains”) (Game 406) takes place. Rather than role-plays, which always refer back to “l’expérience d’un moi ou à l’expression d’un je,” (406) Robinson’s experiments move into the impersonal realm of an ideal play that leaves no identities intact.

In the rapid succession of transformations examined above, “les composantes restent distinctes, mais quelque chose passe de l’une à l’autre, quelque chose d’indécidable entre les deux: il y a un domaine *ab* qui appartient aussi bien à *a* qu’à *b*, où *a* et *b* `deviennent’ indiscernables” (QP 25). Robinson does not substitute the identity of the cat for his own human identity, “ [il] ne pense pas qu’il est réellement devenu un [chat], mais qu’un mixte entre sa condition et celle d’un [chat] est en train de se développer” (Game 416). He meets the cat, statue, wall etc. on a threshold where “what keeps us distinct from this or that can become indiscernible or indistinct or imperceptible” (Sotirin 100). The boundaries that define and separate the narrator from what he observes are overcome in a space *ab* where he mingles freely with animals, colours, and textures.

Between *a* and *b* in the indefinite space of *ab* “la conscience cesse d’être une lumière sur les objets, pour devenir une pure phosphorescence des choses en soi” (LS 362). No longer the constituting light of reason that exposes the nature and meaning of objects, according to the rules of common sense, Robinson’s conscious mind merges and transforms with the objects themselves, illuminating the singularities that extend from them. These becomings do not express a “transformation from one identity to another,” (Sotirin 99) but an unfastening of identity itself.

The disjointed grammar within some of the fragments further contributes to the disruption of common sense, preventing any phrases or identities from coalescing as a whole. In the case of “je suis couleur mur,” for example, the definite articles have been shed in order to facilitate the creation of *indefinite* impressions, which do not belong to a particular subject or object, but occupy a realm between fixed identities.

The play between identities that ensues in becomings is not restricted to a finite duration, as Alice’s games of pretend are, and it does not preserve the identity of the subject so that it can be reinstated. Instead in an “ideal game, the game of becoming...all is metamorphosis” (Canning 91) and the categories of common sense are unreservedly transformed. The constituting subject is deposed and “on peut continuer à dire Je, pour faire plaisir,” (MP 172) but not to identify and empower a single self-identical subject. The *je* that accompanies Robinson’s becomings “n’est que le mince...réceptacle offert aux événements” (Renaud 770). When he says “je suis faible, pas le bon voltage? 110?” (Cadiot 20) the *je* does not belong to a unified subject of common sense, but is rather the unsteady receptacle of his becoming electric. Serving only as a gage of flows and intensities, “le moi n’est qu’un seuil, une porte, un devenir entre deux multiplicités” (MP 305). *Je*, and *moi* become markers of thresholds, “zones ‘in-between’ two multiplicities...where the elements of multiplicities enter into, and pass through and between each other” (Sotirin 100).

The always present, but never encountered, *être aimé* also participates in a *zone ‘in-between’* that permeates Robinson’s experiences, but can never be apprehended as a fixed identity to be retained or possessed: “Je suis l’eau...bras pliés, hop, dépliés, moteur./ Je nage./ C’est moi, je sais parler...je décompose mes gestes dans l’élasticité du réservoir

noir, ...je te présente mon corps, c'est moi...je compose, je me décompose, j'avance" (Cadiot 258-259). Flowing in a series of decomposing gestures that meld with the deep black water, her *je*, like Robinson's, "se constitue et se déconstitue sans cesse, se déterritorialise et reterritorialise, sans que jamais prenne forme une totalité..." (Renaud 770) and she and Robinson can never quite discover the *être* that each is seeking in this playful becoming-imperceptible.

According to traditional definitions "all play is a voluntary activity. Play to order is no longer play: it could at best be but a forcible imitation of it" (Huizinga 7). But the ideal play experimented with in Cadiot's text is neither voluntary, nor ordered or forced, it sweeps the categories of common sense up in its irrepressible ludic impulses creating involuntary as well as voluntary plays between identities: "tout bouge, mon vieux...il faut bouger pareil" (Cadiot 190). Limiting play to being either voluntary or forced is to limit it to the conscious decisions of the subject of common sense. This approach only thinks of "*singularités déterminables que déjà emprisonnées dans un Moi suprême ou un Je supérieur*" (LS 129). The play of singularities precedes and escapes this *je*, carrying Robinson into unpredictable becomings where: "tout bouge, je ne pense rien, ça marche, je suis dans le vent, je penche sans tomber, je penche./ 30m? arbre peint sur ciel mauve, je suis ciel sur ciel..." (Cadiot 228). The overwhelming impetus of the play initiated by singularities that are released from the bounds of common sense, carries everything into playful exchanges and becomings, and in these flows, "il n'y a plus de sujet..." (LS 131).

Destroyed by the flux of Deleuzian becoming, the "old image of the subject as a fixed substance or foundation stone" (Boundas DS 268) no longer applies to Robinson's identity and the fragmented remains of his *je* become a springboard for new becomings.

### **Play Acting:**

Beyond the impulsive role-plays and games of pretend carried out by Alice, and Robinson's spontaneous becomings, a more formal departure from the bounded identities of common sense occurs in the form of acting. Acting, in Carroll's texts, involves a more sustained engagement with a particular role. Alice's attempt to act the part of an adult draws on her previous study and imitation of the adults around her. It is not a fleeting experiment, but an unrelenting enterprise that lasts for the entire duration of her adventure on the other side of the Looking-Glass. Unfortunately, this form of play-acting, unlike her spontaneous role-plays, allows her to depart from her identity as a girl, only to occupy the more rigidly delimited identity of a woman. While Cadiot's Robinson also engages in a form of acting that requires a more persistent commitment than his impetuously creative becomings, he, unlike Alice, strains toward a less and not more well-defined role. Over the course of the text he develops into a Deleuzian actor who plays bifurcating, unstable roles that carry him into pre-individual explorations.

**Acting the Part:** No longer playing roles in make-believe games, in *Through the Looking-Glass* Alice attempts to maintain the appearance and fulfill the obligations of a mother figure. This is the least productive example of play in the Carroll texts and we will see in later chapters how the text itself playfully retaliates against it. Rather than making the thresholds of the subject more permeable, as other forms of play do, this play-acting shields Alice's fragile, youthful identity from the challenges of the strange world

that she finds herself in. Playing the role of an adult enables Alice to seize a more powerful position in this world than the one she occupied in Wonderland.

Instead of depicting a child bored by her more adult sister's book "without pictures or conversations," (Carroll 3) in *Through the Looking-Glass* "Alice alone in the frame story...plays motherly mistress to her own real kitten" (Rackin 71). Drawing pleasure from this assumption of authority, Alice, imitating, no doubt, a phrase and intonation that she has heard many times before, rebukes the black kitten: "Now don't make any more excuses, but listen!" (Carroll 121). Here "au lieu que le chat de Chester soit la bonne voix pour Alice, c'est Alice la bonne voix pour ses chats réels, voix grondeuse, aimante et retirée" (LS 275). The mad logic of the Cheshire cat is replaced by Alice's adult reprimands and she plays the authority figure with relish. Her passage through the mirror does not alter this impulse toward social mastery and "within the Looking-Glass adventures themselves, as the self-possessed, indulgent caretaker of the weak, incompetent, silly and infantile creatures of her still lively imagination, Alice plays the integrated self ready and eager for independent queenhood" (Rackin 71).

Struggling to participate fully in an adult role, the creative element of Alice's play is restricted because the role exists before her and she has only to occupy it. This play-acting belongs to the category of Deleuze's ordering *lignes de coupure* "qui, loin d'épouser les penchants naturels de l'âme, son prurit multidirectionnel et son inquiétude joyeuse, la castrent ou plutôt tentent de le faire, l'endorment par la notion d'obligation, la notion de limitation nécessaire de l'individu prénom-nom inscrit dans une époque historique et dans une société donnée" (Miranda 16). Alice wishes to be firmly transcribed in her world and this final imaginative adventure marks her departure from

the joys and dangers of playful invention. Her creative impulses are absorbed and confined by the limitations and obligations of a fixed identity, and in this guise she becomes a more acceptable subject because “un enfant tari fait d’autant mieux l’enfant qu’aucun flux d’enfance n’émane plus de lui” (MP 338). The disruptive, free flowing play of the child is dried up by the “répétition à la première personne” that is the “habitude quotidienne sociale, qui nous désingularise” (Miranda 40). She no longer threatens the identities and order of common sense and is rewarded for this obedience.

The play-acting that Alice engages in “takes the vicissitudes of human existence and transmutes them, carries them back to its own designed and designated space where they can be played out to the full and worked over, time and again” (Bates i) until they are mastered. The pressures and demands of adulthood are drawn into the adventures of the Looking-Glass world so that the child can practice until “with the aplomb of an accomplished actress, Alice... plays beautifully the grownup, culture-bearing, dominant role in which her elevated social position has cast her” (Rackin 79). As an accomplished actress, Alice ceases to experiment and assumes the trappings of power associated with her new role, continually chastising the characters she meets: to the Tweedles she exclaims, “ ‘And all about a rattle!’ ...still hoping to make them a *little* ashamed of fighting for such a trifle,” (Carroll 166) to the Gnat she remarks, “ ‘You shouldn’t make jokes...if it makes you so unhappy’ ” (151), and to the Knight Alice cries, “ ‘You ought to have a wooden horse on wheels, that you ought!’ ...losing all her patience...” (210). Words belonging to the adult world of obligation such as *ashamed*, *shouldn’t*, and *ought*, are used frequently by the little girl who plays the adult, claiming dominance over the creatures she meets.

Alice expresses a firm and even cold authority in regards to the fantastic creatures that she was once so eager to please and understand. In the case of Humpty Dumpty, “Alice’s mature awareness that his fall and disintegration are inevitable and that, unlike Alice’s self after her disastrous fall down the rabbit hole, his can never be reconstructed or developed,” (Rackin 83) demonstrates, both her superior adult understanding, and her distant unconcern for the frustrating creature’s destiny.

In this role Alice’s play becomes unproductive and far from the Deleuzian ideal play in which “the ethical imperative in...experimentation is not that of an increase in power *over* a world, but an increase in powers of affecting *and being affected*, a responsiveness to a selected world and an openness to *interaction*” (Bogue DW 12). Instead of opening herself up to the world, Alice strives to gain power over it and to deny its challenges. The child’s musings in Wonderland: “ ‘Who in the world am I?’” (Carroll 13) and her game of trying on and rejecting the identities of the other little girls that she knows: “I’m sure I’m not Ada...for her hair goes in such long ringlets, and mine doesn’t go in ringlets at all; and I’m sure I can’t be Mabel, for I know all sorts of things, and she, oh! She knows such a very little...” (151), have been exchanged for a determination to defend her identity, “ ‘And now, who am I? I *will* remember, if I can! I am determined to do it...” and even an angry assertion, in the face of the challenges she encounters, “I *am* real!” (163). Having lost her identity once, Alice attempts to rebuild it more securely and rigidly than before.



**Becoming a Deleuzian Actor:** Rather than striving to fulfill a predetermined identity, Robinson relentlessly pursues unfamiliar roles and the many roles within a role. An explorer of new percepts and affects, he closely resembles a Deleuzian actor who releases singularities from fixed identities by playing across their thresholds. The part he learns to play is so fragmented and multiple that “lorsque ce texte a été donné au théâtre, on a partagé, reparti, entre trois acteurs, la pensée de Robinson” (Renaud 763). Instead of assuming the familiar contours of conventional characters, “ce qu’il joue n’est jamais un personnage : c’est un thème...constitué par les composantes de l’événement, singularités communicantes effectivement libérées des limites des individus” (LS 176).

Cadiot’s Robinson does not act the part of Daniel Defoe or Michel Tournier’s characters, that bear the same name and are often referred to, or replicate any of the Robinsons of Cadiot’s earlier texts. He plays a theme that draws on certain elements of all these figures. “Robinson est un nom de code,” Cadiot once said in an interview, “un Neutre, un embrayeur d’impressions et de transport. À chaque livre, je pars avec lui de zéro, un camarade mal réglé, qui entend trop fort et pas assez, qui réapprend à parler, à sentir, qui a de bizarres capacités, comme un personnage de conte” (Cadiot IN). Robinson is a vessel for the exploration of a subject destroyed, who begins to rebuild, discovering a role that he can play outside of either strict delimitations of common sense or the collapsed ruin that he once succumbed to. “Le Robinson n° 3 de *Retour définitif et durable de l’être aimé* est un héros purement mental. Perdu dans le monde et les mondanités, échoué dans les conversations des autres, à la recherche ulysséenne d’un être aimé que les voix des autres s’échinent à éloigner, c’est un autodidacte du cerveau, un naufragé de la pensée” (Alizart 781). This shipwreck of thoughts becomes a Deleuzian

actor when he learns to be transformed, and not destroyed, by the conversations, the worlds, the people, and landscapes that his probing mind encounters and links up with.

This is not to say that the roles that Robinson plays are entirely divorced from the characteristics of the other figures who share his name, but that he does not assume any of them in its comfortably delimited entirety, instead he is always “dans la situation de jouer un rôle qui joue d’autres rôles” (LS 176). He is not the next avatar in a long tradition of shipwrecked Robinsons; he is the Robinson that never affirms a single role or unified identity, but plays between the others, exploring singularities that escape and traverse their more well-ordered identities. When the Robinson of the *Retour* states: “À une époque précédente, j’avais une vie très proche de la nature, par nécessité, installé dans une cabane faite main, après avoir réglé l’essentiel, j’aurais dû m’arrêter, j’ai continué comme un canard sans tête” (Cadiot 50), a connection is evidently drawn between him and Crusoe, but the result of this temporary superimposition of these characters is not a stable imitation. Similarly, the observation that he later makes, “dans une autre vie j’aurais pu être domestique dans cette maison” (183), is an allusion to an earlier Robinson, from Cadiot’s text *Colonel Zouaves*, which causes the two identities to play over one another in the virtual space of what could have been, that exists between the two texts, and the two characters, without one becoming absorbed in the identity of the other.

Unrestricted by the boundaries of a well-defined and enduring identity, Robinson may continually repeat: “ ‘Je suis Robinson...’ [mais] en vérité il n’est personne. Ou bien il est tout le monde” (Renaud 770). Rather than a static character, Robinson is a dynamic process that traverses other identities, but is itself nobody because it will not submit its

movements to the organizing structures of common sense. As Cadiot explained in an interview, “c’est sa méthode qui m’intéressait...,” (Cadiot IN) and this method is that of a Deleuzian actor, which involves infinite digressions, the playful discovery of unexpected connections, and the tireless attempt to advance an understanding that always remains incomplete. According to this method: “toute sa personnalité, l’acteur la tend dans un instant toujours encore plus divisible, pour s’ouvrir au rôle impersonnel et préindividuel,” (LS 176) enabling Robinson to pass through, rather than occupy, an identity that is forever partial.

Robinson’s frequent digressions infuse his role with foreign elements that do not advance the development of his character or the plot, but introduce impersonal intensities:

Ajouter ici la même impression que le jour où il faudra aller chercher le vieux sac rempli des dernières affaires portées le jour de la mort de quelqu’un, ouvrir la fermeture éclair : rentrée massive d’air de printemps sur médicaments démodés, dentifrice durci, chaussures fondues dans le temps, chemises rayées sans rayures, effacées par une longue série de rien, jours non-vécus.

Barrés.

Comme ces traits gravés sur un arbre par paquets de six, avec un dimanche horizontal, si on est dans une île déserte (Cadiot 14)

The *impression* that is explored here lacks any particular subject: I, you, he/she are missing from the entire passage, which is not fixed within the subjective experience of an individual, but the impersonal realm of *quelqu’un*. Robinson captures a unique moment that, disentangled from any fixed identities, exists before and beyond any living person who would occupy and personalize the affects that it generates. A resonance is developed

between the un-lived days of the dead person and a man trapped on a desert island, who records the passage of time in the bark of a tree, creating an interplay between the narrator, the Robinson of the desert island, and this strange impression, but without any concrete relations or explanations being proffered.

Traditionally, play “divides experience into completed, tellable narratives, making it representable and masterable” (Bates 172), but the shifting, fragmented identity of Robinson, the text itself, and the impersonal impressions that he records, prevent the play of this text from being either mastered or repeated. Such ideal play is not oriented toward a fixed end point— “avancer, ici, c’est n’avancer vers rien,” (Renaud 767) — but centers on its own inventive process. While Robinson’s role may lead nowhere, his acting explores effects like the “ralenti de l’image filmique,” through which he reveals “les événements qui, à vitesse réelle, sont imperceptibles” (Gauthier 53). “Je glisse, je me décale de 6 mètres de côté, je cours 7 foulées, d’abord en ligne droite puis en courbe, penché comme une moto dans un virage de circuit, impulsion maximum, je saute, je saute au-dessus de lui, quand on est dans l’air il faut continuer à pousser vers le haut, c’est le plus dur...Je suis dans l’air...Je suis dans l’air...” (Cadiot 38-40). This slow motion enables Robinson to convey his strenuous effort to break free of the cumbersome identities of common sense. He moves, slides, passes into the role of a car, leaps and, pushing higher into the air, becomes cinematic and bird-like simultaneously, entering into the free play of the Deleuzian actor.

Becoming a Deleuzian actor capable of playing roles that are not predetermined or rigidly defined, Robinson ultimately succeeds in following the advice of his bizarre instructor: “n’essayez pas de vous créer un personnage, ça n’intéressera personne” (248).

No longer attempting to create a character for himself, Robinson escapes sedentary identities through an ideal play that continually draws him outside of himself and into explorations of new affects.

### **Playing Oneself:**

The final section of this chapter examines, not the play that carries a person outside of a fixed identity, into other roles, but the underlying habit of playing oneself that structures the subject of common sense. The play of Carroll's texts reveals the artificial fragility of the habit of repeating one's *I*, through a disruption of Alice's identity. Common sense is ultimately secured, however, when Alice, affirming habit over the possibilities of play, rejects the challenges posed to her identity. Cadiot's Robinson, by contrast, recovering from an identity destroyed in an effort to entirely break free of common sense, learns instead to forget habit and to begin to produce creative alternatives through play. He does not cease to participate in the dominant reality altogether, but always crosses its thresholds in games that escape the rules and limitations of common sense.

**Force of Habit:** Carroll's texts develop a paradoxical understanding of the structures of habit that both preserves and disrupts the stability that they achieve through repetition. On one hand, Alice clings to habits in order to preserve her identity, and on the other, Carroll's text forces her outside of the organizations that she is comfortable with. Both tendencies centre on the unthinking habit of saying *I*, which is at once Alice's most

treasured security, and the propensity that is most forcefully challenged by the strange worlds that she finds herself in. While Carroll's texts show that "play can infuse all areas of activity" (Blake 16), even stale quotidian habits, with its creative enterprises, his character, Alice, proves that play can be reterritorialized by the organizations of habit and the flows of creative becomings can be restructured as unified identities once again.

Disrupting the habits of her daily life, Alice's adventures in the fantastic worlds of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass realm challenge her perception of herself as "a stable, rational individual, experiencing changes but remaining, principally, the same person" (Stagoll 21). She struggles to identify the moment at which she ceased to be herself: "And yesterday things went on just as usual. I wonder if I've been changed in the night? Let me think: *was* I the same when I got up this morning? I almost think I can remember feeling a little different," (Carroll 13) in the hopes of isolating and reversing the change. Faced with the initial shock of not knowing where or who she is, "Alice naturally tries to relate herself to the secure stability of her past existence," (Rackin 39) in order to retrieve the usual self of yesterday, but she fails and it is not until the end of each adventure that she is able to retrieve her lost identity.

During the course of her adventures, however, Alice's loss of identity marks the dissolution of common sense.

Alice subit et rate toutes les épreuves du sens commun : l'épreuve de la conscience de soi comme organe – 'Qui êtes-vous?'—l'épreuve de la perception d'objet comme reconnaissance – le bois qui se dérobe à toute identification—, l'épreuve de la mémoire comme récitation—'c'est faux du commencement à la fin'—, l'épreuve du rêve comme unité de monde—où chaque système individuel se défait au profit d'un univers dans lequel on est toujours un élément dans le rêve de

quelqu'un d'autre—'je n'aime pas appartenir au rêve d'une autre personne'. (LS 97)

First, Alice upsets the rule of common sense that relies on the habit of considering oneself as a unified body and self-conscious interior. She begins to lose track of both her body, in the rapid succession of physical transformations that she undergoes, and her interior sense of self in the confused inability to answer the question, "Who am I?" (Carroll 9). In an argument with a pigeon, who claims that Alice is a serpent because of her extremely long neck and because, if little girls eat eggs "then they're a kind of serpent," Alice, thinking of "the number of changes she had gone through that day," confusedly fails to defend herself or her identity as a little girl, "'I-I'm a little girl,' said Alice rather doubtfully" (44). The habit of a subject who unconsciously reflects on itself as an *I* and subsumes its differences under a unified identity, is broken, revealing that "le cogito n'est qu'une opinion" (QP 196). Even as she attempts to retrieve her identity, Alice exposes her unstable *I* to be grounded only in opinion and habit, not fact.

Second, recognition, which founds common sense's ability to abstract unities from difference, through the habit of grouping singularities into recognizable forms of the same, is disordered. The forest in which identities are erased and recognition becomes impossible, resulting in an otherwise prohibited friendship between a fawn and a human, which ends as soon as recognition is reinstated: "'dear me! You're a human child!'," (Carroll 152) is only one of many examples, depicted in these texts, of a loss of recognition that produces new possibilities. Recognition fails on many levels, "not only is Alice's previous identity apparently meaningless in Wonderland; the very concept of permanent identity is invalid. A pack of cards can also be a group of living people, a child can quickly turn into a pig, a cat's grin can exist without a cat. Even inanimate

objects like stones lack simple consistency” (Rackin 42), suddenly transforming into cakes. The permanence and repetition that is necessary for recognition to ground the fixed identities of common sense is made impossible by the shifting, transforming identities that elude its confines, and Alice becomes unrecognizable, even to herself.

Third, memory, which ensures that the subject of common sense is consistent throughout time, synthesizing its past, present and future experiences, into a single self-identical *I* is replaced by forgetfulness and transformation. As Alice says, “it’s no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person *then*” (Carroll 89). No longer unified with her past, Alice becomes an inconsistent subject, fundamentally different today than yesterday and unable to confidently assert her *I*. Moreover, “perhaps sensing that her above ground identity rested on arbitrary constructed systems like arithmetic (or one might add language) [Alice] attempts to reestablish that ‘in-the-world’ identity by reciting her rote-learned lessons” (Rackin 40), but her memory of these lessons fails—“It’s wrong from beginning to end” (Carroll 42)—and the structure of her world cannot be restored.

Finally, Alice’s identity is profoundly upset when, as was mentioned above, she is told that she is only an element in someone else’s dream: “‘If that there King was to wake...you’d go out—bang!—just like a candle” (162). In a failed attempt to prove otherwise Alice breaks down in tears, but far from affirming her reality, the only response her tears elicit from the Tweedles is, “‘You wo’n’t make yourself a bit realer by crying”” (163). She cannot assert her own reality and, with this final blow to the permanence of her *I*, she is momentarily overcome. Through the dissolution of Alice’s identity the



various proofs of common sense are upset, the habits that guarded her identity are invalidated and she is left without the foundational sense of herself as a unified *I*.

While the repetitive habits that structure subjects “nous font souffrir parce que l’individuation réelle se passe à un niveau plus souterrain” (Miranda 16) and their disruption in the Carrollian texts provides Alice with an opportunity to escape their bounds, she does not take advantage of this opportunity because she desires the stability that habits promise. “Social production along identity lines is dear to us because it provides a sense of security, certainty and belonging: a rootedness to the territory of the dominant social categories” (Albrecht-Crane 122), and Alice’s final, absolute rejection of the worlds that upset her identity represents the triumph of restrictive habits over the free play of identities that the disruption of habits could allow.

**Forgetting and Creation:** Arising from play rather than habit, Robinson’s identity is not secured within the boundaries of a constantly repeated *I*. Fragmented, memoryless and lacking unity, “c’est Robinson la caisse,” in this particular tale of shipwreck, “c’est lui qu’on retrouve en morceaux sur la plage” (Cadiot in Alizart 784) and his project throughout the narrative is not to reorganize himself according to the habits of common sense, but to pursue the possible linkages that these fragments of an *I* can achieve. Robinson’s forgetfulness is linked to his ability to endlessly recreate himself because “only if we have forgotten something can we see it again for the first time, see it as something unique and different. Similarly, only if we forget who we are, or who we are supposed to be, can we then create ourselves...To do this, however, entails a continual

overcoming of the tendency to settle into habits” (Bell 95). Fulfilling Deleuze and Guattari’s order: “Remplacez l’anamnèse par l’oubli, l’interprétation par l’expérimentation...Et c’est là que tout se joue”, Robinson enters a free space of play through forgetting habits, and creating through experimentation (MP 187).

Referring to himself as *je*, and even sporadically attempting to delimit the contours of his identity, in order to affirm his concrete presence as a subject in the world, Robinson does occasionally succumb to the desire for the security of a fixed identity. The *je* that Robinson repeatedly uses to describe himself, however, is “toujours provisoire et approximatif. Il ne renvoie pas à un héros consistant, profond, pourvu d’une âme et d’une histoire” (Renaud 770). Referring not to an enclosed interiority, but to the locus of certain intensities and singularities, this *je* is a shifting virtual indicator that accompanies this strange narrator, without ever solidifying into a determinable identity. Even when Robinson attempts to concretize himself in space and time, asserting: “j’y suis, c’est là, c’est maintenant,” he rapidly succumbs to a new imaginative development that carries him outside of the coordinates of common sense: “Je vais améliorer la construction de ma boîte en fixant des volets..” and later, “Je me développe très vite...des images de bruits s’impriment lentement dans ma boîte obscure...” (Cadiot 123, 255). He becomes a camera that slowly captures the images of noises, once more diverging from the habit of considering himself to be the human organism belonging to a particular *I*. Robinson never remains for long within the bounds of habit because the “répétition de l’habitude est une somnolence de l’imagination” (Miranda 41) and his unbridled imagination always results in his forgetting the habit of an *I*, and embarking on new creations.

Skilled at forgetfulness, Robinson escapes the weighty memory of an identity mired in past experiences. As he declares, “le grand champion c’est celui qui oublie” (Cadiot 191), because forgetting permits an escape into the imaginative play that lies beyond the thresholds of the subject. For him “il n’y a donc pas de passé, pas de temps accumulé dans lequel il faudrait – avec soin, responsabilité, ou angoisse, ou douleur – prendre place” (Renaud 766). He does not occupy a static place in time, limited to the possibilities dictated by a past that steadily accumulates behind him, instead, “les anciennes choses se mélangent à l’infini aux nouvelles, chaque souvenir se divise en un point qui ouvre une nouvelle porte...” (Cadiot 28). This free play of new and old that continually opens new doors, leads away from the confines of the subject of common sense that, enclosed upon itself, echoes with the memories of past afflictions.

In this space of play, free of the repetitive habits of the subject of common sense, Robinson begins to create, inventing new affects, which are “pures sensations excédant toute expérience vécue et toute mémoire” (Game 406). His fragmented memories allow vastly divergent impressions to play across one another, linking up in unpredictable ways and creating new intensities. The description of the lapin fluo’s surroundings, for example, creates a constellation of singularities that, having escaped the confines of greater organizations, freely interact with one another:

surface floue du blé neuf, ce qu’on garde en mémoire si on court très vite en regardant fixement les herbes, comme dans l’une des premières photographies où on ne voit personne sur un boulevard, sauf la moitié inférieure du corps de quelqu’un, le pied posé sur la caisse d’un cireur de chaussures, le mouvement des vivants échappant au temps de pause. (Cadiot 22)

New affects are created from the unexpected play between the faded black and whites of Louis Daguerre's photograph, *Boulevard du Temple*, in which the moving people are not captured because of the long exposure time, blurred grass seen while running, and the flowing, heaving surface of a wheat field. From these vastly divergent impressions a unique impersonal percept of motion made visible/invisible is created. Breaking the habits of an *I*, and of normal perception, enables Robinson to "produire des devenirs encore inconnus et impersonnels...plutôt qu'à narrer les émotions, sentiments ou faits d'individus" (Game 403). His is not the tale of a self-enclosed subject, operating according to habit, in a landscape that is common to all only because it conforms rigidly to the organizations of common sense.

The destroyed identity, that broken case on the shore, which describes Robinson at the beginning of the text exemplifies the "hazards and risks one takes to break out of a habitual mold" (Canning 74). As the text progresses, however, Robinson, continually playing beyond the limitations of habit without abolishing them altogether, is able to retrieve "de petites rations de subjectivité...pour pouvoir répondre à la réalité dominante" (MP 199) without becoming a rigid subject once more. He becomes an *I* that speaks possibilities into the fiction of the personal pronoun. Saying *je* only in order to open it up to new configurations, he passes into "un autre régime où les pronoms personnels ne fonctionnent plus que comme fictions" (172).

**Conclusion:**

The characters of Carroll and Cadiot's texts engage in two very distinct kinds of play. Bounded in time and space, Alice's inventive role-plays allow her to temporarily escape the limitations of a single, coherent self. Her play-acting, on the other hand, provides her with the opportunity to try out real-world roles in a safe space. Experimenting with the language, gestures, and motivations of an adult facilitates her transition between childhood and adulthood and she leaves behind the figure whose continual play upsets the organizations of common sense. Finally, her play allows for the boundaries of habit to be challenged, but not destroyed. This is the safe play of ruled games and make-believe that always promise a return to the well-ordered reality from which the subject temporarily departed. Although Carroll's text itself forces Alice to grapple with a more challenging form of play, it too is bounded and permits Alice to reinstate her identity in the end.

Robinson's is an ideal play; it occurs in a space that is not safely delimited, but that infiltrates and alters reality, producing permanent changes, without destroying the subject entirely. He not only enters himself into transformative becomings, but also draws the landscape that common sense organizes according to static, recognizable features into the creative play that he initiates. Breaking with the limitations of memory, his imaginative activity causes him to forget repetitive habits in the excitement of new creations and experiments.

## Ch. 2 Putting Worlds into Play

*"c'est un grand grand pays... infini, c'est pas un petit terrain de croquet pour petites filles modèles copines de Lewis Carroll..." (Cadiot 171)*

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In both Carroll's Alice texts and Cadiot's *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé*, exchanges between vastly disparate worlds initiate a play between real and fantastic that poses a challenge to the secure identities of common sense. Existing in a mutually constituting relationship with a strictly delimited world, the "moi personnel a besoin...du monde en général" (LS 11) in order to sustain its identity. The subjects of common sense are, therefore, threatened by the transformative play between worlds that is depicted by these texts. The nature of the disruption created by such interactions between worlds depends upon the kind of play that they participate in. If the separation from ordinary life is maintained by a frontier that remains intact, as in Carroll's work, it belongs to a more traditional formulation of play, and poses a challenge to the identity of the subject that is ultimately resolved. If, however, the separation from ordinary life is not maintained, and the frontier itself is transformed or eliminated entirely, as the result of a play that resembles a Deleuzian ideal game, the outcome is a profound disruption of common sense that prevents the identities that it preserved from ever being fully reinstated.

There are commonly "two attitudes towards...frontiers," that are attributed to texts that seek to challenge the boundaries of common sense, "denying them and forgetting them. If we deny them, the whole system...crumbles away...If we simply forget them, temporarily, we recognize them and with them the norm, we come to terms with

reality” (Lecerle 74). Carroll is often accused of a temporary forgetfulness of the boundaries of reality, a mere “matter of playing and control,” in which “the game is meant to preserve order, at all costs” (74,36). While authors who fall into the category of a complete denial of frontiers delve into the “overriding madness of the depths” (41). Taking this comparison only as a point of departure, this chapter will challenge the idea that Carroll’s play is solely a means for restoring order, and explore the alternative to either forgetting or denying frontiers that is presented in the endless movement *between* worlds that characterizes Cadot’s play. First, this chapter will examine the crossings between worlds that are depicted in these texts and, subsequently, the clashing or diverging series that describe the interplay between foreign worlds within worlds.

### **Across Thresholds:**

Across the thresholds of the *real* worlds depicted by both Carroll and Cadot lie the fantastic realms that their texts set out to explore. Alice’s crossings into Wonderland and the Looking-glass world participate in a temporary denial of the boundaries of reality, but Carroll also presents a more profound challenge to these frontiers in his rediscovery of the surface of the event, which escapes the limitations of a mere forgetting of boundaries. Cadot’s text, on the other hand, participates in a sustained engagement with this evental surface, situating itself *between* worlds, and moving in a double direction across disappearing frontiers. Engaging real, false and virtual worlds in an undifferentiated play, Cadot’s work escapes both Carroll’s preserved order and the descent into non-communicating chaos, represented in the total denial of frontiers.

**Carroll Rediscovered the Surface:** The crossings between the real and fantastic worlds of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass* are depicted as events in the plot of each text. Alice physically traverses the frontiers between worlds without profoundly compromising the integrity of the boundaries themselves. As she “bounces from universe to universe, each one moving in its own insulated round” (Blake 107) the different worlds remain distinct and Alice’s identity, though repeatedly challenged, is protected by her ultimate ability to return to the preserved identities of her real world. Characteristic of a kind of play that obeys the rules of a strict separation from ordinary life, these crossings preserve the identities of common sense.

Alice’s passages into both Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world are explicitly depicted in two manners. The first describes a physical crossing: her fall “down, down, down” (Carroll 5) the rabbit hole and her passage through a mirror that is transformed into a “bright silvery mist” (124). The second describes the dream crossings that mitigate the threat of “a completely alien and nonsensical world... by [the use of] a familiar framing perspective” (Schwab 160) — the child falls asleep and will awaken to a restored reality unchanged by the dream adventures that she has undergone. While interpretations, such as Donald Rackin’s, argue that the “‘dream vision’ is...an avenue to knowledge that is perhaps more meaningful—and frequently more horrifying—than any that the unaided conscious intellect can discover” (36), these crossings in the last instance preserve Alice’s *real* world, consequently reinforcing her identity against the challenges posed by the fantastic realms that she finds herself in. It would seem, therefore, that the boundaries that endow Alice’s world with structure and meaning are



only temporarily forgotten, but what complicates this view of Carroll's play is the movement that he initiates across a different frontier, onto what Deleuze describes as the surface of becoming.

Over the course of Alice's two adventures, "Carroll rediscovers the enigmatic surface of meaning that the Stoics articulate in their theory of incorporeals" (Bogue DL 23). This theory describes events as hovering at the surface, neutral and in a constant state of pure becoming. Inhering rather than being actualized in fixed states of affairs, events do not participate in "des établissements de présents, [et] des assignations de sujets," but "les devenirs rebelles" that occur at the surface (LS 9). Carroll's texts do not rend language or worlds apart and plunge into their depths, but play along this surface. In other words, his texts carry Alice from a realm of common sense onto the surface of "un pur devenir, sans mesure," (9) without threatening her with the madness or pure destruction of the depths.

This crossing is not commensurate with either Alice's physical or dream passages into Wonderland or the Looking-glass world because "c'est à force de glisser qu'on passera de l'autre côté, puisque l'autre côté n'est que le sens inverse" (19). The texts do not merely depict Alice's movement across this boundary but themselves participate in the crossing of this frontier when they, and the character that they describe, begin to slide "so fast that at last they... skim through the air" (Carroll 141). "Il n'y a donc pas *des* aventures d'Alice, mais une aventure: sa montée à la surface, son désaveu de la fausse profondeur, sa découverte que tout se passe à la frontière" (LS 19). This crossing does not happen instantaneously and "le début *d'Alice* (toute la première moitié) cherche encore le secret des événements, et du devenir illimité..." (19). The text achieves this

climb to the surface only as “les mouvements d’enfoncement et d’enfouissement font place à des mouvements latéraux de glissement, de gauche à droite et de droite à gauche” (19). The irrepressible movements of the surface are then discovered and Alice’s inexorable sliding begins.

In *Through the Looking-glass* events “ne sont plus du tout cherchés en profondeur, mais à la surface” (19-20). The surface has been discovered and even Alice’s physical crossing into the Looking-glass world is now a lateral sliding, rather than a downward tumble. Passing to “l’autre côté du miroir, c’est passer du rapport de désignation au rapport d’expression – sans s’arrêter aux intermédiaires, manifestation, signification” (38). The text slides from the rigid designations of common sense into the fluid expressions of becoming, without becoming trapped by the *I* of manifestation or the universal meanings of significance. Identities become slippery and unfixed as they slide into new possibilities that Alice has trouble keeping up with. In the sheep’s shop, for example, Alice is taken aback when the Sheep asks, ““Can you row?” ...handing her a pair of knitting needles,” and her reply, ““Yes, a little—but not on land—and not with needles—”” (Carroll 175), reflects her inability to yet grasp the fluid identities of the surface. When “suddenly the needles [turn] into oars in her hands, and she [finds] they [are] in a little boat,” however, Alice, having learnt through her adventures the fruitlessness of resisting the movements of the surface, simply attempts “to do her best” (175).

Carroll’s rediscovery of the surface is more threatening to Alice’s identity, as will be seen in more detail later in this chapter, than her actual crossings into the fantastic worlds of Wonderland and the Looking-Glass realm, but even this passage is not

permitted to entirely dissolve the frontiers that divide these worlds. Alice's adventures end with her return "to dull reality..." (109), both her real world and the realm of common sense that corresponds to it are reinstated and the pure becomings of the surface are arrested and covered over once again.

**Cadiot's Play Between:** Cadiot's text does not depict the intimate thoughts and emotions of a character who traverses secure frontiers in an adventure that promises to conclude in a safe return. In the *Retour*, "on n'entre pas dans le secret, l'obscurité d'une conscience, mais on parcourt, en pleine lumière, l'apparence du monde (le monde comme apparence, comme surface)" (Renaud 771). Here, the sliding, discovered by Carroll, carries worlds over their own borders to play indiscriminately across one another. Crossing frontiers in the double direction of the event, the *Retour* takes place in a space of pure becoming that Cadiot refers to as the post-countryside, where "il n'y a ni début ni fin" (766). His text plays *between* worlds, never preserving the delimitations of a *real* world, complete with a fixed beginning and end.

*Between* worlds "ne désigne pas une relation localisable qui va de l'une à l'autre et réciproquement, mais une direction perpendiculaire, un mouvement transversal qui les emporte l'une et l'autre, ruisseau sans début ni fin, qui ronge ses deux rives et prend de la vitesse au milieu" (MP 37). No longer representing travel back and forth across a frontier, the unbounded flows of meaning, in Cadiot's text, undermine the boundaries between worlds. The subject is transformed as "le monde entre (n'entre pas) dans la 'conscience', la remplit (ne remplit pas), la traverse sans fin, couvre sa surface – la constitue comme

surface” (Renaud 771). The neutral play of the event slides between worlds, traversing subjects and drawing them onto the surface of becoming. Cadiot’s post-countryside becomes infused with myriad elements drawn from different subjects and worlds that can no longer be disentangled from one another and the identities that were sustained by the *real* world can no longer be restored or secured. Only irreparable fragments remain of the triad, repeatedly criticized by Deleuze throughout *Logique du sens*, of subject, world, and God.

The *Retour* opens suggestively with the narrator’s recollection of his first sighting of a strange rabbit: “C’est dans la campagne sans lune, noir total, que j’ai vu pour la première fois le lapin fluo, vert intense dans son champ abandonné, menant sa vie, indifférent à l’idée de son étrangeté” (Cadiot 9). No longer possessing a waistcoat or pocket watch, Wonderland’s white rabbit has been transformed into a *lapin fluo*, and the bright gardens of Wonderland have become the more ominous post-countryside, submerged in darkness. The narrator does not follow this fluorescent green rabbit down a hole, but is propelled by its image into a sliding passage between worlds: “on glisse d’un règne à l’autre, je n’ai pas peur, je glisse. / Vers X. / Fermer les yeux, se souvenir de lui, uranium dans cortex, borne blanche sur forêt noire, lapin fluo...” (22-23). From one kingdom to another, the narrator travels toward an unknown destination X that remains a mystery because, unlike Carroll’s texts, here there are no strict arrivals or departures between properly delimited worlds, but rather a continual movement between the many unknown worlds that play across the surface of the post-countryside.

On this surface it is never clear what world a particular phrase or element is drawn from. The phrase, *je glisse*, quoted above, for example, expresses more than the

passage of the narrator: “lorsqu’un propos comme ‘je glisse’ est énoncé, il est impossible de déterminer, compte tenu de la confusion entretenue du récit, si le narrateur parle de la fiction ou de la narration, s’il évoque telle péripétie de l’histoire ou tel aspect du texte” (Gauthier 56). Hesitating between the two possible meanings, this undecidable phrase plays between the space of a character in an unknown kingdom and the world of a self-reflexive text, never existing wholly in either one.

The post-countryside is not a realm in which the story of a properly delimited subject’s private adventures unfolds. The text “rassemble (accumule, mélange, traverse, retourne, reprend), en ordre-désordre, non les pensées d’un sujet, comme fait, depuis un siècle ou plus, le monologue intérieur, mais les éclats innombrables du monde” (Renaud 771). Producing the narrator’s disintegration onto the surface of the post-countryside, the movement of the text draws his fragmented identity into “une géographie, non... une histoire” (770). At the beginning of the text, while contemplating a painting, the narrator muses: “voilà mon futur espace vert. / Mais qui vivrait dans un tableau?” (Cadiot 24-25). The improbability of living in a painting is initially foregrounded, but over the course of the text the frontiers between life and art deteriorate and he passes into the painting, becoming part of a new geography: “Je m’enracine. / Mon feuillage est fin et dense, une meute de chiens glisse, dans une houle noire et blanche, entre mes branches, ça cavale. / Je suis dans le tableau” (Cadiot 236). The many transformations that have been played out across different worlds enable him to escape the limitations of his identity, and fully enter into radical becomings that repeatedly transform the landscape of the post-countryside. Between subject and world Cadiot creates a space of shifting identities and

unpredictable combinations, splicing together elements from foreign worlds at the surface.

This movement *between* worlds participates in a Deleuzian ideal game that threatens the order and restrictions of common sense. Neither a Carrollian play that promises a return to ordinary life, nor a mad descent into the depths, the transversal line drawn by Cadiot's text communicates between Carrollian order and total chaos, surveying new possibilities and endlessly transforming and reconfiguring the identities that it engages with.

### **Worlds Within Worlds:**

Sliding across the delimitations of worlds, Carroll rediscovers the Stoic surface of pure becoming, while Cadiot, beginning from this surface, creates a movement between worlds that dissolves borders in a productive play of difference. Beyond the initial crossings described by these movements, however, there is a further play between the worlds within worlds created by these texts. On the surface, other worlds— in Deleuze's terms, other 'series'— continue to interact and even clash. For Deleuze, "un 'autre' monde commencerait au voisinage des points où les séries obtenues divergeraient" (LS 133). Within Wonderland and the Looking-glass realms, Alice represents a different world because her unfailing adherence to "the rightness of her own world and its conventions" (Parsons 40), causes her to continue participating in a divergent series. While Carroll's text pursues the ramifications of two such clashing worlds, Cadiot evokes a proliferation of divergent series causing many realms to interact on the surface of the

post-countryside. In what follows I will explore the tensions between series, which characterize the play within worlds produced by Carroll's texts, and the co-ordination and combination of innumerable worlds that takes place in Cadiot's post-countryside.

**Alice vs. Wonderland:** Continuously attempting to impose the world of common sense that she has left behind on the fantastic realms and evental surface that she discovers, Alice represents a site of tension between worlds. The conflicts between the 'Alice' series and the 'fantastic' or 'surface' series exemplify not only Alice's failure to play the game of these other realms in a productive way, but also the limited ability of Wonderland, the Looking-Glass world and, ultimately, the Carrollian surface to overcome her resistance.

Despite having crossed or, as we saw above, slid into another world, Alice continues to vehemently resist a conjoining or mutual becoming of the two worlds. She insistently "maintains a constant awareness of both cultures and their differences. Far from observing... a blurring of the boundaries between them, we thus experience in Carroll's textual world a sequential chain of collisions that maintains and even highlights the boundaries" (Schwab 160). Alice, refusing to relinquish the values of her own world continually stresses that "in *our* country" (Carroll 223) things are quite different. The play of worlds depicted by Carroll repeatedly fails to overcome this protective barrier, and Alice successfully rejects the surface in a violent return to the safety of her own world at the end of both texts. In the clash between the 'Alice' series and the becoming of the surface, however, real challenges are posed to the construction of her identity.

*The Double Movement of Pure Becoming:* One of the most profound challenges to common sense, and consequently to Alice's own identity, is the double direction of pure becoming that characterizes the surface. Moving always in "les deux sens à la fois..." (LS 9) the unpredictable movements of the surface cause Alice to continually be "shutting up like a telescope" (Carroll 8) and "opening out like the largest telescope that ever was", (11). The fixed states of affairs that enable one to describe "tel sujet à telle grandeur, telle petitesse à tel moment" (LS 9), are overcome by a movement that does not stop and cannot be fixed in one direction. As Deleuze writes, "Quand je dis 'Alice grandit', je veux dire qu'elle devient plus grande qu'elle n'était. Mais par là-même aussi, elle devient plus petite qu'elle n'est maintenant" (9). Awakening pure becoming within her, this double movement makes Alice extremely uneasy: "She ate a little bit, and said anxiously to herself 'Which way? Which way?'" (Carroll 9) a question that reflects her presentiment, "que c'est toujours dans les deux sens à la fois" (LS 11). Alice's deep anxiety betrays not only her realization that "tous ces renversements ...ont une même conséquence: la contestation de l'identité personnelle... la perte du nom propre" (11), but also her stubborn resistance to this loss.

Frustrated, rather than intrigued by this challenge to her identity, Alice refuses to engage with the transformative potential that it offers, continuing to blindly privilege her own world: "'It was much pleasanter at home,' thought poor Alice, 'when one wasn't always growing larger and smaller, and being ordered about by mice and rabbits'" (Carroll 28). For Alice, the double direction of becoming is an inconvenience, rather than an opportunity. Moreover, she resents that its disruption of the identities of common sense



extends to a disordering of the hierarchy obtaining to those identities, resulting in a loss of privilege that makes her answerable to *mice and rabbits*.

In spite of the fact that Alice suffers these challenges to her identity, she is always somewhat protected from the dangers of the evental world that she finds herself in. This is because her position there “combines the role of an active agent exposed to the hazards of culture contact with that of an observer who, instead of becoming absorbed by her dream world, stays at a safe distance” (Schwab 161). From this *safe distance*, Alice watches these fantastic worlds, knowing that her world of common sense holds out the promise of a return. Rather than freely entering into the pure becomings of the surface Alice “learns to speak and to act ‘inside’ while observing from ‘outside’” (160). In an exchange between Alice and the Red Queen, the Red Queen argues that if a dog were to “lose its temper” and then go away, “its temper would remain!” and Alice, momentarily entering into the logic of this other world, and sensing the double movement that characterizes it, responds “They might go different ways,” but she immediately returns to her role as outside observer by noting “What dreadful nonsense we *are* talking” (Carroll 221-222).

Behaving according to the *inside* without ever letting herself genuinely enter into its possibilities, Alice attempts to retain the integrity of her identity through sheer resolve: “‘I’m determined to do it!’ But being determined didn’t help her much...” (151). This attempt to sustain her identity based on psychological determination fails because “l’incertitude personnelle n’est pas un doute extérieur à ce qui se passe, mais une structure objective de l’événement lui-même, en tant qu’il va toujours en deux sens à la fois, et qu’il écartèle le sujet suivant cette double direction” (LS 11-12). Despite her

attempt to remain 'outside' of the pure becoming of the surface, Alice's identity is torn apart in the double direction of the event, and is not reinstated until her escape back to her world. Because of her resistance to the becomings of the event, this loss of identity occurs without her benefiting from the release of singularities that such a disruption of common sense creates.

*Becomings Flow:* A second major challenge faced by Alice is the flow of becoming. Not only do events move in two directions, they do so without stopping, precluding the anchoring of any fixed identities (9). The stops and breaks of a language and world of common sense are removed, as Alice exclaims in frustration, "Things flow about so here!" (Carroll 175). The inability to fix anything results in a fluidity of identity that upsets Alice. The White Queen, for example is caught up in a transformative movement when her exclamation, *Much better*, is set in motion: "'Much be-etter! Be-etter! Be-e-etter! Be-e-hh!'" The last word ended in a long bleat, so like a sheep that Alice quite started. / She looked at the Queen, who seemed to have suddenly wrapped herself up in wool...was it really a *sheep* that was sitting on the other side of the counter? Rub as she would, she could make nothing more of it" (173-174). In the face of such fluid transformations, nothing can be known for certain and identities are lost.

Once again Alice is a failed player of this game because she misreads the flow of events as frustrating, rather than as a creative opportunity. When she leaps across a creek and suddenly discovers herself on a train where the Guard, who examines her through an opera-glass, declares "You're traveling the wrong way," Alice, failing to realize either the eventual potential of traveling in both directions at once, or the flowing possibilities of transforming spaces, simply declares, "I don't belong to this railway journey at all!"

(145-146). Always insisting on a reality that *should* apply to her situation, Alice never takes up the strange possibilities of her unreal experiences. The “perte du nom propre est l’aventure qui se répète à travers toutes les aventures d’Alice,” (LS 11) and Alice suffers this loss because she is a poor player, and the Carrollian surface is not powerful enough to permanently overcome her resistance.

Although her “dogged quest for Wonderland’s meaning in terms of her above-ground world of secure assumptions and self-assured regulations is doomed to failure” (Rackin 36). Alice does succeed in resisting total absorption in the flows of the surface in her final escape. Her “flight from Wonderland’s maddening anarchy—a desperate leap back to the above-ground certainty of social formalities and ordinary logic” (36), repudiates the double movement and unstoppable flow of surface that she has discovered.

**‘More Terrifying than Wonderland’:** The shift from Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world and Carroll’s surface, to the post-countryside of Cadot’s *in between*, marks a transformation of the kind of play initiated and the kind of player it demands. No longer a world of becoming apart from other worlds, the post-countryside arises from the dissolution and recombination of divergent worlds across its surface. The cheerful landscape of Wonderland has become “une campagne dénaturée, celle où détail le lapin fluo, où ne fleurissent pas d’énormes nénuphars, celle où les nitrates s’écoulent tranquillement dans les champs de maïs...” (Gauthier 108). The suffocating landscape sketched in the description above, however, is also the site of a breaking down of common sense that instigates a series of productive becomings. Traversing the borders

between worlds, these flows liberate singularities from the subject who is able to attain “the power, won only with the greatest difficulty *against oneself*, of being constrained to the world’s play” (Badiou 12).

The post-countryside is both more threatening and more productively transformative than an ordinary playing field. As Cadiot writes, this “grand grand pays, avec tout ce végétal, partout, infini, c’est pas un petit terrain de croquet pour petites filles modèles copines de Lewis Carroll...” (Cadiot 171). Rather than the delimited spaces of Alice’s play, the infinite post-countryside engages far reaching worlds in a strange “mélange de guerre et de jeu” (Renaud 775) that disrupts and recreates the subject of common sense. The element of war expresses the post-countryside’s threatening disruption of identities, while the presence of *play* recuperates the fragmented shards thus produced and returns them to the creative becomings of the surface. The image that Cadiot’s text “nous [donne] de notre monde est à la fois sinistre et drôle, effrayante et légère” (775). Profoundly threatening because of this free play between violence and lightness, this new landscape is also a site for the creation of new ways of living. It is the world that Lecercle calls for when he writes, “a new territory is waiting to be explored, more terrifying than Wonderland, but every inch as fascinating” (Lecercle 82). An exploration of many fragmented worlds that converge and dissolve in the post-countryside, and the ‘impossible’ worlds of the ‘Alice’ and ‘Robinson’ series that infuse its entire surface, will illustrate the creative potential of this space and the different kind of play that it engages in.

*Fragmented Worlds*: Cadiot's is a text in pieces, punctuated by fragments that irrupt on the blank space of the pages rather than filling them up. Through the use of short fragments—"le plus long d'entre eux comportant trente. Et nombreuses, très nombreuses, sont les lignes se réduisant à un mot, parfois purement onomatopéique" (Gauthier 8-9) — shards of vastly different worlds coexist in shifting juxtapositions.

Clearly in dialogue with the form of the fragment developed by the German Romantics, "en se faisant fragmentaire, le texte du *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé* s'est donc mis sans ambages sous l'égide de l'*Athenaeum* et a fait sienne la problématique du mélange des genres" (30). Permitting different genres and worlds "de cohabiter, de se succéder les uns aux autres, sans que le souci intégrateur vienne" (Gauthier 11), the form of the fragment challenges the unifying organizations of common sense. The succession of different worlds represented by the self-sufficient fragments of the Romantics is, however, transformed in Cadiot. His fragments are no longer "like a small work of art, [that] has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog" (Schlegel 206), instead they are incomplete pieces of unique worlds that contaminate and transform one another in an unstoppable flow. The famous hedgehog of *Athenaeum* fragment 206, "s'est changé en lapin fluo" (Gauthier 30), and this change marks the new effect that Cadiot obtains from fragmentation.

"Que fait un lapin?," asks Michel Gauthier, in his book on Cadiot, *Le Facteur Vitesse*, "Il court. Il détale. Il file. Bref, il va vite" (30). While Gauthier focuses on the mixing of genres, as he writes, "il est deux façons de mélanger les genres, faire se succéder l'un et l'autre ou soumettre l'un à une vitesse de défilement telle qu'il devienne autre, sinon l'autre" (31), this same distinction easily transfers to the mixing of worlds.

This is one of the fundamental differences between Cadiot's form of the fragment and Schlegel's; his fragments are simultaneously distinct in form and fused in speed in order to facilitate the release and acceleration of pre-individual singularities. The hedgehog in its prickly isolation resists being narrativized or drawn into a greater unity, but the *lapin fluo* bolts at a speed that dissolves the worlds it traverses into blurred streaks and interactions of color and texture, extracting from them new combinations and Deleuzian percepts.

Cadiot's evocation of vastly divergent worlds in rapid succession results in a deterioration of their frontiers, giving rise to the unstable landscape of the post-countryside. As Deleuze and Guattari write in *Mille Plateaux*, "écrire n'a rien à voir avec signifier, mais avec arpenter, cartographier, même des contrées à venir" (MP 11), and Cadiot's work maps at a speed that prevents common sense from drawing coherent identities from the barrage of incomplete worlds that he traverses.

Cadiot does not present a juxtaposition of different worlds, each contained within its own particular fragment, but a series of interjections, contaminations and disruptions that successively break in on the preceding world:

L'absence de lumière impliquait un non-événement général, seul le vent agitait *sans le son* des branches.../Oublions./Ajouter ici un désir urgent de s'en sortir, quelque chose qui ressemblerait à ce qu'avait répondu un écrivain dans un roman à la question inquiète de son héroïne: quand est-ce que vous allez faire mon autobiographie?...je vais l'écrire, je vais l'écrire tout de suite, aussi simplement que Defoe pour Robinson Crusoe./Ça rime, c'est simple./So simply like Robinsonne Cruzou, like it...like yes-yes...(Cadiot 138-139)

The strange landscape of the countryside, described in the first fragment by the character who experiences it, is not contrasted with, but transformed by the word. *Oublions* that, like the other two frequent interjections in Cadiot's text, *Pause* and *Action*, creates "des zones amphibologiques où le lecteur ne sait plus très bien s'il est encore dans le récit ou s'il en est sorti" (Gauthier 46). Functioning sometimes as part of the narrative, sometimes as a stage direction that transforms the world of the text into that of a play, and sometimes as a direction to the reader as to how to proceed, these ambiguous zones participate fully in more than one world. The boundaries between these worlds are not clearly defined or sustained, and as a result the post-countryside is infused by all of them simultaneously.

*Ajouter ici* draws yet another world onto the surface of the text; the fictional world of an undisclosed *écrivain et son héroïne*, who are in fact Gertrude Stein and the character that she based on her partner, Alice B. Toklas. Furthermore, the recurrent interpolation of *Ajouter ici* itself participates in the "style télégraphique" (87) of Proust's notebooks. The word *ajouter* reoccurs throughout the notebooks and invariably appears in the infinitive; " 'ajouter sur Balzac dans Barbey...', 'ajouter à départ de G...', 'Ajouter avant: Concentrant en elle assez de mes rêves...'" (88). Cadiot's evocation of this phrase, mimicking even the infinitive form, transposes the world of both Proust's artistic process and his novel onto the surface of the post-countryside.

Finally, Defoe and his Crusoe momentarily appear in this passage when a voice, whose origin is indeterminate, irrupts pronouncing *Robinsonne Cruzou* and muttering in English. In these six fragments manifold worlds collide at speed, producing a

fundamental contamination that precludes the reinstatement of their borders or the retrieval of their lost identities.

In Cadiot, “l’important est que le ‘réel’ – ce qu’on voudrait, du moins, tenir pour tel – est mêlé sans fin, jusqu’à l’indistinction, de faux et de virtuel” (Renaud 765). Not only do many of the worlds conjured by passages such as the one quoted above initiate an indecipherable play between the virtual and the real, but the *si on* that reappears throughout the text: “Si on retombe en enfance...Si on s’imagine être en partie électrique...Si on est dans une comédie musicale... Si on est architecte dans l’âme...” (Cadiot 12,20,59, 183) activates an entire network of virtual possibilities that mix with and transform the real. In the post-countryside “tout est dématérialisé, pour être rematérialisé autre part” (Alizart 783) eliminating the possibility of a return to the *real* world and instead drawing new possibilities by constantly reinventing the landscape that is traversed.

This surface of fragmented and interwoven worlds does not only break apart identities but, in doing so, releases uncommon singularities that are “essentiellement pré-individuelle, non personnelle, a-conceptuelle” (LS 67). A non-event, an urgent desire, a mysterious voice, “la venue incessante d’objets, lieux, situations, personnages, paroles, voix...Il semble que tout se trouve rassemblé, emporté, sans ordre, sans limites” (Renaud 765). The surface that Cadiot creates out of his text is not made up of “discrete objects, fixed coordinates and chronometric time, but of flows and fluxes,” (Bogue DW 37) escaped singularities that mix anonymously between worlds and identities.



*Impossible Worlds*: Dissolving the frontiers between worlds, the post-countryside sustains multiple worlds, which are “les variantes d’une même histoire” (LS 138), what Deleuze refers to as *impossible worlds*, which continuously play and recombine across its surface.

This play between impossible worlds gives rise to a certain kind of player, who is capable of sustaining a nomadic presence in many worlds. Deleuze uses the example of Adam and Eve, the Adam that eats the apple and the one that does not belong to two impossible worlds; “il y a donc un ‘Adam vague,’ c’est-à-dire vagabond, nomade, un Adam = x, commun à plusieurs mondes” (139). Such vague, nomadic, figures, whose function is to take part in multiple conflicting worlds, abound in Cadiot’s post-countryside, and Cadiot’s Alice, the Lapin Fluo and Robinson are such vague figures.

*The Alice series*: The Alice series refers to the many direct references to Carrollian landscapes and characters that play across the surface of the post-countryside, and which arrive, on more than one occasion, already transformed by a passage through the Deleuzian world of *Logique du sens*. The Alice series is a prominent world that does not occasionally appear in the text, but traverses its entire surface. Alice is not an active character within the *Retour*, but her identity, adventures and the eventual surface of pure becoming that she discovers are present, layering the post-countryside with an incorporeal topography, belonging to these other worlds.

It is not only the Alice of Carroll’s work that permeates the *Retour*, however, Alice is a nomadic figure that participates simultaneously in two variations of the same

story. In one version of the story she is linked to Wonderland, in the other to Gertrude Stein's novel, *l'Autobiographie d'Alice*. This figure embodies a convergence between impossible worlds that contributes to the strange disequilibrium of the post-countryside.

The description, quoted above, of a character that demands of her author, "quand est-ce que vous allez faire mon autobiographie?" (Cadiot 139) is a misreference to Stein's book. In the actual book "c'est Gertrude qui demande à Alice quand elle va se mettre à écrire; dans le *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé*, c'est Alice qui pose la question à Gertrude" (Gauthier 25). The *Retour* transforms the material that it imports, creating yet another variation of the story, and Alice's *autobiography* is to be written by the author, who is already writing the text to which the demanding character belongs, setting in motion a play against fixed, self-constituting identities. The writer and the character enter into a mutual becoming fictional/real. The name Alice does not appear directly in reference to Stein's book, but having been directly evoked she lingers in the other references to Alice that appear throughout the text. Entering into a disruptive convergence of worlds, Stein's Alice becomes indecipherable from "l'autre Alice, celle du 'pays des merveilles'" (Renaud 765) and also the Alice of Deleuze's *Logique du sens*.

Cadiot's narrator directly references but typically misquotes Deleuze's description of Alice's pure becoming: "Alice, au moment où elle devient plus grande, devient plus petite qu'elle n'était, je l'ai lu, c'est comme ça" (Cadiot 110). Here, instead of growing simultaneously larger than she was and smaller than she *will* be, Alice grows both larger than she was and smaller than she *was*. This misreading of the double direction of becoming expresses not only the narrator's frequent inability to correctly grasp or recall

the concepts that he has studied, but also the more threatening instability of the post-countryside. The transformations of pure becoming are strangely more physically substantial in the virtual— “ce qui est réel sans être actuel” (Game 402) — world of post-countryside, where Alice is somehow actually split and doubled into a smaller and larger Alice, who is simultaneously becoming Alice B. Tocklas. This vague Alice is responsible for linking the impossible worlds of Stein and Carroll’s irreconcilable creations and every reference to *Alice*, throughout the text, simultaneously activates both worlds.

The lapin fluo is another such nomadic figure who embodies the convergence of two vastly different worlds. First, as Michel Gauthier argues, the lapin fluo is a reference to the “GFP Bunny d’Eduardo Kac,” a piece of art presented in 2000 that involved the display of “un lapin vivant qui, grâce aux ressources du génie génétique, se présente avec un pelage vert fluorescent” (Gauthier 97-98). The lapin fluo is an escaped artwork, and Cadiot’s own reference to its realization by an “artiste de labo” (Cadiot 16) corroborates this connection. In this text of intermingling worlds, however, the lapin fluo also belongs, despite Gauthier’s failure to draw the connection, to a very different story and a completely different world. In this second world he is the white rabbit from Wonderland, transformed into a fluorescent green, but still functioning as the initiator of a very strange journey.

The two worlds of Wonderland and the laboratory are present as different variations of the same story that Cadiot’s narrator attempts to recall. The two versions converge, but are never reconciled, in the vague figure of the lapin fluo and, as the narrator confesses, “cette histoire de lapin fluo est beaucoup trop compliquée, c’est juste une image, c’est tout...” (224). This strange image sustains two impossible worlds,

without enforcing their borders, or overwriting their differences with a greater synthesizing narrative. The resulting landscape is both more menacing and more fruitful than either the fantastic world of Wonderland or the artistic laboratory that are loosed within it.

*The Robinson Series*: A world that is present throughout, not only the *Retour* but also many of Cadiot's other novels, is that of Robinson Crusoe. The Robinson of the *Retour*, like that of Cadiot's other text, *Futur, ancien, fugitif*, is always "entre deux milieux, ou entre deux entre-milieux, comme entre deux eaux, entre deux heures, entre chien et loup" (Deleuze in Game 419). Like Cadiot's Alice, Robinson is not simply a transposition of another writer's character: "ce qu'il faut remarquer, c'est qu'à cette superposition de fictions, se joint un mouvement inverse, ironique: le Robinson de *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé* n'est pas 'Robinsonne Cruzou'...Pourtant ce mouvement n'annule pas l'autre" (Renaud 765). The Robinson figure is part of a double movement that does not sustain fixed identities but participates in a nomadic movement between them.

"Depuis Defoe ou Tournier, Robinson est le mythe de la productivité délirante" (Game 410), and it is not the personal characteristics of this figure, but this delirious production and recombination of new possibilities that is of interest to Cadiot. For Cadiot, Robinson is the becoming bricoleur of creating new possibilities out of the wreckage of old identities: "Je suis Robinson...je me suis retrouvé, c'est moi, je suis une vraie personne...Maladie Robinson...je n'ai pas d'idée adéquates, pensées en pièces détachées, mais cette fois-ci il n'y a pas d'île, ni de caisses retrouvées sur la plage avec tout dedans pour tout refaire... Robinsonne Cruzou" (Cadiot 49-50,73, 130). It is the fragmentation or wreckage, not of ships but of memories, thoughts, libraries, language,

and particularly of common sense that plays across the surface of the Robinson series, obtaining previously unimagined affects (Gauthier 26).

The Robinson world is responsible for the irruption of fragments of other worlds throughout the text. “Les références littéraires qui fourmillent dans le *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé*, il faut plutôt les voir comme ces éléments que Robinson – la figure emblématique de l'écrivain et, plus généralement, de l'artiste pour Cadiot – peut récupérer dans l'épave du navire naufragé en vue de construire sa nouvelle vie insulaire” (25). Linked to the creative force of the writer or artist, the Robinson series draws fragments of many other literary worlds into the post-countryside, where they are transformed and entered into new relations. Each fragment “is like a slit or hole through which the entire universe seeps through” (Lambert *Who's Afraid?* 54), therefore, onto the surface of Cadiot's text *seep*, not only the many universes of his own devising, but those belonging to the countless texts that Robinson references. An entire library is implicated in the transformative becomings of the post-countryside. “Effectivement,” writes Gauthier, “le lecteur peut retrouver des bouts de bibliothèque un peu partout dans le texte” (Gauthier 20). Proust, Mallarmé, Beckett and Dickens, among many others, are scattered throughout, each becoming an opening onto the impressions and affects created in their own texts. These are not quotations; Cadiot is not interested in plots or characters, but in passing across thresholds and releasing singularities.

Unlike Carroll's Alice who “unconsciously turns almost every poem she recites into a textbook case of the violence of a capitalist society motivated by survival of the fittest” (Parsons 40), Robinson's readings are not governed by a particular ideological view, but rather produce a release of singularities. Robinson's reference to Dickens'

*Great Expectations*, as only one example among many, emphasizes the insignificance of identities or states of affairs, by not being faithful to the original: “une vieille dame qui garde intact son dîner de mariage. / Futur mari mort le jour même?” (Cadiot 108). The reference passes through Dickens without pausing for accuracy (the future husband is not dead, but has absconded) in order to extract an intense impression of withered regret. This is not the character’s regret or the idea of regret, but the singularity of a regret that belongs to no particular person and that contributes to no greater signification, but that resonates and transforms Cadiot’s text as it inexorably slides from this brief reference into other series.

Racing over the unities of the texts that he references, Robinson produces readings that are “diagonales, aériennes, flottantes, rapides, qui se focalisent sur quelques passages ou quelques éléments pour les prélever, dans l’oubli de leur contexte, lectures perverses donc qui mettent en morceaux les textes qu’elles parcourent” (Gauthier 20). This diagonal movement has nothing to do with common sense, and its fixed identities and worlds; it sweeps them away, subordinating them to difference and dissolving them in its speed.

### **Conclusion:**

Carroll’s Wonderland is threatening and fantastical, but it has a certain coherence and abides by limitations that prevent it from destroying identities altogether. The post-countryside of Cadiot’s novel, by contrast, is littered with the remains of unfinished thoughts and references that playfully produce sense, but never cohere as the common

sense that is foundational for unified identities. Cadiot's post-countryside is a space in which disruption and creation combine in order to prevent the event from being "trop vite recouvert par la banalité quotidienne ou, au contraire, par les souffrances de la folie" (LS 290). The subject of common sense is, however, disturbed, though to different extents, by the play of worlds initiated by both writers.

### Ch. 3 Word Play

*"When I use a word...it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less."*

*-Humpty Dumpty*

*(Carroll 185)*

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The subject is organized in and by language and therefore transformations in the language that the subject uses, encounters and is immersed in produce corresponding changes in the structures of the subject itself. A language that participates in common sense names and orders; it both puts in order, organizing subjects and their world according to the relationships and structures that its logic presupposes, and it commands, ordering that the subject obey its rules and grammar. In this sense, "JE est un mot d'ordre" (MP 107), a word that organizes, limits and confines movements and differences in order to generate the subject that it refers to. Far from Humpty Dumpty's claim to absolute mastery over language, the subject is bound by "inescapable frontiers, which are disclosed by language" (Lecercle 74). Male and female, self and other, yours and mine, too young and too old are only some of the endless limitations that are internalized by the subject through language. The subject is also organized into a consistent *I*, which traverses all of its past, present and future actions, by "language [that]...allows me to recognize myself as a subject in action, not just the locus of action" (Brusseau 34). Fixing meaning and restricting identities, the language of common sense creates recognizable, self-identical and unified subjects.

When language begins to play, however, it begins to mean more, less, and something else entirely than intended and these static unities become unsettled – they



cease to reproduce common sense and begin to create, such that “the subject [that] is nothing outside the order of language by which it has been formed” (Lecerle 58) is correspondingly transformed.

Creating a language that plays beyond the bounded identities of common sense, both writers draw on anomaly, ambiguity and ambivalence, which form the underside of common sense’s unified identities, in order to overturn the categories that it seeks to maintain. Each of these elements describes a particular elusion of the delimitations of bounded identities:

The anomalous stands between the categories of an existing classification system; it threatens the integrity of text and context by being neither one nor the other. The ambiguous is that which cannot be defined in terms of any given category; it threatens the integrity of individual categories, being ‘either this or that or something else.’ The ambivalent is that which belongs to more than one domain at a time and will not fix its identity in any one member of this set of domains; it is ‘both this and that’ (Stewart 61)

Accenting the fault lines inherent in the logic of language, Carroll plays with anomaly, ambiguity and ambivalence to expose the paradoxes that common sense seeks to exclude. Carroll demonstrates not only how language generates the identities of common sense, but also exposes the inherent illogic that it suppresses in order to do so. His play reintegrates this excluded nonsense and, in doing so, disturbs the structures of the subject.

Cadiot, on the other hand, does not only play with elements within the greater system of language, he puts language itself into play. His play moves language into an anomalous dimension outside of the boundaries of signification, manifestation and

denotation, where fluid becomings replace static identities. The ambiguous shifts between levels of meaning, produced by Cadiot, occur at the level of the text as a whole and not in isolated incidents of misunderstanding. Finally, unlike Carroll's safer play, the movement and rhythms of difference that Cadiot releases from the organizations of common sense enter the text into an ambivalent becoming between text and music, in which the subject is swept outside of its protective boundaries.

Carroll and Cadiot are able to employ language to overcome the limitations of the very order of common sense that it normally sustains because it is "langage qui fixe les limites...mais c'est lui aussi qui outrepassé les limites" (LS 11). Able both to order and to disorder, language can be deployed in playful experimentations as a transformative force, without risking the total destruction of the identities it once organized.

### **Anomaly: Neither *this* Nor *that***

Anomalous elements that do not conform to the categories of common sense pose a threat to the stability of the organizations that seek to order difference and confine it to unified identities. Existing between supposedly exhaustive categories, these anomalies expose the insufficiencies of the totalizing order that sustains the subject. By playfully dwelling on and in this space between identities, Carroll and Cadiot disrupt the supposed unity of the subject. While Carroll's anomalous word play highlights gaps in the language of common sense by focusing on elements that do not participate in any fixed category, Cadiot's *Retour définitif et durable de l'être aimé* carries language as a whole into an

anomalous in between, which is outside of the categories of signification, denotation, and manifestation.

**Carroll's Word Play:** For Carroll, "language itself is a gamelike system of reciprocally accepted terms and rules, arbitrary, meaningful only by social agreement" (Blake 16). By revealing the elements that these rules cannot account for, he illustrates the inherent uncertainties that this *social agreement* represses in order to facilitate the indefinite continuation of the game. Replacing this restrictive, ruled order with a more open explorative form of play, Carroll focuses on the "nonsense of language" that "steps outside the system of what common sense deems acceptable," and "expose[s] common sense for what it is – a constraint upon an inherently illogical and lively language" (Parsons 47). The subject, who is confined by the rules of organizational language, is also released into this lively play of a language that moves outside of common sense.

In Carroll's text language does not operate as a descriptive mechanism, but reflects critically on itself, and undermines the identities that its logic usually protects. "Refusing to serve as the 'mirror of nature,'" this illogical language "thrives in the delirious space of the looking-glass world in which it no longer 're-presents' but mocks its very foundations and speaks on its own against theoretical conventions, rules, and codes" (Schwab 158). The Red Queen, for example, creates meaning out of nonsensical phrases that neither belong to the logical realm of common sense, nor succumb to non-meaning. When the Queen says to Alice: "'When you say 'hill,' ...I could show you hills in comparison with which you'd call that a valley'" (Carroll 138), she creates a

paradoxical way of seeing both the landscape and language itself. Although Alice attempts to resist this illogical transformation of her world, exclaiming, “a hill *ca 'n' t* be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense...,” she fails to restore language to the confines of its well-ordered dichotomies or to retrieve the lost identities of common sense, and the Queen’s reply, “You may call it ‘nonsense’ if you like...but *I've* heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!” (139), further disrupts the logic that Alice wishes to reinstate.

While “language provides the terms and meanings with which to establish and divide the world into human beings and animals, nature and society” (Albrecht-Crane 122), synonyms and antonyms, *hills* and *valleys*, in the Queen’s language these categories and identities are contaminated by the creation of anomalous meanings. Releasing the volatile illogic inherent in language, the Queen’s comments are not simply invented gibberish. Her “nonsensical statement is as sensible as the dictionary, for the dictionary...is highly nonsensical” (Parsons 12). The dictionary that defines and delimits fixed identities is challenged and, failing to repress the disruptive play that the Queen initiates, Alice is left shaken and unsure of herself.

Similarly, when the Mock Turtle and the Gryphon sympathetically use phrases that Alice commonly uses, declaring her adventures to be *very curious* and *uncommon nonsense*, they further destabilize the shared logic of common sense because any sense that is *common* to a little girl and to these strange fantastical creatures must, Alice suspects, be very nonsensical indeed (Carroll 89, 91). In another context these words would reassure Alice, but the fantastical nature of these creatures becomes the text that she warily engages with and it is an anomalous text that belongs to no familiar categories.

“The fact that the two creatures, openly marked by their names and identities as fictive constructs, use Alice’s favorite terms to describe Wonderland compounds the linguistic confusion, marking a final, complete mockery of Alice’s above-ground assumptions about the validity of language” (Rackin 61), and she is forced to acknowledge that language can both secure meanings and enter them into anomalous spaces that depose them.

Finally, Carroll’s texts initiate a play between the materiality of language and its production of sense. “Caring more about sounds than sense,” Carroll “begins to free the materiality of language from meaning and reference” (Schwab 157), allowing each word to play in an anomalous space between sound and meaning. The delicious sounds of a nonsense poem, like *Jabberwocky*, participate fully in neither abstract sense nor pure sound. While words like *brillig*, *slithy*, *gyre*, *vorpal*, *manxome*, and *uffish*, create a “wordplay...[that] thankfully release[s] a person from the tiresome requirement of having to make sense all the time, returning him to the joyous mode of childhood when he was allowed to experiment with gurgles, rhythms, and sounds with no regard for logical sense” (Bates 77), they do so without themselves exhibiting a complete disregard for sense. Carroll does not dissolve language entirely into sounds and shapes, but plays in a space between that exposes the uneasy relationship between a word, its sound, and its meaning that common sense attempts to naturalize. The joyous play of sounds and the “bombardment of words and sounds [that]...devastates the ‘self’” (Parsons 21) exist in tension in Carroll’s texts, never participating wholly in either an entirely non-threatening play or complete destruction.

Alice's struggle to locate and fix meanings is repeatedly frustrated by the anomalous play between sound and sense initiated by the fantastic characters that she encounters. The illogic of common sense's arbitrary assignment of a meaning to a sound that is entirely unrelated to it, is exposed by the alternative logic expressed by characters such as Humpty Dumpty. Arguing that the name *Alice* means nothing at all, Humpty Dumpty challenges the identity that Alice believes to be safeguarded by her own particular name:

‘My *name* is Alice, but—‘It’s a stupid name enough!’ Humpty Dumpty interrupted impatiently. ‘What does it mean?’ ‘*Must* a name mean something?’ Alice asked doubtfully. ‘Of course it must,’ Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh ‘*my* name means the shape I am—and a good handsome shape it is too. With a name like yours, you might be any shape, almost.’ (Carroll 181)

Her name, that cornerstone of her identity that Alice repeatedly attempts to secure throughout both of her adventures, *means* nothing and, being entirely arbitrary, bears no resemblance to her. Unlike Humpty Dumpty, whose name *means the shape* he, is or “the Jubjub bird, whose name implies that it repeats a word until its meaning lies in shreds,” the sound of the name *Alice* conjures no immediate associations. (Huxley 62) The logic of common sense is upset and Alice's belief in a strong relationship between herself and her name, which subsumes and unites her past, present and future exploits under one overarching identity, is thoroughly weakened.

Carroll uses a subversive language that reintroduces excluded anomalies into the order of common sense. By interrupting the organizations that protect stable identities, Carroll's play threatens Alice's sense of self, “but its subversion is more peaceable and

playful than violently anarchic” (25) and so the language that protects and structures Alice’s identity is not destroyed, but restored at the end of the game.

**Passing to the Other Side:** Cadot’s linguistic play propels language into unrestrained sliding and catches it up in irrepressible stuttering, causing it to *pass to the other side*, into the chaotic, unpredictable, anomalous space between the constants of common sense. Passing through unities into difference, Cadot’s language begins to create rather than order and communicate. By “subvert[ing] phonetic, syntactic and semantic conventions,” Cadot, like Carroll, “activate[s] lines of continuous variation that are immanent within language” (Bogue DL 5). Cadot’s disruptions, however, are not limited to the safe space of a strictly delimited game and resultantly they present a more permanent threat to the identities of common sense.

Cadot’s writing creates a “discours affolé qui ne cesserait de glisser sur ce à quoi il renvoie” (LS 10) and the panicked sliding of a language that is entered into unconstrained play causes the text to participate in the *second dimension* of language, which is discussed by Deleuze in *Logique du sens*. No longer adhering to the rules of the first dimension, “celle des choses limitées et mesurées, des qualités fixes, qu’elles soient permanentes ou temporaires, mais toujours supposant des arrêts comme des repos, des établissements de présents, des assignations de sujets,” Cadot’s text participates in the second dimension of “un pur devenir sans mesure, véritable devenir-fou qui ne s’arrête jamais....” (9). He draws language into an anomalous *in between* that escapes the

categories of manifestation, denotation and signification, where it enters a state of pure becoming:

Une meute de chiens glisse, dans une houle noire et blanche  
d'aboiements légers pygmées, Kiddi, Kiddam, Kooki, Khôl,  
Keen-keen, Kaaki, Kook, ça cavale.

À la poursuite d'un renard mauve.

Dans le halo brûlant qu'on se fait au fond des yeux, dans l'autre  
sens, sur l'écran noir en soi qu'on regarde dans l'autre sens, j'ai  
vu le lapin fluo, acide dans noir total, faisant ses affaires, comme  
une étoile sur un champ cosmos, petit goût de fer sur la langue,  
batterie acide dans les prés.

Il neige. (Cadiot 19)

Like the imagined pack of dogs, Cadiot's writing slides in a black and white swell over the page. The sense of each fragment is imprecisely differentiated from the next, blurring at the edges in a flux of indistinct meanings that destabilize signification, denotation, and manifestation. Propositions that are "limited to denotation, manifestation, and signification, rely on common sense," that is to say, they rely on "static ideas that 'everyone knows'" (Poxon 67). Cadiot's passage does not make use of static ideas to facilitate immediate recognition and comprehension. Instead it plays in anomalous spaces between signification, manifestation and denotation, creating possibilities for meaning that are not limited to reference, recognition, universal ideas, or a subject that expresses itself.

Amorphous and indeterminate, the *state of affairs* denoted by these fragments disrupts the referential capacity of language. By slipping outside of the clear correlation between word and thing that characterizes denotation, this passage plays between the



identities of common sense, refusing to adhere to their boundaries. “Logiquement, la désignation a pour critère et pour élément le vrai et le faux” (LS 23), that is, it indicates a concrete absence or presence in the state of affairs. The sequence of a pack of dogs, an imagined cry, an inner screen, a lapin fluo, and the taste of battery acid, meld true and false in an anomalous mass of partially selected images.

Furthermore, always seen *dans l'autre sens*, the greater significations of these images, actions, and figures are entirely indeterminate. These fragments produce sense, but “la signification n’est pas le sens: elle est le rapport entre signifiés connus tandis que le sens est un effet, un exprimé, c’est-à-dire un devenir (une échappée hors du sens rigidifié) rendu perceptible et sensible” (Game 414). The becomings created in this excerpt glide across the page and while images, affects and powerful impressions are released in their wake, no “concepts *universels ou généraux*” (LS 24) arise from their passing.

Signification is further disrupted by the material contours of words that begin to impinge on the smooth production of meaning. Cadiot’s language begins to stutter, rather than signify. This stuttering “ne tient pas dans la répétition d’un seul et même phonème, mais à celle d’un même phonème à qui est ajouté un autre phonème, lui toujours différent: prolifération” (Game 413). The series: *Kiddi, Kiddam, Koki, Khôl, Keen-Keen, Kaaki, Kook* voices both the howls of the pack of dogs and the movement of the text. It enacts a playful stuttering in which “contrairement à ce qui se passe dans une syntaxe normale les disjonctions ne sont pas exclusives” (413). The process of sustaining and “internalizing the frontiers, learning to distinguish between bodies (mine and others), between sounds (‘pig’ and ‘fig’), between what the norm allows and what it does not”

(Lecerclé 74), is disrupted. Sounds begin to blur into one another and the normally exclusive disjunctions that draw borders between sounds such as ‘pig’ and ‘fig’ are transgressed. Instead of a particular identity being assigned to a fixed sound, “plusieurs mots partagent le même phonème” and are not “sélectionnés ou déconnectés mais assemblés sans ordre apparent” (Game 413). This non-selection of words makes it impossible to draw universal significations from the chaotic proliferation of metamorphosing sounds. Playing with the material possibilities of language, instead of generating general concepts and fixed identities, the “sens du passage tient plus à son mouvement qu’à son signifié ou à son référent” (414). The identities that are sustained by signification are lost in an anomalous flow of undefined intensities.

Finally, manifestation becomes unstable when the narrator’s voice slides into an anomalous space between his own expression and that of the text itself. In reference to the phrase *Il neige*, quoted above, Gauthier writes, “Certes, l’histoire narrée met en scène son narrateur sur un balcon alors qu’il neige. Pourtant, il n’est pas permis au lecteur d’ignorer la capacité de ces deux mots, en pareille position intercalaire, à représenter... la neige typographique qui troue le texte fragmentaire” (Gauthier 38-39). *Il neige* is the expression neither of a voice within the text, nor of the text itself, but a strange enunciation that plays between the two. Stable manifestation, along with the confident *I* of the speaking subject, are lost to an indistinct murmur that issues from this anomalous space between narrator and text. Signification, denotation and manifestation are playfully disrupted in this passage. Releasing creative flows from static identities, Cadot attacks the structures of common sense through his play, but without causing them to disintegrate into meaningless chaos from which no further becomings could be extracted.

Beyond escaping the limitations of signification, denotation and manifestation, Cadiot's transgression of the rules of punctuation sets language in motion and contributes to the loss of unified identities. Lecercle writes, "each rule of grammar draws a borderline between what can and what cannot be said. Crossing the frontier, then, is just breaking the rule..." (Lecercle 71). Cadiot does not just break rules; he plays with them, accelerating language until it is in a continual process of crossing frontiers, passing into the anomalous space between the categories of common sense. In the passage: "On peut redescendre dans le noir en arrière, chercher les lumières au fond, grande pièce, hésitantes flammes sur mur, autour c'est noir, sauf des demi-visages, robes blanches pour accrocher lumière, choc d'assiettes et rires loin..." (Cadiot 254) rather than eliminating periods, he transforms them into commas. The comma, "qui coupe et lie à la fois, sépare et joint, dans un mouvement incessant" (Renaud 772), causes language to playfully dance between stops and flows, producing a fragmented, sliding expanse of lower case letters. The unstable surfaces of these fragments create "les mouvements ou les devenirs rebelles" (LS 10) that escape the categories of common sense. The play between dark and light, blackness and flames, the silence of the dark and clattering plates, combine and recombine such that "meaning proliferates, in short threads that can hardly manage to weave a coherent text: there is no totality, no guarantee, and the field is never closed" (Lecercle 70-71).

In the organizations of common sense "les constantes sont tirées des variables elles-mêmes" (MP 130), but Cadiot's use of language returns the constants to variables by playing over their frontiers and moving language into an anomalous space where singularities escape strictly defined identities. Half-faces and white dresses no longer

belong or refer to unified subjects or objects; they slip across the commas that divide them into rebel becomings with hesitant flames and distant laughter. The movements that common sense arrests are released and these impressions meld and intermingle in the darkness, transformed into a single intense matter of pure becoming. The partial faces, noises, lights, and objects of this passage participate in an anomalous flow of escaped singularities.

Cadiot's language creates an unbounded play that escapes the limits of manifestation, denotation, signification and punctuation, transforming the identities sustained by these organizations. Stuttering and sliding across the frontiers that confined its movements, his language draws the subject of common sense into disarticulations and new becomings in an anomalous space between identities.

**Ambiguity: *Either this, Or that Or something else***

Disordering common sense by making words play on multiple levels of meaning, Carroll and Cadiot exploit and exaggerate the ambiguity inherent in language in order to free their play from the constraints of static identities. Between the literal and the metaphorical, the sense producing and the material, the colloquial and the self-reflexive elements of language, Carroll creates a play of words that disrupts and blurs the boundaries of each of these categories. These unexpected shifts expose the ambiguity of words that can often mean, "either this or that, or something else" (Stewart 61). Whereas the illicit slips between levels described in Carroll's texts are humorously self-evident, frustrating rather than destroying Alice, Cadiot's linguistic play is unmarked and

unrestricted. His text moves between the referential, reflexive, and material qualities of language in an undifferentiated play between levels that radically disrupts static identities.

**Carroll Creates Confusion:** Carroll's wordplay reveals the instability and imprecision of the borders that purportedly enclose each word's particular meaning. He exploits the ambiguity of any word capable of producing more than one meaning and, amid the shifting boundaries that his play discloses, the identity of the subject can no longer be strictly delimited.

Slips between the literal and metaphorical levels of language are responsible for many of the confusions between Alice and the creatures that she encounters. For example, "the exchange between the White King and Alice, in *Through the Looking Glass*, is halted by a continual movement from the metaphorical to the literal level" (79). Alice and the King, never quite meeting in mutual understanding, always inadvertently slip into the ambiguity of the other's words: "'I see nobody on the road,' said Alice. 'I only wish *I* had such eyes,' the King remarked in a fretful tone. 'To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too! Why, it's as much as I can do to see real people, by this light!'" (Carroll 195). From Alice's *nobody*, to the King's *Nobody* a playful shift takes place that not only confuses their conversation, but makes the distinction between *real people* and an absence personified as *Nobody*, quite uncertain. This linguistic play between levels of meaning creates a communicative impasse that isolates and destabilizes Alice's already fragile identity and challenges her aboveground common sense.

Similarly, a slip in levels of meaning occurs when Alice's colloquial use of *beg*, to express her desire for clarification, " 'I beg your pardon?', " is mistaken for literal begging by the King who replies, " 'It isn't respectable to beg" (195). The ambiguity of the word *beg* causes Alice's identity to momentarily slip into that of a beggar.

It is not only the King who fails to understand the correct level of speech; Alice also has trouble avoiding the pitfalls of ambiguity. When the King produces the simile: " 'It went through and through my head like an earthquake!'" Alice can only think, " 'It would have to be a very tiny earthquake" (Carroll 197) and so their communicative troubles continue. Throughout their exchanges the narrator repeats phrases such as "all this was lost on Alice" and "the King remarked simply, without the least idea that he was joining in the game..." (197), humorously revealing the tendency for language to elude the control of both speaker and listener.

When language begins to play and the ambiguity inherent in words is unleashed, it rapidly becomes very difficult to adhere to either the March Hare's stricture: "you should say what you mean," or Alice's rejoinder, "at least I mean what I say" (195, 58). Neither the *I* of manifestation, nor the meaning it seeks to express are assured when language plays with its own ambiguities. The collision between the metaphorical and the literal levels of language, therefore, leaves the constituting subject lost in a jumble of words and meanings that are said but not meant, and not meant to be said.

Alice's encounter with the White Queen is no less confusing. Carroll plays with the word *ca'n't* destabilizing common sense by establishing its meaning as either participating in Alice's reference to the logical impossibility of believing something she

knows to be untrue, and the Queen's use that refers to an *inability* that she genuinely tries to help Alice overcome: "'I ca'n't believe *that!*' ... 'Ca'n't you?' the Queen said in a pitying tone. 'Try again: draw a long breath, and shut your eyes.' Alice laughed. 'There's no use trying...one *ca'n't* believe impossible things'... 'sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast'" (Carroll 173). The Queen's ability to understand impossible things is shared by language, which, despite the claim of common sense that language produces the unambiguous communication of meaning, can equally sustain either the impossible or the possible.

Another example of Carroll's play with the ambiguity inherent in language is the duck who, interrupting the mouse's tale, demands to know what *it* means. When the mouse says: "the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable—," the confused duck asks, "Found *what?*...I know what 'it' means well enough, when *I* find a thing...it's generally a frog or a worm. The question is what did the archbishop find?" (20). Here the duck illustrates "Wonderland's destructive strategy," which "instead of contradicting the validity of human constructs and conventions by simply carrying on without them... manages in the very act of using them to be far more subversive..." (Rackin 44). By making language reflect on itself the duck "implicitly puts above-ground linguistic assumptions to the test by asking language to do what is finally impossible: to be constantly unambiguous" (44).

Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world are both characterized by a nonsensical play that does not result in the elimination of sense, but instead overburdens every word with many possible senses, without providing a system for deciding which is appropriate. "Nonsense can be defined accordingly not as a lack of sense... but as a collision of

systems of meaning—a collision that invites a new relationship between the involved systems or even causes them to collapse” (Schwab 158). Alice’s disconcerting loss of control over language and her growing realization of its irrepressible ambiguity, upsets her sense of dominance over herself and over her meanings.

Not only relying on playful misunderstandings to highlight the indistinct quality of words, Carroll exposes the profound ambiguity that arises from the reflexive quality of language, which requires the use of a new word each time the *sense* of a word is to be stated. Because no one word can say its own sense, but requires another to clarify it, the possibility of an infinite regress threatens language’s ability to produce unambiguous meanings. The song of the White Knight is the most poignant example of Carroll’s use of this ambiguity to create humorous wordplays:

‘The name of the song is called ‘*Haddocks’ Eyes*.’ ‘Oh, that’s the name of the song, is it?’... ‘No, you don’t understand,’ ... ‘That’s what the name is *called*. The name really *is* ‘*The Aged Aged Man*.’ ‘Then I ought to have said ‘That’s what the *song* is called?’... “No, you oughtn’t: that’s quite another thing! The *song* is called ‘*Ways and Means*’: but that’s only what it’s *called*, you know!’... ‘Well, what *is* the song then?’... ‘The song really *is* ‘*A-sitting On a Gate*’... So saying, he stopped his horse and let the reins fall on its neck... (Carroll 213)

The confused play between a word and its sense utterly unnerves Alice, who repeatedly fails to grasp the sense of the Knight’s speech. This continual slippage between levels of sense problematizes clear communication. The vaporous shifting reality created by a network of words that endlessly refer to one another provides no solid foundation for the construction of fixed identities. Carroll consciously plays with the unsettling fact that, “je ne dis jamais le sens de ce que je dis” (LS 41), that *my* meanings always exist beyond my



control in a precarious system of other words. Carroll's play makes "each word the site of struggle and upheaval" (Parsons 28), because the presupposed sense of words such as *name*, *called*, and *is* are entered into playful slips between levels of meanings, causing senseless confusion to ensue.

The infinite regress that threatens in this passage is controlled, however, because "Carroll s'est volontairement limité, puisqu'il ne tient même pas compte de chaque strophe en particulier, et puisque sa présentation progressive de la série lui permet de se donner un point de départ arbitraire" (LS 43). Carroll does not want the ambiguity of language to be carried to an entirely destructive conclusion. Always threatening Alice's identity with his wordplays, he ultimately protects her from a complete disruption of language.

Carroll's play between the different levels of language, which are normally differentiated through tacit agreement, draws out the ambiguity that constantly threatens the production of clear meaning. The subject emerges as an unsteady construct of this uncertain landscape of meanings, rather than the self-evident, unified entity privileged by common sense. The play that Carroll initiates, however, is always limited to an isolated example of such instability and is never permitted to affect language in its entirety.

**Cadiot's Unmarked Play between Levels:** Sliding seamlessly between levels of meaning, Cadiot's play causes language itself, rather than a particular expression, to become *this or that or something else*. The text's unmarked play between descriptions of events and characters, reflections on its own movements, and the production of strange

combinations of sense and sounds, causes its meanings to always remain indeterminate and unfixed. While often humorous, the uncertainty produced by a language inundated by such ambiguous shifts presents a more ominous threat to the formation and preservation of a self-identical *I* than that posed by Carroll.

Either reflecting on its own movement or describing the actions and passions of a *je* belonging to Robinson, the language of the following excerpt invents a game, a *sport* in its own words, out of an unrestrained play between movement and meaning: “Je glisse, je bouge sans cesse, ils croient que je danse, j’esquive, jeu de jambes infime, ffft-fft, déplacement, droite, hop, glisser, hop, c’est mon sport, en avant, je m’appuie sur les basses profondes au fond de la musique./ Je glisse” (Cadiot 35). The boundaries between Robinson’s physical body and its ability to produce sense, and between the language of the text and the physical presence of its ‘body’ on the page, are entered into ambiguous exchanges and transformations. Form and content begin to mix, and a Deleuzian “mutual becoming-other of multiple bodies engaged in unpredictable unshapings and reshapings of one another” (Bogue DW 14) is initiated.

The narrator’s body becomes a text of escape that is misread by the other partygoers as an expression of his eager complicity in their festivities. Robinson, however, has slipped into a realm where bodies and sounds enter into mutual becomings, instead of simply dancing, he produces “des lettres à la vitesse du son avec [s]on corps” (Cadiot 261). The sliding *je...je... je... j’e... jeu* describes “un changement de depuis l’intérieur d’un mot; plutôt qu’une modification organisée de depuis l’extérieur” (Game 413) that evokes, not only the rhythmic flux of the dancing text, but also the ambiguous metamorphosing passage of the subject from the confines of a rigid *I*, into a space of play

between ambiguous identities. This transformation of Robinson's *je* into the *jeu* of uninhibited creation arises from the linguistic play that makes indeterminate the boundaries of common sense.

Beyond communicating abstract meanings, this body of text produces both visual and audible affects. Visually, this series of fragments develops in a rhythmic cascade of short phrases or even single words that are separated only by commas. While the onomatopoeia *ffft-ffft* causes the text to become audibly expressive, simultaneously evoking the sounds of moving limbs, and of rapidly passing words. Such "onomatopées, qui miment, sous les phrases, ou entre elles, le bruit rapide des choses, le sens concentré des gestes, les passages et les disparitions" (Renaud 773) continually undermine the ordering language of common sense. An irresolvable play between language as "systematic... separated from any physical or material origin... an instrument of control, mastered by a regulating subject..." and "material language," which "is unsystematic, a series of noises... not meant to promote communication..." (Lecerle 44) is developed. The regulating subject of systematic language is unseated and its disruption is not safely contained by the limited space of a traditional game, as in Carroll, but it is not destroyed altogether.

Transforming language into sounds and movements, and the subject into expressive intensities, this passage "unexpectedly mixes expression and content in a single intense matter" (Hayden 98). Rather than adhering to the delimitations of common sense, both Cadiot's language, which slips out of communication and into dancing proliferations of meaning, and his narrator, who begins to produce creative articulations

with his body, cross the frontiers that the categories of common sense seek to restrict them to, becoming *this or that or something else*.

Cadiot further induces ambiguous plays between meanings by using “la forme impersonnelle du verbe qu’est l’infinitif” (Gauthier 90) to create “le moi non-figuratif, non-substantiel, de Robinson” (Game 410). Without “imposing subjective or objective co-ordinates” (Boundas WD 6), the infinitive verb, by “retracting every specific declension” (Brusseau 69), allows Cadiot’s language to elude the identities and restrictive temporal framework of common sense. He creates a Deleuzian language of becoming that “insists the action exists on its own, it exists before the first person singular, the third person plural, and the rest” (69). The subject, as an agent or source of meaning becomes superfluous in the free evental movement of the unfettered verb that creates unconstrained, ambiguous meanings.

In many examples of Cadiot’s most prominent use of the infinitive, *Ajouter ici*, there is a double refusal to refer to a particular subject:

Ajouter ici une histoire vraie à propos de gens qui aiment leur vache jusqu’à leur tisser des couvertures sur mesure... Ajouter ici la même impression que le jour où il faudra aller chercher le vieux sac rempli des dernières affaires portées le jour de la mort de quelqu’un...Ajouter l’idée de quelqu’un qui pourrait être ma soeur... (Cadiot 9,14, 31)

First, the infinitive eludes all reference to a subject to whom the conjugated verb would refer, and second, indefinite references like *gens*, and *quelqu’un* participate in “an impersonal mode of enunciation which is not a generality but a singularity: *a man, a woman, a child*” (Marks 125). And this impersonal mode releases the differences and

singularities that were *stopped, measured* and confined to the boundaries of the subject of common sense.

The absence of the personal pronoun is not just “un manque,” that allows language to move more quickly, “mais un vide ou une ellipse qui font que l’on contourne une constante sans s’y engager...” (MP 132). Cadiot’s language does not directly attack constants but playfully evades them. Confrontation would require that he restrict his language to the tempo of the structures that he seeks to attack, always risking the recovery of fixed identities. By sliding over constants Cadiot creates a language in which “tout le figé, le vieux, l’inerte...s’anime, glisse, s’envole” (Renaud 774). He enters language into a pure becoming from which no fixed identities can be recuperated because when “les substantifs et adjectifs se mettent à fondre, quand les noms d’arrêt et de repos sont entraînés par les verbes de pur devenir et glissent dans le langage des événements, toute identité se perd pour le moi, le monde et Dieu” (LS 11).

### **Ambivalent Word Play: *this* And *that***

Participating simultaneously in two distinct categories of meaning, the ambivalence that Carroll and Cadiot explore in the language of their texts creates the final disruption of language and consequently of the subject that will be examined here. Carroll’s puns and portmanteau words upset the organizations of common sense by participating in multiple categories of meaning and refusing to be limited to a single fixed identity. Cadiot’s play with ambivalence, on the other hand, enters language into a

transformative *becoming musical* that not only participates in more than one category of meaning, but also blurs and disrupts the frontiers that separate them.

**Carroll's Puns and Portmanteaus:** Once again Carroll's play moves between a daring release of chaos and a return to the confined parameters of a game that is not allowed to permanently alter the order of common sense. Each pun and portmanteau participates in both the disorder of multiple meanings, and the possibility of reaffirming order through interpretation. Similarly, the subject is strained between the disarticulations threatened by disruptive wordplays and the ability to *make sense* of puns and portmanteaus and thereby reconstitute ordered meaning.

Puns are responsible for many of Alice's frustrations in Wonderland and the Looking-Glass realm. Here, instead of ambiguous slips between the metaphorical, literal, colloquial etc. levels of a word or phrase, the double meanings of a single word are responsible for humorous confusions. "A pun subverts the one-to-one relation between signifier (*bat*) and signified (a bald, flying mouse or a stout piece of wood for hitting balls)" (Bates 141), allowing for a double meaning that reveals the ambivalence of language. The denizens of Carroll's fantastic worlds continuously succumb to the miscommunications inherent in puns. Alice's "conversations are continually halted by puns, by a splitting of the discourse into two simultaneous and disparate paths, each followed by a respective member of the conversation" (Stewart 161). Through the Hatter's punning on beating time, which he personifies as an injured party, or the mouse's pun on a dry story and a physically dry body, to offer only a few examples,

Alice repeatedly becomes lost in the ambivalent language of the characters that she converses with. This punning results in linguistic disruptions that greatly upset the *I* that she strives to secure.

As though to indicate that “puns show language to be mobile and friable, and not just sporadically – in isolated spots of trouble – but, potentially, all the time” (Bates 78) Carroll does not isolate the punning tendency of language to the characters of his fantastic worlds, Alice herself often succumbs to the punning possibilities of words. Mistaking the mouse’s *tale* for his *tail* and *not* for a *knot*, Alice inadvertently upsets the sense of the Mouse’s tale: “‘I had *not!*’ cried the mouse, angrily. ‘A knot!’ Said Alice, always ready to make herself useful...” Alice not only confuses, but enrages the speaker, who declares: “‘You insult me by talking such nonsense!’” (Carroll 24). The unintentional punning and misunderstandings of even the staid Alice show that there are no *isolated* linguistic uncertainties, but that they are everywhere, endangering the meaning of an unsuspecting subject. By causing order-loving Alice to be accused of talking nonsense, Carroll illustrates that ambivalence is proper to language itself, and not just a result of the subversive techniques employed by his absurd characters.

The disruptive potential of this gesture is curtailed, however, by Carroll’s frequent italicization of the punning word, which ensures that the reader, who can correctly interpret the play that it instigates, does not overlook it. This measure retrieves meaning from ambivalence because, “to get a pun is to redeem its meaning, to find a sense underlying the apparent nonsense...It is to bring the world over from meaninglessness and restore it to meaning” (24). While Alice and the creatures that she encounters rarely *get* the puns that they experience, and so fail to immediately restore order within their world,

Carroll is careful to ensure that order is restored through the reader who *gets* all of the puns.

Alice's identity is profoundly disturbed by being repeatedly caught in the ambivalence of words that simultaneously participate in too many meanings. When she finally rejects Wonderland and the Looking-Glass world and the game comes to an end, however, these punning proliferations are also suppressed and Alice is no longer troubled by recalcitrant meanings.

The portmanteau words invented by Carroll instigate an even more wily kind of word play because they do not rely only on the ambivalence already present in language, but augment this ambivalence by creating new opportunities for words to participate in too many meanings. In this space of shifting and proliferating meaning, the organization of the subject becomes profoundly unstable. These words are not only a meeting point, where multiple *signifieds* converge on a single *signifier*; rather they produce "la coordination de deux ou plusieurs séries hétérogènes" (LS 61). In Carroll's *Jabberwocky poem*, the portmanteaus which, "contractant plusieurs mots et enfermant plusieurs sens" (60-61) coordinate different series of meaning, through such combinations as "four p.m./broiling, lithe/slimy, badgers/lizards/ corkscrews" (Bogue DL 26), participate in series both of speaking and eating, and incorporeal sense and corporeal bodies. These mischievous inventions unfix meaning and cause it to hesitate between the various possibilities inherent in a word that combines many other unspecified words, and "Carroll expliquait lui-même que les possibilités d'interprétation étaient infinies" (LS 61).



Humpty Dumpty, that *master* of words and their meanings, explains the portmanteau in his interpretation of the *Jabberwocky* poem. Unpacking *slithy*, for example, as follows: “‘*slithy*’ means ‘lithe and slimy.’ “ ‘Lithe’ is the same as ‘active.’ You see it’s like a portmanteau—there are two meanings packed up into one word” (Carroll 186). This interpretation augments the play of this word rather than retrieving its order, *lithe* is not at all the same as active and so, without intending to, Humpty Dumpty has stuffed yet another meaning into this supple word. Even for Humpty Dumpty these sly words slip away from any meaning that one attempts to establish, because “as soon as one tries to unfold the ‘portmanteau’ there is no escaping its escape” (Royle 242). The subject loses control over language and is instead carried away by the movements of its escaping meanings.

It is not a fusion of meanings that is achieved by portmanteau words, but a disjunctive synthesis in which the heterogeneous series that the word brings together coexist in perpetual tension. The *Jabberwocky* combines “deux séries d’objets désignables (animaux consommables) et d’objets porteurs de sens (êtres symboliques ou fonctionnels)” (LS 61). The word *Jabberwocky* is itself, according to Carroll “formé de *wocer* ou *wocor* [from an anglo-saxon word], qui signifie rejeton, fruit, et de *jabber*, qui exprime une discussion volubile, animée, bavarde” (60). Throughout the poem the portmanteaus fold together these opposing series, forcing the eating and speaking function of the mouth into an ambivalent play that is never resolved. The common sense presupposition that there is a natural separation between eating and speaking is challenged and the subject organized according to these distinct categories is unsettled.

In his examination of the words *slithy* and *frumious* however, Deleuze points out that “ces éléments s’organisent facilement dans une seule série pour composer un sens global” (61) and this unified sense is not commensurate with his interpretation of “portmanteaux words as compressed paradoxes” (Lecerle 104). The disjunctive tension of the paradox is seemingly not present but, according to Deleuze “la disjonction nécessaire n’est... pas entre fumant et furieux, car on peut fort bien être les deux ensemble, mais entre fumant-et-furieux d’une part, furieux-et-fumant d’autre part” (LS 62). Portmanteau words arise therefore when it is absolutely impossible to privilege one term even slightly over the other.

In the creative play of a portmanteau, “there is no escape from its insistence that meaning is an *effect* of language, not a presence within or behind language, and that the effect is unstable and uncontrollable” (Attridge, in Royle 242). The subject, therefore, the *I* that seems to so adeptly clothe a particular and unified meaning, is merely an *effect* of language, and one that, as the portmanteau’s exhibit, is *unstable* and *uncontrollable*.

Unlike the pun, the portmanteau cannot be reterritorialized by the order of common sense through interpretation. One can never completely *get* or solve the meanings that they participate in and so they produce a kind of wordplay that escapes the safe boundaries of traditional play. While their rebellious ambivalence does not transform language as a whole, preventing them from completely participating in an unbounded ideal play, these word plays successfully unfix the categories of common sense, disrupting the protective boundaries of the subject and its control over meaning so profoundly that even Humpty Dumpty cannot put them together again.

**Rhythm's Smooth Surface:** Experimenting with the physical and sonorous qualities of words, Cadot's linguistic play augments the rhythmic potential of language in a departure from its signifying and denoting functions. The sound and flow of words begin to participate in the creation of meaning, rather than being subordinated to the transmission of information. Beyond the ambiguous play of the body of language, discussed in the previous section, which moves between expression and dance, the linguistic experiments examined here interrupt common sense by drawing the text as a whole into an ambivalent becoming between text and music. Language accelerates, becomes rhythmic and begins lifting itself off the page in sonorous expressions, undermining the unities of common sense that sought to contain and direct its flow. Not only does Cadot force language to take part in both categories, but at times he seems to overcome the distinctions between them, creating a smooth surface of intermingling singularities.

In participating in both music and writing, Cadot's *Retour* transforms the identity of each.

Both literature and music are experimentations on the real, means of capturing, dissolving and transmuting existing relations of force and then reshaping and reconstructing them in new configurations. Literature works with a linguistic medium, music with a sonic medium, but both engage rhythms and forces that extend through fields that include the discursive and the nondiscursive, the sonic and the nonsonic. (Bogue DW 31)

Cadot stretches language into audible segments that participate in sonic as well as sense producing possibilities. Sweeping away the weighty seriousness of common sense.

Fragments like, “s’aaaaattaquait quelque chose de sééééérieux” (Cadiot 55), produce a resonant stretching that belies the signification of the words. Instead of using language solely for *serious* communication, Cadiot’s *becoming musical* plays with the spelling, transcription, sound, and meanings of words that ‘ought’ to be standard. Playing between a language that mutely signifies and phrases, such as, “Ouin’mor’tai-m” (58), that seem to pronounce themselves aloud, Cadiot makes language falter between designation and pronunciation. The words are stretched and warped in order to sustain a certain rhythm, which is privileged over signification. Furthermore, in this phrase the meaning is not contained in the words themselves, but in the reference to the Daft Punk song that their rhythmic transcription evokes. The text is drawn beyond manifestation, denotation and signification into a realm where it plays itself musically.

Becoming a Deleuzian “théâtre pour de brusques condensations, fusions, changements d’états...,” Cadiot’s text draws language into an ambivalent play that participates equally in different categories of common sense, erasing their borders and causing them to combine “comme lorsque deux liquides se dissolvent l’un dans l’autre” (LS 150). The language of the *Retour* sweeps each fragment, every identity, world and even word across its own thresholds to mix in a smooth space, free of the stops and breaks enforced by common sense. In common use, language “fixes, regularizes and stabilizes forms and meanings...reinforces categories and distinctions that compartmentalize existence...”, whereas the language of the *Retour* reconfigures meaning by “disturbing dominant regularities and setting them in variation” (Bogue DW 23).

Suppressed variations are released in the ambivalent spaces of a language where rigid organizations cannot retain their hold, and a play between impressions, observations, truth, falsity, inside, outside, ensues:

Torchère, tout en bas, spirale de lumière à grande vitesse l'eau devient aussi dure que le ciment, dure<sup>dure</sup> cage d'escalier à vitraux sur cour, capitonné pour étouffer les bruits, 3<sup>e</sup>, maman, morte<sup>morte</sup>, maman<sup>maman</sup>, 2<sup>e</sup>, plus vite, je glisse sur la rampe, spirale, c'est une statue de pierre qui tient la lampe verticale, plante-lampe égale branches<sup>branches</sup> vers le ciel que font mes veines, oh peur<sup>peur</sup>, vitesse, 1<sup>er</sup>, l'eau devient dure, dehors, on y est, jungle qui part d'un coup, choc.

Dehors. (Cadiot 76)

The imagined descent of the narrator reveals an inexorable flow of blurring images: water as hard as cement, a dead mother, a statue, lamps or plants both with branches reaching toward the sky, and a jungle. While the flow of these disconnected images blurs and transgresses the boundaries of common sense, it is through the sliding rhythmic repetitions and higher pitches of the superscript that the passage is transformed into a smooth musical surface where new configurations of the sensible can form. Creating a “jeu d'accents, d'intensités, d'accélération, de coupures...” (Renaud 774), the free movement of intensities transcribed in this passage leaves no room for a self-identical subject, which is swept away by the musical rhythms and pitches of a language that no longer orders, but plays.

The text itself gasps for air in the final *Dehors*, the climactic conclusion to this frenetic passage, which is separated from the main body of writing by a breathless white space. The “alternance, immédiatement sensible (à la fois au regard et au souffle) entre des ‘paragraphes’ (trois à quinze lignes, en gros) et des énoncés brefs (une ligne, voire un

mot), séparés les uns des autres par des blancs,” marks the rhythm, the breaths of the singer, or reader, of this musical text, creating an “alternance respiratoire, sur quoi se fonde le chant, la présence physique du texte” (773). Such fragments do not produce fixed identities or significations, here, “la pensée (la description, l’analyse) est affaire de rythme, non de concepts” (774) and the concept of a unified subject disappears into this rhythmic flux. The ambivalent play of this text, which is at once literary and musical, transforms the subject who can draw no concrete articulation of itself out of the metamorphosing, rhythmic fluxes that have replaced the fixed categories of common sense.

Similarly, the ellipses (...) that Cadot frequently makes use of, increase the ragged pace of his text because “avec ces trois points de suspension entre parenthèses, l’élision absolue du mot est choisie. Ainsi la fiction s’éclipse-t-elle, se virtualise-t-elle pour laisser le champ libre à la motion rythmique” (Gauthier 40-41). Words are silenced in order to further free up space within language for rhythmic developments. For example, in the passage: “Rien, silence, nuit d’un coup, noir. / (...) / Profondeur de champ enfoncée, noir, petit bruit de bêche. / (...) / Il neige?” (Cadot 178), the silence of the night referred to in this fragment is actualized in the dark silence of the passing dots. Marking beats with the rhythmic pulse of these dots, rather than communicating meanings, Cadot’s writing becomes a play between words and sliding silences.

Cadot not only enters the language of his text, but the entire library that he references into this becoming-musical. For “l’écrivain en TJ (text-jockey)...les caisses retrouvées sur le rivage sont pleines de ces vinyles livresques que le ‘technicien en mots’ va pouvoir mixer, soustrayant tels passages, dopant les basses, en modifiant la

vitesse...” (Gauthier 50). Remixing these texts in order to increase the surface area of the ambivalent plane of transformative rhythms that he creates, Cadiot enters them into “a dimension of rhythms, movements, pauses, accelerations and decelerations” (Bogue DW 11). The play he initiates is not confined, it contaminates the entire library that he draws into its transformative becomings.

The danger, here, is that “une erreur de vitesse, de rythme ou d’harmonie serait catastrophique, puisqu’elle détruirait le créateur et la création en ramenant les forces du chaos” (MP 382). Cadiot’s language becomes a smooth rhythmic surface, but this theatre of condensations, fusions and changes of state, the disarticulated forms of common sense can lose control “et rentrer dans le décor” (Cadiot 213). “Given the chance, language is liable to go off in unwarranted and arbitrary directions, to break down into a quagmire of mere sounds” (Bates 78) and this is always the risk that Cadiot runs when he releases language into the *arbitrary directions* of a becoming musical. By proceeding playfully, however, he is able to avoid altogether destroying the stops and controls of common sense. His language of pure becoming does not result in an uncontrolled skidding along the smooth musical surface that he creates, but the inventive production of an ambivalent, shifting combination of text and music that carries the subject across thresholds.

### **Conclusion:**

A language that plays becomes creative rather than communicative. Disrupting the order of common sense, it enters the anomalous, ambiguous and ambivalent elements that are normally suppressed by static identities into new movements and connections.

Carroll's play challenges the unified consistency of the subject by dwelling in the lacunas of common sense. Disordering the organizations that protect the subject from chaotic difference, his play exposes the instability of the closed categories of common sense. While Carroll shows that "language itself is a woefully inadequate construct, a mere 'pack of cards'," he also retrieves order by demonstrating that "it is by this construct that Alice preserves her sanity and identity" (Rackin 65). His play is transgressive, but it is never allowed to become wholly transformative. Alice is always permitted to save herself and to finally reject the language that has become fractious and difficult to manage. In Carroll, "the game is one in which the limitations of our logic, our language, and our way of making sense of the world are exposed, ultimately the limitations of the very foundations of our identities are exposed..." (Parsons 26) but without being entirely rejected.

Inventing a new style, Cadot's linguistic experimentations put language as a whole into play. Allowing for no return, and confining itself to no fixed boundaries, this play poses a profound challenge to common sense because "to overcome the dominant form of thought, we must begin by destroying it stylistically" (Lecerle 172). The ideal play that Cadot's stylistic experimentations induce in language is not just revelatory – it is dangerously transformative and it avoids the annihilation of the subject only because its movements are tremendously creative as well as disruptive. Releasing the stops and pauses that language relies on to organize the subject, Cadot's play sweeps the *I* of common sense across its own thresholds and into new becomings.



## Conclusion: Play and the Work of Art

*“Ce jeu qui n'est que dans la pensée, et qui n'a pas d'autre résultat que l'oeuvre d'art, il est aussi ce par quoi la pensée et l'art sont réels, et troublent la réalité, la moralité et l'économie du monde.” –LS 76*

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Play, as I have endeavored to demonstrate, initiates illicit connections that draw the subject across the thresholds of common sense, and into inventive explorations of new configurations that “do away with: the individual (conceived as a self-identical entity) within a society (conceived as a self-consistent system)” (Massumi 423). The tangential links to the identities of common sense that are formed through play enable the subject to escape the totalizing explanations of identity and recognition, without destroying itself altogether, creating an open “terrain of subjectivity, ceaselessly traveled and to be traveled indefinitely” (Negri 100), instead of the static enclosure of a solitary *I*.

It is in the figure of the child that this disruptive play, capable of resisting subjectification and initiating transformation, is discovered. As Deleuze and Guattari write, “un enfant qui court, qui joue, qui danse, qui dessine, ne peut pas concentrer son attention sur le langage et l'écriture, il ne sera jamais...un bon sujet” (MP 221). The child who, “contrary to the adult, plays in the full light of day, plays openly, and even causes his or her creations to transform the external world of perception” (Lambert 145), continually escapes the structures of common sense, threatening fixed identities in an exuberant disregard for their boundaries. This is why the ingenuous, unreserved play of Carroll's Alice forms the point of departure for Deleuze's *Logique du sens*. It is through his exploration of the exploits of this creative child that he begins to map the possibilities of ideal play, as resistance and creation. In Carroll's texts, as we have seen, Alice is the

point of convergence for a play that experiments with alternatives to fixed identities, inventing new roles and worlds, and discovering a liveliness in language that undermines the staid logic and communications of common sense, but this play, like the child who grows up, ends by accommodating itself to structures of common sense, in a return to a world of fixed identities.

Deleuze's understanding of play diverges from Carroll's when, instead of mourning an inevitable decline in play as the child grows up, he locates the possibility for ideal play in a "process of 'becoming-child' [that] does not imitate children but repeats a block of childhood and allows it to pass through language" (145). The disciplined *I* of an adult who is proficient at explanation and interpretation is rejected, and play is reintroduced in the adult, and in particular the artist, whose experimentation resists the laws of common sense. The play of this becoming-child is the ideal play, which is present in the becomings of Cadot's character, Robinson.

Here, the subject escapes the boundaries of a static identity and enters into "the play of the world" (Villani 232). To be a subject is no longer to be confined to a single self-identical *I*, but "to invent and experiment – the subject itself is both the process and the unstable result of experimentation and artifice" (Boundas WD 20). The creative becomings entered into by Robinson, the transformative interactions between the volatile worlds of the post-countryside, and the inventive developments of a language that creates rather than organizes, which have been explored in the preceding chapters, arise from this limitless play that endlessly experiments, releasing singularities from the fixed identities of common sense.

### **Play as Art:**

It is not coincidental that Deleuze's concept of ideal play springs from an engagement with the works of Lewis Carroll, or that it is in the fiction of Olivier Cadiot that I have been able to explore its fully-developed potential. The transformative potential of play is fundamentally bound up with possibilities unique to the arts. Constituting a space for surveying and generating alternatives to the organizations of common sense that structure 'real' life, literature has "nothing to do with the process of describing or redecorating a reality external to it. Art doesn't expose truths or realities that would pre-exist it: it *makes* truth and participates directly in the creation of reality" (Hallward 104). Literature, and the arts in general, are unique because, through their playful experimentations, they can explore and invent alternatives to the subject of common sense.

Texts that create and participate in ideal play demand a unique kind of reader. Continually upsetting "nos interprétations statiques" (Colombat 47), such texts inevitably elude the explanations of a traditional reader. Instead of being an objective interpreter, the reader must enter into the ideal play of the text, becoming an active source of meaning. As Sylvie Decorniquet says, in relation to Cadiot's works: "the reader [must become] the place where the text originates" (Decorniquet in Fetzer 60). Reading at "varying velocities and intensities" (Bryden 10), such a reader attempts to "work through the writing with the eye and ear of an artist or a poet" (Buchanan 11), in a process of experimentation and creation. The ideal play of the work of art is made *real* through this "experimentation, [that] involves playing and working with the text in order to see what effects it is capable of producing, without being constrained by what someone or

something else (author or text) intended” (Baugh 39). It is through such a reading, that participates in ideal play, that the transformations invented by works of art become “réels, et troublent la réalité, la moralité et l’économie du monde” (LS 76).

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